

PUBLIC SUBMISSION

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Agency Information Collection Activities; Proposals, Submissions, and Approvals

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General Comment

Wind Turbines locals see them as eyesores - or something even worse. causing "unavoidable impacts" to habitats and ecosystems. You feel the massive blades swoosh like flyswatters cutting through the air. As the wind picks up, the blades spin faster and the machines emit louder mechanical whine. lesser prairie-chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*), is particularly vulnerable, it's the chicken's innate fear of looming, vertical structures that has made turbines so disastrous in Oklahoma. Bird populations are among the fastest declining on the continent, and the turbine is the latest aggressor to swat native species out of existence. Turbines give the lesser prairie-chicken an uncomfortable feeling of being watched. Problem remains that more wind farms are being constructed directly in the chicken's limited habitat than the birds can handle. Despite challenges in stemming the loss of prairie-chickens, no one wants to see the charismatic bird suffer extinction. There are potential solutions in stopping the Windfarms. Efforts that focus on finding common ground between competing interests on the landscape. Habitat loss isn't helped by the fact that the best sites for wind turbines tend to be where prairie-chickens congregate. If private companies develop wind like they would like, in the areas they want to, we'll lose a lot of birds, And if that land disappears, by blanketing northwest panhandle to the Canada border, where will the birds will go? Largely comes down to habitat loss and degradation. There used to be, at one point in time, just literally endless miles, miles, miles and miles of continuous, good habitat. Many miles of that habitat are now gone, and the causes are legion with Turbines. Point the finger at wind turbines as the main culprit in prairie-chicken's slow demise. We saw declines in habitats and habitat conditions, we saw good nesting years,

bad nesting years. wind turbine is the cause of everything bad that's ever happened to the lesser prairie-chicken. utility has avoided paying mitigation fees to offset any impacts from its turbines since turbine installation in the bird's habitat was completed. wind developments have dominated the area since Oklahoma's green-energy endeavors began in the early 2000s. Decade ago state's utilities had no turbines to produce wind energy. With a new transmission project set to transport wind power to Arkansas and Tennessee, more farms being constructed. prairie-chickens instinctively distance themselves from anything they might perceive as a raptor perch, The lesser prairie-chicken as a candidate for the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife in 1998 and declared the bird "threatened" in 2014. When a species gains a place on the list, it is protected by law from hunting or trade, its habitat gains legal protection from being destroyed or adversely modified, and the agency develops and implements a conservation plan. The lesser prairie-chicken belongs to the grouse family of birds so iconic to prairie culture. This brown-barred, stocky species nests in shrubbery and grasses of the Texas panhandle, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Kansas and Colorado. It's about the size of a 20-ounce bottle of Coca-Cola. In a flashy mating ritual called lekking, the male chickens' necks flair with inflating red air sacs to wow female chickens during spring nesting. But this elaborate mating ritual is now harder to perform as shortgrass habitat loses ground to development of Wind Turbines.