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## SPION KOP WIND FARM: MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS NEW ROLE IN WIND ENERGY

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Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) has acquired a new role in working with NorthWestern Energy to plan and implement the post construction monitoring (PCM) at Spion Kop Wind Farm, located on the southern slopes of the Highwood Mountains near Geysler, Montana. The objectives of this project are not only to assess the bird and bat fatalities and impacts of habitat loss as a result of construction and operation, but to work together to make a standard for wind energy monitoring in Montana, implementing any further mitigation measures and research as determined by the outcome of the PCM, and eventually making all findings available to the public for reference. Using the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Land-Based Wind Energy Guidelines and Eagle Conservation Plan Guidance, FWP will estimate bird and bat fatalities through conducting formal fatality searches, assess the risk to eagles through standard eagle point counts, monitor all eagle nests within the project area, search for new nests through flight surveys, and monitor species of concern including bat activity, nesting of non-eagle raptors, and sharp-tailed (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*) grouse leks. Through early PCM work, an active Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) nest was discovered just .70 miles away from the nearest wind turbine. This, as well as the challenges realized through pilot fatality searches, has made FWP have to adapt the PCM plan accordingly. Where the project is currently as well as the future goals and objectives are addressed.