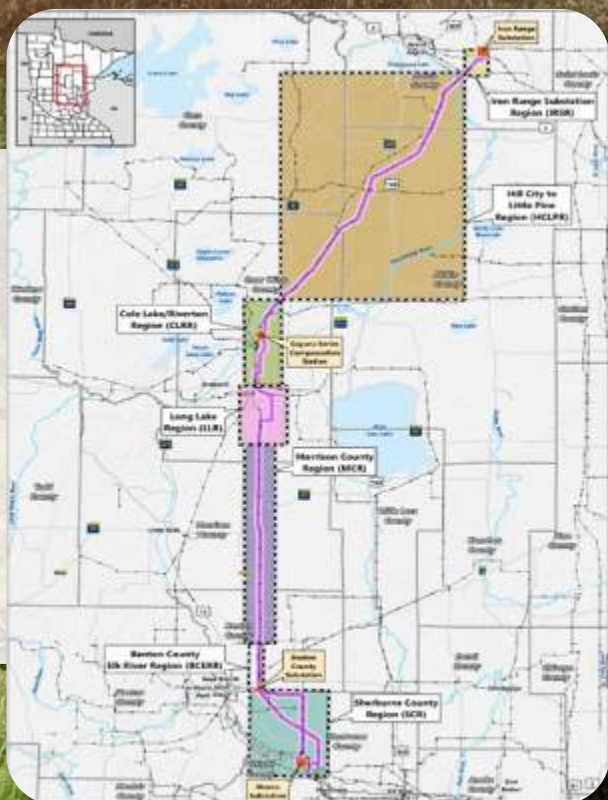


Northland Reliability Project Environmental Assessment

The Human and Environmental Impacts of Addressing
Electrical Grid Reliability Concerns in North Central Minnesota



June 2024

Docket Numbers E015, ET2/CN-22-416
and E002, E015, ET2/TL-22-415

Abstract

Responsible Government Unit

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Minnesota Power and Great River Energy (Applicants) propose to construct approximately 180 miles of double-circuit 345 kilovolt (kV) transmission line from the Iron Range Substation near Grand Rapids, Minnesota to the Sherco and Big Oaks Substations near Becker Minnesota (Northland Reliability Project or project). The project includes equipment additions and reconfigurations within several substations as well as a new Cuyuna Series Compensation Station near Riverton, Minnesota.

The Northland Reliability Project requires two separate approvals from the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission)—a certificate of need (CN) and a route permit. The applicants submitted a joint CN and route permit application to the Commission in August 2023. The Commission subsequently authorized joint hearings and combined environmental review for the CN and route permit. The Commission requested that Department of Commerce (Department) Energy Environmental Review and Analysis (EERA) staff prepare an environmental assessment (EA) for the project.

This EA addresses the issues and mitigation measures identified in the Department's scoping decision of March 22, 2024. It evaluates the project's potential for human and environmental impacts and possible measures, including route alternatives, to mitigate these impacts. Additionally, this EA discusses system alternatives (i.e., alternatives other than a double-circuit 345 kV transmission line) that may meet the stated need for the project.

Public hearings for the project will be held in the project area and are anticipated to occur the week of July 22, 2024. Notice of the hearings will be issued separately. An administrative law judge (ALJ) from the Minnesota Office of Administrative Hearings will preside over the hearings. Upon completion of the hearings, the ALJ will submit a report to the Commission including recommendations to the Commission regarding the applicants' CN and route permit application. Commission decisions on a CN and route permit are expected in November 2024.

Additional materials related to this project and its permitting proceedings are available on the Department's website: <http://mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities> and on the state of Minnesota's eDockets

system: <https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/search.jsp> (enter the year “22” and the number “415” or “416”).

Persons interested in receiving future project notices and updates can place their names on the project mailing list by emailing docketing.puc@state.mn.us or calling 651-201-2246 and providing the docket number (22-415 or 22-416), their name, email address, and mailing address. Please indicate how you would like to receive notices—by email or U.S. mail.

To receive email notifications when new documents are filed for this project visit: <https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling>, select Subscribe to Dockets.

This document can be made available in alternative formats (i.e., large print or audio) by calling 651-539-1529 (voice).

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Environmental Assessment Northland Reliability Project

June 2024



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