Boulder City Meeting Transcripts

REPORTER'S TRANSCRIPT

OF

PROPOSED SEARCHLIGHT WIND ENERGY PROJECT

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Held at Boulder City Library

701 Adams Boulevard

Boulder City, Nevada 89005

Thursday, February 23, 2012

6:00 p.m.

Reported by: RENE' HANNAH, CCR #326

IN ATTENDANCE:
ROBERT B. ROSS, JR.
Field Manager
Bureau of Land Management
GREGORY N. HELSETH
Renewable Energy Project Manager
Bureau of Land Management
STEPHANIE LOCKE
Senior Environmental Scientist
New Fields
NANCY CHRIST
NEPA Coordinator
Bureau of Land Management

PRIVATE COMMENTS BY
ELLEN ROSS

PUBLIC COMMENTS BY
ELLEN ROSS
JUDY BUNDORF
JAMES EATON
JOHN HIATT
THOMAS CASEY

FEBRUARY 23, 2012

BOULDER CITY, NEVADA

PRIVATE COMMENTS

MS. ROSS: My name is Ellen Ross, R-O-S-S. I am vehemently opposed to the Searchlight wind turbine project. I'm a real estate broker and I am currently selling short sales and foreclosures because there is no land market, but just a few years ago I was selling parcels in and around the Searchlight, Nelson area to people from other parts of the west that wanted to purchase land that was like a desert retreat where you would buy anywhere from, say five acres to 20 acres of raw, unimproved land, and beautiful vistas and open views of Joshua trees and mountains and wildlife. And with this project coming into Searchlight, this is heavily impacting the purchase of my clients' property. And I also own property in this area. And I'm very highly offended by the concept of placing 86 or 97 wind turbines within close proximity to the private property these people have paid for. And, for instance, in the area where my property is there are three or four of us that have turbines very close. It's 800 feet from the edge of my property. That is totally unacceptable for 40-story wind turbines,

Comments noted.

which is 463 feet tall with blades that are like 300 feet wide that are going around. And that also are conduit by underground electricity. Because they can't run by themselves, we have to pay for the power to keep the wind turbines going until they kick up their wind speed. So the whole project is financially, it's not feasible. It's being subsidized by our money, and then the corporations who get these projects such as to Duke Energy who created this nightmare, they get to roll it over to another company after the first five years and that company gets the five years of tax write-offs. So it's a continual stream of, you know, benefits to corporations. There is no benefit to the community and there is no benefit to private ownership. And it's been time we started, you know, taking a stand for people who live in small, outlying communities outside of Las Vegas. This is part of the asset of southern Nevada in that we have rural area with pristine Mojave Desert area for hiking, biking, kayaking, sailing, boating, fishing, that we honor that and take care of it instead of destroy hundreds of thousands of acres with ineffective methods. It destroys the property values. I mean, I'm not making this up. It will destroy the property values

by 50 percent. Have you ever heard anyone ask you, "I would like to buy land next to a wind turbine"? Once you devastate the ecosystem and separate things like this, it's going to be gone forever. And it will shut down Searchlight and it will shut down Cottonwood Cove, because nobody from southern California wants to drive all this way and go through this lined tunnel of wind turbines. That's why they're leaving southern California and trying to buy land for second homes in an outlying area outside of Las Vegas. So I find it highly offensive, I mean, to the extent that I find it criminal that we can't protect our own desert areas. Boulder City wouldn't put up with this.

And then this is crisis management. In my ever to be humble opinion, it's crisis management from the context of yes, we do need alternate energies, but it's not going to happen overnight. And whatever changes we make are going to have to be a slow, gradual process to weed out the ones that don't work. We already know wind turbines are highly offensive, destroy the environment, birds, the wildlife, the communities, the people, and there are better ways to go. And those processes are unfolding. They are creating a solar photovoltaic

Section 4.12-Socioeconomic Impacts has been updated to include Impacts on Property Values. A literature review on property value impacts has been added in Appendix F: Literature Review of Socioeconomic Effects of Wind Project and Transmission Lines.

factory down in Laughlin. So I would rather see distributed solar energy on rooftops and pools. It would be a better way to go than carving up the entire desert. It's political madness.

PUBLIC MEETING

MR. ROSS: Let's get started. We do have a microphone for your comments and we'll have that set up, I think when we do that part of the presentation. But I'm Bob Ross. I'm the field manager for the BLM Las Vegas Field Office. And welcome to tonight's public hearing on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Searchlight Wind Energy Project. I want to let you know that your comments are very important to us. BLM has not made a decision on the project yet, so what you provide us tonight will really help us with our decision-making in terms of what alternatives to pick, those kinds of things, what kinds of terms and conditions to place on an authorization, if this is authorized.

So I'm going to start with a few introductions. With me tonight is Nancy Christ, and Nancy is going to be giving the BLM's presentation. That's going to take about 15 minutes, I believe, something like that. And another name that you

probably have seen a lot of, Greg Helseth. Greg is the project manager for this project. And Greg works for Mark Spencer. Mark's in the back there. Mark kind of oversees, supervises our Renewable Energy Coordination Office in Las Vegas. And Stephanie Locke is our facilitator. She's the contractor that works on the environmental impact statement for this project. I also wanted to recognize Congressional, any kind of elected officials or their representatives. I know Sara Moffitt (sic), you're here representing Senator Reid. Brian Wilson is also here. Brian. Brian Weaver. Sorry. Yeah. Okay. Brian Weaver is here with Congressman Heck's office. Thank you. And any other elected officials or representatives of elected officials tonight? I just want to once again reiterate that your comments are very important to us and we are really looking forward to hearing from you.

Stephanie has some ground rules for the public hearing portion of this meeting tonite. She'll go after Nancy. But Nancy, it's your turn now, so I'll turn it over to you.

MS. CHRIST: Thanks, Bob. Good evening, everyone. My name is Nancy Christ. I'm the NEPA

coordinator with the BLM. I work for the Renewable Energy Coordination Office. I work exclusively on renewable energy projects. I'm here tonight to present a brief project overview of the proposed Searchlight Wind Energy Project. So let's get started.

So what is the proposed project? Well, if approved, the project would authorize Searchlight Wind Energy, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Duke Energy, to develop an approximately 200-megawatt wind energy generation facility and all necessary associated infrastructure. It will also authorize Western Area Power Administration to develop an interconnecting switching station which would transfer the power generated from the wind energy facility to the existing Western Area Power Administration transmission grid. So if approved, the project is capable of producing enough electricity to provide, or to power 50,000 homes.

So where is the proposed project? Well, as you can see on the map here, this red area is the proposed project area. It's located adjacent to Searchlight, Nevada, which is the yellow block right there. Searchlight is approximately 50 miles southeast of Las Vegas. It's also 40 miles north of

Laughlin and about 1.5 miles from the western border of the National Park Services Lake Mead National Recreation Area. So this area in red is the right-of-way application area. It consists of approximately 19,000 acres. However, if approved, the project would only occupy approximately 163 acres. So these additional lands in the right-of-way application area would be returned to the BLM.

What is mineral segregation? Well, mineral segregation as applies to this project means that no new mining claims can be filed in the right-of-way application area for a period of two years while BLM is considering this project. So mining segregation is temporary, again, a maximum of two years and it does not affect any valid existing mining claims. So what laws authorize the BLM to grant rights-of-ways? Well, actually there are several laws that authorize the BLM to grant rights-of-ways, and there's a list of them here. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act requires the BLM to manage the land it administers for multiple uses. The Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations, that provides overall right-of-way guidance, including how to process wind energy

right-of-ways. Section 211 of the Energy Policy Act established a goal for the Secretary of the Interior to approve 10,000 megawatts of non-hydro-powered renewable energy projects, meaning solar, wind, geothermal projects, by the year 2015.

And finally, there's Secretarial Order 3283 enhancing renewable energy on public lands. And that set a priority for the entire Department of the Interior, which includes the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop environmentally responsible renewable energy.

So why is the BLM considering this project? Well, in accordance with those laws on the previous slides, the BLM is required to respond to the applications they receive. What is the decision to be made? At the end of the EIS process the BLM will decide to approve or deny the right-of-way application. If the project is approved, the BLM will also determine what mandatory stipulations would be required in the right-of-way grant. Some examples of these would be an avian and bat protection plan; desert tortoise monitoring before construction, during and after; and a traffic safety plan to insure public safety on the road that will

be used for the project, things like that.

So what are the project components? This goes through a couple of slides. I have a few details I'll fill in as I go. So essentially, the proposed project is to install about 96 wind turbines that each require a foundation as well as a high-mountain transformer. The applicant has proposed to use 2.3-megawatt transformers that are manufactured by the Siemens Corporation. The project will also require some underground electric collection and communication systems. The electrical collection system will collect the energy from each turbine and transport it to one of two on-site substations. The communication systems are fiberoptic lines connected to each turbine, then they connect to a central computer which actually operates the turbines. That would be located and operated in some maintenance facility.

And then there is two electrical substations and 8.7 miles of overhead transmission lines. Again, two substations are proposed for the project, one in the southeastern portion and one in the northeastern portion of the project. The 8.7 miles of overhead transmission lines would be 230kV lines. It would be a monocled (sic) structure. And

1 additional components, the switching stations as
2 proposed by Western Area Power Administration. And
3 like I mentioned earlier, the purpose of that
4 facility is to transfer the power generated from the
5 wind energy facility to the existing transmission
6 grid. The proposed location for this is adjacent to
7 the newly constructed entrance station on Cottonwood
8 Cove for the National Park Service. Also, up to
9 four MET towers would be included. Three of those
10 have already been installed. They were applied for
11 and improved under a separate right-of-way
12 application and NEPA cross-up. The MET towers have
13 been sending wind data since 2009. They will
14 continue to be a component of the project for the
15 life of the project. And the operations and
16 maintenance building, this facility would require
17 approximately three and a half acres. It would be
18 painted to match the surrounding landscape. And
19 again, it would house a number of project components
20 including the central computers that would control
21 the turbines and access roads. 9., I think about
22 nine, maybe ten miles of existing roads would be
23 widened to a maximum width of about 36 feet. And
24 then new roads, about 27 miles of new roads would be
25 constructed to connect the turbines. So I mentioned

earlier, the applicant is proposing to use 2.3-megawatt turbines, which is manufactured by Siemens Corporation. And this particular model has a maximum height, excuse me. Maximum height. From the ground to the tip of the rotor blade at its highest position would be 427 feet. From the ground to the rotor hub, approximately 252 feet. It's not identified here, but I think it's an important measurement. From the ground to the rotor blade at its lowest position, approximately 96 feet. As you can see, the rotor does have three blades. These are approximately 165 feet in length and that allows for the rotor-swept area, 331 feet. The slide also has some pictures of a construction of a typical foundation required for the Siemens 2.3 turbine. What you see up here is an octagon shape and foundation. It is approximately 40 to 50 feet wide. It requires about 300 cubic yards of cement. And then once that is constructed, it's back-filled. And BLM, if they approve the project would require a rehabilitation plan, so this area you see here would be rehabilitated.

So what are the temporary components during construction? As you know, with all construction projects there are areas called

lay-down areas. There are two proposed for this project. Each are about ten acres in size and they will be used to store construction equipment, material, while the rotors are pre-assembled and whatnot. There will also be a temporary construction or lay-down area at the base of the turbines. I would like to point out that the proposal does include that all of these materials would be placed on wooden pallets or straw bales while they're waiting to be assembled and constructed.

There will be a concrete batch plant for making concrete for those foundations, as well as a portable rock crusher for making aggregate for the road. The last two items are both mobile, and so they would be moved from each lay-down area as needed during the construction process.

So what alternatives are being considered? The Draft EIS considered three alternatives; the applicant's proposes action, which is a 96-turbine layout; the BLM preferred alternative, which is an 87-wind turbine layout; and also a no-action alternative. I do want to point out also that there were a couple of potential alternatives that were not analyzed in detail under the Draft EIS. Some of

you who may have been following this project, this is an initiation back in 2008, you may recall a 161-turbine layout. That was the original proposed action. Then we held some scoping meetings, and based on scoping meetings, technical and non-technical issues, the 161-turbine alternative was discarded and not analyzed in detail by the BLM. The result was a 140-turbine alternative that again, was discarded by the BLM and not analyzed in detail for the Draft EIS.

So this is the proposed action on, as you can see, the 96-wind turbine layout. It would have the capacity to generate up to 220 megawatts of wind energy. This slide here shows streams of turbines here. This inset here is a blow-up of the Western Area Power Administration switching, switchyard. We also have the same map that will go on some of the posters here so you could see them in more detail.

The BLM preferred alternative to the 87-wind turbine alternative, this project would produce approximately 200 megawatts of energy. BLM determined this to be the preferred alternative because it requires less land, has less impact to sensitive biological resources and still met the purpose and needs of the project.

In addition, the proposed action, the 96-turbine alternative would have exceeded air quality emissions during construction, even after mitigation. And the third alternative analyzed in the EIS is the no-action alternative. And BLM underneath it is required to analyze a no-action alternative. Of course, this assumes BLM has not approved the right-of-way application and the project would not be constructed.

So why is this location being considered? Well, BLM receives the applications and they work with the Searchlight area. And again, based on the existing laws and regulations we are required to consider the applications as received. The purpose of the DEIS is not to determine where the best site for wind energy development is, but it's rather to analyze the site selected and determine whether or not that site is appropriate for wind energy development.

Since the applicant has a few selection criteria as well, Searchlight Wind Energy based on studies has determined that the area has good to excellent wind resources that are capable of a utility-scale project like this. The area is close to existing electrical transmission lines. That was

a key criteria for Western Area Power Administration. It also meets BLM resource planning guidelines as far siting a project in this area. And then the area topography is suitable for wind turbine generators. So during the public scoping period that started in December of 2008 and ended in 2009, people who made comment at the public scoping meeting as well as in agency feedback the BLM received, identified those following issues. The purpose of this slide is to highlight the issue. For example, visual impact. You can find the analysis on visual impact on page 4-61 of the Draft EIS. And we also have a number of boards available to this evening for viewing that highlight some of these areas, too.

So the project schedule, or NEPA process. The NEPA process for this project started with the notice of intent published in the Federal Register. The notice of intent essentially announced to the public that the BLM intended to do an environmental impact statement in order to, for this proposed project. And like I said, there was an internal and external scoping, and the scoping period ended on February 17th, 2009. The Draft EIS was recently released on January 20th, 2012, and that officially

started the 90-day public comment period for this project. As you can see, the comment period ends April 18th and the BLM will accept all comments through that date.

So here we are at the public meeting phase. This is the third of three public meetings the BLM has held on the Draft EIS. Tuesday night we were in Laughlin, last night we were in Searchlight, and tonight, of course, here we are in Boulder City. So we have got some projected dates. BLM is anticipating responding to everybody's comments in the Draft EIS and would be, the Final EIS has a projected release date of June 30th, 2012, followed by a record of decision whether to approve or deny the project signed by the Secretary of the Interior on July 30th, 2012. Please keep in mind these are projected dates and can change depending upon time required for comment analysis.

So thank you. This concludes my portion of the project presentation. I'd like to thank everybody for coming this evening. I hope that you all have learned a few things about the project you might not have known. We appreciate your presence. I'll turn it over to you, Stephanie.

MS. LOCKE: We're going to start the

comment period here shortly, but I'm going to go over how that is going to work first, then we're going to take a quick two or three-minute break so we can set up. And that will give you some opportunities, if you didn't know that those opportunities existed. So this next portion of the meeting is for the BLM to receive your comments, any comments. If you are for the project, if you have a question, if you are against the project, your range of comments, that's what the BLM is here to listen to. So we're going to have people come up. So if you would like to speak to the BLM, what you need to do is fill out a speaker registration card. They're with my colleague Sean here at sign-in table, if you haven't already done so. Some people may not prefer to speak in front of the group, so if that's the case we have a court reporter. Her name is Angela, back in the corner. You can make your comment to her privately, if you would prefer. If you did choose to speak up here, you're going to speak to the BLM, and you get three minutes. My colleague Andy is going to help you out. We'll have a timer up here on the screen and he'll hold up a green card when you have two minutes. When you have a minute left he'll hold up a yellow card, and when your time

is up he'll hold up a red card. And this is so everybody gets the same amount of time, and hopefully, adequate time to make your comment.

The BLM is not going to respond to questions or comments, however. Those will be responded to in the Final EIS. There are a couple of reasons for that. This is to maximize the time that you get to comment. Also, some comments may require more research and analysis. And answering them in the Final EIS allows the BLM to have that time to come up with a thorough, well-researched answer to your question.

Also, let's see. We have elected officials. Nobody has, none of the elected officials have informed me that they want to make a comment; is that correct, or their representatives? So we'll start with the public comments. And I'm basically going to call you up here in the order that I received your speaker registration cards. Please be respectful and courteous. And also, if you do have questions that the BLM staff can answer at this moment after this portion of the meeting, there's lots of BLM staff in this room. You're welcome to ask them your questions directly.

Another way to comment. On the front

table with my colleague Sean there are comment cards and you can fill out your comments and mail them in to the BLM, you can fax them in to the BLM, you can e-mail the BLM, you can leave them here. If you send them to the BLM by regular mail make sure they are postmarked by April 18. Of course, the electronic correspondence is much quicker so you can send that 11:59 on April 18th, if you so choose. So give me two or three minutes to set up. If you would like to speak and haven't filled out a speaker registration card, please see Sean. And any questions on how the next is going to work? Okay.

(Recess taken.)

MS. LOCKE: Ellen Ross.

MS. ROSS: Good evening. So I saw these people last night in Searchlight. So I'm here again. I live in Las Vegas. I've lived here for 35 years. I'm not born in Nevada, but I feel like a real Nevadan. I'm really attached to the desert. It's grown on me. I have been in the real estate business for 33 years and don't much prefer showing land in short sales and foreclosures. In this particular market, that's what we do. We show a lot of empty homes, which brings me to my point. Nevada has approximately, if you Google it, 30 plus million

Comments noted.

visitors a year. You Google Las Vegas, it says it has 39.2 million. So I know that's a little weird, but the point I'm trying to make is that Las Vegas is definitely a hotspot on the planet for tourism. And people don't come here just to visit the Strip anymore, they come here to visit the desert, to be part of the growing ecotourism, which is going to Death Valley, which is going down the river, which is going to various, you know, desert, visiting archeological sites and maybe eventually the fossil museum they have up in North Las Vegas. The point being, we really have a lot of researches. We have the history of Spanish Trails, we have Native American histories, Spanish cultures that were through here, and the mining history. It just overwhelms me, the uniqueness of our southwest heritage and the people that we are and where we come from. I hate to see that overlaid with sort of an industrial Disneyland in various parts of the pristine Mojave Desert, which is one of the highest preserves of natural desert in our country.

Part of the reason why I got involved in real estate there is because private properties there appeal to a lot of people from other countries and of the States that want to live in the desert

Section 4.12-Socioeconomic Impacts has been updated to include a discussion on Impacts on Recreation and Tourism.

Impacts to cultural resources are evaluated in Section 4.5.of the Final EIS.

Section 4.12-Socioeconomic Impacts has been updated to include potential effects property values. For further information see the newly added Appendix F: Literature Review of Socioeconomic Effects of Wind Project and Transmission Lines.

for their retirement homes. In saying that, I sold mining claims in areas that are part of Searchlight. Not in the immediate area, but within, you know, two miles, one mile. It's still private property. People bought that property, paid a fair market value, pay property taxes on it, and now that land is going to be devalued because of wind turbines. Nobody has asked me if I would like to sell them a property with a wind turbine next to it. Nor is that, if you look at YouTube, any of the properties that are in the community, it's not desirable. It devalues the property 50 percent. I would like to ask Duke Energy to buy out all the people that are in close proximity to this project. I am one of those people. 800 feet from my property is going to be positioned a wind turbine. I find this totally unacceptable and obnoxious. In reference to Cottonwood Cove, there's a new home development down there that went under. I now have the listing. I put them in the computer yesterday. I went to the meeting last night and had two calls when I got back that evening, people interested in buying a home. I will now have to disclose to those people that there will be a wind turbine farm within close proximity. These are people who want to retire in Searchlight,

paid a decent price. They paid 400 before, they'll pay a hundred to two hundred thousand now, and they want to have a retirement home in Searchlight outside of southern California. They are trying to run away from the madness that's been created in southern California.

So in the end, what I'd like to say is that the idea of putting a wind turbine farm outside of Las Vegas in an eco area, it's just insane to me. And I think that in doing this we are defeating our purpose in moving forward as a community. And I would like to speak to Senator Reid's representative and Congressman Heck's representative, because we need more representation so we can continue our growth in a positive way where we keep our city, Las Vegas, and the eco-development tourism balanced into the future. Not just this generation, but generations in the future.

Comments noted.

MS. LOCKE: Judy Bundorf?

MS. BUNDORF: Judy Bundorf. Over on Grand Pass Road we bought ten years ago because of the Joshua Tree forest. We researched the land all around, sold by BLM. I talked to geologists, I talked to mining people, "Will anything ever happen here to destroy my views?" I was assured, oh, no,

Comments noted.

that that is BLM land. They will not permit this to be destroyed. I would like to read from the DEIS. "It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain and help diversity and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations." I don't have children. I won't be able to sell that house. It's a beautiful home. I guess we'll just blow it up and move away. I have choices. I have another home. But referring to the environmental justice section of the DEIS which states there, few minorities or low-income people in Searchlight. And they're using 2008 census data. Well, just last weekend at the Searchlight Town Board meeting there was a letter read approving, requesting the Silver Rider transport because of the large number of elderly and low-income people who live in Searchlight who depend on public transaction. You can't have it both ways.

So the noise level. I will be 1.25 miles from about a dozen turbines. It's very quiet out there. I hear the quail at night, hear the coyote. I've read that people that live near wind turbines, it sounds like tennis shoes in the dryer. The jet engine that never takes off, it just roars. And there's more and more studies being done

Data updated to 2010 Census.

See noise modeling in Section 4.10-Noise Impacts, for discussion on the conservative projected noise levels in the area.

that back that up. The Federal electrical subsidies per unit of production for wind, $56.29 per megawatt. That's 2010 dollars. For gas, .64. For coal, .64. For hydropower, .82. But wind, $56.29 per megawatt hour. As a taxpayer, I can't afford to subsidize this. As a rate payer, I can't afford to turn my lights on with those prices.

Comments noted.

Fire safety will be a huge issue. I want to ask BLM where is the nearest BLM fire station? The little, you know, volunteer fire department of Searchlight is not prepared to fight a massive desert fire when one of those things explodes. I say when, not if, because there are too many cases where they do cause fires. The desert is like tinder. This area on a typical year like this, we're all in trouble. Thank you.

Section 4.14-Health and Human Safety Impacts of the document contained a detailed description of the potential effects. Mitigation to reduce fire-related risk is described in MM SAFE-4: Construction Fire Prevention Measures and APM-7.

MS. LOCKE: Thank you for your comment. James Eaton?

MR. EATON: There's a chart over here and a lot of stuff, lot of numbers. $22 million in the road construction. Those were like Clark County, Las Vegas, state of Nevada. What is that money being spent on, because the wind turbines are obviously not coming from Las Vegas. They're going to make their own concrete at a batch plant, and

Comments noted.

then get their aggregate from on-site because of the rock prices. So they're not going to be buying materials from Las Vegas companies. And $500,000 a year in maintenance and upkeep in Clark County and Mojave County. And what, and electricians and all that stuff, special for wind turbines will be coming in from wherever they come from. I don't know if they come from the state of Nevada, but they're not going to hire 200 construction workers that are unexperienced. You have to work on wind turbines to get a job building the turbines. So people will come in from other parts of the country to build the wind turbines. And with it, add to the 200 construction jobs to go through and make them permanent jobs that are going to go to people that are trained and operating and maintaining and keeping track of all this stuff and the main computer, whatever, that has to hook up all these turbines to run it all. So they're not going to hire people from Searchlight, Clark County, they're going to hire people from some other part of the country to come in and build the stuff, and then become executives, or they'll make the decision to send somebody out to there to work. They're not going to hire people from Searchlight.

So, you know, $22 million in construction and all the jobs and stuff is kind of illegitimate in the fact it's not going to be local people, really, from Searchlight. Searchlight has nothing to gain from the wind turbines, except they're going to have to look at them. So there's no real upside to the people of Searchlight. The electrical company that owns, Searchlight Wind Tower, LLC, they made it an LLC to protect themselves so if something happens in the construction project where, gee, we can't mitigate the, anything, really, to foilage to plant life to animal or anything natural, they're going to protect themselves through an LLC. They're not going to do an electrical, a subsidiary that was owned and something happens, you would fold them up, protect the larger corporation. Really, the responsibility is not going to come down to the large company, it's going to come down to a small subsidiary that they can just walk away from.

The BLM will require financial bonds for all wind energy development projects on BLM-administered public lands. Refer to Appendix C: BLM Wind Energy Development Program Policies and BMPs, page A-4.

And then you've got the sound. On the chart they show that from the distances, but they don't show prevailing winds. If it's dead calm, that's the decibel reading. So if it's dead calm the turbine doesn't spin. So what's the wind have to do to spin the turbine? That's where it's 105

See noise modeling presented in Section 4.10.2-Direct and Indirect Effects by Alternative for discussion on the conservative projected noise levels in the area. The modeling study conducted for this project included very conservative assumptions that included all receptors being downwind from all turbines simultaneously (a physical impossibility), all turbines operating simultaneously, and the maximum sound output from the turbines under maximum wind conditions. Sound levels from the project would only be lower under lighter wind conditions.

decibels at the turbine. And then what's the decibel reading 300 yards away when it's going full speed and wind blowing towards the house. So that's the kind of information that's more pertinent to people that live in Searchlight. That's a nice picture and I see what the noise is, but what's it going to be in the real world when they're all done and built and it's a little louder and then they say, "Well, sorry about that," and then it's too late.

So if we have a realistic number that says, "Hey, you know what? On a really windy day it's going to lift your house," that's more realistic information. That's it. Thanks.

MS. LOCKE: Thank you for your comment. John Hiatt.

MR. HIATT: Thank you for the opportunity to comment tonight. This is a big EIS and there are a lot of comments to make, so this is a short time to talk about a couple things. This area on the west side of the Colorado River here, this southern Nevada from Boulder City on south down towards Sierra Mountains is a very rich area biologically. If you look at it you can see how much plant life there is. And, of course, that attracts animals,

and particularly to the bird life. I'm sure the people doing the EIS, the contractors have done studies of bird species and migratory birds in here. But to give you an idea how this area compares, there's an inadvertent study which is being carried out. Basically, it's a removal of all the mine markers and seeing how many dead birds are in each one of those markers. And it turns out that this area around Searchlight we're talking about has one of the highest mortality rates for birds in those tubes than any place in southern Nevada. And now, I looked at a couple last week when I was out in Searchlight. I pulled out eight tubes, a total of 37 dead birds. There are a lot of birds being killed there. And those birds are flying through the air. They will be impacted by this. The one species that maybe is the greatest concern are the Golden Eagles. And yes, studies have been done in terms of how many nests are in this area and so on, but that doesn't really capture the essence of the problem. For the cumulative impact for Golden Eagles, for me you need to look at the entire western United States in terms of wind tower projects, because eagles are incredibly far-ranging birds. One of the things we found out due to the

A Bird and Bat Conservation Strategy (BBCS) (formerly referred to as the Avian and Bat Protection Plan [ABPP]) has been developed for the proposed project utilizing the recommendations within the USFWS's March 2012 Land Based Wind Energy Guidelines (Refer to Appendix B-4: Bird and Bat Conservation Strategy).

1 satellite tracking devices is that eagles that may
2 breed in this area or be born in this area, they can
3 go all the way to the Arctic Ocean and back again.
4 And so they're everywhere. And so when we look at
5 the impact of the population, we have to consider
6 the entire Golden Eagle population in the United
7 States.
8 There's a project in the Tehachapis, it's
9 called the Pine Tree Project, in which six Golden
10 Eagles were killed in the last year. You figure
11 that the recruitment of the population in California
12 is estimated to be about 96 Golden Eagles per year
13 that are fledged. You look and you see that one
14 project, that basically would take out 16 percent of
15 the annual fledging of Golden Eagles. We don't need
16 to discuss very many of these projects before we
17 basically put Golden Eagles on the decline, and now
18 we're looking potentially in the future at
19 endangered species status with Golden Eagles. That
20 is not something we want to have happen. That would
21 potentially shut down all of the wind turbine
22 projects in the western United States if that
23 happens. And I think it talks about, the EIS talks
24 about mitigation and adaptive management to try and
25 solve this problem. The only way to resolve it is

and region that is rich with mining history. An area, in fact, riddled with abandoned mines and diggings. Well, enter this pamphlet, it's a BLM pamphlet, Needles Field Office. Mojave Desert bats. Abandoned bats are for -- excuse me. Abandoned mines are for bats, not people. Let's read on. Very interesting. Subterranean bat program. Bats in the desert choose roosting sites that might surprise you. They often roost in abandoned mines and associated structures. The Needles Field Office has done several projects in recent years to protect bat habitat. Read down further. Abandoned mines serve as roosting habitat for several species of bats considered BLM-sensitive, and California Department of Fish and Game species special concern. More than half of the 45 bats species in the U.S. are in rapid decline or are already listed as endangered. Two-thirds of these bat species roost in mines. And also, over here, there's evidence of groups and sites that seriously threaten the population. The BLM in light of, or given BLM that the search point areas that are invariably political, those abandoned mines, and have all the desert southwest natural habitat that so many bat species use, this would be the perfect spot for

these wind turbine projects you propose. If you wanted to kill more bats, if you wanted to kill increased numbers of them, indeed, BLM, are you looking to hasten the already rapid decline of 45 -- of half of the 45 U.S. bat species, more than half? Are you looking to more seriously affect the 30 bat species that roost in mines, all of this by BLM literature? Are you looking to further and more seriously affect those species considered BLM-sensitive? And I would also add that the construction of such a wind power facility would certainly provide the disturbance to affect, seriously, roosting bat species.

MS. LOCKE: Thank you for your comment. That is all the speakers' comments. At this time there are two court reporters still available and will be available for the duration. And so, it's 25 minutes until 8:00.

(Whereupon, proceedings were concluded at 8:00 p.m.)

1 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

2 STATE OF NEVADA)

) ss:

3 COUNTY OF CLARK)

4 I, Rene' Hannah, Certified Court Reporter,

5 do hereby certify:

6 That I reported the PUBLIC MEETING OF

7 PROPOSED WIND ENERGY PROJECT, commencing on

8 Thursday, February 23, 2012, at 6:00 p.m.

9 That I thereafter transcribed my said

10 shorthand notes into typewriting and that the

11 typewritten transcript is a complete, true and

12 accurate transcription of my said shorthand notes.

13 I further certify that I am not a relative

14 or employee of counsel of any of the parties, nor a

15 relative or employee of the parties involved in said

16 action, nor a person financially interested in

17 the action.

18 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have set my hand in

19 my office in the County of Clark, State of Nevada,

20 this_____ day of _____, 2012.

21

_____

22 RENE' R. HANNAH, CCR NO. 326

23

24

25