

## Bulletin 2018-18

December 10, 2018

### **Standardized post-approval monitoring requirements for wind and solar power plants Stakeholder feedback must be submitted by 4 p.m. on January 28, 2019**

The Alberta Utilities Commission is responsible for approving the construction and operation of wind and solar power plants. Its approval process requires consideration of a project's social, economic and environmental impacts, including its potential effects on wildlife and wildlife habitat. The AUC is seeking stakeholder feedback on the standardized post-approval wildlife-related requirements for all wind and solar power plants by 4 p.m. on January 28, 2019.

AUC Rule 007: *Applications for Power Plants, Substations, Transmission Lines, Industrial System Designations and Hydro Developments* requires the inclusion of a wildlife renewable energy referral report prepared by Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) staff in the applications submitted for prospective wind and solar power plants. AEP referral reports include recommendations and feedback regarding project-specific post-construction monitoring and mitigation plans in accordance with standards set out in AEP's *Wildlife Directive for Alberta Wind Energy Projects* and *Wildlife Directive for Alberta Solar Energy Projects*.

The intent of post-construction monitoring standards is to ensure that approved wind and solar power plants are required to implement effective, consistent operational mitigation measures to minimize the potential for negative effects on Alberta's wildlife and wildlife habitat (in accordance with AEP's *Wildlife Directive for Alberta Wind Energy Projects* and *Wildlife Directive for Alberta Solar Energy Projects*). Post-construction monitoring, in accordance with these directives, is conducted to assess the effectiveness of mitigation measures and to identify new or changing risks to wildlife and wildlife habitat.

The AUC examines each wind and solar power plant application, the associated referral report and other evidence related to the project's environmental effects. If it is satisfied that approval of the project is in the public interest, its current practice is to assess, on a case-by-case basis, which post-construction monitoring conditions it will include in the approval it issues. While there may be variations in the specific wording of these conditions, the post-construction monitoring directed by the AUC for most wind and solar power plants has been similar.

Section 76(1)(a) of the *Alberta Utilities Commission Act* empowers the Commission to make rules governing the procedures and processes applicable to locating, building, constructing and operating facilities or infrastructure over which the Commission has jurisdiction.

The Commission is considering the enactment of a rule establishing standard post-approval monitoring requirements for wind and solar power plants. Although these requirements would apply to all such projects approved by the Commission, it would retain the discretion to

supplement, omit or modify these requirements on a case-by-case basis, in a decision report. The Commission believes that the establishment of standard post-approval monitoring requirements will improve consistency of monitoring obligations for approved wind and solar power plants and will add certainty to the regulatory process.

The AUC is proposing the following standardized set of post-approval wildlife-related requirements for all wind and solar power plants:

- The approval holder shall abide by all of AEP's requirements, recommendations and directions pertaining to post-construction mitigation and monitoring, outlined in its project-specific referral report.
- The approval holder shall abide by any requirements and commitments outlined in the final version of its post-construction wildlife monitoring and mitigation plan, environmental protection plan and its Renewable Energy Project Submission Template as reviewed and accepted by AEP.
- The approval holder shall carry out site-specific post-construction monitoring surveys for a minimum of three years after the project is operational, or for such further period recommended by AEP in accordance with the *Wildlife Directive for Alberta Wind Energy Projects* and the *Wildlife Directive for Alberta Solar Energy Projects*. A report summarizing the results of these surveys is to be submitted annually to AEP and to the Commission along with any correspondence from AEP summarizing its views on the report.
- To conduct its post-construction monitoring, the approval holder must employ an experienced wildlife biologist as defined in the *Wildlife Directive for Alberta Wind Energy Projects* and the *Wildlife Directive for Alberta Solar Energy Projects*.
- Following completion of the post-construction wildlife monitoring program, the approval holder shall communicate to AEP the corrected mortality rates for birds and bats (using an AEP approved "fatality estimator"), the discovery of any carcasses of species at risk (as defined in the *Wildlife Directive for Wind Energy Projects*) near turbines or associated project infrastructure (including access roads, overhead collector lines, meteorological towers, and substations) during operation or maintenance and, if required, implement any new mitigation measures that AEP may recommend to prevent or reduce further mortalities.

The Commission invites stakeholders to provide written feedback, comments and suggestions on these standardized post-approval monitoring requirements by **4 p.m. on January 28, 2019**. All written submissions and any questions on this bulletin should be submitted to JP Mousseau, executive director, Facilities Division by email at [jp.mousseau@auc.ab.ca](mailto:jp.mousseau@auc.ab.ca), or by telephone at 403-592-4452.

*(original signed by)*

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