

Intra-Service Section 7 Biological Evaluation Form - Region 6

Originating Person: Dustin Casady

Date Submitted: 2/27/2024

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I. **Service Program and Geographic Area or Station Name:** Migratory Bird Management Program, Lakewood, CO

II. **Flexible Funding Program** (e.g., Joint Venture, etc.) if applicable:

III. **Location:** Pryor Mountain Wind Energy Project (Project), a currently operating wind farm with a total output of 240 megawatts (MWs), is in Carbon County, Montana, approximately 8 miles (mi; 12.9 kilometers (km)) southeast of Bridger, Montana.

IV. **Species/Critical Habitat:** One species, the grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), is listed as federally threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and may occur in the Project area or has potential to be affected by the proposed action. Additionally, monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*), a candidate species for listing under ESA, could potentially occur in the Project area.

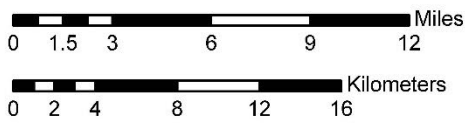
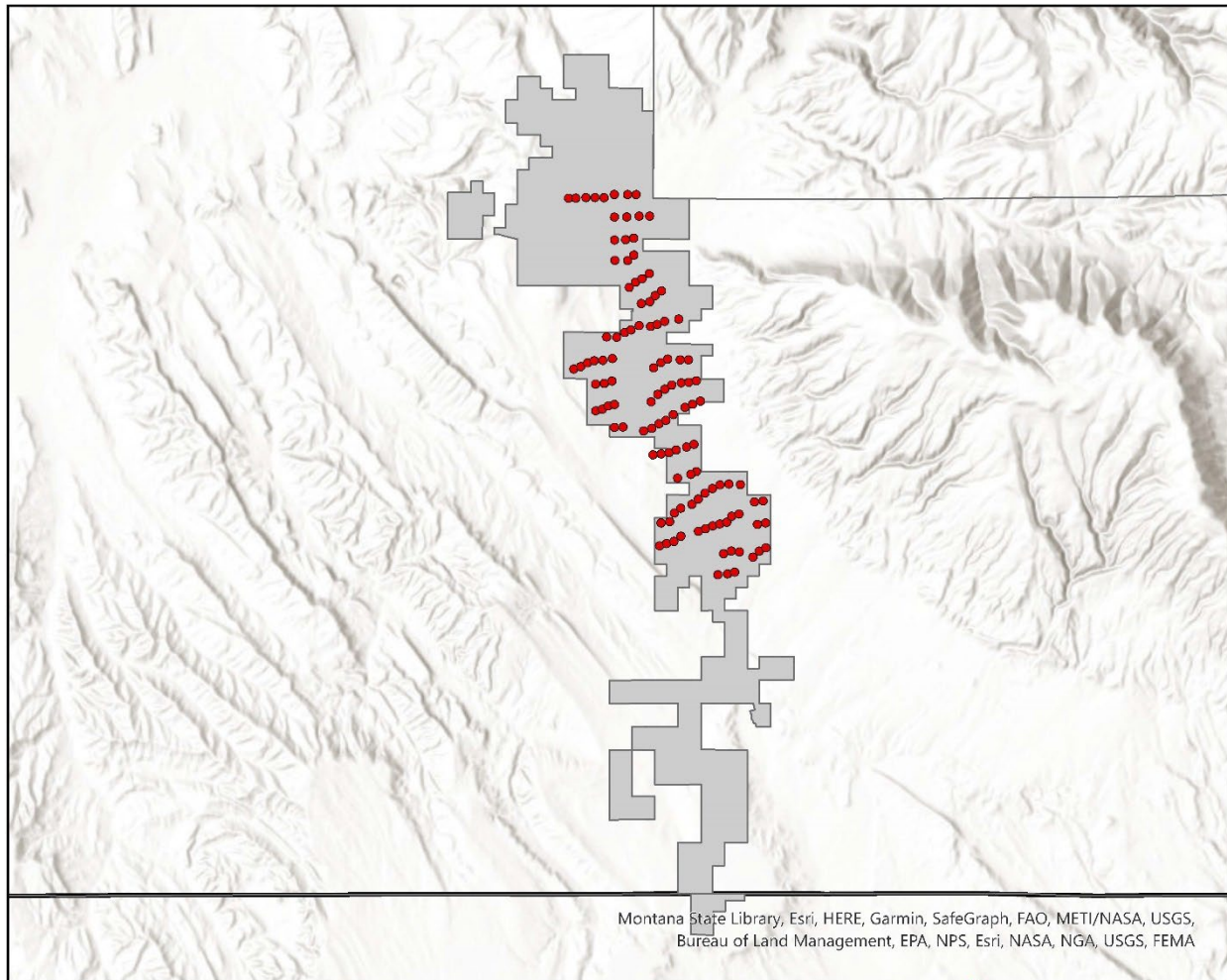
V. **Project Description:** The Project, became fully operational in April 2021, and is in Carbon County, Montana, approximately 8 mi (12.9 km) southeast of Bridger, Montana (Figure 1). In 2018, PacifiCorp (Applicant) submitted an application for a long-term (30-years) Incidental Eagle Take Permit (IETP) related to the operation of the Project, under the 2016 Eagle Rule.

The Project consists of 57 Vestas 2.0 MW wind turbine generators (WTGs) with a 180 foot (ft; 55 meter (m)) rotor radius and 262 ft (80 m) hub height (total height of 443 ft (135 m) to fully extended blade tip), 53 Vestas 2.2 MW WTGs with a 180 ft (55 m) rotor radius and 262 ft (80 m) hub height (total height of 443-ft (135 m) to fully extended blade tip), and four GE 2.3 MW WTGs with a 190 ft (58 m) rotor radius and 262 ft (80 m) hub height (total height of 453 ft (138 m) to fully extended blade tip). The total nameplate capacity for the Project is 240 MW. The Project also includes approximately 49 mi (79 km) of underground collector lines, approximately 25 mi (40 km) of turbine access roads, an operations and maintenance facility, three meteorological towers, two substations, and approximately 50 ft (15 m) slack span or strain bus to connect the two substations. All WTGs are installed on land leased from private landowners.

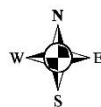
No ground disturbing activities are being proposed. The IETP (if issued) will require post-construction surveys as a condition of the authorization. Post-construction surveys would be conducted utilizing existing pads and roads for access. Typically, post-construction surveys are conducted in a square plot measuring 160 m by 160 m (based on a recently issued permit) centered around each turbine. Although the specifics of the survey protocol are unknown, established protocols for wind projects usually prescribe straight-line transects across the square plot so that the surveyor can visually search for eagles, 20 m on either side of the straight-line transect.

The need for the federal action is necessitated by the Service Region 6 receiving an application from the Applicant for an IETP for the take of bald and golden eagles associated with the existing Project.

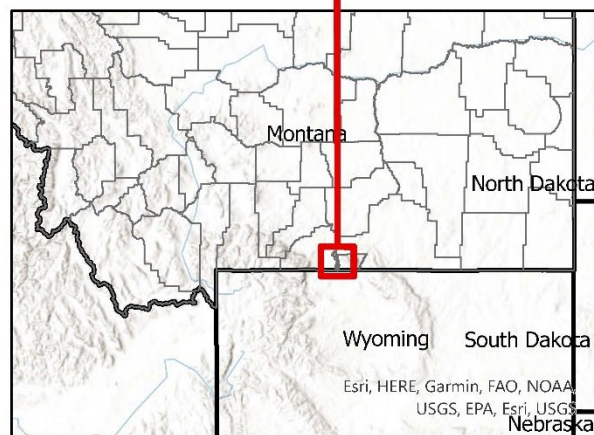
Pryor Mountain Wind Energy Project



Region 6



1:292,974



Legend

- Turbine Location
- Pryor Mountain Project Boundary
- County_Boundaries
- State Boundaries

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 13N	Author: DJC	Date Created: 7/26/2023
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Figure 1. Pryor Mountain Wind Energy Project

VI. Determination of Effects:

(A) Description of Effects:

Grizzly Bear and North American Wolverine

No critical habitat has been designated for grizzly bear throughout its range. No ground-disturbing activities are being proposed. The Project is existing and the proposed action of issuing an eagle take permit for the Project will have no effect on this species.

Monarch butterfly

No ground-disturbing activities are being proposed. There will be no effect to the Monarch butterfly because the proposed action of issuing an eagle take permit for the Project will not result in depletions to habitat known to be associated with this species.

In summary, no ground-disturbing activities are planned as part of the proposed action of potentially issuing an IETP for the Project. The threatened grizzly bear and candidate monarch butterfly may occur in the general Project area; however, no occurrences have been recorded at the Project itself, and the immediate Project area does not contain any designated core and/or critical habitat. Therefore, the proposed action of issuing an IETP for the existing Project will have no effect on the grizzly bear or monarch butterfly.

(B) Determination: Determine the anticipated effects of the proposed project on species and critical habitats listed in item IV. Check all applicable boxes and list the species (or attach a list) associated with each determination.

Determination

No Effect: This determination is appropriate when the proposed project will not directly or indirectly affect (neither negatively nor beneficially) individuals of listed/proposed/candidate species or designated/proposed critical habitat of such species. **No concurrence from ESFO required. grizzly bear and monarch butterfly**

XX

May Affect but Not Likely to Adversely Affect: This determination is appropriate when the proposed project is likely to cause insignificant, discountable, or wholly beneficial effects to individuals of listed species and/or designated critical habitat. **Concurrence from ESFO required.**

May Affect and Likely to Adversely Affect: This determination is appropriate when the proposed project is likely to adversely impact individuals of listed species and/or designated critical habitat. **Formal consultation with ESFO required.**

May Affect and Likely to Adversely Affect but the proposed action is for the purpose of endangered or threatened species recovery and falls under Region 6's Programmatic Consultation on Service-initiated Recovery Actions: This determination is appropriate when adverse effects are likely but the project is designed to assist with recovery of listed species and/or designated critical habitat. **Concurrence from the ESFO that the project is covered by the programmatic consultation is required.**

May affect but Not Likely to Jeopardize candidate or proposed species/critical habitat: This determination is appropriate when the proposed project may affect, but is not expected to jeopardize the continued existence of a species proposed for listing or a candidate species, or adversely modify an area proposed for designation as critical habitat. **Concurrence from ESFO optional.**

Likely to Jeopardize candidate or proposed species/critical habitat: This determination is appropriate when the proposed project is reasonably expected to jeopardize the continued existence of a species proposed for listing or a candidate species, or adversely modify an area proposed for designation as critical habitat. **Conferencing with ESFO required.**

Signature _____ Date _____

[Supervisor at originating station]

Reviewing Ecological Services Office Evaluation (check all that apply):

A. **Concurrence** _____
Explanation for concurrence:

Nonconcurrence _____

B. Formal consultation required _____
List species or critical habitat unit

C. Effects are addressed in the Programmatic Consultation on R7's
Recovery Program – no further consultation needed _____

D. Conference required _____
List species or critical habitat unit

Name of Reviewing ES Office _____

Signature _____

Date _____