

February 4, 2015

Daniel P. Wolf
Executive Secretary
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Place East, Suite 350
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101-2147

RE: **Petition for Certificate of Need**
Docket No. ET2,E015/CN-14-787

Dear Mr. Wolf:

Attached are the comments of the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources (Department) on the following matter:

Application for a Certificate of Need and Route Permit by Great River Energy and Minnesota Power for the Menahga Area 115 kV Transmission Line Project in Hubbard, Wadena and Becker Counties, Minnesota.

The petition was filed on January 13, 2015 by:

William R. Kaul
Vice President, Transmission
Great River Energy
12300 Elm Creek Blvd.
Maple Grove, MN 55369

The Department recommends that the Commission **find the application complete** and is available to answer any questions the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission may have.

Sincerely,

/s/ MICHAEL N. ZAJICEK
Rate Analyst

MNZ/lt
Attachment

BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

COMMENTS OF THE
MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
DIVISION OF ENERGY RESOURCES

DOCKET NO. ET2,E015/CN-14-787

I. BACKGROUND

A. NOTICE AND EXEMPTION PETITIONS

On September 18, 2014, Great River Energy (GRE), on behalf of itself and Minnesota Power (the Applicants) filed a *Notice Plan Petition for the Application of Great River Energy and Minnesota Power for a Certificate of Need for the Menahga Area 115 kV Transmission Line Project in Hubbard, Wadena and Becker Counties, Minnesota* (Notice Petition). The Notice Petition provides the Applicants' proposed Notice Plan to communicate its intent to construct a 115 kilovolt (kV) transmission line and construct/modify substations in the Menahga area in Hubbard, Wadena, and Becker counties. According to GRE, the project is required to serve a proposed new Minnesota Pipe Line Company (MPL) pumping station, but Minnesota Power is a joint applicant to capture load-serving needs in the area.

The Notice Petition provided a plan to notify potentially affected members of the public about the proposal, under Minnesota Rules part 7849.2550. In response to the Notice Petition, comments were filed by the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources (Department).

On September 24, 2014, the Applicants submitted their *Exemption Request Petition for the Application of Great River Energy and Minnesota Power for a Certificate of Need for the Menahga Area 115 kV Transmission Line Project in Hubbard, Wadena and Becker Counties, Minnesota* (Exemption Petition) in order to obtain exemption from certain data requirements of Minnesota Rules part 7849. In response to the Exemption Petition, comments were filed by the Department.

On December 8, 2014, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) issued its *Order Approving Notice Plan and Granting Variances* approving the Exemption Petition and Notice Petition with Modifications.

B. CN PETITION

On January 15, 2015, the Applicants filed their *Application for a Certificate of Need and Route Permit by Great River Energy and Minnesota Power for the Menahga Area 115 kV Transmission Line Project in Hubbard, Wadena and Becker Counties, Minnesota* (Petition). The Petition requested that the Commission approve a certificate of need (CN) to construct approximately 22.5 miles of new overhead 115 kilovolt (kV) transmission line. The proposed project is located in Hubbard, Wadena, and Becker counties.

In response to the Applicants' filing, on January 21, 2015 the Commission issued its *Notice of Comment Period on Completeness of Certificate of Need and Route Permit Application* (Notice). The Notice states that comments on completeness are due February 4, 2015 and reply comments on completeness are due February 11, 2014. Below are the comments of the Department regarding the completeness of the Petition.

II. DEPARTMENT ANALYSIS

A. BACKGROUND

The Applicants propose to construct approximately 22.5 miles of new overhead 115 kilovolt (kV) transmission line, of which approximately 4.5 miles are proposed to be double circuit 115 kV to accommodate future projects. The project also includes the construction of three new substations. Since facilities proposed to be greater than 10 miles long with 100 kV capacity would be created, the proposed facilities qualify as large energy facilities (LEF) under Minnesota Statutes §216B.2421, subd. 2 (3). Minnesota Statutes §216B.243, subd. 2 requires that LEFs must obtain a CN before they could be constructed. Minnesota Rules Chapter 7849 includes the filing requirements for a CN for an electric transmission facility.

B. COMPLETENESS REVIEW

The Department briefly reviewed the Petition for completeness under Minnesota Rules. The Department concludes that the Applicants met the completeness requirements.

C. PROCESS REVIEW

During the completeness review process the Department also makes a recommendation regarding the proper process to use for the Petition. At this time, the Department does not have any disputes as to material facts. Thus, in these completeness comments the Department does not request the Commission to order a contested-case proceeding. Also, the Department recommends that the Commission review the comments and reply comments of other parties, assess the explanation for any request for a contested case, and order a contested case only if a party requests such a proceeding and provides reasonable grounds to do so.

III. DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

The Department recommends that the Commission:

- determine the Applicants' petition is substantially complete; and
- order a contested case if a party requests such a proceeding and provides reasonable grounds to do so.

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Sharon Ferguson, hereby certify that I have this day, served copies of the following document on the attached list of persons by electronic filing, certified mail, e-mail, or by depositing a true and correct copy thereof properly enveloped with postage paid in the United States Mail at St. Paul, Minnesota.

**Minnesota Department of Commerce
Comments**

Docket No. ET2,E015/CN-14-787

Dated this 4th day of February 2015

/s/Sharon Ferguson

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Julia	Anderson	Julia.Anderson@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-DOC	1800 BRM Tower 445 Minnesota St St. Paul, MN 551012134	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_14-787_Official
Sharon	Ferguson	sharon.ferguson@state.mn.us	Department of Commerce	85 7th Place E Ste 500 Saint Paul, MN 551012198	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_14-787_Official
John	Lindell	agorud.ecf@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-RUD	1400 BRM Tower 445 Minnesota St St. Paul, MN 551012130	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_14-787_Official
Michelle	Lommel	mlommel@GREnergy.com	Great River Energy	12300 Elm Creek Blvd Maple Grove, MN 55369	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_14-787_Official
David	Moeller	dmoeller@allete.com	Minnesota Power	30 W Superior St Duluth, MN 558022093	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_14-787_Official
Carole	Schmidt	cschmidt@greenergy.com	Great River Energy	12300 Elm Creek Boulevard Maple Grove, MN 553694718	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_14-787_Official
Donna	Stephenson	dstephenson@greenergy.com	Great River Energy	12300 Elm Creek Boulevard Maple Grove, MN 55369	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_14-787_Official
Daniel	Wolf	dan.wolf@state.mn.us	Public Utilities Commission	Suite 350 121 7th Place East St. Paul, MN 551022147	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_14-787_Official