



## Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

October 14, 2020

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-6301

Dear Madam Chairwoman:

Thank you for your September 22 letter to Secretary Brouillette inquiring about the status of the Interconnection Seams Study (SEAMS) and the Department of Energy's (DOE) Scientific Integrity policies. I was asked to respond on the Secretary's behalf.

Like you, the Department takes seriously its responsibility to put forward quality and robust analysis for projects funded by taxpayer dollars. DOE processes are structured to ensure that these standards are met, including those required by DOE's Scientific Integrity Policy, DOE P 411.2A. Given the importance to the Nation of DOE's research portfolio and the breadth of responsibility DOE bears for the Nation's continuing progress in science and technology, DOE is obliged to uphold the highest standards in the sponsorship, management, and conduct of research.

Originally entitled the "Midwest Interconnection Seams Study" when funded for \$1.2 million in 2016, SEAMS was implemented through DOE's Grid Modernization Initiative. The study was conducted by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) and collaborators to assess the benefits of increasing connectivity between the Eastern and Western Interconnections. This concept had been explored and understood by industry long before DOE funded this study.

Upon receiving non-peer reviewed preliminary results submitted by an NREL employee who has since left for the private sector, DOE and NREL officials expanded the scope of the project to model and analyze additional scenarios, with additional funding of approximately \$400 thousand beginning in Fiscal Year 2019.

The results of the study culminated into a draft article that NREL has chosen to submit to a peer-reviewed journal. NREL transmitted the draft article summarizing the results of the study and all supporting elements for review by DOE on September 30, 2020. DOE programs expeditiously reviewed this draft and approved it for submission to a journal by NREL on October 9, 2020.

Final publication of the article and the timeline is up to the independent journal's own peer-reviewers and standards, which may require additional revision, resubmission, and review of the article as part of the standard scientific peer-review process. Until the peer review process is completed, the draft article and results are preliminary. DOE looks forward to a successful outcome of the peer-review process.

Thank you again for your interest in DOE-funded research. Should you have any further questions, please contact me or Mr. Christopher Morris, Deputy Assistant Secretary for House Affairs, Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs, at (202) 586-5450.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Daniel Simmons", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Daniel Simmons  
Assistant Secretary for Energy Efficiency and  
Renewable Energy