

A pair of West Texas ranches are suing ERCOT, claiming the state's power grid operator violated a 2021 law when it failed to stop a Chinese billionaire's wind farm from moving forward in Val Verde County.

It's the latest battle over the **Blue Hills wind** farm, a 46-turbine project planned near Comstock and started by Houston-based GH America Energy, whose parent company is owned by Chinese businessman Sun Guangxin. In response to the project, the Legislature passed the Lone Star Infrastructure Act in 2021, barring entities from China, Russia, Iran and North Korea from having direct access to critical infrastructure, citing concerns over security of the electric grid.

GH America applied to the Electric Reliability Council of Texas before the law went into effect to connect the wind farm to the Texas electric grid. In the lawsuit filed late last month in state District Court in Val Verde County, the ranchers, whose properties abut the site, claim that ERCOT should have canceled that interconnection application when the Lone Star Infrastructure Act became law.

Spanish renewable energy company Greenalia, which was also named as a defendant in the suit, announced that it took over the wind farm in 2022 from GH America, but it is unclear who owns the ground beneath the planned turbines.

Brazos Highland Properties, a company widely reported as controlled by Guangxin, owns 187 properties in Val Verde County. Records show Greenalia entered into a lease and easement agreement with Brazos Highland last July to develop and operate the wind farm on the Carma Ranch north of Comstock.

A spokesperson for Greenalia did not return a request for comment Friday.

The plaintiffs, Ward-Walker Seven Oaks Ranch and Cole Ranch, say ERCOT is jeopardizing the security and reliability of the grid and are asking the court to void the interconnection application previously filed by GH America. The lawyer representing the ranches, Dallas Barrington, said any new entity that takes over the wind farm should have to restart the application process to connect to the grid.

An ERCOT spokesperson said the grid operator does not comment on pending litigation. A spokesperson for GH America could not be reached Friday.

Randy Nunns, a board member at Devils River Conservancy, which opposes the project, said the proposed influx in wind energy poses a threat to an area known for its wilderness. People travel there to hunt and be in nature, spending thousands of dollars a night to stay at some Val Verde County ranches.

Opponents say the project could also hurt unique wildlife habitats that monarch butterflies, migratory birds and bats call home.

"Everybody is opposed to 700-foot-tall turbines in the county no matter who owns 'em," Nunns said. "If it was Willie Nelson building 'em, we still wouldn't want 'em."