

## Attachment B

STATE OF MINNESOTA

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL

COUNTY OF RAMSEY

In the Matter of the Application  
by Northern States Power Company  
for a Construction Permit for a  
High Voltage Transmission Line  
and Associated Facilities.

CONSTRUCTION PERMIT

Docket No. NSP-TR-1

The Minnesota Environmental Quality Council (MEQC) hereby issues this permit to Northern States Power Company (NSP) pursuant to Minn. Stat., Sec. 116C.57(1974) and Minn. Reg. MEQC 73(c)(6) to construct a single circuit 500 kV ac high voltage transmission line (HVTL) and associated facilities from a substation near Forbes, Minnesota to a point on the U.S./Canadian border in Roseau County, approximately three miles west of Marvin Lake.

This permit is issued for the construction of the HVTL and associated facilities within the route designated by MEQC on February 8, 1977, and described on maps of this permit.

As a requirement of this permit, NSP shall comply with the engineering specifications, design criteria and construction and maintenance practices and ultimate abandonment and restoration of the route described in the Application for a Construction Permit for a High Voltage Transmission Line and Associated Facilities: NSP-TR-1, unless otherwise specified in the conditions of this permit.

## CONDITIONS

### 1. General.

- 1.1) The HVTL shall be constructed within the designated route indicated by nodes numbered: 1, 2, 3, 5, 5A, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 17, 17B, 17A, 19, 21, 23, 24, 24B, 27, 29, 31, 31A, 30A, 34, and 35. Deviation from this route is subject to the conditions of Minn. Reg. MEQC 73(e)(2). Specific centerline recommendations and references contained in the MEQC Findings of Fact Nos. 7, 14, 15, 25, 38 and 49 shall be followed to the maximum extent practical. NSP shall obtain permission from the Council for any deviations therefrom.
- 1.2) No construction will be commenced between nodes 30A and 35 until such time as NSP has submitted an application for a Minor Alteration pursuant to Minn. Reg. MEQC 73(e)(2) for the purpose of rectifying the situation discussed in Finding No. 10 of the MEQC's Findings of Fact.
- 1.3) The width of the right-of-way shall not exceed 200 feet, 180 feet cleared, except as required for guy wires on angle and dead end structures, where guying is needed to stabilize structures in marsh areas, and where danger trees must be removed.
- 1.4) Within the designated route, NSP shall comply with all applicable present and future State and Federal regulations, standards, orders and permits concerning the centerline location, engineering design, electrical performance standards,

construction and maintenance practices and abandonment.

- 1.5) NSP shall provide plans showing centerline and clearing specifications to the MEQC 60 days before the company begins any right-of-way clearing. NSP shall continue to provide the MEQC with construction plans for each phase of construction 60 days before it begins construction.
- 1.6) Herbicides used in right-of-way maintenance are restricted to only those herbicides and methods of application approved by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Selective or basal application shall be used when practical. There shall be no spraying of herbicides in or near any environmentally sensitive area as determined by the Department of Natural Resources or against the wished of any parties bordering upon or included within the right-of-way.
- X 1.7) NSP shall supply the Department of Natural Resources with the name(s), application rates, carrier agent(s), and application methods of all herbicides that the company anticipates using at least two days before it begins application. Buffer areas of at least 300 to 400 feet for aerial applications, and 100 feet for ground applications, shall be left around all water areas. Selective application of herbicides to tree species that interfere with HVTL's is preferable. However, where selective application is not feasible, rights-of-way proposed to be sprayed aerially shall be properly marked to

distinguish stands of shrubs and small tree species, and these areas shall be avoided during spraying so as to prevent the needless destruction of wildlife habitat which does not pose a problem with HVTL maintenance.

- 1.8) In accordance with existing Minnesota Department of Aeronautics/ Federal Aviation Administration regulations, or such regulations that may be promulgated, NSP shall, at its expense, place colored spheres on shield wires as a guide for aircraft pilots.
- 1.9) Waste materials shall be removed from the right-of-way work areas continuously throughout construction. Final cleanup shall also be on a continuous basis as practical, based on weather and ground conditions, to restore the right-of-way to substantially its former condition. All waste and scrap shall be removed or properly disposed of, consistent with Minnesota Pollution Control Agency solid waste regulations and ruts and holes graded. All areas where natural vegetation has been removed shall be reseeded as necessary after the first full growing season.
- 1.10) Drainage tiles broken or damaged by construction or maintenance of line shall be repaired or replaced by NSP in accordance with standard construction specifications as soon as practical, or, after 30 days written notification to NSP, repaired or replaced by the landowner, whose costs shall be reimbursed by the utility.

- 1.11) NSP must consider carefully its placement of structures and alignment in order to avoid sensitive areas and minimize undesirable impact within the designated route.
- 1.12) NSP must promptly report to the Power Plant Siting Staff any complaint received about construction, operation and maintenance and above adverse impact of the line during the entire period of the lines existence. Reporting procedures will be the same as those established for MP&L-TR-1.
- 1.13) The HVTL shall cross trunk highways as unobtrusively as possible.
- 1.14) Where the HVTL crosses or runs adjacent to cultivated lands, a sign shall be conspicuously posted on each tower structure warning farm equipment operators not to refuel their equipment in the vicinity of the HVTL right-of-way.
- 1.15) Before any attempt is made at securing easement agreements, NSP shall notify affected landowners of the centerline location and provide each affected landowner with a copy of this construction permit and a description of easement and condemnation rights. This description shall specifically notify landowners of the utility practice of retaining right-of-way easements forever unless otherwise stated, and of negotiating annual-fee licensing with some property owners.

- 1.16) The location and angle of stream crossings are subject to DNR permit requirements.
- 1.17) NSP shall submit copies of all construction specifications to the Power Plant Siting Staff at least 60 days prior to the start of construction and a complete breakdown of right-of-way acquisition, clearing and construction costs within 180 days after the line is energized.
- 1.18) NSP shall provide brochures outlining safety precautions to be observed in the vicinity of the right-of-way. These brochures shall be distributed to affected landowners and made available to the public.
- 1.19) NSP shall be responsible for the restoration of all roads damaged as a result of the construction or maintenance of the HVTL.

## 2. Electrical Performance Standards.

- 2.1) The HVTL shall be designed, constructed, and operated in such a manner that the maximum electro-static short-circuit current shall be limited to 5 milliamperes rms ac and the maximum capacitive discharge energy shall be limited to 25 joules between the ground and any large object under or near the HVTL including, but not limited to, motor vehicles, large agricultural equipment and implements (with or without a boom), fences, buildings, or irrigation devices. In the event that such current or energy levels may be exceeded, NSP shall redundantly ground such objects to ensure that the potential shock current and energy levels adhere to the above limits.

- 2.2) The HVTL shall be designed, constructed and operated so that:
- (A) The electric field measured one meter above ground levels shall not exceed 8.0 kV/m rms.
  - (B) It complies with Minn. Reg. NPC-2. The provisions of Minn. Reg. NPC-1(c) and Minn. Reg. MPCA-6 shall govern any request for a variance therefrom.
  - (C) The ground level concentrations of ozone and oxides of nitrogen attributable to the HVTL shall not exceed MPCA Ambient Air Quality Standards.

2.3) If the HVTL causes radio or television interference, NSP shall restore reception to levels existing before installation of the line.

2.4) NSP shall, upon request of affected landowners, provide technical guidance about proper specification, installation and operation of future fences and irrigation equipment to ensure that the potential shock current and energy levels adhere to the limits established in Section 2.1.

### 3. Abandonment.

3.1) Upon abandonment of this HVTL, all structures shall be removed promptly and the right-of-way shall be returned to as near its original condition as is practical consistent with then existing land uses.

TO MAXIMUM EXTENT PRACTICAL, the criteria in Sections 4, 5, 6 and 7, shall apply to structure design and placement, right-of-way clearing, line construction, post-construction cleanup and line maintenance.



4. Structure Design and Placement.

4.1) In areas where irrigation is practical, the structures shall be aligned and constructed so as to not interfere with normal irrigation practices.

4.2) Crossing of lakes should be avoided and the line should be located beyond viewlines from lakes wherever possible. In addition, lines and structures should avoid natural passes between important waterfowl concentration areas. Staging and storage sites should be located away from water bodies to prevent oils and chemicals from entering and adversely affecting these waters, and all such storage of oils and chemicals shall comply with Minnesota Pollution Control Agency regulations.

4.3) Structure shall be located to make maximum use of existing topography and vegetation for screening.

4.4) When the right-of-way crosses agricultural fields, the structures shall be aligned to minimize disruption of farm operations.

5. Right-of-Way Clearing.

5.1) Clearing shall maximize preservation of natural beauty and conservation of natural resources and minimize adverse effects on the landscape and waters of the state. At the owner's request, all timber shall be limbed and topped to 4" diameter and stacked tree-length at the edge of the right-of-way. On State lands, the DNR area forester shall be contacted to assist in developing the best means of disposing of merchantable timber.

- 5.2) Clearing shall be done only to the extent reasonable and necessary and consistent with the NSP proposed wildlife management plan to assure line reliability or to provide suitable access for construction, operation, and maintenance.
- 5.3) No right-of-way clearing shall commence until the necessary Canadian and Federal licenses have been obtained.
- 5.4) When clearing is done by contractors, NSP shall ensure that the contractors and those involved with field inspection fully understand the conditions set forth in this permit.
- 5.5) Where the right-of-way crosses highways, rivers, or other sensitive areas, the clearing shall leave a screen of any existing natural vegetation in the right-of-way on each side of the road or river. If a screen of natural vegetation cannot be left and suitable natural regeneration does not occur within two years following construction, NSP shall plant native types of shrubs and low-growing trees to provide screening.
- 5.6) If potential for erosion exists as a result of the ground surface being severely disturbed by clearing or line construction, it shall be seeded as necessary with those ground cover species which will most rapidly prevent erosion.
- 5.7) Rights-of-way through wooded areas shall be cleared or maintained with undulating edges to avoid a tunnel effect.

5.8) NSP shall clear vegetation selectively along stream banks to reduce soil erosion and to preclude elevation of the temperatures of cold water streams. Existing bridge crossings are to be used to the extent possible for line and construction equipment crossings, holding fording to a minimum.

6. Line Construction.

6.1) In cropland, movement of heavy equipment shall be kept to a minimum and confined to the smallest practical area. Where soil compaction occurs, the utility shall restore the soil to as near its original condition as possible.

6.2) In cropland, NSP shall remove and stockpile topsoil from each tower foundation site before construction begins. Topsoils and subsoils shall not be mixed and spread on the original grade of surrounding croplands unless approved by the landowner. Topsoil shall be replaced and the area under and around each structure shall be reseeded as necessary as agreed upon by the landowner and NSP.

6.3) Construction near streams should not be performed during high stream flow. Disturbed stream banks should be stabilized, reclaimed, and seeded immediately after construction to aid in restoration and to prevent unnecessary erosion.

6.4) Precautions shall be taken to avoid oil spills and other types of pollution. Spills shall be reported consistent with MPCA regulatory requirements.

6.5) During construction, NSP shall take appropriate measures to protect livestock and crops.

6.6) Construction activity in croplands shall be scheduled to minimize damage to crops.

6.7) NSP shall be responsible for the repair of farm roads and lanes damaged by obtaining access to the right-of-way and for reimbursement of the farm owner/tenant for crop loss resulting from access to the right-of-way.

6.8) All fences and/or gates opened or removed shall be replaced or repaired in the manner negotiated with the landowner. NSP will install permanent gates on fences crossing the right-of-way as required by NSP.

7. Transmission Line Maintenance.

7.1) Native vegetation that poses no hazard to the transmission line shall be allowed to grow on the right-of-way, particularly if it is valuable for wildlife.

7.2) Small trees and shrubs beneficial to wildlife should be maintained within the right-of-way, insofar as they will not interfere with the high voltage transmission line. Brush and tree tops should be piled and left on or near the site to provide cover for small mammals, if acceptable to the landowner.

- 7.3) Access roads and service roads shall be maintained to prevent soil erosion.
- 7.4) Upon approval of the landowner, NSP shall be responsible for controlling weeds under structures which are placed on cropland, provided that the owner does not intend to raise crops under said structures. The herbicides used shall be compatible with the type of crop being grown adjacent to such structures.
- 7.5) Aerial inspection of the HVTL, spraying of the right-of-way and other overflights shall not be permitted against the wishes of parties adversely affected by such activities.

Dated: February 8, 1977.

STATE OF MINNESOTA  
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL

By   
Peter Vanderpoel, Chairman

Attachment C

**Route Development Process**

Xcel Energy began development of a potential reroute soon after being notified by HibTac in early 2017. Xcel Energy gathered land information for the existing transmission line and began looking at possible routes for relocation. Initial efforts at identifying reroute locations attempted to avoid areas that could hold unmined ore resources. However, due to the linear nature of the Mesabi Iron Range, it is not possible to avoid such areas entirely. Xcel Energy evaluated routing through areas already surface mined, but these areas are characterized by deep pits that are either flooded or will flood in the future and are not feasible to cross.

To better understand the area near the existing transmission line to be relocated, the Company identified a Stakeholder Working Group, which includes various government and non-government stakeholders. Table 1 lists the Stakeholder Working Group participants and their interest near the Project area.

**Table 1. Stakeholder Working Group Participants**

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Interest/Role</b>
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)	Administer County held mineral rights and land, permitting, environmental review
St. Louis County	Owns much of the land and mineral rights through tax forfeit
Hibbing Taconite	Operating and expanding mine. Owned by ArcelorMittal 62%, Cleveland Cliffs 23% and US Steel 15%
Minnesota Discovery Center	Museum and campus located near proposed reroute,
Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)	Manages nearby roadways
Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB)	Landowner of Discovery Center. Working to support tourism and plans for bike trails nearby
City of Chisholm	Land near reroute
Various mineral rights owners and agents	Land owners near reroute

The group’s knowledge of mining history, technology and likely future scenarios helped guide the route decision-making process. A key factor in route identification was the group’s judgement that near-term mining east of Highway 169 is not likely. This judgement is based on currently available mining and ore processing technology, foreseeable ore prices, quality of ore, and its depth. In addition, expanding the mine east of Highway 169 would require relocation of the highway. The group cautioned that things can change in the mining industry and

there may be a time in the future when this area would be mined. If that were to be the case, the transmission line may have to be moved again.

As described below, the group engaged in an iterative routing exercise over the past year and a half. The proposed route was identified and fine-tuned by the group to avoid areas of likely near-term mining activity, to avoid interference with planned mining, to minimize impacts to the Discovery Center and planned bike trails, and did not significantly modify the line's impact on humans or the environment. Stakeholder Working Group meetings are summarized below.

## **D.1 Stakeholder Meeting Summaries**

*April 4, 2017*

Xcel Energy met with HibTac representatives to discuss the scope and purpose of the request to relocate the transmission line. HibTac representatives presented the request to relocate, provided information on the history of area mining, and described mine operations. Xcel Energy and HibTac discussed potential reroute options, land and mineral ownership, and likely permitting processes.

*August 23, 2017*

This meeting convened a larger group of stakeholders. Xcel Energy presented two route options (Options 1 and 2 shown on Map 1). Concerns were raised by the DNR about land and mineral ownership along the proposed routes. Land ownership is complicated in the area because surface, mineral, and stockpile ownership are often separate. Some of the land along the two route options is publicly owned through tax forfeiture. DNR described state ownership of mineral rights and potential impacts of Options 1 and 2 on accessibility of minerals under these routes. DNR suggested consideration of another route to the east following Highway 169 for approximately 2.5 miles then south along Highway 5.

*March 12, 2018*

Xcel Energy presented three new route options to the Stakeholder Working Group. These were labeled Option 3 (a modified version of Option 2) Option 4 (DNR's suggested route), and Option 5 that was a new route that Xcel Energy developed as an intermediate option between Options 2 and 3 (Map 2). Feedback on these routes included:

- HibTac indicated that routes should be adjusted to the east along Highway 169 south of the Minnesota Discovery Center trolley loop to provide clearance for blasting in the proposed expansion area.

- IRRRB and Minnesota Discovery Center staff indicated that Option 3 has high impacts on the Discovery Center, City of Chisholm, Veterans Park, and the County Fair site.
- DNR is opposed to routes across state mineral rights due to the possibility that the presence of the transmission line would hinder mining.
- Xcel Energy indicated that impacts to mineral rights would be minimal because any new ROW over mineral rights would be a temporary permit. The transmission line may have to be moved again if there is the need to mine below the new location.
- Based on the group's knowledge of ore grade, depth of overburden, and available technology, it is unlikely that the HibTac Mine will expand to the east of Highway 169.

*May 8, 2018 (Separate meetings with HibTac and DNR)*

Xcel Energy presented a new route called Option 6 (Map 3). This option minimizes the reroute area and stays as close as possible to Highway 169. HibTac and DNR generally supported this route, but HibTac expressed concerns with blasting zones. HibTac can stop traffic on the highway, but prefers more clearance between the pit and transmission line.

*August 2018 (individual outreach to stakeholder group)*

Xcel Energy contacted the larger group of stakeholders individually to review Option 6 (Map 3). The following concerns were raised:

- HibTac indicated they need a 1,000-foot blasting clearance from their maximum pit expansion. HibTac provided a map of the blasting clearance area that overlapped with a portion of Option 6.
- MnDOT objected to the angle of the Highway 169 crossing. The crossing must be more perpendicular for MnDOT to permit it.
- All other stakeholders found Option 6 acceptable.

*October 24, 2018*

Xcel Energy presented Options 7 and 8 (Map 4) and explained that Option 6 was modified to meet the needs of MnDOT and HibTac. The following concerns were raised:

- DNR cannot support Option 7 due to its crossing of state-owned mineral rights and its increased distance from Highway 169.
- IRRRB and the Minnesota Discovery Center do not support either Options 7 or 8 due to impacts to the trolley loop area of the Discovery Center campus.



*November, 2018*

Xcel Energy developed and presented Option 9 (Map 5) to HibTac, IRRRB, and the Minnesota Discovery Center. Option 9 differs slightly from Option 8 to minimize impacts to the Discovery Center trolley loop by slightly encroaching on the mine blast zone. HibTac recognized the value of lessening impacts to the train barn area of the Minnesota Discovery Center campus and agreed with the modification offered by Option 8. The Minnesota Discovery Center and IRRRB were not satisfied with Option 9 and described their concerns in a summary memo sent via e-mail to Xcel Energy on November 20, 2018.

*December 19, 2018*

Xcel Energy met with IRRRB and Minnesota Discovery Center to discuss concerns outlined in their November 20, 2018 memo. The discussion focused on potential alternate structure locations near the Highway 169 crossing. IRRRB indicated that a major attraction of the Minnesota Discovery Center campus is the view looking east from the trolley track at the canyon crossing. Impacts to this view is a primary concern. They asked if the route might be altered to minimize aesthetic impacts at this location. Xcel Energy agreed to study a revised alignment that would move the highway crossing to the south, so the transmission line would not be in the field of view from this vantage point.

*February – March 2019*

Xcel Energy revised its engineering design to place the Highway 169 crossing structures at locations requested by IRRRB and Minnesota Discovery Center (Option 10) (Map 6). While the new crossing accomplished minimization of aesthetic impacts at this location, IRRRB and Minnesota Discovery Center still had concerns regarding impacts to the rail loop facility. Xcel Energy continued to work with IRRRB and Minnesota Discovery Center to develop a mitigation plan for impacts to their facility. A draft mitigation agreement was developed, but was not executed due to remaining uncertainty of route constructability and IRRRB concern for visual impacts.

*March – November 2019*

Xcel Energy conducted field review and refined engineering design for two options near the Highway 169 crossing, Options 11 and 12 (Map 7), including providing visual simulations for both options. While IRRRB understood the need to relocate the transmission line and agreed that the proposed route options best minimize overall impacts, concerns remained about impacts to the Minnesota Discovery Center (MDC) and its planned future development, the MDC's Historic Trolley tours, and the Redhead bike trail system, among other things.

In evaluating the two options (Options 11 and 12), Option 11 was more difficult to construct and more expensive. IRRR considered whether Option 11 would have less aesthetic impact. To assess visual impacts, Xcel Energy performed photo simulations for both options. The two parties reached an agreement that Option 12 would be proposed and Xcel Energy would provide IRRR with a mitigation payment. These terms were formalized in a Memorandum of Understanding signed by Xcel Energy and IRRR. As of the date of this filing, we are still awaiting signature from City of Chisholm.

*August 29, 2019*

Xcel Energy met with the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to discuss the Project. Based on input provided by SHPO, Xcel Energy contracted with Tetra Tech, Inc. (Tetra Tech) to conduct a Phase I Cultural Resource Investigation for the Project, including agency communication, field survey, site/property recordation, and reviewing the former Godfrey-Burt mine within the historical context outlined in the *Mesabi Iron Range Historic Contexts Report*. The goal of the Phase I Cultural Resource Investigation will be to make eligibility determinations on the identified resources within the Project area. An evaluation of these resources, if warranted, will be determined after the report and recommendations are reviewed by DNR Lands and Minerals, the IRRRB, and SHPO. Xcel Energy will continue to coordinate with SHPO regarding cultural resources related to the Project.

## **D.2 Public Meeting**

Xcel held a public meeting on September 17, 2019. Xcel Energy mailed invitations to all landowners within approximately ½ mile of the proposed route and placed an advertisement in the local newspaper. Xcel Energy presented route maps and photo simulations for Option 12 (Minor Alteration Application Attachment D), as well as construction and schedule information. Public meeting attendees consisted of the stakeholders the Company had been communicating with over the last two years. There was no opposition to the proposed route (Option 12) expressed at the meeting.

**Hibbing Relocation Project (Line 5702)**



**Map 1  
Route Options Considered  
Map**

St. Louis County, Minnesota

**Project Feature**

- Existing 500 kV Transmission Line
- Route Option 1
- Route Option 2

**Water Feature**

- Public Water Basin
- Public Water Waterway

**Jurisdiction**

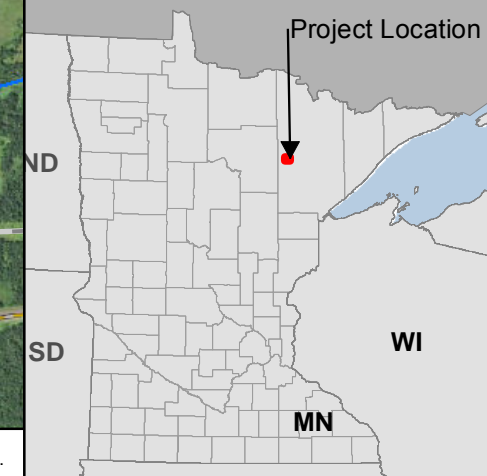
- County Boundary
- Minnesota Discovery Center

USDA FSA NAIP Aerial Dated 2018



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**Reference Map**



1:22,500 NAD 1983 UTM Zone 15N

0 500 1,000 2,000 Feet

Source: Xcel Energy, ESRI, MN Geospatial Commons, NAIP Aerial dated 2018.

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**Hibbing Relocation Project (Line 5702)**



**Map 2  
Route Options Considered  
Map**

St. Louis County, Minnesota

**Project Feature**

- Existing 500 kV Transmission Line
- Option 3
- Option 4
- Option 5
- Route Option Considered

**Water Feature**

- Public Water Basin
- Public Water Waterway

**Jurisdiction**

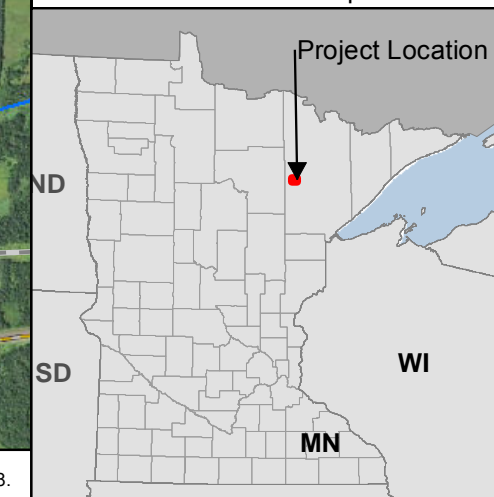
- County Boundary
- Minnesota Discovery Center

USDA FSA NAIP Aerial Dated 2018



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**Reference Map**



1:22,500 NAD 1983 UTM Zone 15N

0 500 1,000 2,000 Feet

Source: Xcel Energy, ESRI, MN Geospatial Commons, NAIP Aerial dated 2018.

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**Hibbing Relocation Project (Line 5702)**



**Map 3  
Route Options Considered  
Map**

St. Louis County, Minnesota

**Project Feature**

- Existing 500 kV Transmission Line
- Route Option 6
- Route Option Considered

**Water Feature**

- Public Water Basin
- Public Water Waterway

**Jurisdiction**

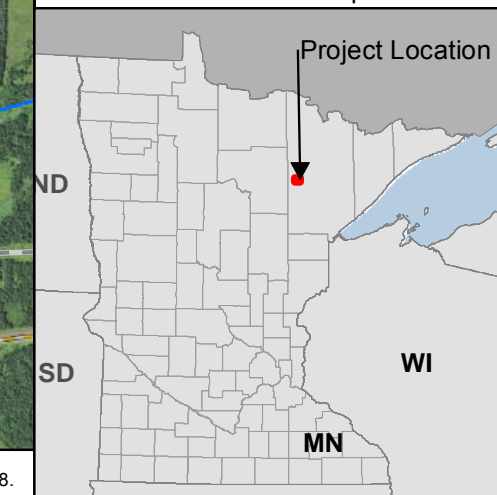
- County Boundary
- Minnesota Discovery Center

USDA FSA NAIP Aerial Dated 2018



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**Reference Map**



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1:22,500 NAD 1983 UTM Zone 15N

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Source: Xcel Energy, ESRI, MN Geospatial Commons, NAIP Aerial dated 2018.

# Hibbing Relocation Project (Line 5702)



## Map 4 Route Options Considered Map

St. Louis County, Minnesota

### Project Feature

- Existing 500 kV Transmission Line
- Route Option 7
- Route Option 8
- Route Option Considered

### Water Feature

- Public Water Basin
- Public Water Waterway

### Jurisdiction

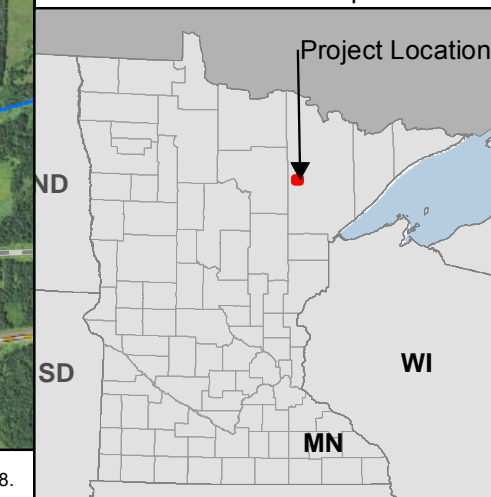
- County Boundary
- Minnesota Discovery Center

USDA FSA NAIP Aerial Dated 2018



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### Reference Map



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1:22,500 NAD 1983 UTM Zone 15N

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Source: Xcel Energy, ESRI, MN Geospatial Commons, NAIP Aerial dated 2018.



**Hibbing Relocation Project (Line 5702)**



**Map 5  
Route Options Considered Map**

St. Louis County, Minnesota

**Project Feature**

- Existing 500 kV Transmission Line
- Route Option 9
- Route Option Considered

**Water Feature**

- Public Water Basin
- Public Water Waterway

**Jurisdiction**

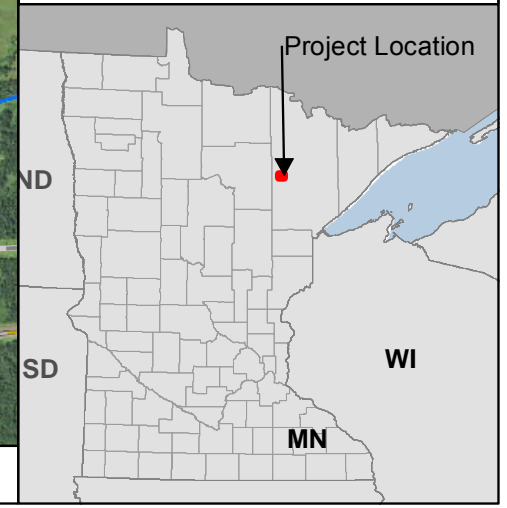
- County Boundary
- Minnesota Discovery Center

USDA FSA NAIP Aerial Dated 2018



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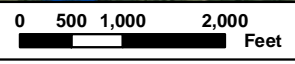
**Reference Map**



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1:22,500 NAD 1983 UTM Zone 15N



Source: Xcel Energy, ESRI, MN Geospatial Commons, NAIP Aerial dated 2018.

**Hibbing Relocation Project (Line 5702)**



**Map 6  
Route Options Considered Map**

St. Louis County, Minnesota

**Project Feature**

- Existing 500 kV Transmission Line
- Route Option 10
- Route Option Considered

**Water Feature**

- Public Water Basin
- Public Water Waterway

**Jurisdiction**

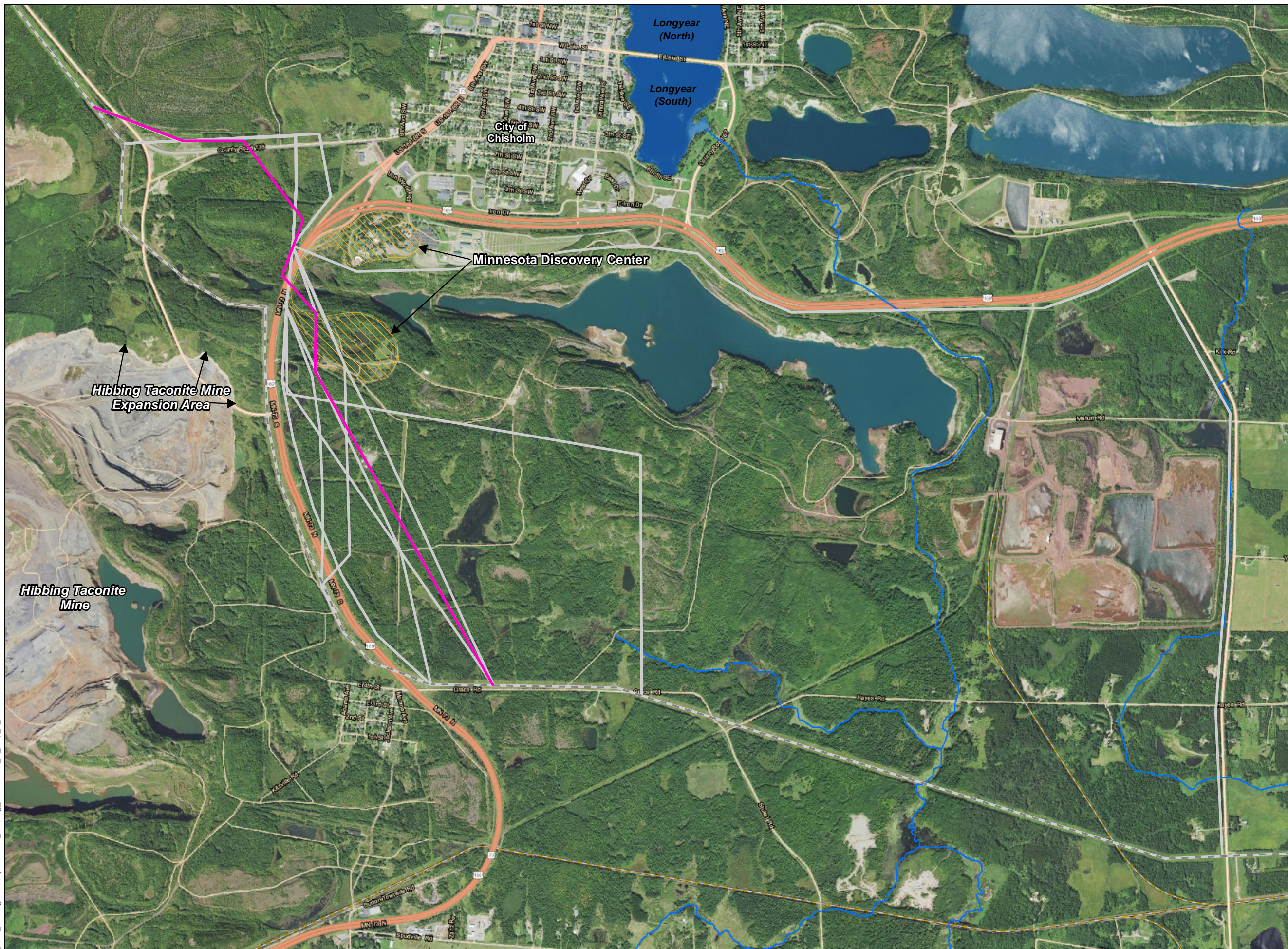
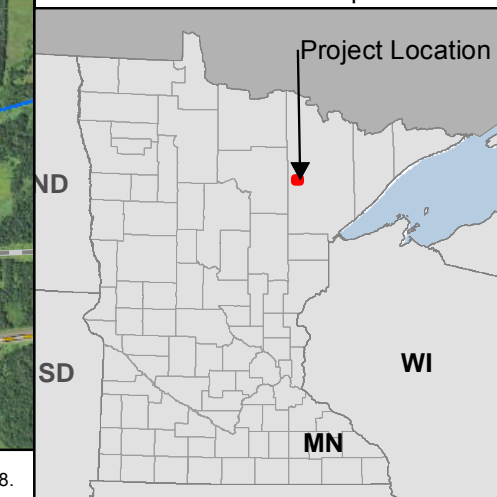
- County Boundary
- Minnesota Discovery Center

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**Reference Map**



1:22,500 NAD 1983 UTM Zone 15N

0 500 1,000 2,000 Feet

Source: Xcel Energy, ESRI, MN Geospatial Commons, NAIP Aerial dated 2018.

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**Hibbing Relocation Project (Line 5702)**



**Map 7  
Route Options Considered  
Map**

St. Louis County, Minnesota

**Project Feature**

- Existing 500 kV Transmission Line
- Route Option 11
- Route Option 12 (Proposed Location for Relocated Transmission Line)
- Route Option Considered

**Water Feature**

- Public Water Basin
- Public Water Waterway

**Jurisdiction**

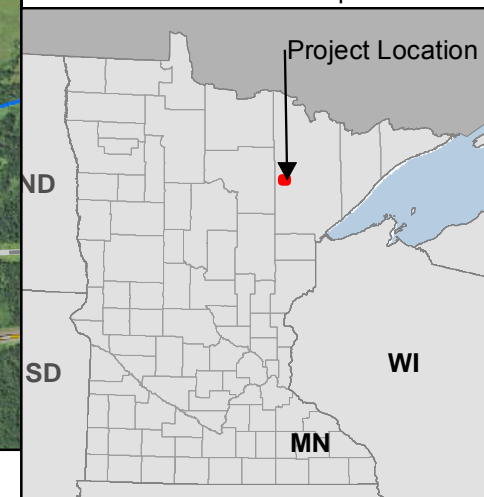
- County Boundary
- Minnesota Discovery Center

USDA FSA NAIP Aerial Dated 2018



Disclaimer: The data provided on this map is for assessment and planning purposes only. It is not intended to be used for definition of legal boundary, property title, or construction. This is not a survey product. Tetra Tech is not responsible for the misuse or misrepresentation of the data.

**Reference Map**



Hibbing Taconite Mine Expansion Area

Hibbing Taconite Mine

Minnesota Discovery Center

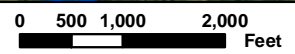
Longyear (North)  
Longyear (South)

City of Chisholm

P:\6601\_Xcel\_Hibbing\GIS\Layouts\Xcel\_Hibbing\_Attachment\_C\_Map\_7\_20191113.mxd



1:22,500 NAD 1983 UTM Zone 15N



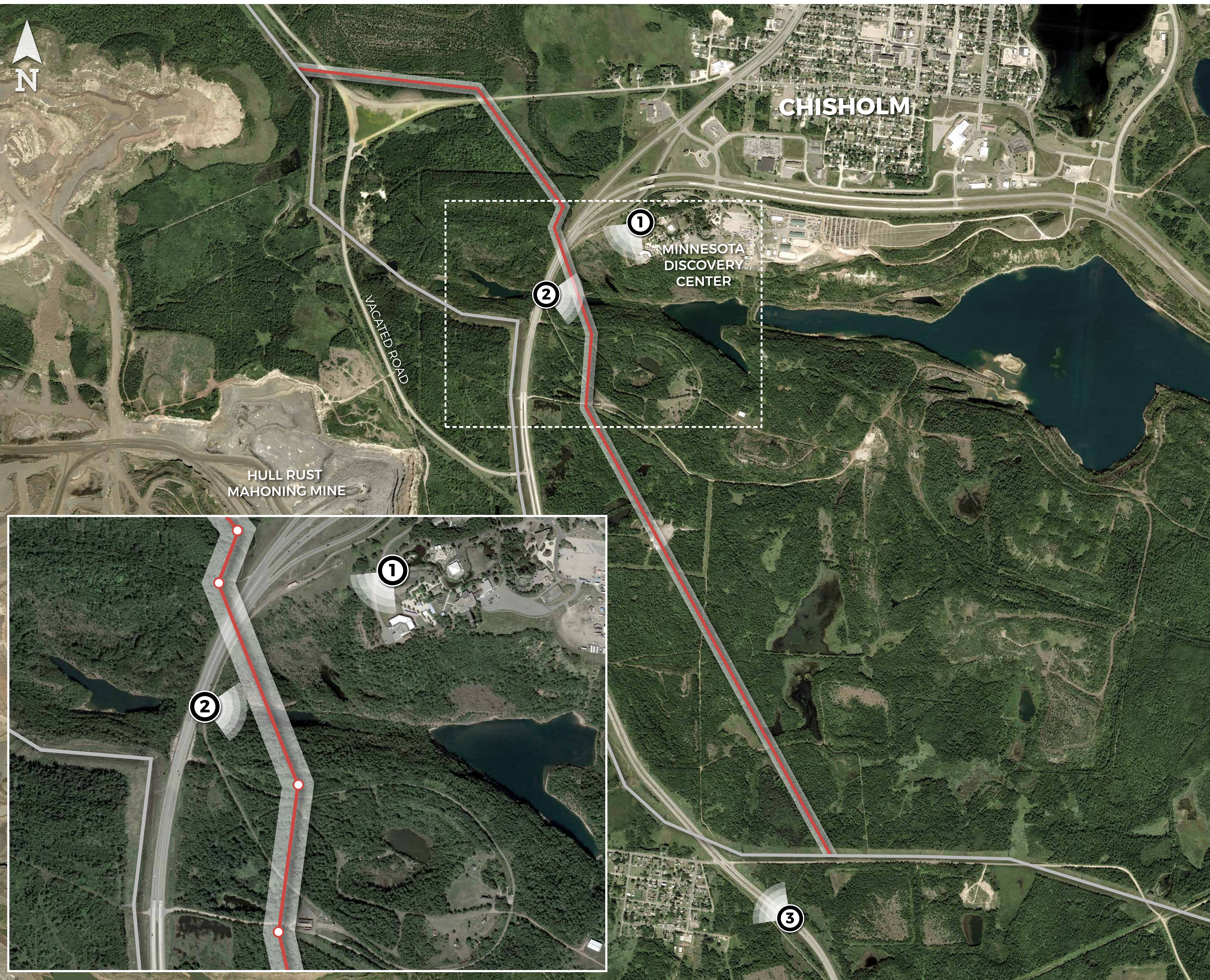
Source: Xcel Energy, ESRI, MN Geospatial Commons, NAIP Aerial dated 2018.

Attachment D

# XCEL TRANSMISSION LINE REROUTE

FOR EXPANSION OF HIBTAC MINE  
OPTION 2

## VIEWPOINT MAP



- EXISTING TRANSMISSION LINE
- PROPOSED REROUTE OPTION 2
- PROPOSED RIGHT-OF-WAY (195 FEET)
- STRUCTURE LOCATION
- ① PHOTO VIEWPOINT

# XCEL TRANSMISSION LINE REROUTE

FOR EXPANSION OF HIBTAC MINE  
OPTION 2

## PHOTO VIEWPOINT 1

DATE: 05/10/2019

TIME: 10:02 AM

DIRECTION: SOUTHWEST



- EXISTING TRANSMISSION LINE
- PROPOSED REROUTE OPTION 2
- PROPOSED RIGHT-OF-WAY (195 FEET)
- STRUCTURE LOCATION
- ① PHOTO VIEWPOINT



EXISTING CONDITIONS



PROPOSED CONDITIONS

PHOTO SIMULATIONS ARE FOR DEMONSTRATION PURPOSES ONLY. FINAL DESIGN IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE PENDING PUBLIC, UTILITY, AND REGULATORY REVIEW.

# XCEL TRANSMISSION LINE REROUTE

FOR EXPANSION OF HIBTAC MINE  
OPTION 2

## PHOTO VIEWPOINT 2

DATE: 05/10/2019

TIME: 11:32 AM

DIRECTION: EAST



- EXISTING TRANSMISSION LINE
- PROPOSED REROUTE OPTION 2
- PROPOSED RIGHT-OF-WAY (195 FEET)
- STRUCTURE LOCATION
- ② PHOTO VIEWPOINT



EXISTING CONDITIONS



PROPOSED CONDITIONS

PHOTO SIMULATIONS ARE FOR DEMONSTRATION PURPOSES ONLY. FINAL DESIGN IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE PENDING PUBLIC, UTILITY, AND REGULATORY REVIEW.

# XCEL TRANSMISSION LINE REROUTE

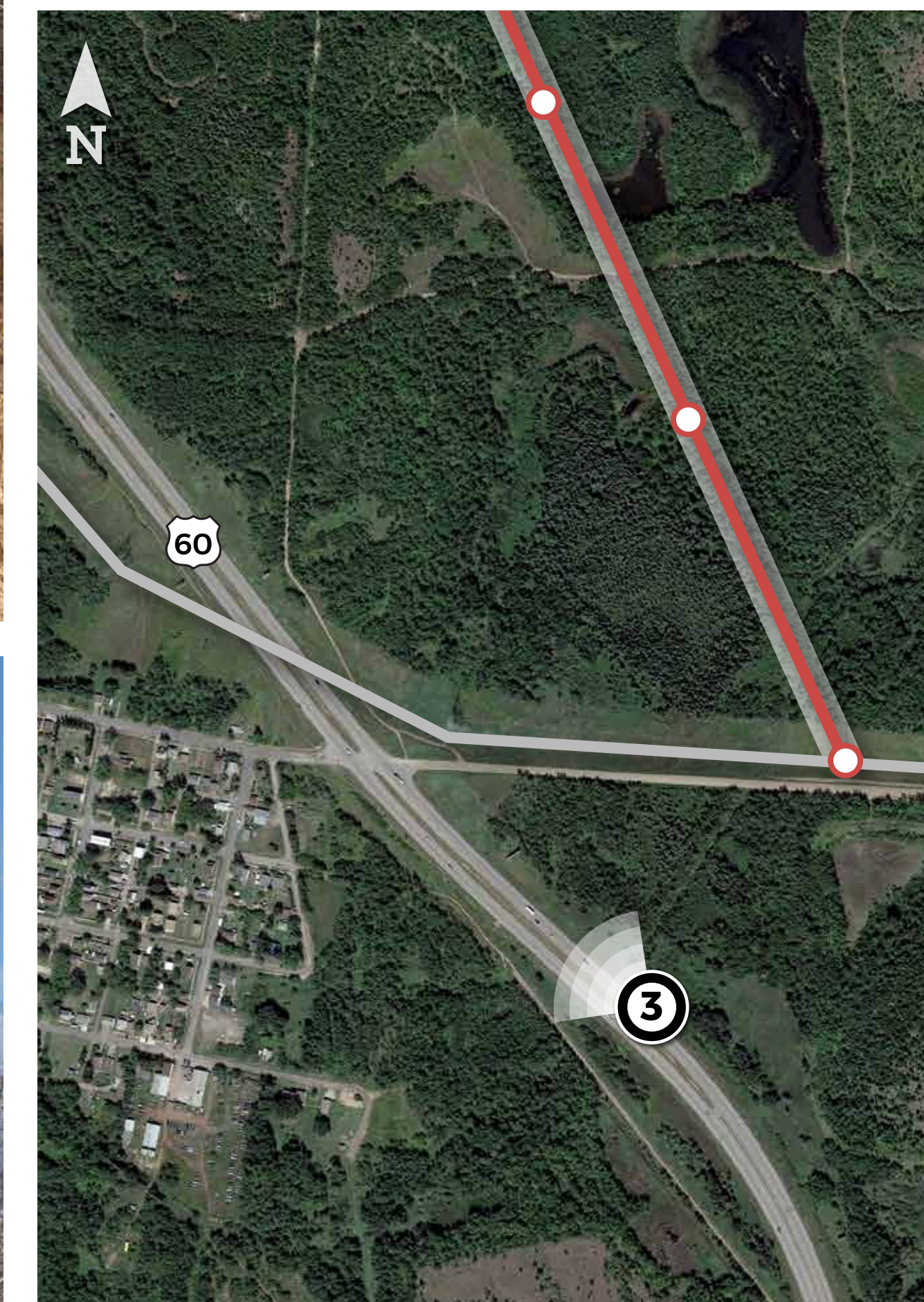
FOR EXPANSION OF HIBTAC MINE

## PHOTO VIEWPOINT 3

DATE: 05/10/2019

TIME: 10:49 AM

DIRECTION: NORTHWEST



- EXISTING TRANSMISSION LINE
- PROPOSED REROUTE
- PROPOSED RIGHT-OF-WAY (195 FEET)
- STRUCTURE LOCATION
- ③ PHOTO VIEWPOINT



EXISTING CONDITIONS



PROPOSED CONDITIONS

PHOTO SIMULATIONS ARE FOR DEMONSTRATION PURPOSES ONLY. FINAL DESIGN IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE PENDING PUBLIC, UTILITY, AND REGULATORY REVIEW.

## Attachment E



March 28, 2019

Ms. Margi Coyle  
Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
1201 East Highway 2  
Grand Rapids, MN 55744

**Subject: Xcel Energy Proposed Minor Alteration of the 500 Kilovolt Transmission Line 5702 in St. Louis County, Minnesota**

Dear Ms. Coyle:

Northern States Power Company, doing business as Xcel Energy (Xcel), is currently preparing to submit an application to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) for a minor alteration authorization, in compliance with Minnesota Statute 216E.16 and Minnesota Rule 7850.4800, for an approximately 2.5-mile reroute of the 500 kilovolt Transmission Line 5702 (Project). A minor alteration is a change in a high voltage transmission line that does not result in significant modifications to the human or environmental impacts of the facility that are subject to the Power Plant Siting Act (Minnesota Statutes Chapter 216E). Per Minn. Stat. 216B.243, Subd. 8.(4), this Project is exempt from the Certificate of Need approval process as it is not a new high voltage transmission line, rather it is a relocation of an existing line.

The Project is proposed to be re-routed across the Mesabi iron formation and was built on right-of-way through a license agreement rather than through an easement due to the value of underlying minerals. One provision of this agreement was that Xcel would move the line if requested by the licensor, and on January 15, 2017, Hibbing Taconite Company formally requested that Xcel relocate the line from six parcels to allow for expansion of the Hibbing Taconite Pit. The township, section, and range of the Project is provided in the table below and shown on the attached Figure 1.

County	Township	Range	Sections
St. Louis	58N	20W	19, 20, 29, 32, and 33

The purpose of this letter is to introduce the Project and obtain input from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources regarding any potential concerns or issues that may exist within the Project area listed above that would influence a decision regarding the use of the land. A Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) Data Request form was also submitted on March 28, 2019. A copy of the NHIS form is attached for reference.

Any resulting information will be used to help guide Project development in a manner that identifies and avoids impacts to sensitive resources where practicable. We have sent similar query letters to other agencies including, but not limited to, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office.



If you have any questions regarding the information presented in this letter, please contact Tom Hillstrom at Xcel Energy, 612-330-5835 or at [Thomas.Hillstrom@xcelenergy.com](mailto:Thomas.Hillstrom@xcelenergy.com). Thank you for your assistance regarding the Project.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Hillstrom". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T".

**Tom Hillstrom**

**Xcel Energy | Responsible By Nature**

**Principal Permitting Agent**

414 Nicollet Mall, 414-6A Minneapolis, MN 55401

P: 612 330 5835 C: 612 584 8783

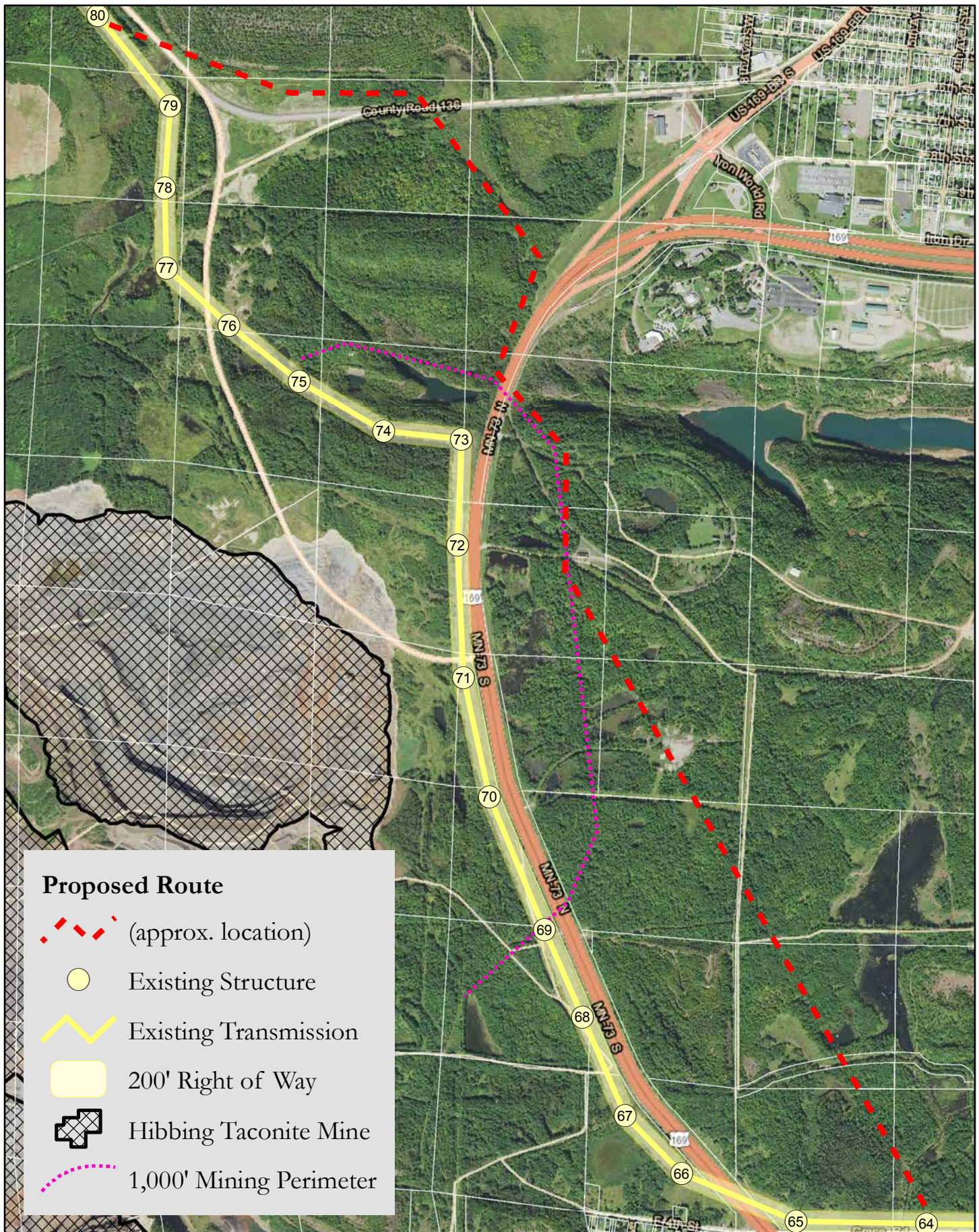
E: [thomas.hillstrom@xcelenergy.com](mailto:thomas.hillstrom@xcelenergy.com)

Enclosure:







Figure 1 - Project Location  
NHIS Data Request Form

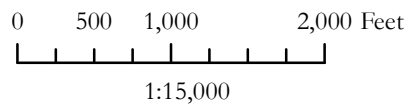
cc:

Mark Rothfork – Tetra Tech



**Proposed Route**

-  (approx. location)
-  Existing Structure
-  Existing Transmission
-  200' Right of Way
-  Hibbing Taconite Mine
-  1,000' Mining Perimeter



**Line 5702 Relocation: Figure 1**



2012	<b>For Agency Use Only:</b>		#Sec _____ Contact Rqsted? _____
	Received _____ Due _____	Inv _____	#EOs _____ Survey Rqsted? _____
	Search Radius _____ mi. L / I / D EM	Map'd _____	#Com _____
	NoR / NoF / NoE / Std / Sub	Let _____ Log out _____	Related ERDB# _____

## NATURAL HERITAGE INFORMATION SYSTEM (NHIS) DATA REQUEST FORM

Please read the instructions on page 3 before filling out the form. Thank you!

### WHO IS REQUESTING THE INFORMATION?

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ms. \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Title \_\_\_\_\_

Agency/Company \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

(Street) (City) (State) (Zip Code)

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Responses will be sent via email.   
 If you prefer US Mail check here:

### THIS INFORMATION IS BEING REQUESTED FOR A:

- Federal EA     State EAW     PUC Site or Route Application     Watershed Plan     BER  
 Federal EIS     State EIS     Local Government Permit     Research Project  
 NEPA Checklist     Other (describe) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Check here if this project is funded through any of the following grant programs: Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (L-SOHC), Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL), or Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR).

### INFORMATION WE NEED FROM YOU:

- 1) **Enclose a map** of the project boundary/area of interest (topographic maps or aerial photos are preferred).
- 2) Please **provide a GIS shapefile\*** (NAD 83, UTM Zone 15N) of the project boundary/area of interest.
- 3) List the following locational information\* (attach additional sheets if necessary):

For Agency Use: Region / MBS Status	County    Township #    Range #    Section(s) (please list <b>all</b> sections)	For Agency Use: TRIS Confirmed <input type="checkbox"/>
	_____ _____ _____	

- 4) Please provide the following information (attach additional sheets if necessary):

Project Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Proposer: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Project (including types of disturbance anticipated from the project): \_\_\_\_\_

---

Describe the existing land use of the project site. What types of land cover / habitat will be impacted by the proposed project?

---

List any waterbodies (e.g., rivers, intermittent streams, lakes, wetlands) that may be affected by the proposed project, and discuss how they may be impacted (e.g., dewatering, discharge, riverbed disturbance).

---

Does the project have the potential to affect any groundwater resources (e.g., groundwater appropriation, change in recharge, or contamination)?

---

To your knowledge, has the project undergone a previous Natural Heritage review? If so, please list the correspondence #: ERDB # \_\_\_\_\_. How does this request differ from the previous request (e.g., change in scope, change in boundary, project being revived, project expansion, different phase)?

---

To your knowledge, have any native plant community or rare species surveys been conducted within the site? If so, please list:

---

List any DNR Permits or Licenses that you will be applying for or have already applied for as part of this project:

---

#### INFORMATION WE PROVIDE TO YOU:

1) The response will include a Natural Heritage letter. If applicable, the letter will discuss potential effects to rare features.

- Check here if you are interested in a list of rare features in the vicinity of the area of interest but you do **not** need a review of potential effects to rare features. Please list the reason a review is not needed:
- 

2) Depending on the results of the query or review, the response may include an Index Report of known aggregation sites and known occurrences of federally and state-listed plants and animals\* within an approximate one-mile radius of the project boundary/area of interest. The Index Report and Natural Heritage letter can be included in any public environmental review document.

3) A Detailed Report that contains more information on each occurrence may also be requested. Please note that the Detailed Report may contain specific location information that is protected under *Minnesota Statutes*, section 84.0872, subd. 2, and, as such, the Detailed Report may not be included in any public document (e.g., an EAW).

- Check here if you would like to request a Detailed Report. Please note that if the results of the review are 'No Effects' or a standard comment, a Detailed Report may not be available.

#### FEES / TURNAROUND TIME

There is a fee\* for this service. Requests generally take **3-4 weeks** from date of receipt to process, and are processed in the order received.

I have read the entire form and instructions, and the information supplied above is complete and accurate. I understand that material supplied to me from the Natural Heritage Information System is copyrighted and that I am not permitted to reproduce or publish any of this copyrighted material without prior written permission from the DNR. Further, if permission to publish is given, I understand that I must credit the Minnesota Division of Ecological and Water Resources, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, as the source of the material.

Signature  
(required) *Tom Hillstrom*

Note: Digital signatures representing the name of a person shall be sufficient to show that such person has signed this document.

Mail or email completed form to:  
Lisa Joyal, Endangered Species Review Coordinator  
Division of Ecological and Water Resources  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
500 Lafayette Road, Box 25  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155  
[Review.NHIS@state.mn.us](mailto:Review.NHIS@state.mn.us)

[Online version of the form](#)

Revised March 2, 2012



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Ecological & Water Resources  
500 Lafayette Road, Box 25  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4025

April 30, 2019

Correspondence # ERDB 20190306

Mr. Tom Hillstrom  
Xcel Energy  
414 Nicollet Mall, 414-6A  
Minneapolis, MN 55401

RE: Natural Heritage Review of the proposed Alteration of 500 kV Line 5702,  
T58N R20W Sections 19, 20, 29, 32, & 33

Dear Mr. Hillstrom,

As requested, the Minnesota Natural Heritage Information System has been queried to determine if any rare species or other significant natural features are known to occur within an approximate one-mile radius of the proposed project. Based on this query, rare features have been documented within the search area (for details, please visit the [Rare Species Guide Website](#) for more information on the biology, habitat use, and conservation measures of these rare species). Please note that the following rare features may be adversely affected by the proposed project:

- Case's ladies' tresses (*Spiranthes casei* var. *casei*), a state-listed threatened species, pale moonwort (*Botrychium pallidum*), least moonwort (*Botrychium simplex*), and prairie moonwort (*Botrychium campestre*), state-listed species of special concern, have been documented in the vicinity of the proposed project. Minnesota's endangered species law (*Minnesota Statutes*, section 84.0895) and associated rules (*Minnesota Rules*, part 6212.1800 to 6212.2300 and 6134) prohibit the taking of threatened or endangered species without a permit. For plants, taking includes picking, digging, or destroying. Given the protected status and the potential for them to occur within the proposed transmission line area, **a qualified surveyor needs to conduct a botanical survey in any suitable habitat within the construction footprint** (see attached survey protocol information). Surveys must follow the standards contained in the attached Rare Species Survey Process and Rare Plant Guidance. Project planning should take into account that any botanical survey needs to be conducted during the appropriate time of the year, which may be limited.
- Please include a copy of this letter in any state or local license or permit application. Please note that measures to avoid or minimize disturbance to the above rare features may be included as restrictions or conditions in any required permits or licenses.

The Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS), a collection of databases that contains information about Minnesota's rare natural features, is maintained by the Division of Ecological and Water Resources, Department of Natural Resources. The NHIS is continually updated as new information becomes available, and is the most complete source of data on Minnesota's rare or otherwise significant species, native plant communities, and other natural features. However, the NHIS is not an exhaustive inventory and thus does not represent all of the occurrences of rare features within the state. Therefore, ecologically significant features for which we have no records may exist within the project area. If additional information becomes available regarding rare features in the vicinity of the project, further review may be necessary.

For environmental review purposes, the results of this Natural Heritage Review are valid for one year; the results are only valid for the project location (noted above) and the project description provided on the NHIS Data Request Form. Please contact me if project details change or for an updated review if construction has not occurred within one year.

The Natural Heritage Review does not constitute review or approval by the Department of Natural Resources as a whole. Instead, it identifies issues regarding known occurrences of rare features and potential effects to these rare features. If needed, please contact your [DNR Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist](#) to determine whether there are other natural resource concerns associated with the proposed project. Please be aware that additional site assessments or review may be required.

Thank you for consulting us on this matter, and for your interest in preserving Minnesota's rare natural resources. An invoice will be mailed to you under separate cover.

Sincerely,



Samantha Bump  
Natural Heritage Review Specialist  
[Samantha.Bump@state.mn.us](mailto:Samantha.Bump@state.mn.us)

Enc. Rare Species Survey Protocol

Links: Rare Species Guide  
<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/rsg/index.html>  
DNR Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist Contact Info  
[http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/ereview/erp\\_regioncontacts.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/ereview/erp_regioncontacts.html)

Cc: Margi Coyle



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Ecological & Water Resources  
500 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155-404

[Electronic Transmittal]

May 9, 2019

Thomas Hillstrom  
Principal Permitting Agent  
Xcel Energy  
414 Nicollet Mall, 414-6A  
Minneapolis, MN 55401

**RE: Xcel Energy Proposed Minor Alteration of the 500 kV Transmission Line 5702 in St. Louis County, MN**

Dear Mr. Hillstrom,

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has reviewed the proposed minor alteration of the 500 kV transmission line 5702 in St. Louis County. We offer the following comments based on the shapefiles provided by Xcel and the information included in your letter dated March 28, 2019.

#### Rare and Unique Resources

State-listed threatened species and species of special concern have been documented near the project area. Given the protected status and the potential for these plants to occur within the transmission line area, a qualified surveyor needs to conduct a botanical survey in any suitable habitat within the construction footprint. Please follow the recommendations in the attached Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) review letter.

#### Flight Diverters

The DNR recommends the use of yellow swan-type flight diverters spaced at the manufacturer recommended 15-foot spacing on the ground/shield wire. Our agency can provide guidance on specific locations for diverter placement near wetlands and water bodies. In addition to reducing bird collisions, flight diverters serve as a safety precaution for low flying aircraft in the area. In some cases, DNR pilots work in areas around water bodies.

#### Wetlands

Clearing wetlands, particularly forested wetlands and vernal pools, should be avoided. The DNR recommends adjusting the proposed route and pole locations away from directly clearing these resources, and using hand clearing in and around wetlands and water crossings if they cannot be avoided. Our agency further recommends that construction and maintenance be done during frozen conditions to avoid wetland impacts and rutting. DNR staff have noted long-term impacts to wetlands from line maintenance in the Northeast Region and are working to minimize further impacts. If construction is necessary during the summer, interlocking pads should be used under equipment and soil piles.

### Public Water Crossing

The proposed route crosses a public water at the southern portion of the project before tying into the existing transmission line. A DNR license to cross public waters will be required at this location.

### Vegetation

Our agency recommends following all environmental safety guidelines when spraying. Avoid broadcast spraying and consider spot spraying to avoid pollinator and wildlife food species, such as berries. The attached guidelines contain seed mixes that should be used for re-seeding of the area vegetation.

### Routing

Upon review of the provided shapefiles, it appears there are existing corridors in the area that, if used, could result in fewer impacts to wetlands, forests, and water resources. DNR recommends consideration of low-impact routes that use existing roads and areas already cleared. Examples of existing corridors are provided in the images below.



The DNR looks forward to working in a positive and collaborative manner on this project to ensure the protection of Minnesota's natural resources. If you have any questions about the contents of this letter, please contact Margi Coyle at [margi.coyle@state.mn.us](mailto:margi.coyle@state.mn.us) or 218-359-6073.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cynthia Warzecha". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Cynthia Warzecha  
Energy Projects Planner

Attachments: NHIS Review Letter  
Rare Species Survey Process  
Recommended Seed Mixes

CC: Margi Coyle, Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist, Minnesota DNR





**Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Ecological & Water Resources  
500 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155-404**

[Electronic Transmittal]

September 19, 2019

Thomas Hillstrom  
Principal Permitting Agent  
Xcel Energy  
414 Nicollet Mall, 414-6A  
Minneapolis, MN 55401

**RE: Xcel Energy Proposed Minor Alteration of the 500 kV Transmission Line 5702 in St. Louis County, MN**

Dear Mr. Hillstrom,

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) appreciates the ongoing discussions with our agency regarding the proposed minor alteration of the 500 kV Transmission Line 5702 in St. Louis County. Based on the information provided during the project coordination meeting on May 20 of this year, our agency supports the proposed route for the minor alteration. It is our understanding that the proposed route reflects extensive coordination with DNR Lands and Minerals engineering staff, mining companies, land and mineral owners, St. Louis County, and the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB). The proposed route considers the multiple issues within the project area including taconite reserves, mineral and surface owner concerns, Highway 169 safety requirements, structural engineering constraints, as well as stockpile and tailings basin issues.

Please continue to coordinate with our agency on rare and unique resources, flight diverter locations, and the public water crossing at the southern portion of the project, which will require a DNR license to cross public waters. The DNR looks forward to working in a positive and collaborative manner on this project to ensure the protection of Minnesota's natural resources. If you have any questions, please contact Margi Coyle at [margi.coyle@state.mn.us](mailto:margi.coyle@state.mn.us) or 218-359-6073.

Sincerely,

/S/ Cynthia Warzecha  
Energy Projects Planner

CC: Margi Coyle, Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist, Minnesota DNR



March 28, 2019

Mr. Andrew Chambers  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
600 South Lake Avenue, Suite 211  
Duluth, MN 55802

**Subject: Xcel Energy Proposed Minor Alteration of the 500 Kilovolt Transmission Line 5702 in St. Louis County, Minnesota**

Dear Mr. Chambers:

Northern States Power Company, doing business as Xcel Energy (Xcel), is currently preparing to submit an application to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) for a minor alteration authorization, in compliance with Minnesota Statute 216E.16 and Minnesota Rule 7850.4800, for an approximately 2.5-mile reroute of the 500 kilovolt Transmission Line 5702 (Project). A minor alteration is a change in a high voltage transmission line that does not result in significant modifications to the human or environmental impacts of the facility that are subject to the Power Plant Siting Act (Minnesota Statutes Chapter 216E). Per Minn. Stat. 216B.243, Subd. 8.(4), this Project is exempt from the Certificate of Need approval process as it is not a new high voltage transmission line, rather it is a relocation of an existing line.

The Project is proposed to be re-routed across the Mesabi iron formation and was built on right-of-way through a license agreement rather than through an easement due to the value of underlying minerals. One provision of this agreement was that Xcel would move the line if requested by the licensor, and on January 15, 2017, Hibbing Taconite Company formally requested that Xcel relocate the line from six parcels to allow for expansion of the Hibbing Taconite Pit. The township, section, and range of the Project is provided in the table below and shown on the attached Figure 1.

County	Township	Range	Sections
St. Louis	58N	20W	19, 20, 29, 32, and 33

The purpose of this letter is to introduce the Project and obtain input from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding any potential concerns or issues that may exist within the Project area listed above that would influence a decision regarding the use of the land.

Any resulting information will be used to help guide Project development in a manner that identifies and avoids impacts to sensitive resources where practicable. We have sent similar query letters to other agencies including, but not limited to, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office.

### **Wetland, Waters of the U.S., and Floodplain Identification**

A desktop analysis was conducted to identify wetlands, Waters of the U.S., and floodplains that would be crossed by the Project. The analysis focused primarily on a review of the following data sources:

- USFWS National Wetland Inventory (NWI), which is a geospatial database of wetlands mapped throughout the country by the USFWS.
- MnDNR 24K hydrology dataset, which is a geospatial database of waterbodies mapped throughout Minnesota.
- Federal Emergency Management Agency floodplain data, which identifies the location and extent

- of 100 and 500-year floodplains along with floodways.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service Soil Survey Geographic Database, which is a geospatial database of the locations of hydric soils.

In addition to the desktop analysis, wetland specialists also conducted a field reconnaissance to further determine the presence of wetlands within the Project area. Figure 1 shows wetlands that were determined to be present during the field reconnaissance.

Based upon the desktop review and field reconnaissance, the Project crosses approximately 6 palustrine emergent wetlands, 5 open water wetlands, 4 scrub/shrub wetlands, and 1 forested wetland. During Project design, every effort will be taken to avoid impacts to wetlands, to the extent practicable.

No FEMA 100 or 500-year floodplains or floodways are crossed by the Project.

If you have any questions regarding the information presented in this letter, please contact Tom Hillstrom at Xcel Energy, 612-330-5835 or at [Thomas.Hillstrom@xcelenergy.com](mailto:Thomas.Hillstrom@xcelenergy.com). Thank you for your assistance regarding the Project.

Respectfully submitted,



**Tom Hillstrom**

**Xcel Energy | Responsible By Nature**

**Principal Permitting Agent**

414 Nicollet Mall, 414-6A Minneapolis, MN 55401

P: 612 330 5835 C: 612 584 8783

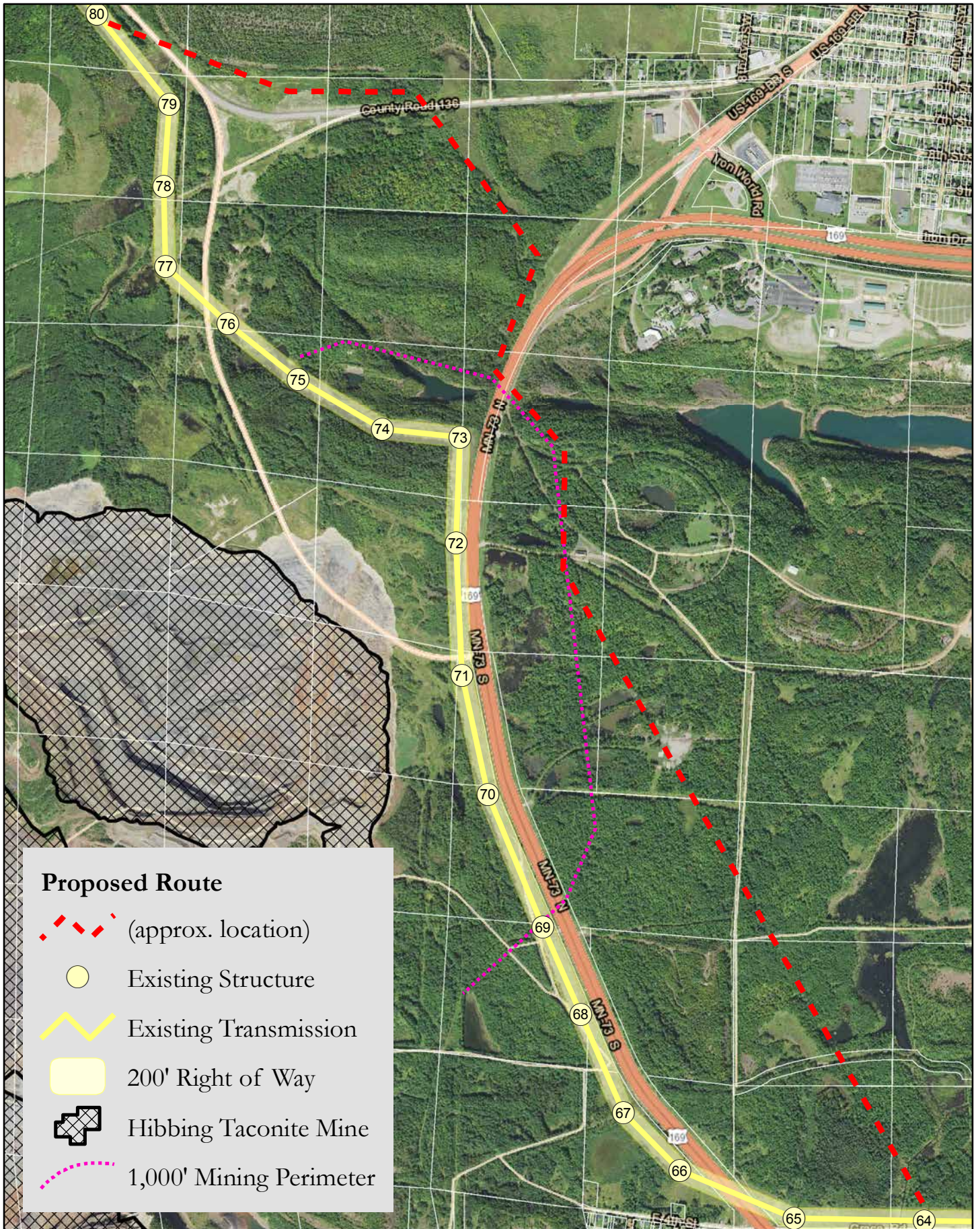
E: [thomas.hillstrom@xcelenergy.com](mailto:thomas.hillstrom@xcelenergy.com)

Enclosure:







Figure 1 - Project Location

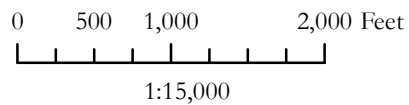
cc:

Mark Rothfork – Tetra Tech



**Proposed Route**

-  (approx. location)
-  Existing Structure
-  Existing Transmission
-  200' Right of Way
-  Hibbing Taconite Mine
-  1,000' Mining Perimeter



**Line 5702 Relocation: Figure 1**



March 28, 2019

Ms. Tamara Smith  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Ecological Services Field Office  
4101 American Boulevard East  
Bloomington, MN 55425

**Subject: Xcel Energy Proposed Minor Alteration of the 500 Kilovolt Transmission Line 5702 in St. Louis County, Minnesota**

Dear Ms. Smith:

Northern States Power Company, doing business as Xcel Energy (Xcel), is currently preparing to submit an application to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) for a minor alteration authorization, in compliance with Minnesota Statute 216E.16 and Minnesota Rule 7850.4800, for an approximately 2.5-mile reroute of the 500 kilovolt Transmission Line 5702 (Project). A minor alteration is a change in a high voltage transmission line that does not result in significant modifications to the human or environmental impacts of the facility that are subject to the Power Plant Siting Act (Minnesota Statutes Chapter 216E). Per Minn. Stat. 216B.243, Subd. 8.(4), this Project is exempt from the Certificate of Need approval process as it is not a new high voltage transmission line, rather it is a relocation of an existing line.

The Project is proposed to be re-routed across the Mesabi iron formation and was built on right-of-way through a license agreement rather than through an easement due to the value of underlying minerals. One provision of this agreement was that Xcel would move the line if requested by the licensor, and on January 15, 2017, Hibbing Taconite Company formally requested that Xcel relocate the line from six parcels to allow for expansion of the Hibbing Taconite Pit. The township, section, and range of the Project is provided in the table below and shown on the attached Figure 1.

County	Township	Range	Sections
St. Louis	58 N	20W	19, 20, 29, 32, and 33

The purpose of this letter is to introduce the Project and obtain input from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regarding any potential concerns or issues that may exist within the Project area listed above that would influence a decision regarding the use of the land.

Any resulting information will be used to help guide Project development in a manner that identifies and avoids impacts to sensitive resources where practicable. We have sent similar query letters to other agencies including, but not limited to, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office.

### **Federally Listed Species**

Tetra Tech obtained the official list of federally listed threatened and/or endangered species within the Project area using the USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) online tool (attached). A 200-foot-wide Project area (100 feet on either side of the centerline) was used for the IPaC tool. Table 1 summarizes the official list of species from the IPaC online tool that are federally endangered, threatened, or candidates under the Endangered Species Act for the Project area.

**Table 1:**  
**Federally listed species known or believed to occur in or near the Project Area**

Species	Status	Habitat	Project Evaluation
<i>Mammals</i>			
Canada lynx ( <i>Lynx canadensis</i> )	Threatened	Live in dense forests. Canada lynx are most likely to persist in areas that receive deep snow and have high-density populations of snowshoe hares, their principal prey.	The Project is located outside of the designated critical habitat areas. Impacts from habitat fragmentation on Canada lynx have been shown to be tied heavily to habitat availability. Due to the abundance of suitable habitat surrounding the Project Area, no adverse impacts aside from temporary displacement within the immediate area of construction activity is anticipated.
Gray wolf ( <i>Canis lupus</i> )	Threatened	Habitat generalist that includes biomes such as boreal forest, temperate deciduous forest, and temperate grasslands.	Potential habitat is present within the Project area. No impact to species or habitat is likely due to high mobility of the species and abundance of habitat surrounding the Project area.
Northern long-eared bat ( <i>Myotis septentrionalis</i> )	Threatened under the Section 4(d) rule of the ESA	Summer habitat (April 1–September 30) includes forested areas and non-forested areas, such as emergent wetlands and adjacent edges of agricultural fields, old fields, and pastures. Roosts underneath bark, in cavities, or in crevices of both live and dead trees. May also roost in cooler places like caves and mines.  Hibernates during winter in caves and mines.	No known roost trees are documented in the township, although potential summer habitat is present along the Project ROW.  No winter habitat (i.e., hibernacula; October 1–May 15) is known to occur in the area.  Impacts unlikely with implementation of conservation measures described in the Interim 4(d) rule.
<i>Birds</i>			
Piping plover ( <i>Charadrius melodus</i> )	Endangered	Live the majority of its life on open sandy beaches or rocky shores, often in high, dry sections away from water. Nesting season occurs May 15 to July 15.	Not likely to occur due to lack of habitat within the Project ROW. The historically-present population known to breed on dredge soil disposal areas of Lake Superior in St. Louis County has been extirpated. No impacts are anticipated.

## Conclusion

The Project would be designed to avoid resources such as wetlands, surface waters, sensitive habitats, protected species and historic or cultural areas to the extent possible. Potential impacts to soil and surface water resources would be minimized or avoided by using erosion and sedimentation control best management practices during construction. Xcel respectfully requests comments from USFWS in regard to the list of special-status species and their associated habitats. Specifically, Xcel requests locations of any known eagle nests that would affect Project construction and confirmation that there are no known northern long-eared bat roost trees or hibernacula within 0.25 mile of the Project.

Upon your review, we ask that the USFWS send a written response to the address below, stating specific findings, concerns, further requirements, or concurrence with the Project related species evaluation presented in Table 1. If you require any further information such as shapefiles or other maps, please do not hesitate to contact us.

If you have any questions regarding the information presented in this letter, please contact Tom Hillstrom at Xcel Energy, 612-330-5835 or at [Thomas.Hillstrom@xcelenergy.com](mailto:Thomas.Hillstrom@xcelenergy.com). Thank you for your assistance regarding the Project.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Hillstrom". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T".

**Tom Hillstrom**

**Xcel Energy | Responsible By Nature**

**Principal Permitting Agent**

414 Nicollet Mall, 414-6A Minneapolis, MN 55401

P: 612 330 5835 C: 612 584 8783

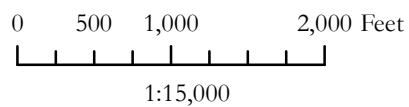
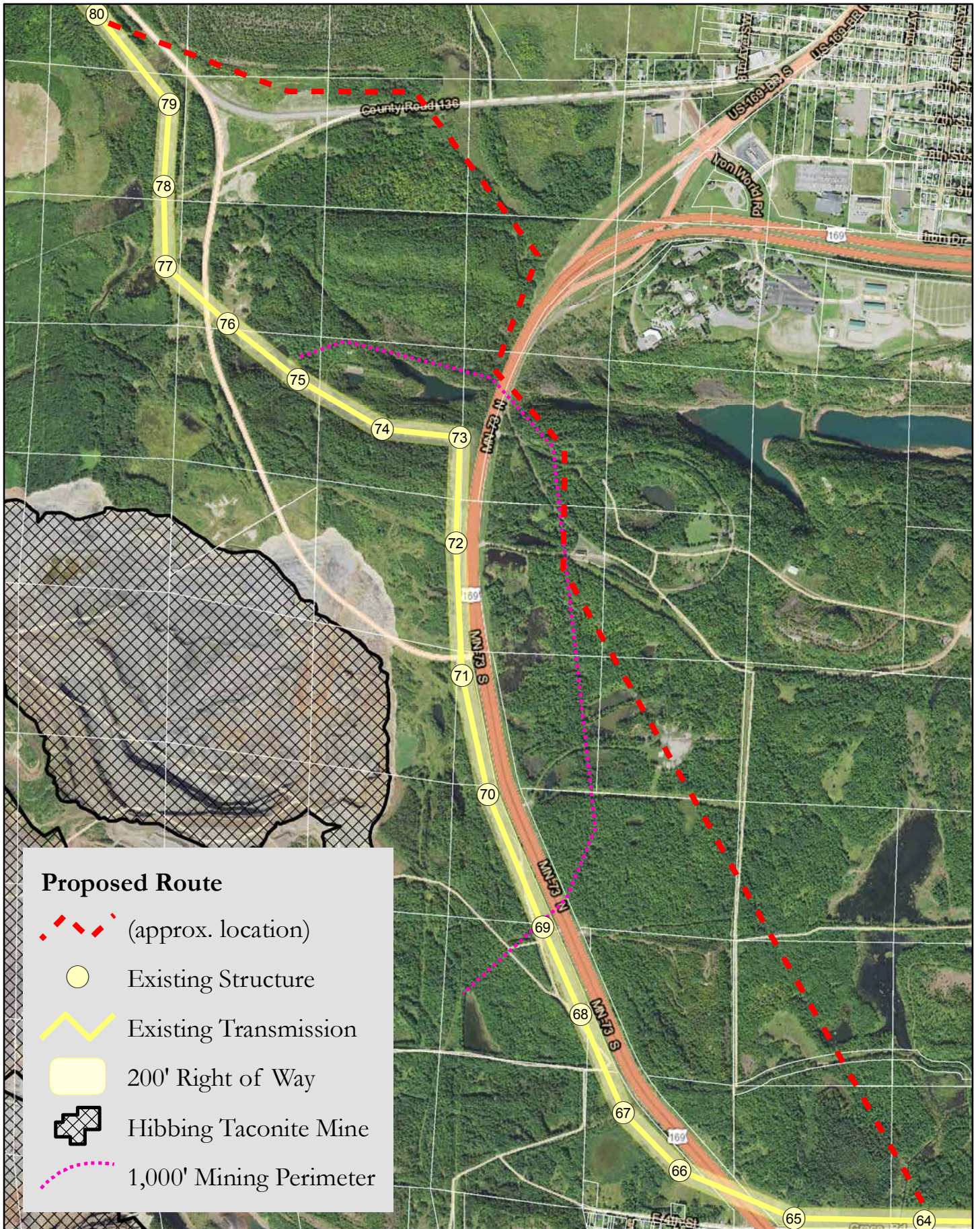
E: [thomas.hillstrom@xcelenergy.com](mailto:thomas.hillstrom@xcelenergy.com)

Enclosure:

Figure 1 - Project Location  
USFWS IPaC Official Species List

cc:

Mark Rothfork – Tetra Tech



**Line 5702 Relocation: Figure 1**





# United States Department of the Interior



## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office  
4101 American Blvd E

Bloomington, MN 55425-1665

Phone: (952) 252-0092 Fax: (952) 646-2873

<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Endangered/section7/s7process/step1.html>

In Reply Refer To:

December 03, 2018

Consultation Code: 03E19000-2019-SLI-0231

Event Code: 03E19000-2019-E-00586

Project Name: Xcel Hibbing Relocation

Subject: List of threatened and endangered species that may occur in your proposed project location, and/or may be affected by your proposed project

To Whom It May Concern:

The attached species list identifies any federally threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate species that may occur within the action area the area that is likely to be affected by your proposed project. The list also includes any designated and proposed critical habitat that overlaps with the action area. This list is provided to you as the initial step of the consultation process required under section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act, also referred to as Section 7 Consultation.

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 requires that actions authorized, funded, or carried out by Federal agencies not jeopardize federally threatened or endangered species or adversely modify designated critical habitat. To fulfill this mandate, Federal agencies (or their designated non-federal representatives) must consult with the Service if they determine their project may affect listed species or critical habitat. Agencies must confer under section 7(a)(4) if any proposed action is likely to jeopardize species proposed for listing as endangered or threatened or likely to adversely modify any proposed critical habitat.

Under 50 CFR 402.12(e) (the regulations that implement Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act) the accuracy of this species list should be verified after 90 days. This verification can be completed formally or informally. You may verify the list by visiting the ECOS-IPaC website <http://ecos.fws.gov/ipac/> at regular intervals during project planning and implementation and completing the same process you used to receive the attached list. As an alternative, you may contact this Ecological Services Field Office for updates.

Please use the species list provided and visit the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Region 3 Section 7 Technical Assistance website at - <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/section7/>

[s7process/index.html](#). This website contains step-by-step instructions that will help you determine if your project will have an adverse effect on listed species or critical habitat and will help lead you through the Section 7 process.

For all **wind energy projects** and **projects that include installing towers that use guy wires or are over 200 feet in height**, please contact this field office directly for assistance, even if no federally listed plants, animals or critical habitat are present within the action area.

Although no longer protected under the Endangered Species Act, be aware that bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668 *et seq.*) and Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703 *et seq.*), as are golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*). Projects affecting these species may require measures to avoid harming eagles or may require a permit. If your project is near a bald eagle nest or winter roost area, see our Eagle Permits website at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/midwestbird/EaglePermits/index.html>. The information available at this website will help you determine if you can avoid impacting eagles or if a permit may be necessary.

We appreciate your concern for threatened and endangered species. Please include the Consultation Tracking Number in the header of this letter with any request for consultation or correspondence about your project that you submit to our office.

Attachment(s):

- Official Species List
- Migratory Birds

# Official Species List

This list is provided pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, and fulfills the requirement for Federal agencies to "request of the Secretary of the Interior information whether any species which is listed or proposed to be listed may be present in the area of a proposed action".

This species list is provided by:

**Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office**

4101 American Blvd E

Bloomington, MN 55425-1665

(952) 252-0092

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## Project Summary

Consultation Code: 03E19000-2019-SLI-0231

Event Code: 03E19000-2019-E-00586

Project Name: Xcel Hibbing Relocation

Project Type: TRANSMISSION LINE

Project Description: Relocate approximately 2.5 miles of 500 kV Transmission Line

Project Location:

Approximate location of the project can be viewed in Google Maps: <https://www.google.com/maps/place/47.4698330585909N92.90078451842254W>



Counties: St. Louis, MN

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## Endangered Species Act Species

There is a total of 4 threatened, endangered, or candidate species on this species list.

Species on this list should be considered in an effects analysis for your project and could include species that exist in another geographic area. For example, certain fish may appear on the species list because a project could affect downstream species.

IPaC does not display listed species or critical habitats under the sole jurisdiction of NOAA Fisheries<sup>1</sup>, as USFWS does not have the authority to speak on behalf of NOAA and the Department of Commerce.

See the "Critical habitats" section below for those critical habitats that lie wholly or partially within your project area under this office's jurisdiction. Please contact the designated FWS office if you have questions.

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1. [NOAA Fisheries](#), also known as the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), is an office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration within the Department of Commerce.

## Mammals

NAME	STATUS
Canada Lynx <i>Lynx canadensis</i> Population: Wherever Found in Contiguous U.S. There is <b>final</b> critical habitat for this species. Your location is outside the critical habitat. Species profile: <a href="https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3652">https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3652</a>	Threatened
Gray Wolf <i>Canis lupus</i> Population: MN There is <b>final</b> critical habitat for this species. Your location is outside the critical habitat. Species profile: <a href="https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/4488">https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/4488</a>	Threatened
Northern Long-eared Bat <i>Myotis septentrionalis</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: <a href="https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9045">https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9045</a>	Threatened

## Birds

NAME	STATUS
Piping Plover <i>Charadrius melodus</i> Population: [Great Lakes watershed DPS] - Great Lakes, watershed in States of IL, IN, MI, MN, NY, OH, PA, and WI and Canada (Ont.) There is <b>final</b> critical habitat for this species. Your location is outside the critical habitat. Species profile: <a href="https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/6039">https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/6039</a>	Endangered

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## Critical habitats

THERE ARE NO CRITICAL HABITATS WITHIN YOUR PROJECT AREA UNDER THIS OFFICE'S JURISDICTION.

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# Migratory Birds

Certain birds are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act<sup>1</sup> and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act<sup>2</sup>.

Any person or organization who plans or conducts activities that may result in impacts to migratory birds, eagles, and their habitats should follow appropriate regulations and consider implementing appropriate conservation measures, as described [below](#).

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1. The [Migratory Birds Treaty Act](#) of 1918.
  2. The [Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act](#) of 1940.
  3. 50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)

MIGRATORY BIRD INFORMATION WAS NOT AVAILABLE WHEN THIS SPECIES LIST WAS GENERATED. PLEASE CONTACT THE FIELD OFFICE FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.

## Migratory Birds FAQ

**Tell me more about conservation measures I can implement to avoid or minimize impacts to migratory birds.**

[Nationwide Conservation Measures](#) describes measures that can help avoid and minimize impacts to all birds at any location year round. Implementation of these measures is particularly important when birds are most likely to occur in the project area. When birds may be breeding in the area, identifying the locations of any active nests and avoiding their destruction is a very helpful impact minimization measure. To see when birds are most likely to occur and be breeding in your project area, view the Probability of Presence Summary. [Additional measures](#) and/or [permits](#) may be advisable depending on the type of activity you are conducting and the type of infrastructure or bird species present on your project site.

**What does IPaC use to generate the migratory birds potentially occurring in my specified location?**

The Migratory Bird Resource List is comprised of USFWS [Birds of Conservation Concern \(BCC\)](#) and other species that may warrant special attention in your project location.

The migratory bird list generated for your project is derived from data provided by the [Avian Knowledge Network \(AKN\)](#). The AKN data is based on a growing collection of [survey, banding, and citizen science datasets](#) and is queried and filtered to return a list of those birds reported as occurring in the 10km grid cell(s) which your project intersects, and that have been identified as warranting special attention because they are a BCC species in that area, an eagle ([Eagle Act](#) requirements may apply), or a species that has a particular vulnerability to offshore activities or development.

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Again, the Migratory Bird Resource list includes only a subset of birds that may occur in your project area. It is not representative of all birds that may occur in your project area. To get a list of all birds potentially present in your project area, please visit the [E-bird Explore Data Tool](#).

### **What does IPaC use to generate the probability of presence graphs for the migratory birds potentially occurring in my specified location?**

The probability of presence graphs associated with your migratory bird list are based on data provided by the [Avian Knowledge Network \(AKN\)](#). This data is derived from a growing collection of [survey, banding, and citizen science datasets](#).

Probability of presence data is continuously being updated as new and better information becomes available. To learn more about how the probability of presence graphs are produced and how to interpret them, go to the Probability of Presence Summary and then click on the "Tell me about these graphs" link.

### **How do I know if a bird is breeding, wintering, migrating or present year-round in my project area?**

To see what part of a particular bird's range your project area falls within (i.e. breeding, wintering, migrating or year-round), you may refer to the following resources: [The Cornell Lab of Ornithology All About Birds Bird Guide](#), or (if you are unsuccessful in locating the bird of interest there), the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology Neotropical Birds guide](#). If a bird on your migratory bird species list has a breeding season associated with it, if that bird does occur in your project area, there may be nests present at some point within the timeframe specified. If "Breeds elsewhere" is indicated, then the bird likely does not breed in your project area.

### **What are the levels of concern for migratory birds?**

Migratory birds delivered through IPaC fall into the following distinct categories of concern:

1. "BCC Rangewide" birds are [Birds of Conservation Concern](#) (BCC) that are of concern throughout their range anywhere within the USA (including Hawaii, the Pacific Islands, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands);
2. "BCC - BCR" birds are BCCs that are of concern only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA; and
3. "Non-BCC - Vulnerable" birds are not BCC species in your project area, but appear on your list either because of the [Eagle Act](#) requirements (for eagles) or (for non-eagles) potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities (e.g. offshore energy development or longline fishing).

Although it is important to try to avoid and minimize impacts to all birds, efforts should be made, in particular, to avoid and minimize impacts to the birds on this list, especially eagles and BCC species of rangewide concern. For more information on conservation measures you can implement to help avoid and minimize migratory bird impacts and requirements for eagles, please see the FAQs for these topics.

### **Details about birds that are potentially affected by offshore projects**

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For additional details about the relative occurrence and abundance of both individual bird species and groups of bird species within your project area off the Atlantic Coast, please visit the [Northeast Ocean Data Portal](#). The Portal also offers data and information about other taxa besides birds that may be helpful to you in your project review. Alternately, you may download the bird model results files underlying the portal maps through the [NOAA NCCOS Integrative Statistical Modeling and Predictive Mapping of Marine Bird Distributions and Abundance on the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf](#) project webpage.

Bird tracking data can also provide additional details about occurrence and habitat use throughout the year, including migration. Models relying on survey data may not include this information. For additional information on marine bird tracking data, see the [Diving Bird Study](#) and the [nanotag studies](#) or contact [Caleb Spiegel](#) or [Pam Loring](#).

### **What if I have eagles on my list?**

If your project has the potential to disturb or kill eagles, you may need to [obtain a permit](#) to avoid violating the Eagle Act should such impacts occur.

### **Proper Interpretation and Use of Your Migratory Bird Report**

The migratory bird list generated is not a list of all birds in your project area, only a subset of birds of priority concern. To learn more about how your list is generated, and see options for identifying what other birds may be in your project area, please see the FAQ “What does IPaC use to generate the migratory birds potentially occurring in my specified location”. Please be aware this report provides the “probability of presence” of birds within the 10 km grid cell(s) that overlap your project; not your exact project footprint. On the graphs provided, please also look carefully at the survey effort (indicated by the black vertical bar) and for the existence of the “no data” indicator (a red horizontal bar). A high survey effort is the key component. If the survey effort is high, then the probability of presence score can be viewed as more dependable. In contrast, a low survey effort bar or no data bar means a lack of data and, therefore, a lack of certainty about presence of the species. This list is not perfect; it is simply a starting point for identifying what birds of concern have the potential to be in your project area, when they might be there, and if they might be breeding (which means nests might be present). The list helps you know what to look for to confirm presence, and helps guide you in knowing when to implement conservation measures to avoid or minimize potential impacts from your project activities, should presence be confirmed. To learn more about conservation measures, visit the FAQ “Tell me about conservation measures I can implement to avoid or minimize impacts to migratory birds” at the bottom of your migratory bird trust resources page.

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