

BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Application of Dairyland Power Cooperative for a Route Permit for
the Beaver Creek 161-kV Transmission Line in Fillmore County

MPUC Docket No. ET3/TL-24-95

OAH Docket No. 23-2500-40403

**DIRECT TESTIMONY OF YVONNE GILDEMASTER
ON BEHALF OF DAIRYLAND POWER COOPERATIVE**

April 8, 2025

I. INTRODUCTION AND QUALIFICATIONS

Q. Please state your name, employer, and business address.

A. My name is Yvonne Gildemaster. I am a Project Manager II at Dairyland Power Cooperative (Dairyland). My business address is 3200 East Ave S, La Crosse, WI 54602.

Q. Briefly describe your educational and professional background.

A. I hold a Master of Business Administration from the University of Iowa and Bachelor's degrees in biochemistry cell and molecular biology, chemistry, and English from Drake University. Since joining Dairyland in 2023, my duties have included overseeing planning and execution of multi-million-dollar energy infrastructure projects, overseeing stakeholder communication and coordination, coordinating with external utility partners, and overseeing consultants, contractors, and other subject matter experts.

Q. Are you familiar with the 161 kilovolt (kV) Beaver Creek Transmission Line Project?

A. Yes, it is a transmission line project being developed by Dairyland. It extends from the intersection of the existing 161 kV LQ8A Harmony to Beaver Creek Tap Line and 171st Avenue in York Township, Minnesota to a new proposed switchyard in Chester Township, Howard County, Iowa.

Q. Is a portion of the Beaver Creek Transmission Line Project located in Minnesota?

A. Yes. Approximately 3.5 miles of the Beaver Creek Transmission Line Project are located in Minnesota.

1 **Q. Is the Minnesota portion of the Beaver Creek Transmission Line Project (the**
2 **Project) the subject of the Route Permit Application (Application) submitted**
3 **by Dairyland on August 26, 2024?**

4 A. Yes.
5

6 **Q. What is your role with respect to the Project?**

7 A. My role is to assist with Project management. My duties include overseeing the
8 scope, budget, and schedule of the Project. This includes all aspects of the
9 Project, including but not limited to right-of-way activities, environmental
10 permitting, site surveys, engineering and design, outage coordination, and
11 construction activities.
12

13 **II. PURPOSE OF TESTIMONY** 14

15 **Q. What is the purpose of your Direct Testimony?**

16 A. The purpose of my testimony is to provide: (1) an overview of the Project; (2) an
17 update on the Project schedule; and (3) an update on Dairyland's coordination with
18 the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).
19

20 **Q. Are you sponsoring the Application?**

21 A. Yes, I am sponsoring the entire Application.
22

23 **Q. What schedules are attached to your Direct Testimony?**

24 A. The following schedules are attached to my Direct Testimony:

- 25 • **Schedule A**: Statement of Qualifications
 - 26 • **Schedule B**: SHPO Letter
- 27

III. PROJECT OVERVIEW

Q. Please generally describe the Project.

A. The Project includes the installation of a new approximately 3.5-mile 161 kV transmission line and associated facilities in York Township, Fillmore County, Minnesota. Dairyland plans to utilize single-pole steel structures, all of which will be self-supporting, eliminating the need for guying. The typical pole heights will vary from 75 to 140 feet above ground, with spans between poles ranging from 300 to 1,000 feet.

Q. Why has Dairyland proposed the Project?

A. The Project was identified as part of the 2017 August West Area Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) Generation Interconnection Study¹ as being needed to allow the proposed generators studied in the 2017 August West Area Study Cycle to interconnect to the transmission system, to mitigate negative impacts to the thermal and voltage performance of the regional transmission system, and to increase the capability of proposed generators in future MISO study cycles to be interconnected to the transmission system. Accordingly, Dairyland proposes the northern endpoint in York Township based on current MISO queue requests for renewable generation in that area, along with the renewable resources generally available in that region. As detailed in the report, the Project is needed for the generation project studied to interconnect.

Q. How much will the Project cost?

A. The Project will cost approximately \$4 million dollars.

¹ Application at 9 and Appendix B.

1 **Q. Has the anticipated schedule for construction and operation of the Project**
2 **changed from what was contemplated in the Application?**

3 A. Yes. Dairyland now anticipates commencing construction of the Project as early
4 as First Quarter 2026 and that the Project will be energized by the end of Third
5 Quarter 2027.
6

7 **Q. Briefly describe Dairyland's Proposed Route for the Project.**

8 A. Dairyland identified a Proposed Alignment that follows an approximately 3.5-mile
9 route starting at the intersection of Dairyland's existing 161 kV LQ8A Harmony to
10 Beaver Creek Tap Line and 171st Avenue in York Township, continuing southerly
11 along the easterly side of 171st Avenue for approximately 1.0 mile, then for 0.25
12 mile continuing southwesterly and then southeasterly transitioning to the westerly
13 side of 171st Avenue and then returning to the easterly side of 171st Avenue, and
14 finally continuing southerly along the easterly side of 171st Avenue for an
15 additional 2.25 miles to the Minnesota and Iowa border, at the southern border of
16 York Township.
17

18 At the starting point of the Project, an existing structure along Dairyland's existing
19 161 kV LQ8A Harmony to Beaver Creek Tap Line will be removed and replaced
20 with a new interconnecting structure for the Project. New conductors are to run
21 from this structure to the south along the Proposed Alignment.
22

23 The Right-of-Way (ROW) is the land along the Proposed Alignment that is needed
24 to construct and operate the Project. Dairyland will obtain a 100-foot-wide ROW
25 along the Proposed Alignment for the Project. The 100-foot-wide ROW easement
26 is typically centered on the Proposed Alignment (or 50 feet on either side of the
27 transmission line).² Additional temporary workspace beyond the 100-foot-wide
28 ROW may be required at certain locations and for temporary construction
29 activities. Additional detail is provided in Section 3.1.2 of the Application.

² Application at 20.

1
2 The Project Route Width (or Proposed Route) is a larger area that is inclusive of
3 the Proposed Alignment and the ROW. Dairyland requests a standard Route
4 Width of 500 feet for most of the Project. Dairyland is requesting a wider Route
5 Width in some areas, up to 1,320 feet wide, to allow for additional route study and
6 the potential need to make minor modifications to the Proposed Alignment in these
7 areas. Specifically, Dairyland requests a variable width where the line transitions
8 to west side of 171st Avenue to allow flexibility in routing around existing homes,
9 buildings and features along the township road.³
10

11 IV. COORDINATION WITH SHPO 12

13 **Q. Have you coordinated with SHPO on this Project?**

14 A. Yes.
15

16 **Q. Please describe any coordination efforts with SHPO regarding the Project.**

17 A. On behalf of Dairyland, HDR Engineering, Inc. (HDR) conducted a Phase IA
18 Cultural Resources Literature Review of the Proposed Alignment and a one-mile
19 buffer (0.5-mile buffer on either side). This literature review and the evaluation of
20 the possible effects of the proposed Project on historic properties in the Project
21 area was provided to SHPO in June 2024.⁴ SHPO responded in a letter dated
22 August 2, 2024, which is attached as **Schedule B**.
23

24 **Q. What recommendations did SHPO make based on the Phase 1A Cultural
25 Resources Literature Review?**

26 A. SHPO recommended that Dairyland complete a Phase 1 archeological survey
27 following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Identification and Evaluation
28 and include an evaluation of National Register eligibility for any properties that are

³ Application at 20.

⁴ Application at 72.

1 identified. SHPO also noted in its August 2, 2024 letter that it has “determined that
2 there are no properties listed in the National or State Register of Historic Places,
3 or within the Historic Sites Network, that will be affected by the proposed project.”
4

5 **Q. Does Dairyland plan to implement SHPO’s recommendations?**

6 A. Yes. Prior to construction, Dairyland will complete the recommended
7 archeological survey for the route that is designated by the Commission in the
8 route permit.
9

10 **V. CONCLUSION**

11

12 **Q. Does this conclude your Direct Testimony?**

13 A. Yes.

DYL - Exhibit ____, Gildemaster Direct, Schedule A

Yvonne Gildemaster, PMP

EDUCATION

University of Iowa
Master of Business Administration

Iowa City, IA

Drake University
Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry Cell and Molecular Biology
Bachelor of the Arts in Chemistry
Bachelor of the Arts in English

Des Moines, IA

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Project Management Professional (PMP) with extensive experience leading multimillion-dollar infrastructure, R&D, and procurement projects. Proven track record in completing large-scale infrastructure projects, cost savings (\$7M+ annually), process optimization, and cross-functional leadership.

CERTIFICATIONS

Project Management Institute Certified - Project Management Professional - PMP

EXPERIENCE

Dairyland Power Cooperative
Project Manager II (promotion)
Project Manager I

La Crosse, WI
April 2025 – Present
April 2023 – April 2025

- Lead the planning, budgeting, and execution of multi-million-dollar energy infrastructure projects, including substations, tap lines, transmission lines, interconnection agreements, grant solar energy, and plant projects
- Integrate and manage cross-functional project teams across planning, engineering, permitting, environmental, procurement, construction commissioning, and close-out phases to ensure project success.
- Serve as the technician liaison, bridging the gap between engineers, consultants, and stakeholders by addressing technical concerns and facilitating discussions on engineering details.
- Oversee stakeholder communication and coordination, ensuring alignment on project goals, timelines, and resource allocation to meet critical deadlines.
- Collaborate with external utility partners, including power, railroad, and gas companies, to align project objectives and ensure seamless integration.
- Evaluate, select, and manage contractors, vendors, and suppliers to optimize project execution and cost-efficiency.
- Develop and execute Request for Proposals (RFPs) for major construction activities, including grading, below-grade, and above-grade work.
- Directly oversee consultants, contractors, and internal personnel to ensure safe and timely project completion in compliance with industry standards.
- Work closely with legal teams to navigate regulatory and contractual complexities, ensuring compliance with all legal and permitting requirements.
- Generate detailed monthly project status reports and financial forecasts to track progress, identify risks, and optimize decision-making.

- Managed the entire R&D project portfolio, leading cost-saving initiatives, procurement strategies, and new product implementations, resulting in millions in savings, including \$7M+ annually through supplier optimization.
- Led multimillion-dollar capital projects, developing scopes, budgets, and risk management plans while coordinating cross-functional teams to meet timelines, mitigate risks, and ensure seamless execution.
- Optimized project workflows by enhancing resource allocation, streamlining processes, and proactively resolving stakeholder conflicts to accelerate product launches and improve efficiency.
- Built and maintained strong relationships with key stakeholders, customers, vendors, and cross-functional teams to drive alignment and successfully execute R&D initiatives.
- Implemented structured resource allocation strategies for the R&D team, improving workload visibility and optimizing team performance.

Kemin Industries, Food Technology Division
Research Associate II (promotion)
Research Associate I

Des Moines, IA
January 2016 – August 2019
September 2014 – January 2016

- Led the development and execution of extraction, antioxidant, and food-based projects, leveraging statistical data analysis to drive insights and presenting key findings to cross-functional teams.
- Delivered high-impact technical presentations, including an oral presentation at the Clean Label Conference in Itasca, IL, an internal company conference, and multiple poster presentations at internal scientific meetings.
- Engaged directly with customers, translating complex technical findings into actionable insights and educating stakeholders on project outcomes.
- Managed Gas Chromatography (GC) operations, including training team members, developing, and documenting SOPs/methods, troubleshooting equipment, and performing routine maintenance to ensure accurate and reliable results.

PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

- *Significant Pressure Loss Occurs Under Tourniquets Within Minutes of Application. Journal of Special Operations Medicine 16(4): 13-24. 2016.*
- *Pressures Under 3.8cm, 5.1cm, and Side-by-Side 3.8cm-Wide Tourniquets. Journal of Special Operations Medicine 16(2): 28-35, 2016.*
- *Tourniquet Pressures: Strap Width and Tensioning System Widths. Journal of Special Operations Medicine 14(4): 19029, 2014.*

PATENTS

- Ban, L., Shen, C., Schroeder, W., Junker, K., Gildemaster, Y., Szajna-Fuller, E., Wray, C. Thymohydroquinone Based System for Human and Pet Food and Related Methods, 10 June 2021, U.S. Provisional Application, Pending



August 2, 2024

Laura Koski
Cultural Resources Project Manager
HDR
1601 Utica Ave S, Suite 600
St. Louis Park, MN 55416-3400

RE: Dairyland Power Cooperative Q-8A Beaver Creek 161 kV transmission line, Minnesota Portion
York Twp, Fillmore County
SHPO Number: 2024-1759

Dear Laura Koski:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above referenced project. We understand that this project will require a Minnesota Public Utilities Commission site permit. Therefore, the submitted information has been reviewed pursuant to the responsibilities given the State Historic Preservation Office by the Minnesota Historic Sites Act (138.665-666). If this project will be located on non-federal public land, the project will also be subject to review under the Minnesota Field Archaeology Act.

Due to the nature and location of the proposed project, we recommend that a Phase I archaeological survey be completed. The survey must meet the requirements of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Identification and Evaluation and should include an evaluation of National Register eligibility for any properties that are identified. For a list of consultants who have expressed an interest in undertaking such surveys, please visit the website preservationdirectory.mnhs.org, and select "Archaeologists" in the "Search by Specialties" box.

Based on the information provided, we have determined that there are no properties listed in the National or State Register of Historic Places, or within the Historic Sites Network, that will be affected by the proposed project.

Please note that this comment letter does not address the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and 36 CFR § 800. If this project is considered for federal financial assistance, or requires a federal permit or license, then review and consultation with our office will need to be initiated by the lead federal agency. Be advised that comments and recommendations provided by our office for this state-level review may differ from findings and determinations made by the federal agency as part of review and consultation under Section 106.

If you have any general questions regarding our review of this project, please contact me at 651-201-3285 or kelly.graggjohnson@state.mn.us. For questions regarding archaeology, please contact Lucy Harrington, Environmental Review Archaeologist, at (651) 201-3283 or lucy.harrington@state.mn.us.

Sincerely,

Kelly Gragg-Johnson

Kelly Gragg-Johnson
Environmental Review Program Specialist

MINNESOTA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

50 Sherburne Avenue ■ Administration Building 203 ■ Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155 ■ 651-201-3287 mn.gov/admin/shpo ■ mnshpo@state.mn.us

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