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BLM Rawlins Scoping First Turbine Sites for Chokecherry/Sierra Madre Wind Energy Project

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Rawlins Field Office (RFO) is accepting scoping comments for the Phase I Wind Turbine Development environmental assessment for the Chokecherry/Sierra Madre Wind Energy Project (CCSM), which will include two public meetings in conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from 4-6:30 p.m. on Dec. 16 at the Jeffrey Center, 315 W. Pine St., Rawlins, Wyo.; and Dec. 17 at the Platte Valley Community Center, 210 W. Elm Ave., Saratoga, Wyo.

The scoping meetings will provide an opportunity for the public and interested parties to ask questions one-on-one with BLM and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service specialists, view maps and posters detailing the site-specific phases of the CCSM project, and provide written comments. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel will be able to answer questions pertaining to the analysis of an Eagle Take Permit. Presentations on the project will be held at 4:30 and 5:30 p.m.

The CCSM Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision amended the Rawlins Resource Management Plan to allow for wind development, but did not identify individual turbine locations. Subsequent tiered environmental assessments (EAs) are needed to analyze site-specific issues, such as the number and layout of the wind turbines. The first to be analyzed was an infrastructure component EA. This second EA includes analysis of the layout of approximately 500 turbines, associated facilities and infrastructure in the western portion of the project area referred to as the Phase I Wind Turbine Development. The initial disturbance for Phase I Wind Turbine Development would be approximately 3,441 acres, with long-term disturbance estimated to be roughly 435 acres.

The proposed CCSM project consists of two wind farm sites encompassing 1,000 turbines on more than 227,638 acres of mixed public and private land located about 10 miles south of Rawlins, Wyo., in Carbon County. It is estimated that each wind turbine would generate between 1.5 to 3 megawatts (MW) of electricity, with a total capacity of 2,000 to 3,000 MW, which is enough energy to power nearly 1 million homes. Access roads, underground electric gathering lines, an overhead transmission line and substations to interconnect the generated power to the electric grid are included in the proposal. It is anticipated construction will take four to five years with an estimated project life of 30 years.

Written comments will be accepted until Jan. 14. Comments may be emailed to BLM_WY_PCW_windfarm@blm.gov (please include "CCSM EA Scoping" in the subject line), faxed to (307) 328-4224, or mailed to the Bureau of Land Management, Rawlins Field Office, CCSM EA Scoping, 1300 N. Third St., P.O. Box 2407, Rawlins, WY 82301.

Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 to contact the individual listed below during normal business hours. The FIRS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to leave a message or question with the below individuals. You will receive a reply during normal business hours.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment – including your personal

identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you may ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

For further information, please contact Heather Schultz at (307) 328-4215.

Note to editor: A copy of the project map and related documents can be found at: <http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/documents/rfo/Chokecherry.html>.