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BLM Rawlins Opens Site-specific Scoping for Chokecherry/Sierra Madre Wind Energy Project

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Rawlins Field Office (RFO) opens scoping for an infrastructure component environmental assessment for the Chokecherry/Sierra Madre Wind Energy Project (CCSM), which will include two public meetings from 4-7 p.m. on Sept. 23 at the Platte Valley Community Center, 210 W. Elm Ave., Saratoga, Wyo.; and Sept. 24 at the Depot, 400 W. Front Street, Rawlins, Wyo.

The scoping meetings will provide an opportunity for the public and interested parties to ask questions one-on-one with BLM specialists, view maps and posters detailing the site-specific phases of the CCSM project, and provide written comments.

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 to address migratory bird and eagle avoidance and minimization. The first to be analyzed will be an infrastructure component EA which includes the Haul Road, West Sinclair rail facility and road rock quarry. Future EAs include analyses of phase 1-development of approximately 500 turbines in the western portion of the project area and phase 2-development of the remaining roughly 500 turbines in the eastern portion of the project area.

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 Oct. 9. 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:
www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/documents/rfo/Chokecherry.html.

The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land, the most of any Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. In Fiscal Year 2012, activities on public lands generated \$4.6 billion in revenue, much of which was shared with the States where the activities occurred. In addition, public lands contributed more than \$112 billion to the U.S. economy and helped support more than 500,000 jobs.

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