



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Division of Ecological and Water Resources
500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-4040

April 27, 2026

Logan Hicks
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Place East, Suite 350
St. Paul, MN 55101

RE: In the Matter of the Application of Xcel Energy for a Route Permit for the Northwest Maple Grove 115 kV Transmission Project in the City of Maple Grove, Hennepin County
PUC Docket Number: E002/TL-24-427

To Whom It May Concern,

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has reviewed the route permit application for the Northwest Maple Grove 115 kV high voltage transmission line (HVTL) project (Project), proposed by Xcel Energy (Applicant). Our agency offers the following comments:

Resource Impact Mitigation

Natural Heritage Review

The Minnesota Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) has been reviewed to determine if the proposed Project has the potential to impact any rare species or other significant natural features. Multiple state-listed species of special concern have been documented in the vicinity of the Project, and are addressed in the Natural Heritage Review (MCE 2024-00870; attached).

The Project area has changed since the review was completed, and the Applicant has confirmed with the DNR that this does not change the results of the initial review.

Vegetation Clearing Timing

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The DNR recommends including a special permit condition requiring the Applicants to clear vegetation for the Project from November 1 to April 1. Winter vegetation clearing minimizes impacts to a majority of nesting birds and bat species. In particular, avoiding tree removal from June 1 through August 15 minimizes impacts to bats during the maternity roosting season when pups are unable to fly; this includes the state-listed bat species identified in the Natural Heritage Review and the federally endangered northern long-eared bat. Winter clearing also minimizes the spread of invasive species, diseases such as Oak Wilt and Dutch Elm Disease, and minimizes impacts to the landscape.

Avian Flight Diverters

Incorporating avian flight diverters into transmission line design minimizes the likelihood of bird collisions attributed to visibility issues. The DNR supports the draft permit condition requiring the Applicants to use avian flight diverters and to coordinate with the DNR to determine optimal placement after the route is finalized.

DNR Permitting

Crossing Public Waters and State Lands

The DNR oversees the administration of designated public waters and state lands to ensure these resources are managed for the public's collective interest. A [Utility License Application](#) must be completed to obtain a license to cross these protected areas.

Water Appropriation and Work in Public Waters

A DNR Water Appropriation Permit is required for all users withdrawing more than 10,000 gallons of water per day or 1 million gallons per year. A DNR Public Waters Work Permit is required for all projects involving development activities below the ordinary high water level in public waters and public waters wetlands. Both permits can be applied for in the [MNDNR Permitting and Reporting System \(MPARS\)](#).

The DNR appreciates the opportunity to comment on the construction and operation of the proposed Northwest Maple Grove 115 kV HVTL Project. Please contact me if you have questions about our agency's comments.

Sincerely,

Samantha Bump
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Attachments: Natural Heritage Review

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