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August 18, 2014

RE: Application of Black Hills Power for a 230kV transmission line and associated substation modification facility permit hearing August 25th

Dear South Dakota Public Utilities Commission:

I am unable to attend in person the public hearing on August 25, 2014, however I wanted my input to be heard by the Commission. Since 1977, I have owned the land that is within one-half mile from the proposed site of the transmission line and have been unable to access electricity from Black Hills Power for my property after several attempts to work with them, which still is the case today in 2014. Since you have the power to approve, disapprove or modify the application for building the new line/substations that financially benefits Black Hills Power and in turn decreases our visual esthetics of the Black Hills and increases our health risks<sup>1</sup>, I'm requesting that the Commission help the property owners of Horse Creek Valley obtain electricity so we can have the benefit of the service that we are sacrificing our beauty and health for.

Even though there are many more remote places in the Black Hills that have electricity, I've been a landowner for 36 years and have been working with Black Hills Power to bring electricity to the valley to no avail. We were told that it would cost \$100,000 dollars since there wasn't a substation on the former Edelweiss Mountain power line. We were also told running overhead lines from the Edelweiss Mountain development (which is only 1 mile away) was not allowed because it "ruined the esthetics" of the national forest. At that time, I did contact you, the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission, to intervene on our behalf, which resulted in Black Hills Power saying it would reduce the cost to \$60,000, or 6 people would have to live in the valley to bring in electricity at no charge. On the wages of a 30-year South Dakota public school principal, you might as well have said 60 million dollars as this figure was completely out of financial range for myself and the other common workers living in the valley at that time, or now.

With the construction of the proposed Teckla-Osage-Rapid City 230kV transmission line and 6 families living in the valley full-time and myself part-time, Black Hills Power is asking us to accept huge power lines "ruining our esthetics" and the additional health risks, but is not willing to service us with electricity without high costs. Obviously the restriction of running overhead lines isn't relevant anymore since the new proposed line is overhead, in 2014 isn't it time for Black Hills Power to bring to our valley (which is only 1 mile from Edelweiss development or 2-3 miles off of Hwy 385) the power that the United States and most of the world takes for granted? Since the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission mission statements reads, "*The commission will exercise its authority and influence to ensure that residential and business consumers have access to utility services at fair and reasonable rates. The commission will be proactive and solutions-oriented in striving to maximize consumer utility value and education while working to enhance the economic and environmental well-being for citizens of South Dakota.*"<sup>2</sup>, we are asking for you to reserve your approval of this permit until we can obtain electricity.

Commission members, we have tried in the past to discuss with Black Hills Power the absurdity of not being able to access electricity. Black Hills Coop and your own department agreed in 1982, but Black Hills Power presented us with an outrageous dollar amount to bring electricity to our home. In 1988, Black Hills Power, the National Forest Service and the Horse Creek Valley property owners were to assemble at Horse Creek Inn with the goal of creating a compromise to bring

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<sup>1</sup> US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health has many studies from 2000-2010 that living near overhead high voltage transmission power lines are a risk factor particularly to children to contract acute lymphoblastic leukemia. There are many additional government studies concluding the same thing, but this study can be found at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20843128>

<sup>2</sup> South Dakota Public Utilities Commission Annual Report Operations 2009



electricity from Edelweiss Mountain via overhead lines making it accessible to us. All parties were present, except Black Hills Power did not show for this meeting. Under the shadows of the former Edelweiss power lines, we invested our life savings and bought property thinking we'd be able to access power upon building. What an inconceivable wake up call when we had to raise our families with gas lamps, root cellars, gravity fed water and generators, having no other choice. Six families live in the valley today and have had to invest in some sort of renewable energy source to provide electricity to their homes. Some love it while others deal with it, but none have a standard refrigerator or freezer, all run generators to pump water to cisterns and occasionally have to light lanterns for kids to do homework. Without consideration for this remoteness, we all pay property taxes as if we did have electricity. In retirement, I have moved from this rustic life to a home with electricity, but do wish to build on my property but won't until I know electricity is viable.

Albeit not driving factors, there are benefits to Black Hills Power and to South Dakota to bring electricity to the Horse Creek valley. In 2008, South Dakota passed HB 1123 that established an objective of 10% of electricity to be created by renewable energy sources by 2015. Utilities are required to report on their progress annually. According to the Institute for Energy Research of renewable mandates, as of 2009 South Dakota reported 0% toward this goal. In an executive order released on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013, President Obama has tripled the mandate for use of renewable sources of energy for federal agencies by 2020, which will affect Ellsworth Air Force base within the Black Hills Power service area. Electricity produced by wind and photovoltaic systems, such as the ones in operation in the Horse Creek Valley, connected to the "grid" would be considered and counted toward these renewable electric goals.

The United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Advisory Group on Energy and Climate Change — composed of global business leaders and heads of UN agencies — has called for a major 2014 UN initiative to achieve universal access for the world to modern energy services by 2030 — a collaboration of 20 UN agencies will lead the effort. In 2014 in the United States in the Black Hills, 1 mile from million dollar homes and 2-3 miles off a major highway, isn't it time to provide people like us without cost access to a basic service that even remote parts of Africa have?

In closing, I'm restating my request that the Commission does not approve this permit until it is modified with the condition via whatever means the Commission deems to be the most cost effective and environmentally sound, Black Hills Power offer to each of the Horse Creek Valley property owners the opportunity to connect to the electric grid without charge in order to benefit from the financial windfall of the construction of the proposed high voltage power line.

Sincerely,

John Halter