

**Sixty-fifth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota
In Regular Session Commencing Tuesday, January 3, 2017**

SENATE BILL NO. 2313
(Senator Unruh)
(Representative Porter)

AN ACT to create and enact a new section to chapter 4-01 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to a wind energy restoration and reclamation oversight program; to amend and reenact sections 49-02-34 and 49-22-05.1 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to annual reports on meeting renewable and recycled energy objectives and exclusion areas for wind energy conversion facilities; to provide a statement of legislative intent; and to provide for application.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:

SECTION 1. A new section to chapter 4-01 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and enacted as follows:

Wind energy restoration and reclamation oversight program.

1. The agricultural commissioner shall establish a program that provides technical assistance, support, and outreach to property owners on wind property restoration and followup support to property owners on wind property reclamation.
2. The agricultural commissioner may contract for ombudsmen for purposes of being a resource for technical assistance and followup on wind property issues. The ombudsmen may not investigate or assist in any easement negotiations.
3. The agricultural commissioner may contract with local individuals, deemed trustworthy by property owners, to be ombudsmen. The agricultural commissioner is not subject to chapter 54-44.4 when contracting for the services of ombudsmen.
4. The agriculture commissioner shall work in cooperation with the public service commission to carry out the duties described in this section.

SECTION 2. AMENDMENT. Section 49-02-34 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

49-02-34. Public reporting on progress toward meeting the renewable energy and recycled energy objective.

Commencing on June 30, 2009, retail providers shall report annually on the provider's previous calendar year's energy sales. This report must include information regarding qualifying electricity delivered and renewable energy and recycled energy certificates purchased and retired as a percentage of annual retail sales and a brief narrative report that describes steps taken to meet the objective over time and identifies any challenges or barriers encountered in meeting the objective. ~~The last annual report must be made on June 30, 2016.~~ Retail providers shall report to the public service commission, which shall make data and narrative reports publicly available and accessible electronically on the internet. Distribution cooperatives may aggregate their reporting through generation and transmission cooperatives and municipal utilities may aggregate their reporting through a municipal power agency.

SECTION 3. AMENDMENT. Section 49-22-05.1 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

49-22-05.1. Exclusion and avoidance areas - Criteria.

1. The commission shall develop criteria to be used in identifying exclusion and avoidance areas and to guide the site, corridor, and route suitability evaluation and designation process. The criteria also may include an identification of impacts and policies or practices which may be considered in the evaluation and designation process.
2. Except for transmission lines in existence before July 1, 1983, areas within five hundred feet [152.4 meters] of an inhabited rural residence must be designated avoidance areas. This criterion does not apply to a water pipeline. The five hundred foot [152.4 meter] avoidance area criteria for an inhabited rural residence may be waived by the owner of the inhabited rural residence in writing. ~~The criteria may also include an identification of impacts and policies or practices which may be considered in the evaluation and designation process.~~
3. Areas less than one and one-tenth times the height of the turbine from the property line of a nonparticipating landowner and less than three times the height of the turbine or more from an inhabited rural residence of a nonparticipating landowner, must be excluded in the consideration of a site for a wind energy conversion area, unless a variance is granted. The commission may grant a variance if an authorized representative or agent of the permittee, the nonparticipating landowner, and affected parties with associated wind rights file a written agreement expressing the support of all parties for a variance to reduce the setback requirement in this subsection. A nonparticipating landowner is a landowner that has not signed a wind option or an easement agreement with the permittee of the wind energy conversion facility as defined in chapter 17-04. A local zoning authority may require setback distances greater than those required under this subsection. For purposes of this subsection, "height of the turbine" means the distance from the base of the wind turbine to the turbine blade tip when it is in its highest position.

SECTION 4. LEGISLATIVE INTENT - WIND ENERGY RESTORATION AND RECLAMATION OVERSIGHT PROGRAM. It is the intent of the sixty-fifth legislative assembly that the agriculture commissioner establish the wind property restoration and reclamation oversight program, created in section 1 of this Act, using existing operating funds.

SECTION 5. APPLICATION. Section 3 of this Act applies only to projects that receive a certificate of site compatibility after August 1, 2017.

President of the Senate

Speaker of the House

Secretary of the Senate

Chief Clerk of the House

This certifies that the within bill originated in the Senate of the Sixty-fifth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota and is known on the records of that body as Senate Bill No. 2313.

Senate Vote: Yeas 43 Nays 4 Absent 0

House Vote: Yeas 64 Nays 22 Absent 8

Secretary of the Senate

Received by the Governor at _____ M. on _____, 2017.

Approved at _____ M. on _____, 2017.

Governor

Filed in this office this _____ day of _____, 2017,

at _____ o'clock _____ M.

Secretary of State