

## Staff Briefing Papers

**Meeting Date** September 7, 2023 **Agenda Item \*2**

**Company** Great River Energy

**Docket No.** ET-2/TL-22-235

**In the Matter of the Application of Great River Energy for a Route Permit to Rebuild the Existing 69 kV ST-WW Transmission Line to 115 kV in Stearns County, Minnesota**

- Issues**
1. Should the Commission adopt the Administrative Law Judge's Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Recommendation?
  2. Should the Commission find that the Environmental Assessment and the record created at the public hearing adequately address the issues identified in the scoping decision?
  3. Should the Commission require the use of an Independent Third-Party Monitor to assist DOC EERA and Commission staff in monitoring compliance of construction and restoration activities of the project?
  4. Should the Commission issue a Route Permit identifying a specific route and permit conditions to rebuild the existing 69 kV ST-WW Transmission Line to 115 kV in Stearns County?

**Staff** Cezar Panait Cezar.Panait@state.mn.us 651-201-2207

**✓ Relevant Documents**

	<b>Date</b>
Great River Energy – Application (4 parts)	August 25, 2022
Notice of Comment Period on Application Completeness	September 6, 2022
Public Comment – City of St. Cloud	September 12, 2022

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The attached materials are work papers of the Commission Staff. They are intended for use by the Public Utilities Commission and are based upon information already in the record unless noted otherwise.

## ✓ Relevant Documents

	<b>Date</b>
Minnesota DNR – Comments	September 20, 2022
Minnesota DOT – Comments	September 20, 2022
DOC EERA - Comments	September 20, 2022
Great River Energy – Reply Comments	September 27, 2022
DOC EERA – Supplemental Comments	October 4, 2022
PUC Notice of Public Information Meeting	November 21, 2022
Commission Order Accepting Application	November 21, 2022
GRE Pre-Scoping Supplemental Filing and Attachments A-F	November 22, 2022
PUC Sample Permit	December 5, 2022
Minnesota DOT – Comments	December 21, 2022
Minnesota DNR – Comments	December 29, 2022
GRE Comments – Scoping Summary	December 29, 2022
DOC EERA - Scoping Summary Report	January 19, 2023
DOC EERA – Scoping Decision for EA	January 31, 2023
PUC Notice of Public Hearing	May 1, 2023
DOC EERA Environmental Assessment and attachments (9 parts)	May 1 and 2, 2023
GRE Direct Testimony of Mark Strohfus (2 parts)	May 3, 2023
GRE Supplemental Testimony and Schedule B	May 5, 2023
Minnesota DNR – Comments	June 1, 2023
DOC EERA Draft Route Permit	June 1, 2023
GRE Reply Comments and Proposed Findings of Fact	June 6, 2023
DOC EERA Response to Reply Comments	June 16, 2023
GRE – Combined Exhibit List	August 3, 2023
OAH – Findings of Fact, Conclusion of Law, and Recommendation	August 4, 2023
GRE – Letter on ALJ’s Findings of Fact Report	August 11, 2023
DOC EERA Letter Response to ALJ’s Report	August 11, 2023

## I. STATEMENT OF THE ISSUES

1. Should the Commission adopt the Administrative Law Judge's Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Recommendation?
2. Should the Commission find that the Environmental Assessment and the record created at the public hearing adequately address the issues identified in the scoping decision?
3. Should the Commission require the use of an Independent Third-Party Monitor to assist DOC EERA and Commission staff in monitoring compliance of construction and restoration activities of the project?
4. Should the Commission issue a Route Permit identifying a specific route and permit conditions to rebuild the existing 69 kV ST-WW Transmission Line to 115 kV in Stearns County?

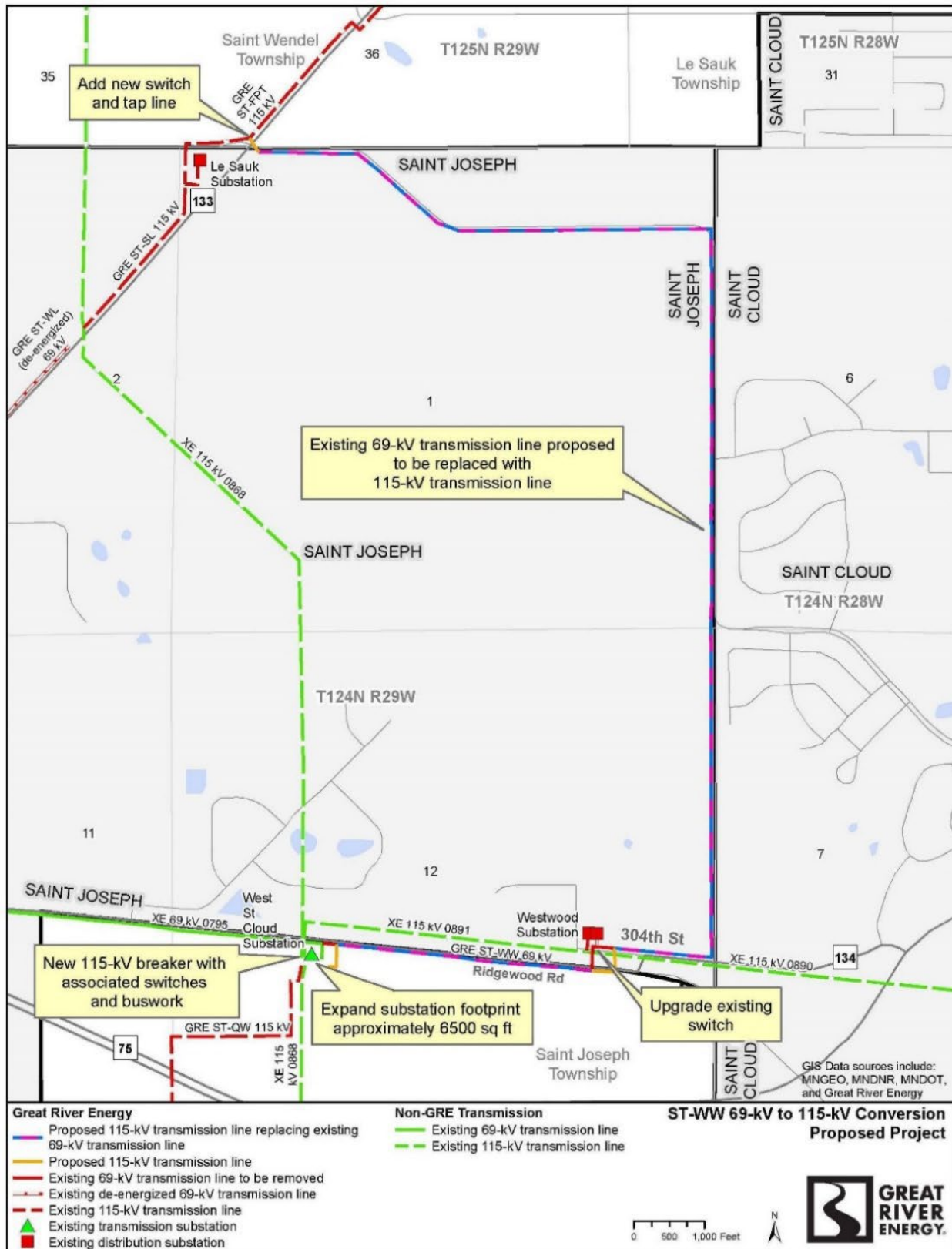
## II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

On August 25, 2022, Great River Energy (Applicant or GRE) submitted a high voltage transmission line (HVTL) Route Permit Application (RPA) to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) to rebuild approximately 3.2 miles of its existing 69 kilovolt ST-WW Transmission Line to 115 kV. The rebuild project is located in the city of St. Joseph and in St. Joseph and Wendell townships in Stearns County, Minnesota. The RPA was submitted under the alternative review process (Minn. Stat. § 216E.04; Minn. R. 7850.2800-3900).

As explained by GRE in the application, the rebuild project is a final step in upgrading the St. Joseph area to a 115 kV transmission system to improve reliability and resiliency. Specifically, GRE has proposed to:

- Remove approximately 3.2 miles of the existing 69-kilovolt transmission line and structures between the West St. Cloud, Westwood, and Le Sauk substations and replace those facilities with a new overhead 115-kilovolt transmission line and structures. The new 115-kilovolt transmission line would follow the alignment of the existing 69-kilovolt transmission line to the extent possible;
- Extend the transmission line approximately 170 feet northwest near the Le Sauk Substation to tap into a new switch to be added on GRE's existing 115-kilovolt transmission line and add a new switch near the existing Westwood Substation;
- Install an additional 115-kV breaker and associated equipment at the existing West St. Cloud Substation, which will require an approximately 6,500 sq. ft. expansion of the substation;
- Install two 115-kV line switches; one for the tap feeding the existing Westwood Substation, and one north of the existing Le Sauk Substation.

Figure 1: Proposed Project



The Applicant plans to begin construction of the Project in summer of 2024 and to energize the project in early 2025.

### **III. STATUTES AND RULES**

#### **A. Route Permit**

Under Minn. Stat. § 216E.01, subd. 4, a high-voltage transmission line is defined as a conductor of electric energy and associated facilities designed for and capable of operation at a nominal voltage of 100 kilovolts or more and is greater than 1,500 feet in length. The proposed project is a new 3.2-mile 115 kV single-circuit transmission line and, therefore, requires a route permit from the Commission.

Minn. Stat. § 216E.03, subd. 2, provides that no high-voltage transmission line shall be sited or constructed in Minnesota without the issuance of a route permit by the Commission.

Under Minn. Stat. § 216E.04, subd. 2, the proposed project qualified for alternative review because it is a high-voltage transmission line between 100 and 200 kV. Under the alternative permitting process: (1) the applicant is not required to propose alternative routes in its application but must identify other routes it examined and discuss the reasons for rejecting those routes; (2) an environmental assessment is prepared instead of an environmental impact statement; (3) a public hearing is conducted, but a contested case hearing is not required.

The proposed project is subject to Minn. Stat. Chapter 216E which requires that high-voltage transmission lines be routed in a manner consistent with the state's goals to conserve resources, minimize adverse human and environmental impacts, and other land use conflicts, and ensure the state's electric energy security and reliability through efficient, cost-effective power supply and electric transmission infrastructure. The statute also affords the Commission the authority to specify the design, route, right-of-way preparation, facility construction, and any other appropriate conditions it deems necessary when issuing a permit for a high-voltage transmission line. The operative rules for the review of high-voltage transmission line route permit applications are found in Minnesota Rules Chapter 7850.

#### **B. Environmental Assessment**

Minn. Stat. § 216E.04, subd. 5, requires the Commissioner of the Department of Commerce to prepare an environmental assessment for the Commission, on proposed high-voltage transmission lines being reviewed under the alternative permitting process. The environmental assessment must contain information on the potential human and environmental impacts of a proposed project and of alternative routes considered and must address mitigation measures for identified impacts.

### **IV. PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

On August 25, 2022, the Applicant filed an application for a Route Permit to rebuild the existing

69 kV ST-WW transmission line to 115 kV in Stearns County, Minnesota.

On November 21, 2022, the Commission issued an Order Finding Application Complete and Referring the Matter for Summary Proceedings and authorizing the use of Alternative Permitting Process.

On November 22, 2022, GRE submitted a supplemental filing with attachments concerning its Application for a Route Permit.

On December 7, 2022, staff from the Commission and Department of Commerce Energy Environmental Review and Analysis (DOC EERA) staff conducted a virtual public information and environmental assessment scoping meeting, followed by an in-person meeting in St. Joseph, MN on December 8, 2022. Comments on issues and potential alternatives for consideration in the environmental assessment were accepted through December 30, 2022.

On January 19, 2023, the Commission, through its Consent Order review process, considered what action it should take regarding route alternatives to be evaluated in the environmental assessment, but took no action.

On January 31, 2023, DOC EERA issued the Environmental Assessment Scoping Decision.

On May 1, 2023, DOC EERA issued the Environmental Assessment.

On May 3, 2023, GRE submitted the direct testimony of Mark Strohfus.

On May 5, 2023, GRE filed supplemental testimony and Schedule B (comments on the Draft Route Permit).

On May 17 and 18, 2023, Administrative Law Judge (ALJ), Suzanne Todnem with the Office of Administrative Hearings presided over in-person and virtual public hearings. The hearing procedures included brief presentations to describe the permitting process and the proposed project; the introduction of documents to be included in the record; and an opportunity for members of the public to provide comments and ask questions of staff and the applicant.

Two members of the public spoke during the public hearing on May 17. No members of the public spoke at the May 18 virtual hearing. A court reporter was present to transcribe the public hearings.<sup>1</sup> Following the public hearings, a written comment period was open through June 1, 2023. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) submitted written comments during the comment period. No other public agency or member of the public submitted written comments.

On June 1, 2023, DOC EERA filled comments and a draft route permit.

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<sup>1</sup> Court Reporter Transcripts, Document IDs: [20238-198521-01](#), [20238-198521-02](#).

On June 6, 2023, GRE filed reply comments and Proposed Findings of Fact.

On June 16, 2023, DOC EERA filed reply comments.

On August 4, 2023, ALJ Todnem filed a report with the Commission with findings of fact, conclusions of law, and a recommendation on a preferred route and permit conditions.

On August 11, 2023, the applicant submitted a letter stating they did not have any exceptions to the ALJ's Report.

On August 11, 2023, DOC EERA submitted a letter stating they did not have any exceptions to the ALJ Report.

## **V. ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE REPORT**

The Commission referred the route permit application to the Office of Administrative Hearings for assignment of an ALJ to conduct public hearings. The ALJ was charged with applying the routing criteria established in statute and rule and preparing a report containing findings of fact, conclusions of law, and a recommendation on the proposed project as well as on conditions and provisions to be included in a route permit.

Rather than repeat the ALJ's full analysis in these briefing papers, staff has summarized the recommendations concerning the adequacy of the EA and whether a route permit should be issued. Staff refers the Commission to the ALJ Report for the complete analysis.

### **A. Public Comments**

The City of St. Cloud submitted a comment expressing its support of the design proposal that maintains the alignment to the west of 73rd Avenue North and requested the alignment account for future widening of 73rd Avenue North and its potential extension south of Westwood Parkway.<sup>2</sup>

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources submitted a comment expressing its appreciation for the Company's early communication about the project and stated the need for additional route details such as pole placement, to provide feedback on any route alternatives and to recommend permit conditions prior to route permit approval.<sup>3</sup> On December 29, 2022, DNR filed comments regarding the potential environmental impacts that should be considered in the EA.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Public Comments – City of St. Cloud (September 12, 2022) (eDocket No. [20229-188984-01](#)).

<sup>3</sup> Public Comments – MNDNR (September 20, 2022) (eDocket No. [20229-189180-01](#)).

<sup>4</sup> DNR Comments – December 29, 2022, eDocket No. [202212-191679-01](#).

DNR also submitted a final letter<sup>5</sup> on June 1, 2023, with final recommendations on Dust Control and Wildlife Friendly Erosion Control measures.

Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) submitted a comment indicating it had not yet been directly contacted to discuss the potential project and recommended early coordination with state agencies to avoid future issues in permitting processes.<sup>6</sup> On December 21, 2022, MnDOT filed comments in response to the Notice of Public Information and Environmental Assessment Scoping Meetings.<sup>7</sup>

During the May 17, 2023, in-person public hearing, two members of the public asked questions concerning Great River Energy's land acquisition process for the Project. GRE responded to those questions at the hearing. No members of the public spoke at the May 18, 2023, hearing. No members of the public submitted written comments during the comment period, following the public hearings.

### **B. Adequacy of Environmental Assessment**

The ALJ concluded that DOC EERA has conducted an appropriate environmental analysis of the Project and that the EA satisfies Minn. R. 7850.3700. The ALJ found that the evidence in the record demonstrates that the EA is complete because the EA and the record created at the public hearing and during the subsequent comment period address the issues and alternatives raised in the Scoping Decision.

### **C. Route Permit**

The ALJ concluded that Great River Energy had satisfied all the criteria set forth in Minn. Stat. Ch. 216E and Minn. R. Ch. 7850. Based on the consideration of all routing factors set forth in Minn. Stat. § 216E.03, subd. 7 and Minn. R. 7850.4100, the ALJ concluded that the Proposed Route is the best route for the project and recommended that the Commission issue a permit for that route with additional conditions. The ALJ also concluded that the record evidence demonstrates that constructing the Project along the Proposed Route does not present a potential for significant adverse environmental effects pursuant to the Minnesota Environmental Rights Act.

As provided in the ALJ Report, the Administrative Law Judge recommended that the Commission issue a Route Permit to the Applicant for the Proposed Route to construct and operate the Project and associated facilities in Stearns County, and that the permit include the general Route Permit conditions with the additional revisions and special conditions identified in section XVI of the ALJ Report and identified in Table 1 below:

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<sup>5</sup> DNR Comments – June 1, 2023, eDocket No. [20236-196308-01](#).

<sup>6</sup> Public Comments – MnDOT (September 20, 2022) (eDocket No. [20229-189183-01](#)).

<sup>7</sup> MnDOT Comments – December 21, 2022, eDocket No. [202212-191541-01](#).



Figure 1

Permit Section	Recommendation
4.1	<p>The record supports and the Administrative Law Judge recommends adoption of the addition of section 4.1 to read:</p> <p>“Route width variations may be allowed to accommodate the potential site-specific constraints listed below. These constraints may arise from any of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Unforeseen circumstances encountered during the detailed engineering and design process.</li> <li>2) Federal or state agency requirements.</li> <li>3) Existing infrastructure within the route, including but not limited to railroads, natural gas and liquid pipelines, high voltage electric transmission lines, or sewer and water lines.</li> </ol> <p>Any alignment modifications arising from these site-specific constraints that would result in right-of-way placement outside of the designated route shall be specifically reviewed by the Commission under Minn. R. 7850.4900.”</p>
5.2	<p>The Administrative Law Judge also recommends adoption of the modification to section 5.2 Access to Property to read:</p> <p>“The Permittee shall notify landowners or their designee at least 14 days in advance but not greater than 60 days in advance of entering the property, unless otherwise negotiated with the affected landowner.”</p>
5.3.7	<p>The record supports and the Administrative Law Judge recommends no changes to section 5.3.7 Soil Erosion and Sediment Control in the amended draft route permit.</p>
6.1	<p>The record supports and the Administrative Law Judge recommends adopting section 6.1 Independent Third-Party Monitor as proposed in the amended draft route permit.</p>
6.2	<p>The record supports and the Administrative Law Judge recommends for adoption that draft route permit section 6.2 be titled “Northern Long-Eared Bat” and read:</p> <p>“The permittee shall coordinate with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding the timing of tree clearing and any other construction or restoration actions that may impact Northern Long-Eared bat in the vicinity of the Project.”</p>

6.3	The Administrative Law Judge agrees with EERA that landowner preference is appropriate as a vegetation management plan goal and recommends not including recognition of landowner preferences in the route permit. The record supports and the Administrative Law Judge recommends adoption of section 6.3 Vegetation Management Plan as proposed in the amended draft route permit.
6.4	The record supports, the parties agree, and the Administrative Law Judge recommends adoption of section 6.4 Coordination with Cities of St. Joseph and St. Cloud as proposed in the amended draft route permit.
6.5	The record supports, the parties agree, and the Administrative Law Judge recommends adoption of section 6.5 Dust Control to read:  “The Permittee shall utilize non-chloride products for onsite dust control during construction.”
6.6	The record supports, the parties agree, and the Administrative Law Judge recommends adoption of section 6.6 Wildlife-Friendly Erosion Control to read:  “The Permittee shall use only “bio-netting” or “natural netting” types and mulch products without synthetic (plastic) fiber additives.”

## VI. EXCEPTIONS

No party filed exceptions to the ALJ’s Report. DOC EERA filed a letter stating they reviewed the ALJ’s Report and agree with Judge’s recommendation that the Public Utilities Commission grant a route permit for the Project.

Similarly, GRE filed a letter indicating they had no exceptions to the ALJ’s Report and supported the recommendation that a route permit be issued for the Project. GRE also indicated that previously they and the DOC EERA disagreed regarding whether Condition 6.3 of the Route Permit (regarding a vegetation management plan) should explicitly acknowledge that landowner preferences would be part of the vegetation management plan.

Great River Energy indicated they continue to believe that it is important that any vegetation management plan acknowledge and accommodate landowner preferences.<sup>8</sup> Because DOC-EERA’s comments and the Report reflect agreement on this point, Great River Energy now

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<sup>8</sup> Supplemental Direct Testimony of Mark Strohfus, at 5-6 (May 5, 2023); Great River Energy Comments, at 2-3 (June 6, 2023). eDocket No. [20235-195609-02](https://www.ercot.com/et2/20235-195609-02)

believes that the record in this matter is clear that landowner preferences may be included in the Project's vegetation management plan and, accordingly, does not submit exceptions to the Report.

## **VII. STAFF ANALYSIS**

### **A. ALJ Report**

Staff agrees with the findings and conclusions reached by the ALJ. Staff finds that the ALJ Report is reflective of the case record.

Staff agrees with the ALJ's recommendations for the modifications to the permit conditions and inclusion of the special permit conditions as identified in the ALJ's Report, found in the following sections:

4.1 Route Width Variations, 5.2 Access to Property, 5.3.7 Soil Erosion and Sediment Control, 6.1 Independent Third-Party Monitor, 6.2 Northern Long-Eared Bat, 6.3 Vegetation Management Plan, 6.4 Coordination with Cities of St. Joseph and St. Cloud, 6.5 Dust Control, and 6.6 Wildlife-Friendly Erosion Control.

### **B. Environmental Assessment**

Staff agrees with the ALJ's conclusion that the Environmental Assessment was prepared in compliance with the procedures in Minn. R. 7850.3700, includes the items required by Minn. R. 7850.3700, subp. 4, and, in combination with the case record, addresses the issues identified in the Scoping Decision.

### **C. Independent Third-Party Monitor**

Consistent with other recent routing and siting permits, DOC EERA proposed an independent third-party monitor during construction of the project. EERA believes that relying on permittees to oversee their own permit compliance or relying on the public to act as a source of independent monitoring is inappropriate. EERA indicated that Minnesota should and must have a more active role in ensuring compliance with the siting and routing permits it issues. As the entity with the delegated responsibility to "maintain compliance information on all active site and route permits" EERA has determined that it is most appropriate to gather this information directly through an independent agency monitor. This is best accomplished through a specific permit condition in the site permit.

In finding 188 of the ALJ's Report<sup>9</sup>, Judge Todnem concluded that "The record supports, and the Administrative Law Judge recommends adopting section 6.1 Independent Third-Party Monitor as proposed in the amended draft route permit."

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<sup>9</sup> At page 34 of the ALJ's Report

In its August 11, 2023 Letter regarding the ALJ Findings of Fact, Conclusion of Law, and Recommendation, GRE did not take exceptions to the ALJ's Report, suggesting that it does not oppose the requirement of having an independent monitor during the construction of the project.

#### **D. Route Permit**

Staff agrees with the ALJ and DOC EERA that the Commission should issue a route permit to Great River Energy to rebuild the existing 69 kV ST-WW Transmission Line to 115 kV as proposed. There were no route alternatives proposed for this project or identified in the EA.

Staff has prepared a proposed Route Permit (attached to these briefing papers) that includes the special permit conditions from the ALJ's Report and modifications to the general conditions as proposed by DOC EERA and recommended by the Administrative Law Judge as described above in section V.

## VIII. DECISION OPTIONS

### ALJ Report

1. Adopt the ALJ Report to the extent it is consistent with the Commission's final decision.

### Environmental Assessment

2. Find that the Environmental Assessment and the record created at the public hearing address the issues identified in the Scoping Decision.
3. Find the Environmental Assessment is not complete, identify the deficiencies and request that the Environmental Assessment be revised or supplemented, and determine a schedule for its completion.

### Independent Third-Party Monitor

4. Require Great River Energy to hire an independent third-party monitor as proposed by DOC EERA and require EERA to file a summary on the use of a monitor upon completion of the monitor's activities.
5. Deny DOC EERA's proposal to require an independent third-party monitor.

### Route Permit

6. Issue the attached Route Permit that identifies the route proposed by Great River Energy for its 115 kV St. Joseph Area Transmission Line Project that includes specific requirements and conditions.
7. Deny a route permit for Great River Energy's 115 kV St. Joseph Area Transmission Line Project.

### Administrative

8. Authorize Commission staff to modify the ALJ Report and the proposed Route Permit to correct typographic and formatting errors, improve consistency, and ensure agreement with the Commission's final order in this matter.

Staff Recommendation: 1, 2, 4, 6, and 8.

**STATE OF MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

**ROUTE PERMIT FOR A  
HIGH-VOLTAGE TRANSMISSION LINE AND ASSOCIATED FACILITIES**

**IN  
STEARNS COUNTY**

**ISSUED TO  
GREAT RIVER ENERGY**

**PUC DOCKET NO. ET2/TL-22-235**

In accordance with the requirements of Minnesota Statutes Chapter 216E and Minnesota Rules Chapter 7850 this route permit is hereby issued to:

**Great River Energy**

Great River Energy is authorized by this route permit to construct and operate approximately 3.2 miles of 115-kilovolt (kV) transmission line and associated facilities in St. Joseph Township, the City of St. Joseph, and St. Wendell Township in Stearns County, Minnesota.

The high-voltage transmission line and associated facilities shall be built within the route identified in this permit and as portrayed on the route maps and in compliance with the conditions specified in this permit.

Approved and adopted this \_\_\_\_ day of [Month, Year]

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION

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Will Seuffert,  
Executive Secretary

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**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – Complaint Handling Procedures for Permitted Energy Facilities

Attachment 2 – Compliance Filing Procedures for Permitted Energy Facilities

Attachment 3 – Route Permit Maps



## 1 ROUTE PERMIT

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) hereby issues this route permit to Great River Energy (Permittee) pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Chapter 216E and Minnesota Rules Chapter 7850. This permit authorizes the Great River Energy to construct and operate an approximately 3.2 mile 115-kilovolt (kV) transmission line and associated facilities in St. Joseph Township, the City of St. Joseph, and St. Wendell Township in Stearns County, Minnesota (Project), and as identified in the attached Route Maps, hereby incorporated into this document as Attachment 3.

### 1.1 Pre-emption

Pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 216E.10, this permit shall be the sole route approval required to be obtained by the Permittee for construction of the transmission facilities and this permit shall supersede and preempt all zoning, building, or land use rules, regulations, or ordinances promulgated by regional, county, local and special purpose governments.

## 2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Project includes: (1) construction of approximately 3.2 miles of 115-kV transmission line and structures between the existing West St. Cloud, Westwood, and Le Sauk Substations; (2) extension of the transmission line approximately 170 feet northwesterly near the existing Le Sauk Substation to tap into a new 115-kV switch on Great River Energy's existing ST-FPT transmission line; (3) installation of an additional 115-kV breaker and associated equipment at the existing West St. Cloud Substation, which will require an approximately 6,500-square-foot expansion of the substation; and (4) installation of two 115-kV line switches: one for the tap feeding the existing Westwood Substation, and one north of the existing Le Sauk Substation.

### 2.1 Project Location

The Project is located entirely in Stearns County, Minnesota, in the City of St. Joseph, the Township of St. Joseph and a small section of St. Wendell Township.

County	City/Township Name	Township	Range	Section
Stearns	St. Joseph Township	124N	29W	12
Stearns	City of St. Joseph	124N	29W	1, 12
Stearns	St. Wendell Township	125N	29W	36

## 2.2 Substations and Associated Facilities

Substations and associated facilities include installation of:

- An additional 115-kV breaker and associated equipment at the existing West St. Cloud Substation, which will require an approximately 6,500-square-foot expansion of the substation;
- Two 115-kV line switches: one for the tap feeding the existing Westwood Substation, and one north of the existing Le Sauk Substation.

## 2.3 Structures

Most of the rebuilt 115-kV line will consist of single circuit, monopole wood structures spaced approximately 300 to 400 feet apart. Transmission structures will typically range in height from 70 to 90 feet above ground, depending upon the terrain and environmental constraints. The average diameter of the wood structures at ground level is 20 inches.

The table below details specifics on the various structure and conductor types as presented in the route permit application.

Structure Type	Material	Approximate Height Above Ground (feet)	Structure Base Diameter (inches)	Span Between Distances (feet)
Monopole with horizontal post or braced post	Wood, steel or ductile iron	70 - 90	18 - 36	300 – 400
H-Frame	Wood, steel or ductile iron	40 - 60	18 - 60	300 - 400
Dead-end	Wood, steel	70 - 90	18 - 60	300 - 400

Laminated wood structures or steel structures may be needed for switches and angled structures; the size of these structures is dependent on the weight of the switch material, the tension on the line, and/or the angle of deflection the pole location causes on the transmission line.

Multi-pole (3-pole dead-end) and/or H-frame structures may be used to cross underneath the existing Xcel Energy 115-kV line located between Ridgewood Road and 304th Street.

## **2.4 Conductors**

The three single-conductor phase wires will be 795 ACSS (Aluminum Conductor Steel Supported) or a conductor of similar capacity. A shield wire will be installed above the conductors for lightning protection.

## **3 DESIGNATED ROUTE**

The route designated by the Commission in this permit is the route described below and shown on the Route Maps in Attachment 3 of this permit. The route is generally described as follows:

The designated route exits the West St. Cloud substation and runs east on Ridgewood Road for approximately one-half mile to an upgraded switch and tap line for Stearns Electric Association's Westwood Substation. From the Westwood Substation, the designated route continues east for 1,100 feet along Ridgewood Road before turning north for approximately 1.4 miles to Mullen Road, then westerly along Mullen Road for approximately 0.9 miles where the existing 69-kV line terminates along County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 133. The 115-kV line will then extend approximately 170 feet northwest on new ROW, crossing over Mullen Road and CSAH 133, to a new switch pole on Great River Energy's existing ST-FPT 115-kV line.

The final alignment must be located within this designated route. The identified route widths on the attached route maps provide the Permittee with flexibility for minor adjustments of the alignment or right-of-way to accommodate landowner requests and unforeseen conditions. The final alignment (i.e., permanent and maintained rights-of-way) will be located within this designated route unless otherwise authorized by this permit or the Commission.

## **4 RIGHT-OF-WAY**

This Permit authorizes the Permittee to obtain a new permanent right-of-way for the transmission line up to 100 feet in width. The permanent right-of-way is typically 35 feet on both sides of the transmission line measured from its centerline. If guy wires are needed to support a structure, a 200-foot box right-of-way around such structures to accommodate guy wires and anchors are authorized.

The Project's anticipated alignment is intended to minimize potential impacts relative to criteria identified in Minn. R. 7850.4100. The actual right-of-way will generally conform to the anticipated alignment identified on the Route Maps, unless changes are requested by individual landowners and agreed to by the Permittee or for unforeseen conditions that are encountered or as otherwise provided for by this permit.

Any right-of-way modifications within the designated route shall be located to have comparable overall impacts relative to the factors in Minn. R. 7850.4100, as does the right-of-way identified in this permit, and shall be specifically identified, documented and approved as part of the plan and profile submitted pursuant to Section 9.1 of this permit.

Where the transmission line parallels existing highway and other road rights-of-way, the transmission line right-of-way shall occupy and utilize the existing right-of-way to the maximum extent possible; consistent with the criteria in Minn. R. 7850.4100 and the other requirements of this permit; and for highways under the jurisdiction of the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the procedures for accommodating utilities in trunk highway rights-of-way.

#### **4.1 ROUTE WIDTH VARIATIONS**

Route width variations may be allowed to accommodate the potential site-specific constraints listed below. These constraints may arise from any of the following:

1. Unforeseen circumstances encountered during the detailed engineering and design process.
2. Federal or state agency requirements.
3. Existing infrastructure within the route, including but not limited to railroads, natural gas and liquid pipelines, high voltage electric transmission lines, or sewer and water lines.

Any alignment modifications arising from these site-specific constraints that would result in right-of-way placement outside of the designated route shall be specifically reviewed by the Commission under Minn. R. 7850.4900.

### **5 GENERAL CONDITIONS**

The Permittee shall comply with the following conditions during construction and operation of the transmission line and associated facilities over the life of this permit.

#### **5.1 Permit Distribution**

Within 30 days of permit issuance, the Permittee shall provide all affected landowners with a copy of this permit and the complaint procedures. In no case shall the landowner receive this route permit and complaint procedures less than five days prior to the start of construction on their property. An affected landowner is any landowner or designee that is within or adjacent to the permitted route.

At the time of first contact, the Permittee shall also provide all affected landowners with a copy of the Department of Commerce's Rights-of-Way and Easements for Energy Facility Construction and Operation fact sheet.<sup>1</sup>

## **5.2 Access to Property**

The Permittee shall notify landowners or their designee at least 14 days in advance but not greater than 60 days in advance of entering the property, unless otherwise negotiated with the affected landowner.

## **5.3 Construction and Operation Practices**

The Permittee shall follow those specific construction practices and material specifications described in Great River Energy's Application for a route permit for the Rebuild of Existing 69-kV ST-WW Transmission Line to 115-kV, dated August 25, 2022, and the record of the proceedings unless this permit establishes a different requirement in which case this permit shall prevail.

### **5.3.1 Field Representative**

The Permittee shall designate a field representative responsible for overseeing compliance with the conditions of this permit during construction of the project. This person shall be accessible by telephone or other means during normal business hours throughout site preparation, construction, cleanup, and restoration.

The Permittee shall file with the Commission the name, address, email, phone number, and emergency phone number of the field representative 14 days prior to commencing construction. The Permittee shall provide the field representative's contact information to affected landowners, residents, local government units and other interested persons 14 days prior to commencing construction. The Permittee may change the field representative at any time upon notice to the Commission, affected landowners, residents, local government units and other interested persons.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities/documents/Easements%20Fact%20Sheet\\_08.05.14.pdf](http://mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities/documents/Easements%20Fact%20Sheet_08.05.14.pdf)

### **5.3.2 Employee Training and Education of Permit Terms and Conditions**

The Permittee shall inform and educate all employees, contractors, and other persons involved in the construction and ongoing operation of the transmission line of the terms and conditions of this permit.

### **5.3.3 Public Services, Public Utilities, and Existing Easements**

During construction, the Permittee shall minimize any disruption to public services or public utilities. To the extent disruptions to public services or public utilities do occur these occurrences will be temporary, and the Permittee will restore service promptly. Where any impacts to utilities have the potential to occur the Permittee will work with both landowners and local agencies to determine the most appropriate transmission structure placement.

The Permittee shall consult with landowners, townships, cities, and counties along the route and consider concerns regarding tree clearing, distance from existing structures, drain tiles, pole depth and placement in relationship to existing roads and road expansion plans.

The Permittee shall cooperate with county and city road authorities to develop appropriate signage and traffic management during construction.

### **5.3.4 Temporary Workspace**

The Permittee shall limit temporary easements to special construction access needs and additional staging, or lay-down areas required outside of the authorized right-of-way. Temporary space shall be selected to limit the removal and impacts to vegetation. Temporary easements outside of the authorized transmission line right-of-way will be obtained from affected landowners through rental agreements and are not provided for in this permit.

Temporary driveways may be constructed between the roadway and the structures to minimize impact using the shortest route possible. Construction mats should be used to minimize impacts on access paths and construction areas.

### **5.3.5 Noise**

The Permittee shall comply with noise standards established under Minn. R. 7030.0010 to 7030.0080. Construction and maintenance activities shall be limited to daytime working hours to the extent practicable to ensure nighttime noise level standards will not be exceeded.

### **5.3.6 Aesthetics**

The Permittee shall consider input pertaining to visual impacts from landowners or land management agencies prior to final location of structures, rights-of-way, and other areas with the potential for visual disturbance. Care shall be used to preserve the natural landscape, minimize tree removal and prevent any unnecessary destruction of the natural surroundings in the vicinity of the project during construction and maintenance. The Permittee shall work with landowners to locate the high-voltage transmission line to minimize the loss of agricultural land, forest, and wetlands, and to avoid homes and farmsteads. Structures shall be placed at a distance, consistent with sound engineering principles and system reliability criteria, from intersecting roads, highways, or trail crossings.

### **5.3.7 Soil Erosion and Sediment Control**

The Permittee shall implement those erosion prevention and sediment control practices recommended by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Construction Stormwater Program.

The Permittee shall implement reasonable measures to minimize erosion and sedimentation during construction and shall employ perimeter sediment controls, protect exposed soil by promptly planting, seeding, using erosion control blankets and turf reinforcement mats, stabilizing slopes, protecting storm drain inlets, protecting soil stockpiles, and controlling vehicle tracking. Contours shall be graded as required so that all surfaces provide for proper drainage, blend with the natural terrain, and are left in a condition that will facilitate re-vegetation and prevent erosion. All areas disturbed during construction of the facilities shall be returned to pre-construction conditions.

In accordance with Minnesota Pollution Control Agency requirements, the Permittee shall obtain a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES)/State Disposal System (SDS) Construction Stormwater permit from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

### **5.3.8 Wetlands and Water Resources**

Wetland impact avoidance measures that shall be implemented during the design and construction of the transmission line and will include spacing and placing of power poles at variable distances to span and avoid wetlands, watercourses, and floodplains. Unavoidable wetland impacts because of the placement of poles shall be limited to the immediate area around the poles. To minimize impacts, construction in wetland areas shall occur during frozen ground conditions where practicable and shall be according to permit requirements by the

applicable permitting authority. When construction during winter is not possible, wooden, or composite mats shall be used to protect wetland vegetation. Soil excavated from the wetlands and riparian areas shall be contained and not placed back into the wetland or riparian area. Wetlands and riparian areas shall be accessed using the shortest route possible to minimize travel through wetland areas and prevent unnecessary impacts. No staging or stringing set up areas shall be placed within or adjacent to wetlands or water resources, as practicable. Power pole structures shall be assembled on upland areas before they are brought to the site for installation.

Areas disturbed by construction activities shall be restored to pre-construction conditions. Restoration of the wetlands will be performed by the Permittee in accordance with the requirements of applicable state and federal permits or laws and landowner agreements.

All requirements of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (wetlands under federal jurisdiction), Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (Public Waters/Wetlands), and affected Counties (wetlands under the jurisdiction of the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act) shall be met.

#### **5.3.9 Vegetation Management**

The Permittee shall minimize the number of trees to be removed in selecting the right-of-way specifically preserving to the maximum extent practicable windbreaks, shelterbelts, living snow fences, and vegetation in areas such as trail and stream crossings where vegetative screening may minimize aesthetic impacts, to the extent that such actions do not violate sound engineering principles or system reliability criteria.

Tall growing species located within the transmission line right-of-way that endanger the safe and reliable operation of the transmission facility will be removed by the Permittee. The Permittee shall leave undisturbed, to the extent possible, existing low growing species in the right-of-way or replant such species in the right-of-way to blend the difference between the right-of-way and adjacent areas, to the extent that the low growing vegetation will not pose a threat to the transmission facility or impede construction.

#### **5.3.10 Application of Pesticides**

The Permittee shall restrict pesticide use to those pesticides and methods of application approved by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Selective foliage or basal application shall be used when practicable. All pesticides shall be applied in a safe and cautious manner so



as not to damage adjacent properties including crops, orchards, tree farms, apiaries, or gardens. The Permittee shall contact the landowner or designee to obtain approval for the use of pesticide at least 14 days prior to any application on their property. The landowner may request that there be no application of pesticides on any part of the site within the landowner's property. The Permittee shall provide notice of pesticide application to affected landowners and known beekeepers operating apiaries within three miles of the project site at least 14 days prior to such application.

#### **5.3.11 Invasive Species**

The Permittee shall employ best management practices to avoid the potential spread of invasive species on lands disturbed by project construction activities.

#### **5.3.12 Noxious Weeds**

The Permittee shall take all reasonable precautions against the spread of noxious weeds during all phases of construction. When utilizing seed to establish temporary and permanent vegetative cover on exposed soil the Permittee shall select site appropriate seed certified to be free of noxious weeds. To the extent possible, the Permittee shall use native seed mixes. The Permittee shall consult with landowners on the selection and use of seed for replanting.

#### **5.3.13 Roads**

The Permittee shall advise the appropriate governing bodies having jurisdiction over all state, county, city, or township roads that will be used during the construction phase of the project. Where practical, existing roadways shall be used for all activities associated with construction of the facility. Oversize or overweight loads associated with the facility shall not be hauled across public roads without required permits and approvals.

The Permittee shall construct the least number of site access roads as possible. Access roads shall not be constructed across streams and drainage ways without the required permits and approvals. Access roads shall be constructed in accordance with all necessary township, county or state road requirements and permits.

The Permittee shall promptly repair private roads or lanes damaged when moving equipment or when accessing construction workspace, unless otherwise negotiated with the affected landowner.

#### **5.3.14 Archaeological and Historic Resources**

The Permittee shall make every effort to avoid impacts to identified archaeological and historic resources when constructing the transmission facility. If a resource is encountered, the Permittee shall contact and consult with the State Historic Preservation Office and the State Archaeologist. Where feasible, avoidance of the resource is required. Where not feasible, mitigation must include an effort to minimize project impacts on the resource consistent with State Historic Preservation Office and State Archaeologist requirements.

Prior to construction, workers shall be trained about the need to avoid cultural properties, how to identify cultural properties, and procedures to follow if undocumented cultural properties, including gravesites, are found during construction. If human remains are encountered during construction, the Permittee shall immediately halt construction and promptly notify local law enforcement and the State Archaeologist. Construction at such location shall not proceed until authorized by local law enforcement or the State Archaeologist.

#### **5.3.15 Avian Protection**

The Permittee in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources shall identify areas of the project where bird flight diverters will be incorporated into the transmission line design to prevent large avian collisions attributed to visibility issues. Standard transmission design shall incorporate adequate spacing of conductors and grounding devices in accordance with Avian Power Line Interaction Committee standards to eliminate the risk of electrocution to raptors with larger wingspans that may simultaneously come in contact with a conductor and grounding devices.

#### **5.3.16 Restoration**

The Permittee shall restore the right-of-way, temporary workspaces, access roads, abandoned right-of-way, and other public or private lands affected by construction of the transmission line. Restoration within the right-of-way must be compatible with the safe operation, maintenance, and inspection of the transmission line. Within 60 days after completion of all restoration activities, the Permittee shall advise the Commission in writing of the completion of such activities.

### **5.3.17 Cleanup**

All waste and scrap that is the product of construction shall be removed from the right-of-way and all premises on which construction activities were conducted and properly disposed of upon completion of each task. Personal litter, including bottles, cans, and paper from construction activities shall be removed daily.

### **5.3.18 Pollution and Hazardous Wastes**

All appropriate precautions to protect against pollution of the environment must be taken by the Permittee. The Permittee shall be responsible for compliance with all laws applicable to the generation, storage, transportation, clean up and disposal of all wastes generated during construction and restoration of the right-of-way.

### **5.3.19 Damages**

The Permittee shall restore or fairly compensate landowners for damage to crops, fences, private roads and lanes, landscaping, drain tile, or other damages sustained during construction.

## **5.4 Electrical Performance Standards**

### **5.4.1 Grounding**

The Permittee shall design, construct, and operate the transmission line in a manner so that the maximum induced steady-state short-circuit current shall be limited to five milliamperes root mean square (rms) alternating current between the ground and any non-stationary object within the right-of-way, including but not limited to large motor vehicles and agricultural equipment. All fixed metallic objects on or off the right-of-way, except electric fences that parallel or cross the right-of-way, shall be grounded to the extent necessary to limit the induced short-circuit current between ground and the object so as not to exceed one milliamperes rms under steady state conditions of the transmission line and to comply with the ground fault conditions specified in the National Electric Safety Code. The Permittee shall address and rectify any induced current problems that arise during transmission line operation.

#### **5.4.2 Electric Field**

The transmission line shall be designed, constructed, and operated in such a manner that the electric field measured one meter above ground level immediately below the transmission line shall not exceed 8.0 kV/m rms.

#### **5.4.3 Interference with Communication Devices**

If interference with radio or television, satellite, wireless internet, GPS-based agriculture navigation systems or other communication devices is caused by the presence or operation of the transmission line, the Permittee shall take whatever action is necessary to restore or provide reception equivalent to reception levels in the immediate area just prior to the construction of the line.

### **5.5 Other Requirements**

#### **5.5.1 Safety Codes and Design Requirements**

The transmission line and associated facilities shall be designed to meet or exceed all relevant local and state codes, the National Electric Safety Code, and North American Electric Reliability Corporation requirements. This includes standards relating to clearances to ground, clearance to crossing utilities, clearance to buildings, strength of materials, clearances over roadways, right-of-way widths, and permit requirements.

#### **5.5.2 Other Permits and Regulations**

The Permittee shall comply with all applicable state rules and statutes. The Permittee shall obtain all required permits for the project and comply with the conditions of those permits unless those permits conflict with or are preempted by federal or state permits and regulations. A list of the permits known to be required is included in the permit application. The Permittee shall submit a copy of such permits to the Commission upon request.

## **6 SPECIAL CONDITIONS**

Special conditions shall take precedence over other conditions of this permit should there be a conflict.

### 6.1 Independent Third-Party Monitor

Prior to any construction, the Permittee shall propose a scope of work and identify an independent third-party monitor to conduct Project construction monitoring on behalf of Commerce. The scope of work shall be developed in consultation with and approved by Commerce. This third-party monitor will report directly to and will be under the control of Commerce with costs borne by the Permittee.

The Permittee shall file with the Commission the scope of work and the name, address, email, and telephone number of the third party-monitor at least 30 days prior to commencing any construction or right-of-way preparation and upon any change in contact information that may occur during construction of the Project and restoration of the right-of-way.

### 6.2 Northern Long-Eared Bat

The Permittee will coordinate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding the timing of tree-clearing and any other construction or restoration actions that may impact Northern Long-Eared Bat in vicinity of the project.

### 6.3 Vegetation Management Plan

Permittee shall develop a vegetation management plan in coordination with EERA and DNR. The vegetation management plan and documentation of the coordination efforts between the permittee and the coordinating agencies shall be filed at least 14 days prior to the plan and profile for the project. The Permittee shall provide all affected landowners with copies of the plan.

The vegetation management plan must include the following:

- Management objectives addressing short term (seeding and establishment) and long-term goals (life of the project).
- A description of planned restoration and vegetation management activities, including how the site will be prepared, timing of activities, how seeding will occur (broadcast, drilling, etc.), and the types of seed mixes to be used.
- A description of tree removal/planting activities and the timing of such activities.
- A description of how the site will be monitored and evaluated to meet management goals.

- A description of the management tools used to maintain vegetation (e.g., mowing, spotspraying, hand removal, fire, grazing, etc.), including the timing and frequency of maintenance activities.

#### **6.4 Coordination with Cities of St. Joseph and St. Cloud**

At least 30 days prior to commencing construction, Great River Energy shall file documentation of the coordination regarding the Project which has occurred after the issuance of the route permit with the City of St. Joseph, the City of St. Cloud, and St. Wendell Township.

#### **6.5 Dust Control**

The Permittee shall utilize non-chloride products for onsite dust control during construction.

#### **6.6 Wildlife-Friendly Erosion Control**

The Permittee shall use only “bio-netting” or “natural netting” types and mulch products without synthetic (plastic) fiber additives.

### **7 DELAY IN CONSTRUCTION**

If the Permittee has not commenced construction or improvement of the route within four years after the date of issuance of this permit the Permittee shall file a report on the failure to construct and the Commission shall consider suspension of the permit in accordance with Minn. R. 7850.4700.

### **8 COMPLAINT PROCEDURES**

Prior to the start of construction, the Permittee shall submit to the Commission the procedures that will be used to receive and respond to complaints. The procedures shall be in accordance with the requirements of Minn. R. 7829.1500 or Minn. R. 7829.1700, and as set forth in the complaint procedures attached to this permit.

Upon request, the Permittee shall assist the Commission with the disposition of unresolved or longstanding complaints. This assistance shall include, but is not limited to, the submittal of complaint correspondence and complaint resolution efforts.

## **9 COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS**

Failure to timely and properly make compliance filings required by this permit is a failure to comply with the conditions of this permit. Compliance filings must be electronically filed with the Commission.

### **9.1 Plan and Profile**

At least 30 days before right-of-way preparation for construction begins on any segment or portion of the project, the Permittee shall provide the Commission with a plan and profile of the right-of-way and the specifications and drawings for right-of-way preparation, construction, structure specifications and locations, cleanup, and restoration for the transmission line. The documentation shall include maps depicting the plan and profile including the right-of-way, alignment, and structures in relation to the route and alignment approved per this permit.

The Permittee may not commence construction until the 30 days has expired or until the Commission has advised the Permittee in writing that it has completed its review of the documents and determined that the planned construction is consistent with this permit. If the Permittee intends to make any significant changes in its plan and profile or the specifications and drawings after submission to the Commission, the Permittee shall notify the Commission at least five days before implementing the changes. No changes shall be made that would be in violation of any of the terms of this permit.

### **9.2 Status Reports**

The Permittee shall report to the Commission on progress during finalization of the route, design of structures, and construction of the transmission line. The Permittee need not report more frequently than monthly. Reports shall begin with the submittal of the plan and profile for the project and continue until completion of restoration.

### **9.3 Notification to Commission**

At least three days before the line is to be placed into service, the Permittee shall notify the Commission of the date on which the line will be placed into service and the date on which construction was complete.

#### **9.4 As-Builts**

Within 90 days after completion of construction, the Permittee shall submit copies of all final as-built plans and specifications developed during the project.

#### **9.5 GPS Data**

Within 90 days after completion of construction, the Permittee shall submit to the Commission, in the format requested by the Commission, geo-spatial information (e.g., ArcGIS compatible map files, GPS coordinates, associated database of characteristics) for all structures associated with the transmission line and each substation connected.

#### **9.6 Right of Entry**

The Permittee shall allow Commission designated representatives to perform the following, upon reasonable notice, upon presentation of credentials and at all times in compliance with the Permittee's site safety standards.

- (a) To enter upon the facilities easement of the property for the purpose of obtaining information, examining records, and conducting surveys or investigations.
- (b) To bring such equipment upon the facilities easement of the property as is necessary to conduct such surveys and investigations.
- (c) To sample and monitor upon the facilities easement of the property.
- (d) To examine and copy any documents pertaining to compliance with the conditions of this route permit.

### **10 PERMIT AMENDMENT**

This permit may be amended at any time by the Commission. Any person may request an amendment of the conditions of this permit by submitting a request to the Commission in writing describing the amendment sought and the reasons for the amendment. The Commission will mail notice of receipt of the request to the Permittee. The Commission may amend the conditions after affording the Permittee and interested persons such process as is required.

### **11 TRANSFER OF PERMIT**

The Permittee may request at any time that the Commission transfer this permit to another person or entity. The Permittee shall provide the name and description of the person or entity



to whom the permit is requested to be transferred, the reasons for the transfer, a description of the facilities affected, and the proposed effective date of the transfer.

The person to whom the permit is to be transferred shall provide the Commission with such information as the Commission shall require to determine whether the new Permittee can comply with the conditions of the permit. The Commission may authorize transfer of the permit after affording the Permittee, the new Permittee, and interested persons such process as is required.

## **12 REVOCATION OR SUSPENSION OF THE PERMIT**

The Commission may initiate action to revoke or suspend this permit at any time. The Commission shall act in accordance with the requirements of Minn. R. 7850.5100, to revoke or suspend the permit.

**ATTACHMENT 1**

**Complaint Handling Procedures for Permitted Energy Facilities**

**MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURES FOR  
PERMITTED ENERGY FACILITIES**

**A. Purpose**

To establish a uniform and timely method of reporting and resolving complaints received by the permittee concerning permit conditions for site or route preparation, construction, cleanup, restoration, operation, and maintenance.

**B. Scope**

This document describes complaint reporting procedures and frequency.

**C. Applicability**

The procedures shall be used for all complaints received by the permittee and all complaints received by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) under Minn. R. 7829.1500 or Minn. R. 7829.1700 relevant to this permit.

**D. Definitions**

**Complaint:** A verbal or written statement presented to the permittee by a person expressing dissatisfaction or concern regarding site or route preparation, cleanup or restoration, or other permit conditions. Complaints do not include requests, inquiries, questions or general comments.

**Substantial Complaint:** A written complaint alleging a violation of a specific permit condition that, if substantiated, could result in permit modification or suspension pursuant to the applicable regulations.

**Unresolved Complaint:** A complaint which, despite the good faith efforts of the permittee and a person, remains unresolved or unsatisfactorily resolved to one or both of the parties.

**Person:** An individual, partnership, joint venture, private or public corporation, association, firm, public service company, cooperative, political subdivision, municipal corporation, government agency, public utility district, or any other entity, public or private; however organized.

## **E. Complaint Documentation and Processing**

1. The permittee shall designate a representative responsible for filing complaints to the Commission's eDocket system. This person's name, phone number and email address shall accompany all complaint submittals. The name and contact information for the representative shall be kept current in eDockets.
2. A person presenting the complaint should, to the extent possible, include the following information in their communications:
  - a. name, address, phone number, and email address;
  - b. initial date of the complaint;
  - c. tract, parcel number, or address of the complaint;
  - d. a summary of the complaint; and
  - e. whether the complaint relates to a permit violation, a construction practice issue, or other type of complaint.
3. The permittee shall document all complaints by maintaining a record of all applicable information concerning the complaint, including the following:
  - a. docket number and project name;
  - b. name of complainant, address, phone number and email address;
  - c. precise description of property or parcel number;
  - d. name of permittee representative receiving complaint and date of receipt;
  - e. nature of complaint and the applicable permit condition(s);
  - f. summary of activities undertaken to resolve the complaint; and
  - g. a statement on the final disposition of the complaint.

## **F. Reporting Requirements**

The permittee shall commence complaint reporting at the beginning of project construction and continue through the term of the permit, unless otherwise required below. The permittee shall report all complaints to the Commission according to the following schedule:

**Immediate Reports:** All substantial complaints shall be reported to the Commission the same day received, or on the following working day for complaints received after working hours. Such reports are to be directed to the Commission's Public Advisor at 1-800-657-3782 (voice messages are acceptable) or [publicadvisor.puc@state.mn.us](mailto:publicadvisor.puc@state.mn.us). For e-mail reporting, the email subject line should read "PUC EFP Complaint" and include the appropriate project docket number.

**Monthly Reports:** During project construction, restoration, and operation, a summary of all complaints, including substantial complaints received or resolved during the preceding month, shall be filed by the 15th of each month to Will Seuffert, Executive Secretary, Public Utilities

Commission, using the eDockets system. The eDockets system is located at: <https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/home.jsp>. If no complaints were received during the preceding month, the permittee shall file a summary indicating that no complaints were received.

If a project has submitted twelve consecutive months of complaint reports with no complaints, monthly reports can terminate by a letter to eDockets notifying the Commission of such action. If a substantial complaint is received (by the company or the Commission) following termination of the monthly complaint report, as noted above, the monthly reporting should commence for a period of one year following the most recent complaint or upon resolution of all pending complaints.

If a permittee is found to be in violation of this section, the Commission may reinstate monthly complaint reporting for the remaining permit term or enact some other commensurate requirement via notification by the Executive Secretary or some other action as decided by the Commission.

#### **G. Complaints Received by the Commission**

Complaints received directly by the Commission from aggrieved persons regarding the permit or issues related to site or route preparation, construction, cleanup, restoration, or operation and maintenance will be promptly sent to the permittee.

The permittee shall notify the Commission when the issue has been resolved. The permittee will add the complaint to the monthly reports of all complaints. If the permittee is unable to find resolution, the Commission will use the process outlined in the Unresolved Complaints Section to process the issue.

#### **H. Commission Process for Unresolved Complaints**

Complaints raising substantial and unresolved permit issues will be investigated by the Commission. Staff will notify the permittee and appropriate persons if it determines that the complaint is a substantial complaint. With respect to such complaints, the permittee and complainant shall be required to submit a written summary of the complaint and its current position on the issues to the Commission. Staff will set a deadline for comments. As necessary, the complaint will be presented to the Commission for consideration.

#### **I. Permittee Contacts for Complaints and Complaint Reporting**

Complaints may be filed by mail or email to the permittee's designated complaint representative, or to the Commission's Public Advisor at 1-800-657-3782 or [publicadvisor.puc@state.mn.us](mailto:publicadvisor.puc@state.mn.us). The name and contact information for the permittee's designated complaint representative shall be kept current in the Commission's eDocket system.

**ATTACHMENT 2**

Compliance Filing Procedures for Permitted Energy Facilities

**MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
COMPLIANCE FILING PROCEDURE FOR  
PERMITTED ENERGY FACILITIES**

**A. Purpose**

To establish a uniform and timely method of submitting information required by Commission energy facility permits.

**B. Scope and Applicability**

This procedure encompasses all known compliance filings required by permit.

**C. Definitions**

**Compliance Filing:** A filing of information to the Commission, where the information is required by a Commission site or route permit.

**D. Responsibilities**

1. The Permittee shall file all compliance filings with Will Seuffert, Executive Secretary, Public Utilities Commission, through the eDockets system. The eDockets system is located at:  
<https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/home.jsp>

General instructions are provided on the eDockets website. Permittees must register on the website to file documents.

2. All filings must have a cover sheet that includes:
  - a. Date
  - b. Name of submitter/permittee
  - c. Type of permit (site or route)
  - d. Project location
  - e. Project docket number
  - f. Permit section under which the filing is made
  - g. Short description of the filing

3. Filings that are graphic intensive (e.g., maps, engineered drawings) must, in addition to being electronically filed, be submitted as paper copies and on CD. Paper copies and CDs should be sent to: 1) Will Seuffert, Executive Secretary, Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, 121 7th Place East, Suite 350, St. Paul, MN 55101-2147, and 2) Department of Commerce, Energy Environmental Review and Analysis, 85 7th Place East, Suite 500, St. Paul, MN 55101-2198.

The Commission may request a paper copy of any electronically filed document.



## PERMIT COMPLIANCE FILINGS<sup>1</sup>

PERMITTEE: Great River Energy

PERMIT TYPE: High-Voltage Transmission Line Route

PROJECT LOCATION: St. Joseph, St. Joseph Township and St. Wendell Township, Stearns County, MN.

PUC DOCKET NUMBER: ET2/TL-22-235

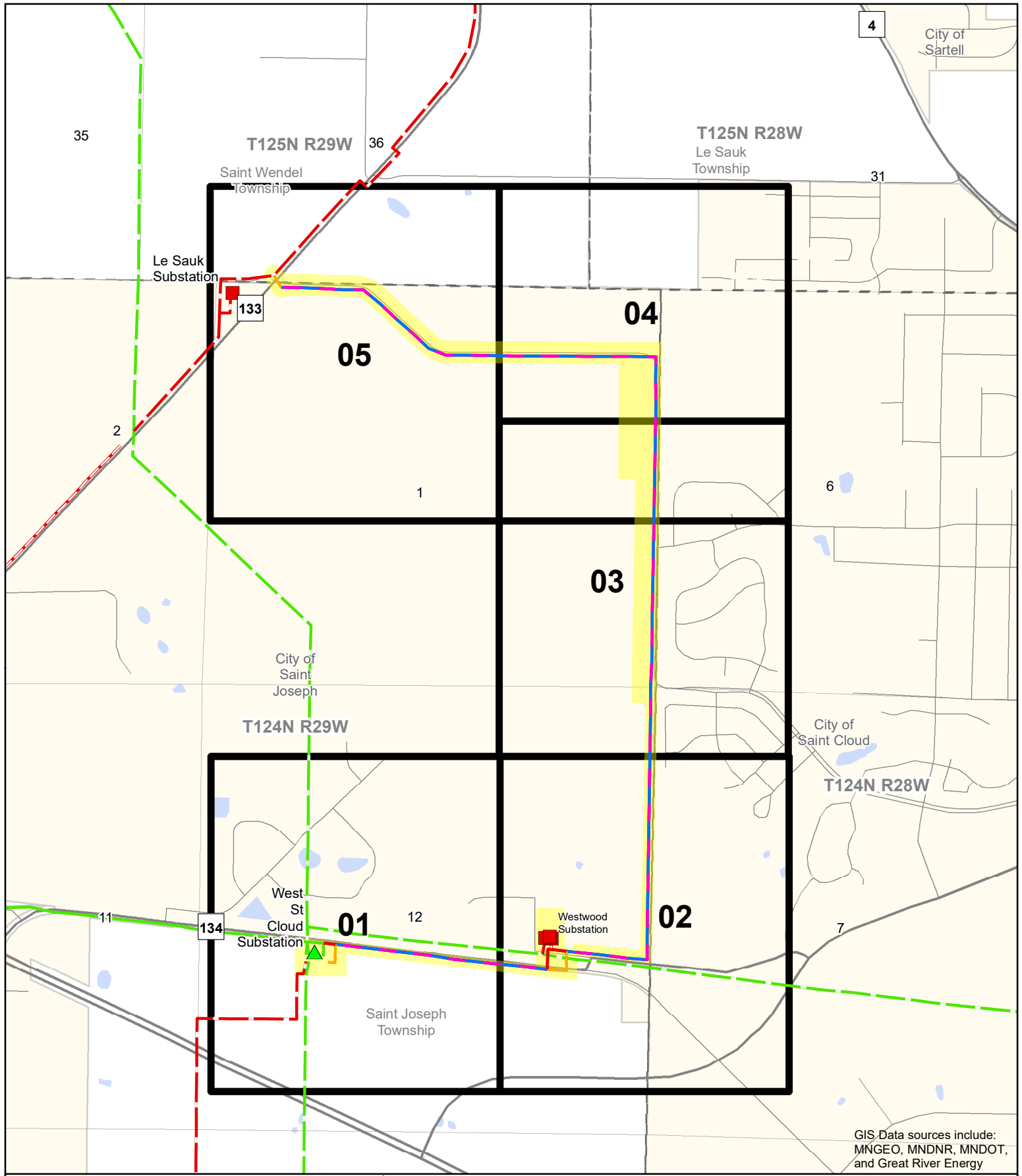
Filing Number	Permit Section	Description of Compliance Filing	Due Date
1.	5.1	Permit Distribution	30 days after permit issuance
2.	5.2	Access to Property	14 days in advance but not more than 60 days
3.	5.3.1	Field Representative	14 days prior to commencing construction
4.	5.3.10	Application of Pesticides	Notice 14 days prior to application
5.	5.3.16	Site Restoration Report	60 days after completion of all restoration activities
6.	5.5.2	List of Other Required Permits	Upon request
7.	6.1	Independent Third-Party Monitor	30 days prior to construction
8.	6.3	Vegetation Management Plan	At least 14 days prior to submitting the plan and profile
9.	6.4	Coordination with St. Joseph and St. Cloud	30 days prior to construction

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<sup>1</sup> This compilation of permit compliance filings is provided for the convenience of the permittee and the Commission. It is not a substitute for the permit; the language of the permit controls.

Filing Number	Permit Section	Description of Compliance Filing	Due Date
10.	7	Delay in Construction	Four years after permit issuance, as necessary
11.	8	Complaint Procedures	Prior to commencing construction
12.	9.1	Plan and Profile	30 days prior to commencing construction
13.	9.2	Status Reports	Monthly through restoration
14.	9.3	Notification to Commission	Three days prior to service
15.	9.4	As-Builts	90 days after construction is complete
16.	9.5	GPS Data	90 days after construction is complete
17.	Complaint Reporting	Monthly Complaint Reports	See Route Permit Attachment 1
18.	Complaint Reporting	Immediate Complaint Reports	By the following day throughout the life of the permit

**ATTACHMENT 3**  
Route Permit Maps

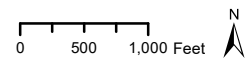


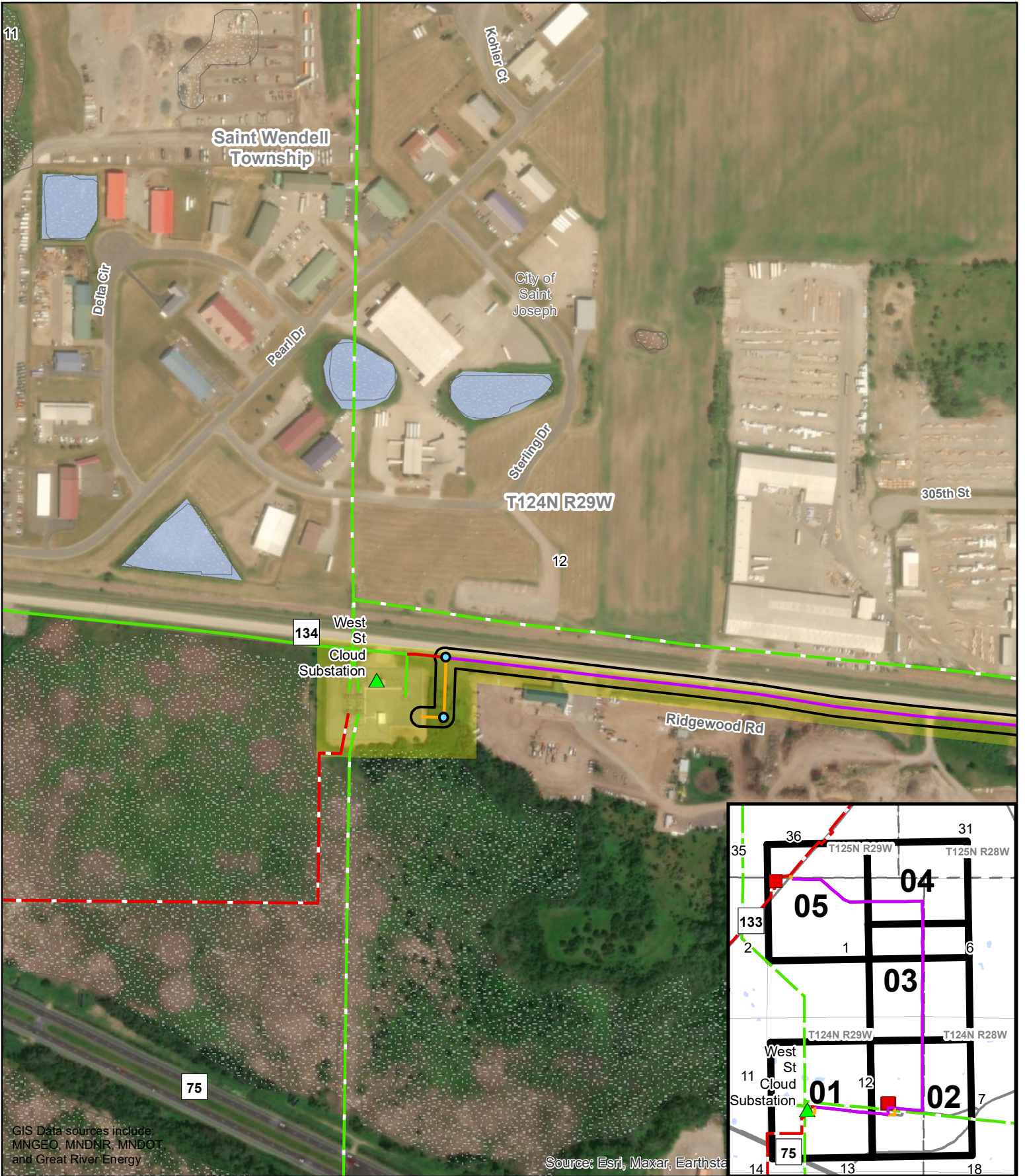
GIS Data sources include:  
MNGEO, MNDNR, MNDOT,  
and Great River Energy

- Great River Energy**
- Proposed 115-kV transmission line replacing existing 69-kV transmission line
  - Proposed 115-kV transmission line
  - Existing 69-kV transmission line to be removed
  - Existing de-energized 69-kV transmission line
  - Existing 115-kV transmission line

- ▲ Existing transmission substation
  - Existing distribution substation
  - Project route
- Non-GRE Transmission**
- Existing 69-kV transmission line
  - Existing 115-kV transmission line

**ST-WW 69-kV to 115-kV Conversion**












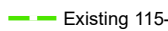
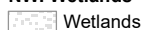


GIS Data sources include:  
MNGEO, MNDNR, MNDOT,  
and Great River Energy

Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar

**Great River Energy**

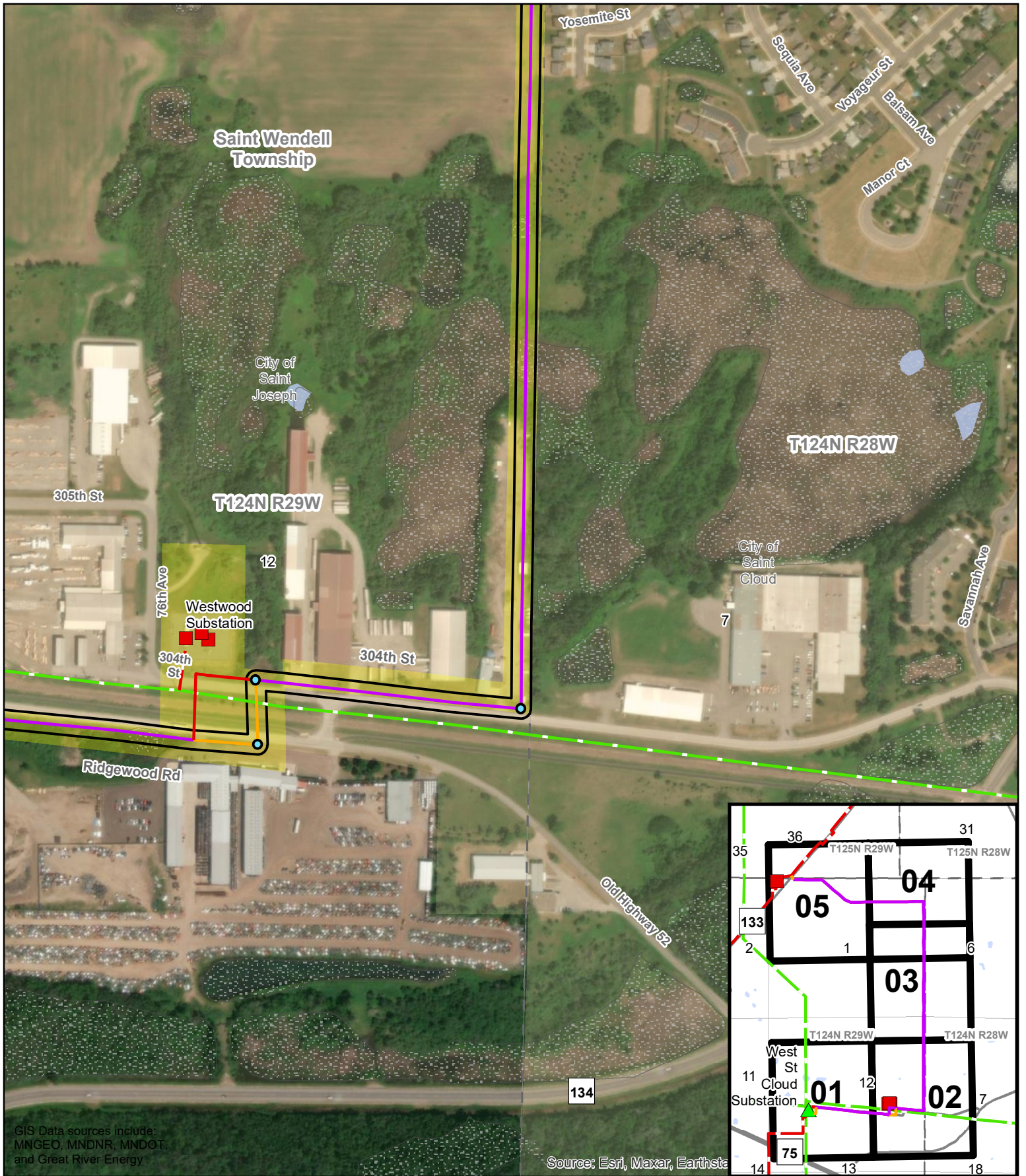
-  Proposed 115-kV transmission line replacing existing 69-kV transmission line
-  Proposed 115-kV transmission line
-  Existing 69-kV transmission line to be removed
-  Existing 115-kV transmission line
-  Existing transmission substation
-  Potential deadend structure

-  Project route
-  Proposed right-of-way
- Non-GRE Transmission**
-  Existing 69-kV transmission line
-  Existing 115-kV transmission line
- NWI Wetlands**
-  Wetlands

**ST-WW 69-kV to  
115-kV Conversion**  
Page 1 of 5

0 250 500 Feet





GIS Data sources include:  
 MNGEO, MNDNR, MNDOT,  
 and Great River Energy

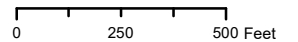
Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar

**Great River Energy**

- Proposed 115-kV transmission line replacing existing 69-kV transmission line
- Proposed 115-kV transmission line
- Existing 69-kV transmission line to be removed
- Existing 115-kV transmission line
- Existing distribution substation
- Potential deadend structure

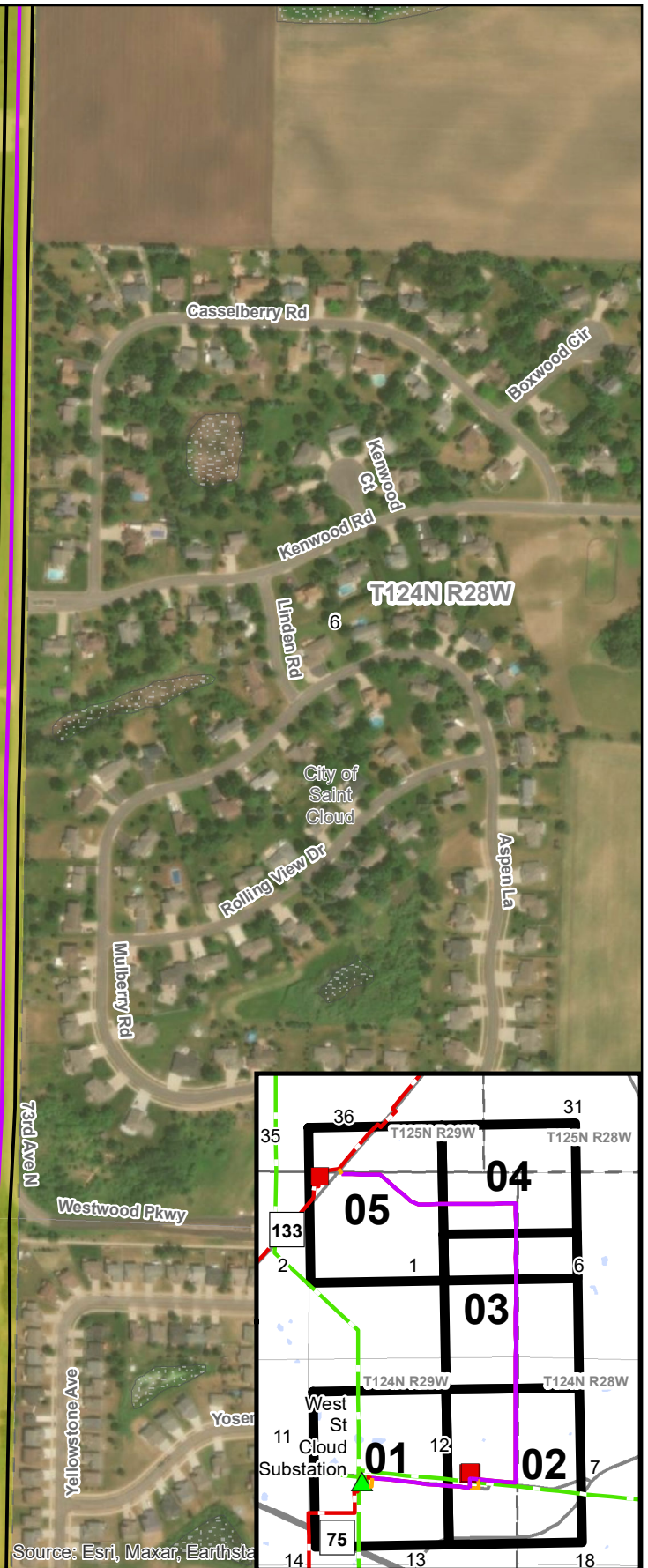
- Project route
- Proposed right-of-way
- Non-GRE Transmission**
- Existing 115-kV transmission line
- NWI Wetlands**
- Wetlands

**ST-WW 69-kV to  
 115-kV Conversion**  
 Page 2 of 5

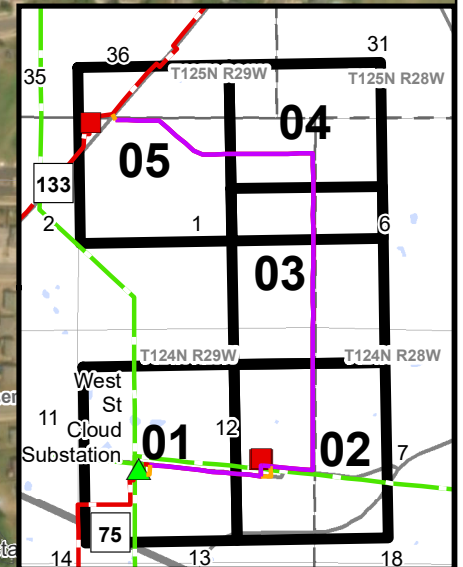




GIS Data sources include:  
MNGEO, MNDNR, MNDOT,  
and Great River Energy



Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar



**Great River Energy**

Proposed 115-kV transmission line replacing existing 69-kV transmission line

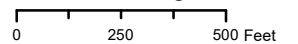
Project route

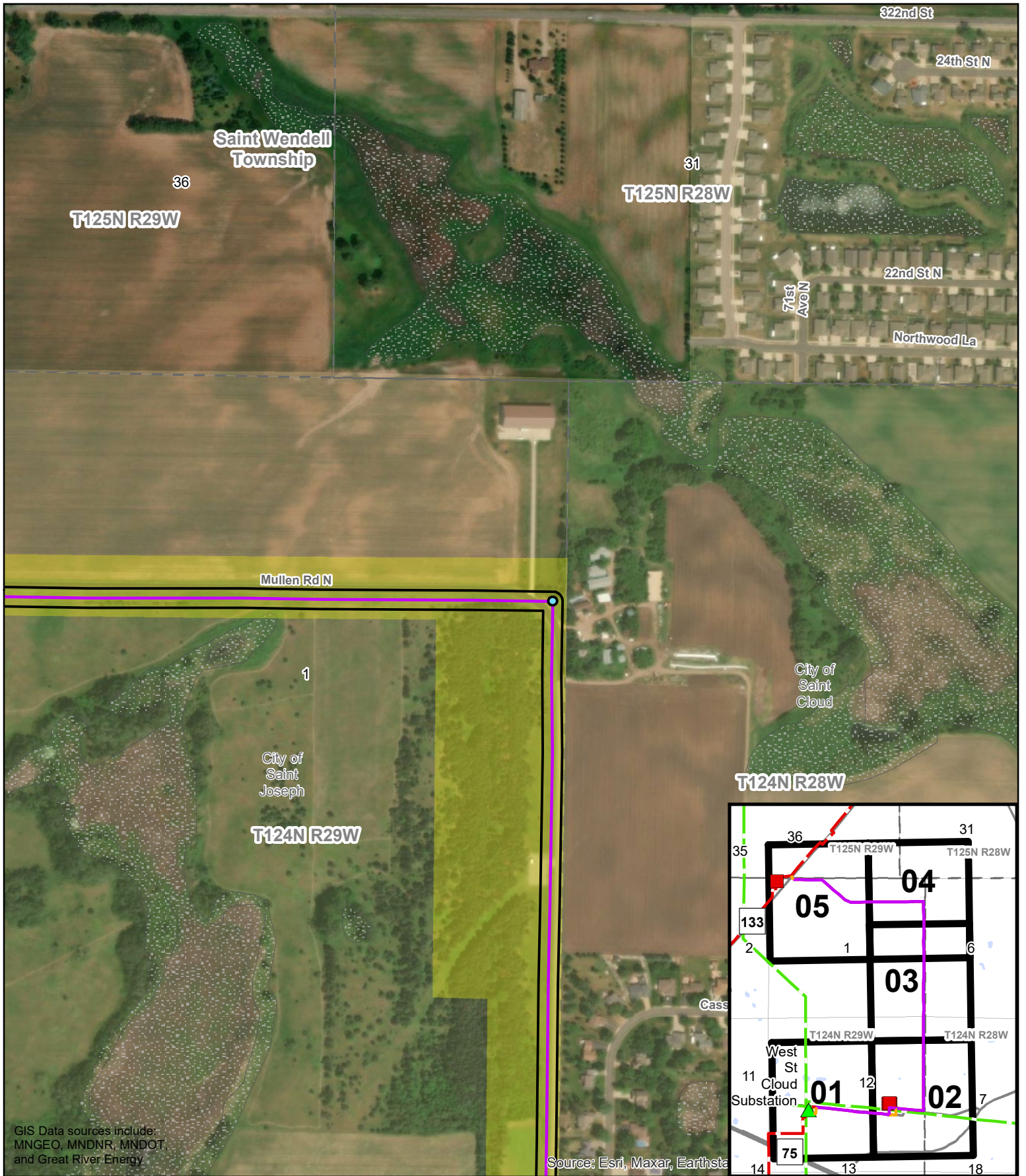
Proposed right-of-way

**NWI Wetlands**

Wetlands

**ST-WW 69-kV to 115-kV Conversion**









GIS Data sources include: MNGEO, MNDNR, MNDOT, and Great River Energy

Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar

**Great River Energy**

-  Proposed 115-kV transmission line replacing existing 69-kV transmission line
-  Potential deadend structure
-  Project route
-  Proposed right-of-way

- NWI Wetlands**
-  Wetlands

**ST-WW 69-kV to 115-kV Conversion**  
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