

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 10, 2007

Mr. Dale Hall
Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW, Room 3038
Washington, DC 20240-0001

Dear Director Hall:

I write today with regards to the future of wind energy development in the Great Plains and a recent draft United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) memo describing the potential impact wind turbines may have on whooping cranes.

As you may know, South Dakota has great wind energy production potential. According to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, South Dakota is capable of producing 566 GW of electrical power from wind, which could meet over half of our nation's electricity demand. Considering that today, South Dakota only generates 44 MW of wind energy, our state has considerable potential for increased wind energy development, which would benefit our state's economy and create a clean and renewable energy source for our nation.

South Dakota's wind energy potential is concentrated in the central part of the state. Central South Dakota also supports diverse wildlife habitat, including whooping crane stopover habitat. In South Dakota, we are proud of our natural resources, appreciate the value of all forms of wildlife, and understand that common sense policies must be in place to protect endangered species.

However, I am concerned by a recent memo drafted by Tom Stehn, USFWS, Whooping Crane Coordinator. I believe this memo is a step toward overly burdensome policies that would discourage new wind farms in the described whooping crane corridor, which encompasses most of South Dakota and much of our nation's greatest wind energy resources. I encourage the USFWS to use this memo for informational purposes only. Certainly we must strive to accommodate wildlife habitat and migratory patterns as we develop wind energy. Should formal wind farm siting policies be based upon the conclusions of this memo, it would send a signal to wind energy developers that South Dakota is unsuitable for new wind farms that provide clean, renewable energy.

Congress and federal agencies should not put onerous environmental regulations on new wind farms that would stifle new wind energy production in South Dakota and the Great Plains area. Such policies would negatively impact national energy policy goals set by the President Bush's Advanced Energy Initiative, the Energy Policy Act of 2005, and potential renewable energy legislation that may be passed during the 110th Congress.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Thune", with a large loop at the top and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

JOHN THUNE
United States Senate