Bulletin 2012-01

February 6, 2012

Additional Stakeholder consultation on AUC Rule 012: Noise Control

Further to Decision 2012-029, Decision on Preliminary Question, Review and Variance of Alberta Utilities Commission Decision 2011-239, Heritage Wind Farm Development, Heritage Wind Farm Power Plant, dated January 24, 2012, the Alberta Utilities Commission (Commission) is seeking comments regarding changes to Rule 012: Noise Control, regarding operations of wind turbines when the background noise from the wind at the location of the receptor is equal to or greater than the noise from wind turbines. Also, the Commission notes that during the consultation on December 12 and 13, 2011, regarding regulatory permitting for wind power generation, it was acknowledged that the implications of noise from wind turbine projects were complex and required further investigation and clarification.

In part to respond to the above-mentioned issue, the Commission proposes to add the provisions set out in Attachment 1 to this bulletin. The intent of the provisions is to clarify the difference between the requirements in the noise impact assessment filed with the application and the provisions for post-construction compliance.

Participants who wish to provide written comments related to the attachment are requested to do so by 5 p.m. on February 17, 2012. All written submissions should be directed to Raymond Lee by email at raymond.lee@auc.ab.ca. Questions or comments relating to the attachment should be directed to Don Popowich by email at don.popowich@auc.ab.ca.

Once comments have been received and reviewed, the Commission will proceed to finalize the 2011 revision of Rule 012.

In addition, in Decision 2012-029, the Commission stated that in its review of AUC Rule 012, it would consider issues raised by wind masking (times when the background noise dominates the total noise profile at the receptor and therefore, masks the noise from the wind turbines to the point where the noise from the turbines is indiscernible within the total noise profile) as it relates to unique operating parameters of wind farms. The issue of wind masking as it affects the cumulative noise at dwellings and the effects on the forecast in noise impact assessments was not included in the recent consultation sessions with participants. However, the Commission invites interested parties to provide comments and recommendations on the wind masking issue and the manner it should be addressed in Rule 012. Interested parties are requested to provide their recommendations by April 15, 2012. The Commission will consider the comments and decide if changes are needed to the 2011 revision of Rule 012.

(Original Signed by)

Robert D. Heggie
Chief Executive
ATTACHMENT 1
Additional proposed provisions of Rule 012:

1. For the noise impact assessments, the sound power level from the wind turbine must correspond to the turbine operating at its maximum electrical power output. Applicants must indicate the sound power levels at all operating wind speeds as provided by the manufacturer.

2. In a post-construction non-compliance situation, the operator may be required to reduce the wind turbine noise emitted from the turbine using alternative operating modes. The operator must indicate how the mitigation plan results in compliance with the permissible sound level.