



**NEW COMSTOCK WIND ENERGY PROJECT  
PLAN OF DEVELOPMENT - DRAFT  
OAK CREEK ENERGY SYSTEMS, INC.  
MOUNTAIN WIND ENERGY, LLC**

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## **NEW COMSTOCK WIND ENERGY PROJECT PLAN OF DEVELOPMENT - DRAFT**

### **1. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE**

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#### **1.1 Project Background**

Twenty five states now have renewable energy portfolio standards (RPS) that call for a mix of power supplied from renewable energy sources such as wind. There is currently an insufficient supply of alternative energy to meet these requirements. The Nevada State Public Utilities Commission has established an RPS (NRS 704.7821) for Sierra Pacific and Nevada Power that requires 20% of the total amount of electricity sold by them to retail customers be generated from renewable energy sources by the year 2015. Currently, there is no commercially produced wind energy in Nevada. This RPS requirement will become increasingly more difficult to meet as the population and energy load demand of the state increase. It is the goal of this project to produce and supply wind-generated renewable energy to the Nevada Utilities.

#### **1.2 Project Description**

The proposed project is to construct, operate and maintain an electric power wind generating facility in the Virginia Mountain Range located within Washoe and Storey Counties, Nevada. The generating facility is planned to include approximately 69- 1.5. to 3.3 Megawatt turbines mounted on 210'-330' tall towers supporting a nacelle and three blades that will be 115'-170' in length. The ranges in turbine specifications are provided to address possible variations in the size of the turbines that could be constructed. Final turbine size will reflect project need and a response to mitigation requirements. Turbine units will be connected to an electrical substation by approximately 20 miles of underground electrical distribution system. An approximately 5 mile high voltage (120kV) overhead electric transmission line will need to be constructed to connect the proposed on-site substation to the electrical grid. This will require an approximate 50 foot wide right of way from the edge of the project to the interconnection point. Although specific analysis has not been performed by Sierra Pacific Power, it appears that the most likely connection point will be Brunswick

Substation located just south of Highway 50, approximately 4 ½ miles east of Carson City near Asphalt Drive. A series of 15 foot to 40 foot wide access roads will be improved or constructed to facilitate site development, operation and maintenance. Roads will need to be constructed to allow for passage of semi-tractor trailer trucks, cement trucks, blade delivery trucks, and large cranes. These large, heavy vehicles cannot pass if the surface is too soft, if the grade is too steep, or if there is insufficient room to make turns. A minimum 15 foot wide road (for single lane traffic) and 25 foot (for 2-way traffic) with wider turnouts at curves will be required. The site will have 3 small outbuildings (approximately 3,000 to 5,000 square feet in size) for equipment and material storage and maintenance activities. Construction will include the use of 4 temporary work areas and material storage yards (three approximately 3 acres in size and one approximately 10 acres in size). Three of these areas will be reclaimed upon the completion of construction. Construction is anticipated to take approximately 6 months to complete. The proposed facility will be used to generate electric power year-round for a period of no less than 50 years with the option for renewal at that time.

**Site Selection** - Wind turbine sites are selected for meeting a specific set of criteria including:

- Sites receiving long periods of sustained wind between 8 and 58 mph without frequent occurrences of violent wind gusts in excess of 58 mph;
- Sites relatively free of heavy snow and ice-loading;
- Large contiguous sites away from sensitive receptors such as residences;
- Close proximity to an electric transmission line with voltage of at least 120kV; and
- Sites with good access for construction, operation and maintenance activities.

Alternate sites were analyzed for feasibility but were eliminated. These sites were located sites in the Pah Rah and Pine Nut Ranges. Both sites were too high in elevation and too remote, with potentials for long-term operational problems from density altitude, icing and extreme winds. In addition, the Pine Nut site was frequented by gliders and the Pah Rah site has a NOAA radar site on Virginia Peak with potential interference concerns.

Two other sites with potential include Churchill Buttes and Eagle Ridge in Lyon County. Those sites may be pursued in the future.

## 2. METHODS OF STUDY

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### 2.1 Schedule

#### **Preconstruction Monitoring/Surveys**

##### **Wildlife**

**Birds and Bats** - A preconstruction bird and bat monitoring program has been developed to document the species present and degree of use of the proposed project site. The program consists of 6 tasks designed to identify the bird and bat species using or flying over the site and the magnitude of that use. The information gathered in the program will enable risk assessment to be predicted if construction of the proposed project is approved.

##### 2.1.1 Task 1 – Conduct Background Research

Meet with the wildlife and land managing agencies and organizations to obtain existing information on the sites. Contacts will be made with the Bureau of Land Management, Nevada Department of Wildlife, Nevada Natural Heritage Program, Great Basin Bird Observatory, University of Nevada, Desert Research Institute, Audubon Society and other professionals currently working on similar studies. Information to be collected will include species lists of wildlife and vegetation, known nest locations, bat roosts and hibernacula, population trends and similar information.

##### 2.1.2 Task 2 – Establish Study Area and Observation Points

The bird study will utilize a fixed point count methodology. A study area will be established with observation points identified to cover the range of vegetation and topographic variations of the sites and account for features such as the presence of water and cover. The points will be set by GPS and rebar with flagging to make the points easy to re-establish each season. Observation points will be approximately 200 meters (600 feet) apart, allowing for approximately 65 points. Basic vegetation mapping of each site will ensure proper coverage. A vegetation community map will be generated to ensure adequate sampling coverage.

## 2.1.3 Task 3 – Conduct Four Seasons of Bird Observations

In order to adequately document bird use at the sites, observations will be made during four separate seasons: Fall Migration, Wintering, Spring Migration and Nesting/Breeding Season. The four season observations will allow for documentation of year-long residents, seasonal users and migrants passing through the area to other locations.

### **Observation Methodology (point count)**

An observer will stand at each point for 10 minutes and record species and individual birds. There is a range of time when three different species are present and in order to adequately record their presence, three separate visits (early, middle and late) will be made during each season. A series of three consecutive observation days for each visit period will be performed, making for nine observation days per season and 36 observation days at each site through the year. Starting positions at each site will vary each day to account for daily variations. Observations will be made at sunrise and sunset with the observations starting ½ hour before sunrise and extending to at least three hours after sunrise for the morning period and start at least three hours before sunset to ½ hour after sunset for the evening observation period. Observations will be made at each of the observation points and also throughout the observation intervals to record birds in flight. All nests and nesting activity will be recorded and mapped. Young birds will be distinguished from adults and sexing will be documented where dimorphism is apparent. In addition to actual bird observations signs of wildlife activity (nests, white-washing, castings, bones, feathers, etc.) will also be documented. Observations will not be performed during inclement weather, so as to maximize the observation efficiency and reduce travel time. A team of 2 observers will be used to ensure full coverage during the observation day.

## 2.1.4 Night-time Radar

In order to record night-time bird (and bat) activity a night-time radar station will be used during the Spring and Fall migration periods. There is a three month lead time for renting the portable radar unit (from Detect of Arizona). The DeTect System has been recommended by biologists and is discussed on many websites. A range of 20 to 60 days per migration season has been discussed. We propose a 30 day observation period. The rental costs include delivery, training in use, start-up, data processing and other support.

One radar station will be set up during the height of Spring and Fall migration for a period of one month at each site to record all activity. The site will be selected based

upon the best likelihood of making unobscured observations. The range of the unit is a 4-mile radius. It may be possible to compare some data with the military and local airports for Quality Assurance purposes. The night-time radar will not provide for species identification but will allow for a relative count of bird and bat activity in the area. Flight patterns should allow for distinguishing between birds and bats. Availability of radar units may be of some concern because of the increasing demand for them at wind energy study sites.

## 2.1.5 Sage Grouse Observations/Nest Survey

The Nevada Department of Wildlife has identified the potential presence of approximately 200 Sage Grouse (unconfirmed) at the south end of the site. Sage Grouse are a species of high concern by the BLM, USFWS and NDOW and as such will require a separate effort to document. It is proposed that a survey be conducted in the Spring to locate potential leks, observe strutting and count both males and females present. All leks identified will need a series of three days of observations during the lek season to ensure a good count of individuals present. Non-lek use observations will also be made during the point count surveys.

In addition to the Sage Grouse survey, the site will require a nesting survey conducted at three separate times during the nesting season. Breeding and nesting behaviors will be recorded in addition to identification of nesting territories and nest sites. Standard Breeding Bird Survey methodology will be utilized during the nest survey.

## 2.1.6 Bat Species Identification

The night-time radar observations identified in task 4 will record relative bat activity within the equipment's range, but will not allow for identification of species in the area. Because bats are nocturnal in nature, identification is difficult unless individuals can be observed up close, or. The Anabat system (the state of the art since 2000) records echolocation vocalizations over long periods of time for the purpose of providing species identification. A professional with experience in reading the Anabat recordings can quickly produce a list of species. Local bat identification will also include talking to agency resource specialists familiar with the area and a visit to some of the local roosts and hibernacula. Three separate units will be purchased for the site and will need to be placed high up on the meteorological towers or a similar platform. Sites will be selected to observe a variety of site conditions such as water sources, canyons and deep gullies. Mist netting for identification will be avoided as this method is very species selective, time consuming and invasive to the bats.

**Other Wildlife** - The Nevada Department of Wildlife has identified the potential presence for Pygmy Rabbits. A survey will be conducted for pygmy rabbits, in addition to noting sign and presence by biologists while working on the site.

## ***Vegetation***

**Sensitive Plants** - A records search will be conducted of State and federally-listed plant species through the Nevada Natural Heritage Program. A field survey of habitats that have the potential to support identified species will be conducted in all areas anticipated for disturbance.

**Noxious Weeds** - All State and federally-listed noxious weeds within the areas identified for disturbance (including access roads) will be identified and mapped. A Noxious Weed Control Plan will be developed to control the spread of weeds during construction and into the reclamation period.

## ***Meteorological***

Meteorological conditions (wind speed and direction, temperature, barometric pressure, humidity and precipitation) have been measured from a tower located on Ophir Hill continuously since mid-June 2006. A Sodar unit located on Mt. Bullion has been measuring wind speed and direction using Sodar since mid November 2007. Up to fifteen additional towers are planned to be installed throughout the project site. All such towers that remain after the project has been constructed shall be non-guyed/self-supporting structures.

**Cultural Resources** - A Class I Literature Review and Class III Intensive Field Survey will be conducted by an authorized Archaeologist on all areas within the Area of Potential Effect. Native American consultation will be managed by the Bureau of Land Management.



### 3. PROJECT CONSTRUCTION

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#### 3.1 Construction Process

Upon receipt of all permits, the site will be surveyed and flagged to locate each turbine site. Pre-construction surveys will have been performed at this time and avoidance areas clearly identified. All construction crews will have environmental sensitivity training before construction begins to understand specific environmental compliance measures and to know what to do should sensitive resources be encountered.

The first construction activity will be to establish access roads. Roads to the site must be able to accommodate large tractor trailer trucks with oversized turning radii. In order to allow for 2-way traffic, approximately 25-foot wide roads are anticipated throughout and maybe significantly wider roads at each turn. Existing road pathways will be used whenever feasible to keep new disturbance to a minimum. Roads constructed between turbine pads will initially be constructed to be approximately 38 feet in width to walk the construction crane between turbine pads within a row. Once construction has been completed, the excess road width will be disked and reseeded leaving a remaining road of about 15-25 feet in width – depending on the anticipated traffic level of the road in question.

Individual turbine sites will need to be graded level and excavated to provide depth for the concrete foundations. Drilled shaft foundations approximately 14 feet in diameter and 30 foot in depth or slab foundation with multiple anchoring “mini-piles” of up to 1 foot diameter and 60 foot in depth, will be utilized depending on the soil type at the turbine site. Blasting (as a last resort) may be necessary to break up large rock. The concrete will be brought to the site from a nearby batch plant by truck.

The turbines are installed in sections using large cranes which will require a very flat surface to operate. Each turbine tower will be installed in 4 sections, while the nacelle and each blade are typically installed separately. No guy wires will be installed on the turbines. The 4 tower sections will be bolted together first, then the nacelle and blades are attached. Each turbine location will have a graded pad for the crane to operate as well as a graded pad for each turbine and transformer. Each crane pad will be approximately 6,000 square feet in size and the turbine and transformer pad approximately 3,500 square feet. The turbine tower sections, nacelle, and blades will be brought to each turbine site by truck (they are too heavy for the maximum lift of 10

tons by helicopter). Staging areas for equipment storage and component construction will be necessary and may need to be fenced for security. Multiple staging areas may be required to transport the turbine sections up the mountain. All but one of these staging areas will be temporary use areas that are approximately 2-3 acres in size but one will likely remain after construction. Once construction is complete, all temporary staging areas will be revegetated and recontoured to pre-existing conditions.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be employed throughout all stages of the project for soil and erosion control. Roads will be constructed to minimize sedimentation and erosion control concerns. Other BMP measures that will be implemented including use of fiber rolls and fabric filter fencing to contain sediment, and revegetating disturbed areas with native seed once construction is complete. Watering will be used for dust control throughout the construction process.

### 3.2 Powerline Construction

Powerline construction will connect the turbines to a proposed distribution substation and provide a system connection to allow for sale of the generated power to Sierra Pacific/Nevada Power Company. It is anticipated that Great Basin Wind would own the distribution and transmission portions of these facilities, but Sierra Pacific may be involved in its design and will be involved in the connection to Brunswick Substation.

### 3.3 Underground Distribution Line Construction

The process for distribution line construction includes: surveying for location, and trenching (typically 4-6 feet deep and 2-4 feet wide) with a backhoe for direct burial of insulated conductor. Topsoil of sufficient quality will be separated and stockpiled for covering the trench. Excavated material will be piled on the side of the trench for reuse. The distribution conductor is delivered to the site by trucks pulling a trailer with large reels. The trenches are compacted and then covered with salvaged topsoil. A front-loader is used to backfill the excavated soil. The distribution lines will connect to a proposed substation that will be located at the south end of the project near McClellen Peak. Attempts will be made to locate the distribution line at the edge of existing or proposed roads where it is practical. At this time approximately 20 miles of underground distribution lines have been estimated.

### 3.4 Overhead Transmission Line Construction

The overhead transmission line is expected to be a 120 kV line approximately 4.7 miles in length, with single wood or steel-poles. Low profile, raptor safe construction will be

used. Poles are expected to be approximately 60-75 feet in height and placed with an approximate 250 to 300-foot span which would vary depending upon terrain. All conductors would be deglared/non-reflective material. The transmission line would connect the proposed distribution substation with the existing Brunswick Substation location just south of Highway 50, 4.5 miles east of Carson City. The poles will be placed utilizing a line truck or if found feasible and cost effective, flown in and placed by helicopter from a temporary staging area.

### 3.5 Substation Construction

One new electrical substation is proposed to convert the voltage from distribution power to transmission. The proposed substation site is just south of McClellan Peak, at the southern end of the proposed project site. The substation is anticipated to be 2-3 acres in size and surrounded by a chain link security fence. Vegetation will be cleared from the site. The site is excavated for a grounding grid and other component installation and then covered with gravel. The substation will contain oil-bearing equipment such as a transformer and circuit breakers. Oil containment will be provided on-site.

### 3.6 Other Structures and Temporary Use Areas

It is anticipated that two to three small outbuildings will be located in the project area for storage, maintenance and operational uses. Three (approximately 2-3 acres) temporary equipment storage/staging yards will be bladed and located on the ridge near the turbines. These temporary use areas will be reclaimed at the completion of construction. A fourth, larger (approximately 10 acre) staging area will be located near Highway 50. This yard could be used for helicopter operations if that is selected as the preferred method for construction and concrete hauling.

### 3.7 Safety, Emergency Response, Fire Prevention

A program for safety, emergency response and fire prevention will be developed. The program will include worker training. In addition safety inspections and tailgate sessions will occur regularly throughout the construction period. Fire suppression equipment will be conveniently located on site and training in its use will be provided to site workers.

## 3.8 Soil/Rock Handling

### 3.8.1 Rock

Rock excavated during construction will be buried on site, used as a road base, used in construction or removed from the site and disposed at an approved facility.

### 3.8.2 Soil

Soil excavated during road and site construction will be used as fill on site. Soil piles will be protected from erosion through use of staked fiber rolls and sufficiently wetted to prevent fugitive blowing dust from leaving the site. Soil will not be placed on native vegetation or in a manner that would block natural site drainage.

### 3.8.3 Topsoil Salvage

In areas where topsoil of sufficient quantity and quality exists, the top 6 inches will be salvaged in piles (to conserve the existing seed bank and to facilitate reclamation success) for redistribution during reclamation. The piles will be protected from disturbance during construction and signed for identification.

## 3.9 Resource Protection During Construction (to be developed during the Environmental Assessment and mitigation identification process)

Environmental Sensitivity training of all on-site personnel and visitors - An introductory training program will be developed to provide information to workers and visitors to the site regarding sensitive resources (wildlife, vegetation, cultural, etc.) should they be encountered.

- Birds
- Bats
- Other wildlife
- Vegetation
- Wetlands, springs and seeps
- Soils
- Air Quality
- Cultural Resources
- Visual Resources
- Noise
- Other Resources

### 3.10 Construction Compliance Monitoring

It is anticipated that a program will be developed to provide compliance monitoring during construction. Qualified monitors will help ensure protection of resources (including wildlife, vegetation, cultural resources, water quality, air quality, noise) and compliance with measures identified in the Environmental Assessment, compliance plans and permits received. Monitors will be onsite during all construction activities.

### 3.11 Post Construction Monitoring and Mitigation

It is anticipated that avoidance of sensitive resources (where practical and possible) would be planned as a part of the facility siting process. Where that is not possible, offsetting mitigation (such as wildlife habitat replacement) would be developed as the impacts are identified.

Areas that are temporarily disturbed during construction will be recontoured and revegetated to conditions similar to those existing prior to disturbance. Temporary access roads only required for construction will be recontoured, decompacted and revegetated. Temporary material storage and construction yards will be decompacted, recontoured and revegetated.

Permanent (best management practice) erosion controls including water bars on roads, and structures to control runoff may be necessary to protect access roads.

#### 3.11.1 Site Revegetation/Noxious Weeds

A plan will be prepared to document the success of revegetation measures and monitor the spread of noxious weeds. Annual monitoring reports will include recommendations for action (such as additional seeding or weed treatment) should it be necessary.

#### 3.11.2 Erosion Control

A plan will be developed to provide post-construction monitoring of potential erosion issues with specific attention paid to areas that were disturbed during construction and potential problems caused by natural drainage. Practices and experience in successful erosion control that has been gained by the proponents at other windfarms shall be utilized when possible.

### 3.11.3 Mortality Monitoring

A Bird and Bat Mortality Monitoring Program including carcass search methodology will be developed as a part of the mitigation for the proposed project.

### 3.11.4 Wildlife Monitoring

A Wildlife Monitoring Program will be developed to document bird, bat and other wildlife use in the proposed project area. Monitoring will include observing flight avoidance and colonization of areas disturbed and reclaimed from construction activity.

### 3.12 Operation and Maintenance

The proposed project is designed to operate for a period of no less than 50 years. It is anticipated that changes would be made to the functional portions of the project as the technology for wind power generation makes advances. Because moving parts are the basis for the functioning of the project, maintenance is a full-time, ongoing process. As components break or wear, they are replaced. Some of those repairs will require the use of cranes to access the nacelle and turbine hub. Each turbine has an access port at the base (is hollow inside) and internal ladder for taking operating readings and performing minor repairs and maintenance. Maintenance activities with the wind turbines may include checking oil and bolts, monitoring brake pads, brake systems, and hydraulics. Grounds maintenance may include painting, grading roads, maintaining erosion control measures, and reseeding disturbed areas.

Three full time, year-round maintenance employees will be on site during normal working hours, who will handle day-to-day maintenance and monitoring. Specialty crews would be brought to the site as needed for more complex tasks.

3.13 Hazardous Material Proposed For Use On Site

<b>Hazardous Materials Proposed For Use On The New Comstock Wind Energy Project</b>	
ABC Fire Extinguisher	Mastic Coating
Acetylene Gas	Methyl Alcohol
Air Tool Oil	Wasp and Hornet Spray
Ammonium hydroxide	Oxygen
Ammonium nitrate/fuel oil fertilizer explosives	Paint Thinner
Automatic Transmission Fluid	Petroleum Products
Battery Acid	Cooling System Antifreeze (Ethylene glycol)
Canned Spray Paint	Propane
Chain Lubricant (Methylene chloride)	Puncture Seal Tire Inflator
Connector Grease	Safety Fuses
Contact Cleaner	Starter Fluid
Diesel deicer	Brake Fluid
Diesel fuel additive	WD-40
Gas Treatment	Zep Safety Solvent
Gasoline	Zip1,1,1 Trichloroethane
Insulating Oil	2-cycle oil
Lubricating Grease	

3.14 Maps

- Facility locations (turbines, meteorological towers, powerlines, access roads, buildings, substation, staging areas);
- Resources to be protected; and
- BMP locations.

3.15 Plans Anticipated To Be Developed

3.15.1 Wildlife Monitoring Plan

A post-construction monitoring plan with components to document mortality from operation of the proposed project and to determine the degree of other impacts such as site avoidance.

3.15.2 Reclamation Plan

A post construction implementation and monitoring plan to reclaim temporarily disturbed areas and document the success of reclamation. The plan would spell out in detail the processes used for reclamation including seed mixtures, planting procedures and how monitoring for compliance with reclamation mitigation goals for species diversity and percent cover will be conducted.

3.15.3 Noxious Weed Control Plan

A plan to reduce the impacts caused by the potential spread of noxious weeds. The plan will contain measures that will need to be followed during construction and monitoring in the post-construction phase. Measures are expected to include treatment of existing noxious weed population and new populations that are discovered during the post construction phase.

3.15.4 Historic Properties Treatment Plan

A plan to mitigate potentially impacted historic and prehistoric resources that are identified during resource surveys.

3.15.5 Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan

A plan developed in compliance with the Stormwater General Permit anticipated being required for the proposed project. The Plan will include Best Management Practices that will be incorporated during and after construction to control sediment and erosion control caused by site disturbance.



## 3.15.6 Emergency Response Plan

A contingency plan with protocols should an emergency arise. The plan will include procedures to handle fire prevention and suppression, medical emergencies and environmental disasters. It will contain responsibilities by party and a list of contact names and phone numbers.

## 3.15.7 Spill Prevention Containment and Countermeasures Plan

A plan to identify the measures to take should an oil or hazardous chemical spill occur. The plan will address prevention, cleanup, notification and disposal of hazardous spilled substances.

## 3.15.8 Dust Control Plan

The plan will identify measures to be employed during construction to reduce the potential for fugitive dust leaving the proposed project site. Measures to be addressed will include minimizing surface disturbance and vegetation removal, watering for short term control and revegetating disturbed areas for a long term control.

## 3.16 Permit Conditions

This section will identify all of the permit conditions as they relate to the project.

- BLM Permits
- Washoe County SUP
- Storey County SUP
- Carson City SUP (powerline)
- Stormwater Permit
- Surface Protection (Dust Control) Permit