

From: [Freske, Bruce](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#); [Klavetter, Mead](#)
Cc: [michael budd](#); [Powers, Neil](#)
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Hillman WPA - Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Project Docket No. E017, ET10/TL-23-160
Date: Wednesday, April 9, 2025 8:50:08 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[Proposed Alternatives Decision Options Maps 20250404.pdf](#)

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Thank you Jenna for informing us of these proposed alternate routes. I am unable to attend the meeting tomorrow but would like to provide the following comments for the record.

The newly proposed south route along US Hwy 12, in Odessa Township, would cross our Hillman Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) which is one of the most important WPA's we manage. We have been acquiring, restoring, and managing land for this WPA since the early 1960's and have spent millions of dollars to create this important waterfowl habitat.

The newly proposed north route, which travels past the north side of Artichoke Lake, would cross Artichoke WPA which is likewise an important waterfowl habitat area. However, regardless of the importance, all proposed projects that impact federal lands must undergo a compatibility review. Projects which are not considered compatible for the purposes for which a WPA was established will not be granted a right-of-way. It may be possible for a land exchange to occur so the project may occur on an affected WPA, however, this option is only available if no other practical alternative is available. Based on my 37 years of experience with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, I believe it is highly unlikely the transmission line project would be considered compatible. It also appears to me that there are other practical option available, which if this case, then a land exchange option would not be offered. I should add that a land exchange process is quite lengthy, and based on a land exchange we recently did with MN DOT when they rebuilt U.S. highway 12, will take at least 3 years to complete, and perhaps even longer given recent significant staff reductions our agency has experienced.

Thank you Jenna for your excellent communication with our office. I want to inform you that I will be retiring on April 18th. Michael Budd, the Project Leader at Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge, will take over my duties after I leave.

Bruce Freske