



NaturEner Wild Rose 2 Energy Inc.

Amendment to Wild Rose 2 Wind Power Plant

April 11, 2014

The Alberta Utilities Commission

Decision 2014-099: NaturEner Wild Rose 2 Energy Inc.

Amendment to Wild Rose 2 Wind Power Plant

Application No. 1610214

Proceeding No. 3004

April 11, 2014

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Fifth Avenue Place, Fourth Floor, 425 First Street S.W.

Calgary, Alberta

T2P 3L8

Telephone: 403-592-8845

Fax: 403-592-4406

Website: www.auc.ab.ca

1 Introduction

1. NaturEner Wild Rose 2 Energy Inc. (NaturEner) pursuant to Approval No. [U2013-383](#),¹ has approval from the Alberta Utilities Commission (the AUC or Commission) to construct and operate the Wild Rose 2 wind power plant in Cypress County. NaturEner, pursuant to Permit and Licence No. [U2013-384](#),² has approval from the Commission to construct and operate the Eagle Butte substation.

2. On December 23, 2013, NaturEner filed Application No. 1610214 (the application) with the AUC, under Section 11 of the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act* to alter the Wild Rose 2 wind power plant. NaturEner also requested a one-year extension from December 31, 2015, to December 31, 2016, to complete construction of the power plant and substation.

3. On January 22, 2014, the Commission issued a notice of application with a deadline of February 12, 2014 for interested parties to file submissions. The notice was sent to all occupants, residents and landowners within 2,000 metres of the power plant project area as well as to industry stakeholders.

4. Six submissions were received in response to the Commission's notice of application, including Paul and Twyla von Huene, Henry Binder, Clark Walker, Honeycomb Farms, Shirley Walker and Marilyn Hudec, and Trevor Clark. Trevor Clark and Honeycomb Farms withdrew their objections to the application on March 3, 2014 and March 5, 2014 respectively.

5. On March 27, 2014, the Commission issued its standing rule, denying all parties standing in the proceeding. The Commission stated that Paul and Twyla von Huene and Mr. Binder own property greater than 2,000 metres from the amended project boundary and that none of the parties provided any information to establish that they would be directly and adversely affected by the project. The Commission found that Clark Walker, Marilyn Hudec and Shirley Walker (the Walker Group) did own or reside on land within 2,000 metres of the amended project area and that the amendment would result in a reduction of turbines within 2,000 metres of the lands of the Walker Group from four to one, an increased distance from the residence to the nearest turbine from approximately 1,086 metres to 1,700 metres and a decrease in predicted noise levels at the residence. The Commission found that the Walker Group did not provide any information, relative to the incremental impacts of the amendment versus the currently approved project, showing how they may be directly and adversely affected by the Commission's decision on the amendment application.

¹ Approval No. U2013-383, Application No. 1609867, Proceeding No. 2801, August 29, 2013.

² Permit and Licence No. U2013-384, Application No. 1609867, Proceeding No. 2801, August 29, 2013.

6. Accordingly, the Commission determined that it would not hold a hearing for the proceeding as the Commission determined that there are no parties that filed submissions whose rights may be directly and adversely affected by its decision.

2 Discussion

7. The Wild Rose 2 wind power plant, consisting of 108 wind turbines; each rated at 1.5 megawatts (MW), with a total generating capacity of 162 MW, was approved in AUC Decision 2011-329³ and Approval No. U2011-251.⁴ NaturEner was granted approval for a time extension in AUC Decision U2013-323⁵ and Approval No. U2013-383. The location of the power plant is in Cypress County, approximately 30 kilometres southeast of the city of Medicine Hat, Alberta.

8. A 34.5-kilovolt gathering system was also previously approved for the power plant. The gathering system would collect electric energy generated by the turbines and transmit it to the Eagle Butte substation, which would be connected to the Alberta Interconnected Electric System.

9. The proposed alteration to the approved wind power plant as set out in the application consists of a change of wind turbine model, from the approved Acciona AW-77 1.5-MW model to the Alstom ECO110 3.0-MW model. NaturEner stated that the Acciona turbines are no longer being produced.

10. NaturEner stated that approval of the Alstom turbines for the project would result in a reduction in the number of turbines from 108 to 63, a reduction in turbines located on native pasture from 19 to 12, and a reduction in the project area from 8,351 hectares to 7,036 hectares.

11. NaturEner stated that the proposed change in turbine would increase the nameplate rated capacity from 162 MW to 189 MW resulting in an increase in annual energy production.

12. The new proposed turbine would have a rotor diameter of 109.8 metres compared to 77 metres for the previously approved turbine. As well, the hub height of the new turbine would be 90 metres compared to 80 metres.

13. NaturEner attempted to locate the new turbines as close as possible to the previously approved turbine sites. NaturEner sited 13 turbines within 50 metres of an approved site, 24 turbines between 50 and 200 metres from an approved site, 26 turbines greater than 200 metres from an approved site and removed 45 turbines in the revised layout.

³ Decision 2011-329: NaturEner Energy Canada Inc. - 162-MW Wild Rose 2 Wind Power Plant and Associated Eagle Butte Substation, Application No. 1606143, Proceeding No. 625, August 2, 2011.

⁴ Approval No. U2011-251, Application No. 1606143, Proceeding No. 625, August 2, 2011.

⁵ Decision 2013-323: NaturEner Wild Rose 2 Energy Inc. - Time Extension for Completing Construction of the Wild Rose 2 Wind Power Project, Application No. 1609867, Proceeding No. 2801, August 29, 2013.

14. The proposed amended turbines would be installed at the following land locations:

Sections	Township	Range	Meridian
1, 3, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15, and 24	10	5	west of the Fourth Meridian
4, 5, 7, 8, and 9	10	4	west of the Fourth Meridian
12	9	5	west of the Fourth Meridian
6, 7, 8, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 28, 29, 30, and 33	9	4	west of the Fourth Meridian

15. NaturEner contracted Golder Associates Ltd. (Golder) to evaluate the potential environmental effects due to the proposed turbine changes. Golder submitted the amendment would result in lower adverse effects on soil, native pasture and listed plant species due to the lower number of turbines required and minimal increases in adverse effects on birds and bats due to the increase in rotor sweep area. Golder concluded that the majority of the conclusions and recommended mitigation measures remain unchanged.

16. NaturEner submitted a noise impact assessment for the proposed amendment which concluded that the predicted sound level produced by the power plant and substation, combined with ambient sound levels, is lower than the permissible sound level of 40 dBA at all noise receptors in the area. The noise impact assessment predicted a reduction of the noise level at most of the receptors in the project area; six of the 51 receptors were modelled to have higher sound levels. Five of these receptors were modelled to have an increase of 0.1 to 0.3 dBA while one receptor increased from 37.3 dBA to 38.2 dBA.

17. In the original application, NaturEner proposed a mitigation plan to offset the impact of placement of turbines on native grasslands. NaturEner testified that it had negotiated with a conservation agency which it will assist in creating approximately 97 hectares of off-site native pasture and habitat enhancement compensation area to extend the northwest to southeast wildlife corridor to Bullshead Reservoir. The Commission imposed a condition in Approval No. U2011-251 that NaturEner implement the mitigation plan to assist in creating the 97 hectares of off-site native pasture and habitat enhancement compensation area.

18. The amendment to the power plant reduces the project area and the number of turbines on native prairie. As a result, NaturEner submitted a native pasture mitigation proposal to reflect this change. NaturEner proposes a total mitigation plan of 143.38 hectares of finite-term conservation easement lands, within or in close proximity to the Wild Rose 2 project area, for the area of native pasture potentially affected by the 12 turbines and associated infrastructure planned within the Wild Rose 2 project area. The proposed finite-term conservation easement lands will be selected in collaboration with the Fish and Wildlife division of the Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (AESRD-FWD) representatives.

NaturEner stated that if the terms and conditions for a finite-term conservation easement cannot be finalized, it would evaluate options with AESRD-FWD and pursue potential alternatives that will provide equivalent mitigation measures to those contemplated in this proposal.

19. NaturEner conducted a participant involvement program that included all stakeholders within 800 metres and 2,000 metres from the edge of the revised project area as well as stakeholders who were previously included in the participant involvement program for the project. The participant involvement program included the mailing of an information package on September 30, 2013, outlining details of the revised power plant project. A project map was included which illustrated the approved project area, the proposed reduced project area and residences located in the proximity of the project area. NaturEner held an open house in Medicine Hat on October 22, 2013. The open house was advertised in the Medicine Hat News and the County Commentator-Cypress Courier. NaturEner also conducted personal consultation with occupants, residences and landowners within 800 metres of the reduced project area, previous stakeholders, and organizations and companies who are active in the project area.

3 Findings

20. The Commission has reviewed the application and has determined that the technical, siting, emissions, environmental and noise aspects of the power plant alteration have been met. NaturEner's participant involvement program has been conducted and objections and concerns have been addressed.

21. The Commission approves the request for an extension of the construction of the power plant and substation from December 31, 2015, to December 31, 2016.

22. In Decision 2011-329, the Commission imposed conditions on the approval, as outlined in paragraph 196 of the decision. The conditions as set out below continue to apply. The conditions are that NaturEner:

- a. Must carry out pre-construction surveys, as set out in the AESRD sign-off letter.
- b. Must develop and implement a post-construction monitoring program acceptable to AESRD and the Canadian Wildlife Service.
- c. Must file all studies and reports relating to the post-construction noise survey and the post-construction monitoring program with the Commission.

23. In addition, the following conditions are imposed, which take into account the change in project layout, number of turbines on native prairie and changes to the noise impacts:

- a. NaturEner shall implement the mitigation plan entitled "Wildrose 2 Wind Power Project Revised Native Pasture Mitigation Proposal".
- b. NaturEner is directed to conduct a post-construction comprehensive noise study at the most impacted receptor to verify and ensure compliance with AUC Rule 012: *Noise Control*.

24. For the foregoing reasons and subject to the conditions and directions herein, the Commission considers that the approval of the amendment to the Wild Rose 2 wind power plant is in the public interest.

4 Decision

25. Pursuant to Section 11 of the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act*, the Commission approves the application and grants NaturEner the approval set out in Appendix 1– 189-MW Wild Rose 2 Wind Power Plant – Approval No. U2014-152 – April 11, 2014 to alter and operate the power plant (Appendix 1 will be distributed separately).

26. Pursuant to Sections 14, 15 and 19 of the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act*, the Commission approves the permit and licence to alter and operate the substation and grants NaturEner the approval set out in Appendix 2 – Eagle Butte Substation – Permit and Licence No. U2014-153 – April 11, 2014 (Appendix 2 will be distributed separately).

Dated on April 11, 2014.

The Alberta Utilities Commission

(original signed by)

Neil Jamieson
Commission Member