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3	In the Matter of the Application of:	
4	Scout Clean Energy, LLC, for Horse Heaven	DOCKET NO. EF-210011
5	Wind Farm, LLC, Applicant.	APPLICANT'S OPPOSITION TO MOTION TO COMPEL/MOTION FOR
6		PROTECTIVE ORDER
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8		

#### I. INTRODUCTION

For the reasons set forth more fully below, Scout Clean Energy ("Applicant")
respectfully requests that the Administrative Law Judge ("ALJ") deny the motion of the
Intervenor Tri-Cities C.A.R.E.S. ("TCC") to compel the attendance of David Kobus at a
deposition and for sanctions.

14 TCC's entire motion is based on misinformation. The Applicant is not refusing to 15 make Mr. Kobus available to be deposed. Its sole goal has always been to establish limitations on what TCC can ask Mr. Kobus at that deposition, consistent with the scope of 16 the adjudication as enunciated by the ALJ and consistent with TCC's limited role as 17 intervenor in this matter. It appears that TCC may be trying to use the communications 18 19 regarding Kobus deposition as a pretext for resurrecting issues that it has raised – and that the ALJ has resolved – before. 20 21 The Applicant requests that the motion to compel be denied, and also moves for an 22 order limiting the scope of the Kobus deposition to matters within the defined purview of 23 TCC's involvement in this adjudication.

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## **II. ARGUMENT**

# <u>A.</u> <u>All the Applicant wants is for there to be reasonable limits put on the scope of Dave Kobus's deposition.</u>

Since it first learned of TCC's plan to depose its Senior Project Manager, Dave

5 Kobus, the Applicant has been trying to get TCC to provide an idea of what it plans to ask
6 him. Responding to a direct request for clarification, counsel for TCC would state only that
7 he "will be asking him questions about the original and amended ASC."<sup>1</sup> Since that
8 statement literally could not be any broader relative to material in the application, and since
9 TCC's representation both makes preparing Mr. Kobus nearly impossible and opens the door
10 to a long, rambling and unfocused deposition, virtually all of the Applicant's efforts since
11 June 15 have been aimed at defining the universe of areas on which Mr. Kobus can expect to
12 be questioned.
13 The ALJ has outlined the issues that are to be resolved at the adjudication,<sup>2</sup> and
14 already several times TCC has tried, unsuccessfully, to push back at the boundaries that the
15 ALJ set.<sup>3</sup> The ALJ has explicitly overruled each of those objections.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, TCC is

6 ignoring the previous rulings in this matter and proceeding as though those limits do not

17 exist.

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<sup>2</sup> Second Pre-Hearing Conference Order, p. 2 ("these are the disputed issues approved for presentation of evidence and supporting witnesses"); *see also id.*, p. 3 ("the following issues
 will *not* be taken up during the adjudication unless specifically authorized by a subsequent order").

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> <sup>1</sup> Email from Rick Aramburu to Tim McMahan (June 15, 2023) (Declaration of Willa
<sup>20</sup> B. Perlmutter (June 28, 2023) ("Perlmutter Decl."), Ex. A).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> <sup>3</sup> Tri-Cities C.A.R.E.S. Objection to Second Pre-Hearing Conference Order (May

<sup>24 30, 2023) (&</sup>quot;Objection to Second Pre-Hearing Conference Order") (pp. 6-10); *see also*, generally, Tri-Cities C.A.R.E.S. Motion for Disqualification/Recusal of Presiding

<sup>25</sup> Administrative Law Judge (May 25, 2023).

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Order Overruling Parties Objections to Second Prehearing Conference Order (June 12, 2023) (pp. 3-4); see also Order Denying Disqualification or Recusal of Administrative Law Judge (June 23, 2023) ("Order Denying Disqualification"), p. 3.

By the same token, the ALJ established limitations on discovery consistent with the nature of this proceeding. He has all along expressed a clear preference for targeted discovery, dictated by the proper legal bounds of the adjudication. For example, "[t]he parties' pre-filed testimony shall serve as the chief source of discovering each party's principal position(s) and supporting evidence. *Any additional discovery must seek only information that is relevant to the approved issues for the adjudication* (e.g., no inquiries into the SEPA process)."<sup>5</sup>

8 Additionally, TCC's participation as an intervenor is subject to limits that are not 9 merely hypothetical. "Council policy allows intervenors broad procedural latitude, but limits may be imposed to avoid undue delay to the adjudication. ... Development of the list of 10 disputed issues approved for the adjudication has more narrowly tailored the relevant subject 11 12 matter for all parties, including both intervenors. However, some further limitation remains appropriate in order to avoid undue delay to this proceeding."<sup>6</sup> In defining TCC's role, the 13 ALJ recognized "with particularity the organization's significant interest in wildlife and 14 15 ecosystem conservation as well as local decision-making to preserve the community's uniquely picturesque natural landscapes."<sup>7</sup> The ALJ further identified Benton County as the 16 17 lead party with regard to land use topics, and directed TCC to "limit its participation and presentation of evidence" and to "coordinate its concerns with the County."8 18 19 Nonetheless, despite the unambiguous articulation of the extent of TCC's involvement, and despite the Applicant's efforts to set reasonable limits on what 20

- <sup>6</sup> Second Pre-Hearing Conference Order, p. 4.
- <sup>7</sup> *Id.*, p. 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Second Pre-Hearing Conference Order, p. 4 (emphasis added); *see also* Letter from Hon.
22 Adam Torem to Tim McMahan (June 2, 2023) ("Torem Letter"), p. 2 ("if the Applicant is

unable to work out an informal resolution to provide TCC with any relevant evidence that

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Mr. Kobus might know or have *regarding a topic germane to the adjudication*, I expect that
 <sup>24</sup> pertinent motions will be filed promptly") (emphasis added).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> <sup>8</sup> *Id.*, p. 5; *see also* Order Denying Disqualification, p. 4 (confirming that an ALJ is empowered to set limits on extent of participation by intervenors).

would otherwise be a free-for-all, the intervenor continues to maintain that it is entitled to
 stretch the scope of its role beyond what it has repeatedly been told by the

3 ALJ. TCC's insistence on opening the door to any question about the "original and amended4 ASC" demonstrates once more that it has no intention of honoring the limits set by the ALJ.

5 It does not help for TCC to say simply that the Applicant can object to overreaching questions.<sup>9</sup> As the ALJ knows, a deponent must answer even the most objectionable 6 7 question unless the response would be privileged. In this case, the Applicant's concern is 8 that unless reasonable guardrails are put in place, Mr. Kobus would have to sit there and answer every question put to him, regardless of whether it is outside the established 9 limitations on TCC's role as intervenor, and regardless of whether the question would be 10 reasonably likely to lead to the discovery of evidence that would be admissible in the 11 12 adjudication. Under the procedures created for this adjudication it is hard to imagine how the 13 Applicant's objections would be resolved once the horse has left the barn.

14 For these reasons, the Applicant respectfully requests that the ALJ direct TCC that 15 Mr. Kobus's deposition be limited to questions within the bounds previously established for the parties and, specifically, for TCC. The Applicant further requests that the ALJ authorize 16 Mr. Kobus to refuse to answer any questions that clearly venture outside those bounds. 17 Without such authorization, it is virtually inevitable that one or more phone calls to the 18 19 ALJ will be necessary while the deposition is underway, a situation one would hope neither the ALJ nor the litigants want. 20 21 22 23

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Intervenor Tri-Cities C.A.R.E.S Motion to Compel Attendance of Senior Product Manager
 David Kobus at a Deposition and For Sanctions ("Motion to Compel") (June 25, 2023),

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> p. 9 ("concerns about individual questions are resolved during the deposition by objection to questions or by motions to strike").

B.

### The timing of TCC's motion demonstrates an ulterior motive.

TCC has made no secret of its desire to slow-roll this adjudication.<sup>10</sup> It claims that 2 the instant controversy makes delay necessary – but the responsibility for any perceived 3 delay properly belongs to the intervenor, not the Applicant. Procedural deadlines were 4 established well ahead of TCC's motion to compel. Indeed, TCC has acknowledged as 5 much. It complained as early as May 30 about the effect the schedule would have on 6 discovery, specifically including motions to compel.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, TCC directly and explicitly 7 threatened to move to compel Mr. Kobus's deposition on June 2.<sup>12</sup> 8 9

Moreover, TCC has been threatening to move to compel Mr. Kobus's deposition for a

long time. Also on June 2, the ALJ acknowledged the possibility that an informal resolution 10

to the deposition dispute might not be possible and he advised the parties that he "expect[s] 11

that pertinent motions will be filed promptly regarding this disputed deposition."<sup>13</sup> 12

Nonetheless, despite the fact that the dispute had been identified, the specter of motions to 13

compel had been raised, and the fact that the parties had clearly reached an impasse, 14

TCC waited for more than three weeks, until June 25, to file.<sup>14</sup> 15

19 11 Objection to Second Pre-Hearing Conference Order, pp. 6-7.

20 12 Perlmutter Decl., Ex. B (Email from Rick Aramburu to Tim McMahan (June 2, 2023)).

13 21 Torem Letter, p. 2.

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<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Objection to Second Pre-Hearing Conference Order, pp. 4-6; see also Motion to 17 Compel, pp. 2, 8, 9 ("TCC should be permitted to file testimony based on the deposition of Mr. Kobus within three weeks of the signing of his deposition, without regard to the current 18 schedule for submission of testimony.").

On June 23, counsel for the Applicant proposed a phone call so the Applicant, TCC, and 14 22 Benton County could discuss and, it was hoped, agree to reasonable parameters for Mr.

Kobus's deposition. Perlmutter Decl., Ex. C (Email from Willa B. Perlmutter to Ken Harper 23 and Rick Aramburu (June 23, 2023)). Approximately three hours later, counsel activated an

<sup>&</sup>quot;out of office" notification on her account, indicating that she would have only limited access 24 to voicemails and emails but that she would be returning to the office on Monday morning,

<sup>25</sup> June 26. Perlmutter Decl., ¶ 2-5. Later that afternoon, TCC's counsel responded by

offering to "consider" the Applicant's proposed limitations on Mr. Kobus's deposition, but 26 stating that he "must have them by the end of the day given the need to promptly set Mr. Kobus [sic] deposition." Perlmutter Decl., Ex. D (Email from Rick Aramburu to Willa B.

1 The Applicant would also note that once the ALJ made clear that it would have to 2 produce Mr. Kobus to be questioned under oath regarding "a topic germane to the 3 adjudication,"<sup>15</sup> the Applicant not only consulted with the putative deponent about his 4 schedule but also advised TCC that it was doing so with the aim of making him available on 5 the intervenor's schedule.<sup>16</sup> A cynic might say that TCC is using the current dispute over 6 Mr. Kobus's deposition as an opportunity to seek, yet again, to delay these proceedings.

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# <u>C.</u> <u>TCC is not entitled to sanctions.</u>

8 It is remarkable that instead of accepting the Applicant's invitation to join in a 9 good-faith discussion aimed at resolving the impasse over the scope of Mr. Kobus's 10 deposition, TCC is actually asking the ALJ to reward its intransigence by imposing sanctions 11 against the Applicant. In support of this perplexing ask, TCC has repeatedly (and to be perfectly honest, brazenly) mischaracterized the Applicant's position. In its motion, 12 13 TCC claims, over and over again, that the Applicant is "refusing to produce Mr. Kobus for deposition.<sup>17</sup> In truth, however, the Applicant is *not* refusing to make Mr. Kobus available. 14 15 For example, on June 15, in response to TCC's request to schedule the deposition for June 16 22 or 23, counsel wrote:

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- 24 respond to authorized discovery"); p. 4 ("TCC then met with the continuous refusal of the Applicant to make their Project manager available"); p. 5 ("again refusing to make Mr.
- Kobus available" and "Applicant continued its obstinate refusal to make Mr. Kobus available"); p. 9 ("[t]he unwarranted refusal of the Applicant to make its Project Manager
- 26 available," "the frivolous refusals of the Applicant to make his project manager available," and the Applicant "continuously refused to make Mr. Kobus available").

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<sup>Perlmutter (June 23, 2023)). Notwithstanding the fact that he has been threatening the instant motion for roughly the last four weeks, and notwithstanding counsel's courtesy notice that she would be unavailable before Monday, June 26, TCC's counsel filed the instant motion at 4:40 p.m. on Sunday, June 25, 2023.</sup> 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Torem Letter, p. 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Perlmutter Decl., Ex. E (Email from Willa B. Perlmutter to Rick Aramburu (June 15, 2023)).

<sup>23 &</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Motion to Compel, p. 1 ("Applicant has steadfastly refused to produce Mr. Kobus for his deposition ....); p. 2 ("Because of the improper refusal of the applicant to

We are checking with Mr. Kobus about his availability and we will circle back to you on that shortly. ... Any questions you plan to ask Mr. Kobus have to be limited to those that are consistent with TCC's role as an intervenor in this case: specifically, "the organization's significant interest in wildlife and ecosystem conservation as well as local decision-making to preserve the community's uniquely picturesque natural landscapes." Mr. Kobus will answer questions on those limited subjects. Moreover, we will not agree to allow Mr. Kobus to respond to any questions regarding land use topics, as Judge Torem affirmatively identified Benton County as the lead for those issues. ... We hope that we can agree to these limitations without the need to involve Judge Torem any more than necessary. Please confirm in writing that you will agree to limit your questions to the areas identified by the judge and we will work with you to get Mr. Kobus's deposition scheduled for next week. ... We look forward to your agreement to the approach we've outlined. Once we get your confirmation we'll firm up a date and time for Mr. Kobus's deposition.<sup>[18]</sup>

11 Later, when TCC continued to insist on taking a global, no-holds-barred deposition, the

12 Applicant tried again:

13 As I hope my previous email made clear, we are not refusing to make Mr. Kobus available for a deposition. We are, however, unwilling to make him 14 available for questioning if TCC will not agree in advance to limit the scope 15 of the deposition to the fairly narrow range of issues that Judge Torem has identified as the scope of your client's involvement in this matter. ... We 16 would be happy to talk with you in an attempt to arrive at an agreement on a reasonable scope for the deposition you seek. ... Once more, however, please 17 understand that we hope that will not be necessary and that we can reach a reasonable accommodation that gets you what you need - while still 18 respecting the appropriate statutory and procedural status of this matter and TCC's narrowly defined role in it.<sup>[19]</sup> 19

20 Even when it should have been clear that TCC would not engage in a good-faith effort to

21 reach an agreement on the scope of the deposition, counsel for the Applicant offered another

22 path to helping TCC learn what it wanted to know:

Here's what we suggest as a possible way to break our current impasse. If
you'll submit the questions you'd like to ask Mr. Kobus, we'll undertake to

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<sup>18</sup> Perlmutter Decl., Ex. E (emphasis added).

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 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Perlmutter Decl., Ex. F (Email from Willa B. Perlmutter to Rick Aramburu (June 18, 2023)) (emphasis in original).

1 have Mr. Kobus answer them in good faith, in writing and under oath, subject to the objections we're raising as to scope. If that won't work for you and 2 your client, it would appear the parties might need to ask Judge Torem to weigh in with direction as to the limits, if any, to be put on your lines of questioning for Mr. Kobus. We still hope you'll voluntarily agree to limit the scope of Mr. Kobus's deposition to something less than the entire universe of 4 issues the original and amended applications might touch upon, in which case none of this will be necessary and we can get the deposition scheduled in short order. In the alternative, as noted, we'd be happy to submit your 6 questions to Mr. Kobus for written answers. Failing that, we'll wait for the motion you seem to feel is necessary. That said, however, if you have another 7 solution, we'd be happy to discuss it with you in an effort to get this moving forward again.<sup>[20]</sup>

9 Perhaps naïvely, the Applicant tried one last time to get the parties back on track:

Here's a suggestion that might help us move forward with regard to Mr. Kobus's deposition. We'd propose a call among the three of us to see if we can't iron out an agreement regarding the permissible scope of questioning. As we've indicated in previous emails, we're happy to make him available as long as we can put reasonable guardrails on the subjects for deposition. It seems to me that rather than trying to fight it out by email, our clients might be well served if we just get on the phone and try to talk it out. ... I hope we can get things back on track so we can get Mr. Kobus deposed and move on from there.<sup>[21]</sup>

16 Rather than accept the various invitations it was offered to engage in a collective effort to

17 resolve the impasse, TCC filed the instant motion. The Applicant's efforts to bring TCC to

18 the table were entirely consistent with the ALJ's encouragement to the parties to resolve

discovery disputes without involving the Council or ALJ,<sup>22</sup> and yet they were met with 19

20 derision and a motion for sanctions.

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characterizes as the Applicant "apparently requiring TCC to submit interrogatories under 25 Rule 33 rather than a deposition under Rule 30." Motion to Compel, p. 9.

26 21 Perlmutter Decl., Ex. C.

> 22 Second Pre-Hearing Conference Order, p. 4.

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Perlmutter Decl., Ex. G, (Email from Willa B. Perlmutter to Rick Aramburu (June 20, 20 23 2023) (emphasis added)). The Applicant's good-faith offer to find another way to

<sup>24</sup> accommodate TCC's request to question Mr. Kobus hardly amounts to what TCC

Not only did TCC ignore the spirit of the ALJ's order regarding discovery; it ignored
 the letter of the order as well. "Filing motions to compel discovery should be a last resort for
 any party and *must show good cause and further demonstrate how and why less formal*

*measures were attempted and refused*."<sup>23</sup> TCC has made no effort whatsoever to show good
cause for its motion, let alone demonstrate "how and why less formal measures were
attempted and refused." This is undoubtedly because TCC simply could not make the
requisite showing.

8 TCC seems to interpret the ALJ's suggestion that the parties accomplish discovery informally to mean that it should repeat its demands ever more stridently, without giving 9 even cursory consideration to the Applicant's offers of cooperation. The ALJ encouraged the 10 parties to look for ways to facilitate the exchange of information relevant to the adjudication, 11 12 writing that he "use[d] this correspondence to again encourage the Applicant and TCC ... to 13 use informal discovery methods to gather any information a party may think is relevant to 14 this proceeding. In [his] humble experience, when one asks for information, one generally receives what they're seeking."<sup>24</sup> Following that admonition, and consistent with the 15 ALJ's direction, the Applicant offered a number of creative, reasonable suggestions in good 16 faith to resolve the dispute and provide a means by which TCC could obtain the information 17 it sought without needing to engage the ALJ. TCC has batted each of them aside, ignoring 18 19 its own role in the impasse even as it asks the ALJ to award sanctions against the Applicant. 20 Sanctions are simply not warranted. TCC may disagree with the Applicant's position on the permissible scope of Mr. Kobus's deposition, but as shown above, there is no remote 21 22

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26 original).

<sup>24 &</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Second Pre-Hearing Conference Order, p. 4 (emphasis added). "The Second Prehearing Conference Order was an Order, not a suggestion." Order Denying Joint Motion to Strike

Applicant's Direct Testimony; Admonishing Applicant and Granting Alternate Relief to Moving Parties (and Counsel for the Environment) (June 26, 2023), p. 2 (emphasis in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Torem Letter, p. 2.

1 basis for concluding that Applicant is acting "frivolously" or in bad faith.<sup>25</sup> Nor is there any
2 justification for TCC to use that language. The Applicant's position is based in a good-faith
3 interpretation of the orders that govern this adjudication.

In any event, TCC's reference to Civil Rule ("CR") 26(g) is inapposite. The Rule provides that sanctions may be imposed when an attorney or party signs discovery responses and falsely certifies that those responses were made properly and in good faith.<sup>26</sup> Even if the ALJ would be willing to overlook the procedural context within which CR 26(g) is set, the correspondence detailed above shows that at all times the Applicant has been acting in good faith, bending over backwards in an admittedly failed attempt to try to reach a reasonable solution that accommodates the needs of each side.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, TCC's representation that the Applicant was required to file a motion for protective order is both unsupported and incorrect as a matter of law.<sup>28</sup> Not only does no such requirement exist; CR 26 provides avenues for both motions to compel and motions for protective orders, depending on which party is doing the filing. Logically, too, if a motion for protective order is always required under these circumstances, as TCC misrepresents, there would be no reason a litigant would ever have to move to compel discovery. In this

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> <sup>25</sup> Motion to Compel, pp. 9-11 ("TCC has had to respond to the frivolous refusals of the
 <sup>20</sup> Applicant to make his [sic] project manager available for deposition").

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> CR 26(g) ("If a certification is made in violation of the rule, the court, upon motion or upon its own initiative, shall impose upon the person who made the certification, the party on whose behalf the request, response, or objection is made, or both, an appropriate sanction .....").

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> <sup>27</sup> Nor would sanctions be appropriate under CR 11, which by its terms applies to pleadings,
 <sup>24</sup> motions, and legal memoranda. CR 11(a)(4) ("If a pleading, motion, or legal memorandum

is signed in violation of this rule, the court, upon motion or upon its own initiative, may

<sup>25</sup> impose upon the person who signed it, a represented party, or both, an appropriate sanction .....").
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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> <sup>28</sup> Motion to Compel, p. 8 ("the Applicant has not moved for a protective order, which is required before a party can withhold a witness from discovery").

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case, the only date ever noticed for Mr. Kobus's deposition has long since come and gone, so
 it would not have made sense for the Applicant to move for a protective order.

TCC's request for sanctions should be denied.

### D. <u>The Applicant respectfully seeks a protective order that limits the scope</u> of Mr. Kobus's deposition.

6 As noted above, TCC steadfastly refuses to agree voluntarily to limit the scope of 7 intended deposition of Dave Kobus to something less than "questions about the original and 8 amended ASC."<sup>29</sup> CR 26(c) provides, among other things, that "[u]pon motion by a party or 9 by the person from whom discovery is sought, and for good cause shown, the court in which 10 the action is pending ... may make any order which justice requires to protect a party or 11 person from annoyance, embarrassment, oppression, or undue burden or expense, including 12 one or more of the following: ... (4) that certain matters not be inquired into, or that the 13 scope of the discovery be limited to certain matters ....."

14 The Applicant respectfully requests that the ALJ issue a protective order limiting the 15 scope of discovery to those matters for which TCC's involvement has been authorized 16 pursuant to Second Pre-Hearing Conference Order: specifically, wildlife and ecosystem 17 conservation and local decision-making to preserve the community's uniquely picturesque 18 natural landscape; and, in coordination with Benton County, concerns over land use. The 19 Applicant further seeks an order that authorizes its counsel where appropriate to instruct 20 Mr. Kobus to refuse to answer questions that fall outside the scope of TCC's identified role 21 as intervenor.

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#### **III. CONCLUSION**

The Applicant recognizes and of course absolutely respects the ALJ's desire that the parties work together as professionals so he can avoid having to intervene in needless discovery disputes. The Applicant has made sincere efforts, in good faith, to avoid being in \_\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Perlmutter Decl., Ex. A.

the position in which it finds itself, but to no avail. For the foregoing reasons, the Applicant
 Scout Clean Energy respectfully requests that the ALJ deny TCC's Motion to Compel
 Attendance of Senior Product Manager David Kobus at a Deposition and For Sanctions and
 enter a protective order limiting the scope of questions that Dave Kobus may be asked to
 those matters previously authorized as within the role of TCC's status as intervenor in this
 adjudication.

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	1	CERTIFICIATE OF	FILING AND SERVICE		
	2	2 I hereby certify that on June 28, 2023, I filed the foregoing with the Washington			
	3	3 Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council through electronic filing via email to			
	4	adjudication@efsec.wa.gov.			
	5	I hereby certify that I have this day se	erved the foregoing document upon all parties		
	6	of record in this proceeding by electronic ma	il at the email addresses listed on the attached		
	7	Service List.			
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