

Comments from North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters

February 22, 2022

Mr. Will Seuffert
Executive Secretary
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Place East, Suite 350
St. Paul, MN 55101

RE: In the Matter of the Application of Big Bend Wind, LLC for a Certificate of Need, Site Permit, and Route Permit for an up to 308 MW Wind and Farm and Associated 161 kV Transmission Line in Cottonwood, Martin, and Watonwan Counties, Minnesota; and In the Matter of the Application of Red Rock Solar, LLC for a Certificate of Need and Site Permit for an up to 60 MW Solar Facility in Cottonwood County, Minnesota

Dear Mr. Seuffert,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the Big Bend Wind and Red Rock Solar wind and solar projects.

The North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters is a labor union representing approximately 12,000 workers and their families across Minnesota. Our members include carpenters, millwrights, floor coverers, lathers, pile drivers, and industrial workers across the state. As such, they work on a wide array of energy infrastructure construction and maintenance—including coal, natural gas, wind, solar, and nuclear.

Legacy energy infrastructure in Minnesota is primarily built, operated, and maintained by local, unionized workers who are paid family-sustaining wages and benefits. As Minnesota's energy system undergoes decarbonization and utilizes an increasing share of renewable resources, it is important to ensure that projects continue to benefit local workers and the local economy. In this case, the project developer has indicated that the request for proposal (RFP) for project construction for both Red Rock Solar and Big Bend Wind will include strong preferences for "bids that utilize local, union construction craft employees to the greatest extent feasible." Furthermore, it is expected that the contractor selected through the RFP process "will collaborate with organized labor unions and other stakeholders to develop a workforce and hiring plan that maximizes the local economic benefits." As such, both projects have the potential to provide significant local benefits to construction workers and their families in Cottonwood County and the surrounding areas.

In addition to local jobs benefits, both projects will help contribute towards Minnesota's goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions within the energy sector, along with ensuring that Minnesota's energy system remains reliable and affordable for ratepayers. Furthermore, the

project proposer has worked to achieve a settlement agreement with the Minnesota Historical Society, Lower Sioux Indian Community in the State of Minnesota and the Upper Sioux Indian Community, in order to address concerns raised about the proximity of the project to the Jeffers Petroglyphs and Red Rock Ridge.

For the above reasons we would respectfully recommend the Commission grant the certificates of need and site permits for both Red Rock Solar and Big Bend Wind, along with the route permit for the associated high-voltage transmission line.

Sincerely,

Adam Duininck, Director of Government Affairs, North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters