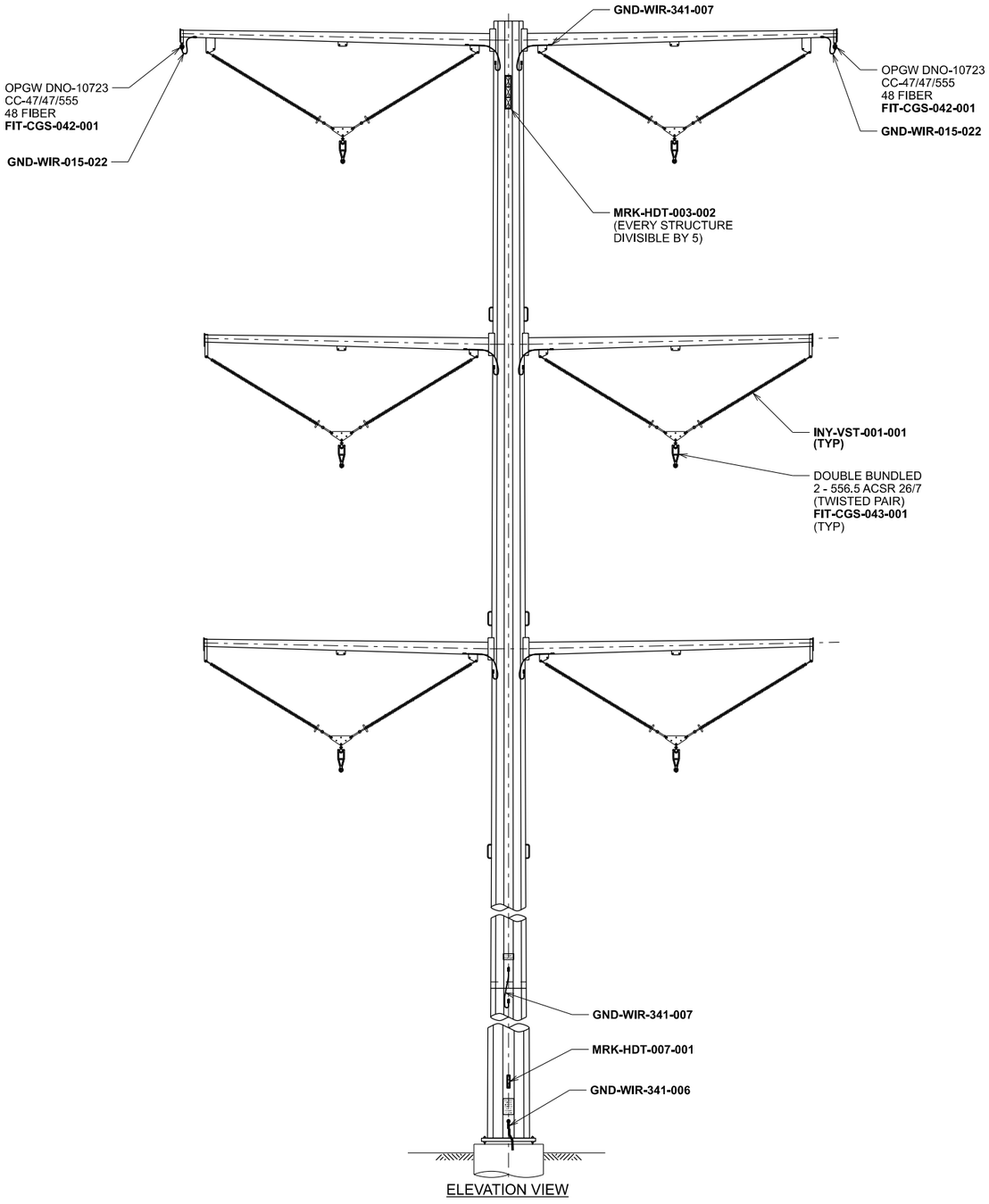
APPENDIX D

Technical Drawings of Proposed Structures



ELEVATION VIEW

NOTE:
SUB-ASSEMBLY FOR JOINT BONDS WILL BE ADDED TO EACH PLS POLE MODEL.

INSTALL BONDING GND-WIR-341-007 ACROSS ALL STEEL SHAFT SLIP JOINTS		
STRUCTURE XP#	POLE HEIGHT	TOTAL NUMBER OF SLIP JOINT BONDING REQUIRED
PST17159	125-0"	2
PST17160	130'-0"	2
PST17161	135'-0"	2
PST17162	140'-0"	2
PST17163	145'-0"	2
PST17164	150'-0"	2
PST17165	155'-0"	3
PST17166	160'-0"	3
PST17167	165'-0"	3

CONSTRUCTION NOTE:

WHEN INSTALLING ARMS TO SHAFT BONDS DO NOT CONTACT ANY PART OF THE POLYMER INSULATOR.

CONSTRUCTION NOTE:

IF CABLES ARE USED TO TIE DOWN ARMS PRIOR TO WIRE INSTALLATION, DO NOT ALLOW TIE DOWN CABLES TO CONTACT ANY PART OF THE POLYMER INSULATOR.

ASSEMBLY
STR ND-279464-1
FOR STEEL POLES
STL ND-279454-PST17159
STL ND-279454-PST17160
STL ND-279454-PST17161
STL ND-279454-PST17162
STL ND-279454-PST17163
STL ND-279454-PST17164
STL ND-279454-PST17165
STL ND-279454-PST17166
STL ND-279454-PST17167
LD ND-279418

QTY	SUBASSEMBLIES
2	FIT-CGS-042-001
3	FIT-CGS-043-001
2	GND-WIR-015-022
1	GND-WIR-341-006
6	GND-WIR-341-007
3	INY-VST-001-001
1	MRK-HDT-007-001

ASSEMBLY
STR ND-279464-2
FOR STEEL POLES
FOR SECOND CIRCUIT

QTY	SUBASSEMBLIES
3	FIT-CGS-043-001
3	INY-VST-001-001

REV	DATE	WBS 4	REVISION DESCRIPTION
0	09/25/2019	B.0000004.021.001.001	

DRAWING REFERENCE

PLAN & PROFILE _____ ND-279505
SUBASSEMBLY INDEX _____ NL-279504

THIS PE SEAL IS ONLY APPLICABLE TO THE CURRENT CONSTRUCTION REVISION

ISSUED BY ENGINEERING DEPT FOR: CONSTRUCTION

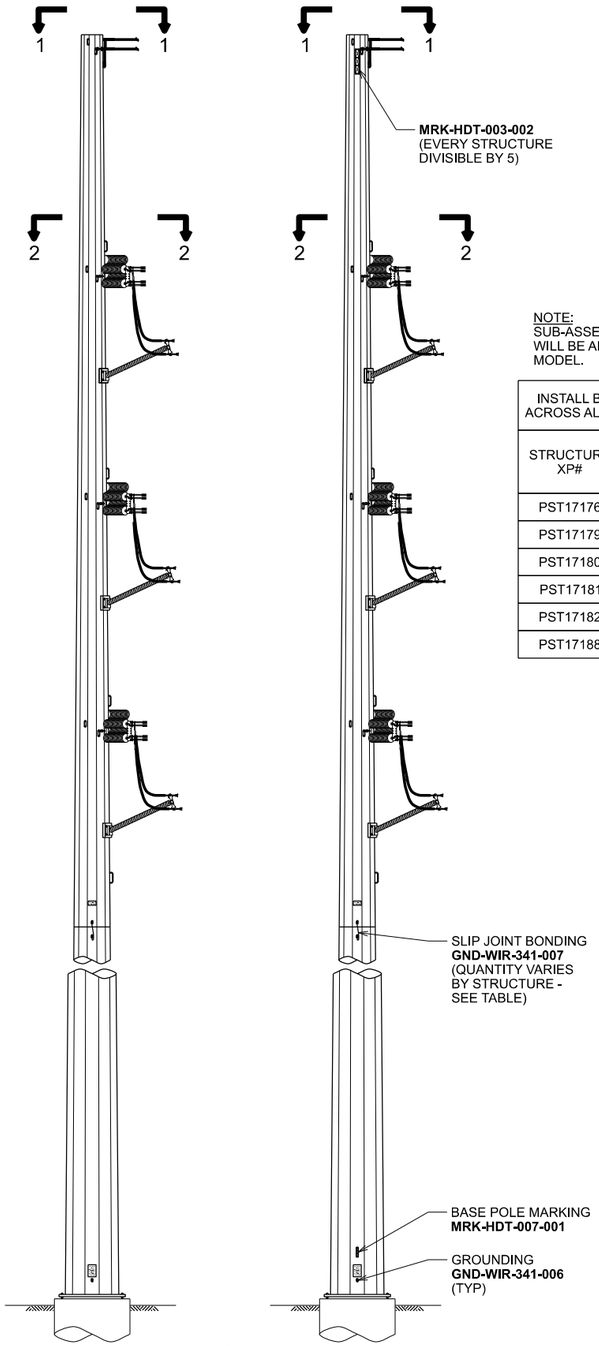
345 kV

STRUCTURE DRAWING - TANGENT - STEEL - D.C. - SINGLE POLE
TAN TO 2 DEGREE, DAVIT ARM, V-STRING

Xcel Energy® | ND-279464-1 | SCALE AS NOTED | REV 0

ND-279464-1.DGN

4/27/2020 8:03:50 AM



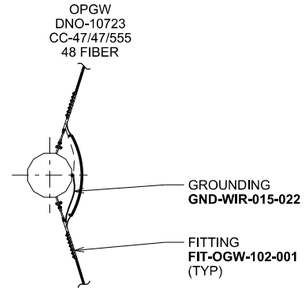
ELEVATION VIEW

STRUCTURE SHOWN IS RIGHT ANGLE CONFIGURATION - ROTATE 180° FOR LEFT ANGLE CONFIGURATION

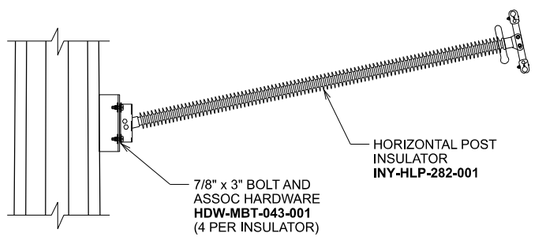
LINE ANGLE VARIES BY STRUCTURE

NOTE:
SUB-ASSEMBLY FOR JOINT BONDS WILL BE ADDED TO EACH PLS POLE MODEL.

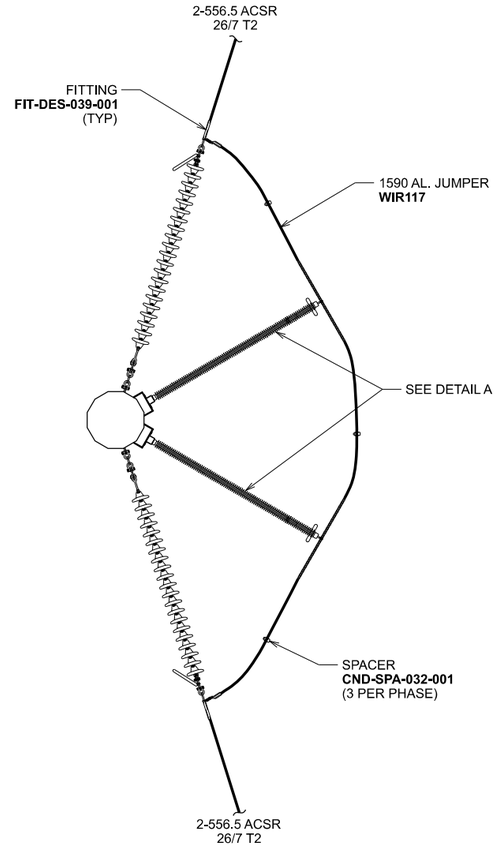
INSTALL BONDING **GND-WIR-341-007** ACROSS ALL STEEL SHAFT SLIP JOINTS		
STRUCTURE XP#	POLE HEIGHT	TOTAL NUMBER OF SLIP JOINT BONDING REQUIRED
PST17176	130'-0"	2
PST17179	155'-0"	3
PST17180	160'-0"	3
PST17181	165'-0"	3
PST17182	155'-0"	3
PST17188	145'-0"	3



SECTION 1-1
SHIELD WIRE
SCALE: NONE



DETAIL A
HORIZONTAL POST INSULATOR
SCALE: NONE



SECTION 2-2
PHASE
SCALE: NONE

ASSEMBLY
STR ND-279471-1
FOR STEEL POLES
LINE 0967

STL ND-279455-PST17176
STL ND-279455-PST17179
STL ND-279455-PST17180
STL ND-279455-PST17181
LD ND-279425

STL ND-279455-PST17182
LD ND-279426

STL ND-279455-PST17188
LD ND-279431

QTY	SUBASSEMBLIES
9	CND-SPA-032-001
2	FIB-OGW-102-001
6	FIT-DES-039-001
2	GND-WIR-015-022
2	GND-WIR-341-006
48	HDW-MBT-043-001
12	INY-HLP-282-001
1	MRK-HDT-007-001
330	WIR117 - 1590 AL

ASSEMBLY
STR ND-279471-2
FOR STEEL POLES
LINE 0982

QTY	SUBASSEMBLIES
9	CND-SPA-032-001
6	FIT-DES-039-001
330	WIR117 - 1590 AL.

REV	DATE	WBS 4	REVISION DESCRIPTION
0	01/13/2020	B.0000004.021.001.001	

DRAWING REFERENCE
PLAN & PROFILE _____ ND-279505
SUBASSEMBLY INDEX _____ NL-279504

THIS PE SEAL IS ONLY APPLICABLE TO THE CURRENT CONSTRUCTION REVISION

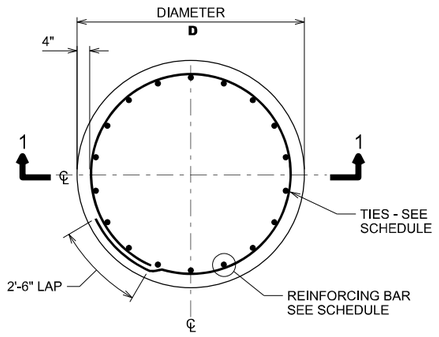
ISSUED BY ENGINEERING DEPT FOR: CONSTRUCTION

345 kV
STRUCTURE DRAWING - DEADEND - TERMINAL - STEEL - ANGLE
0 TO 95 DEGREE - DOUBLE CIRCUIT - 2-POLE, NO OPGW SPLICE

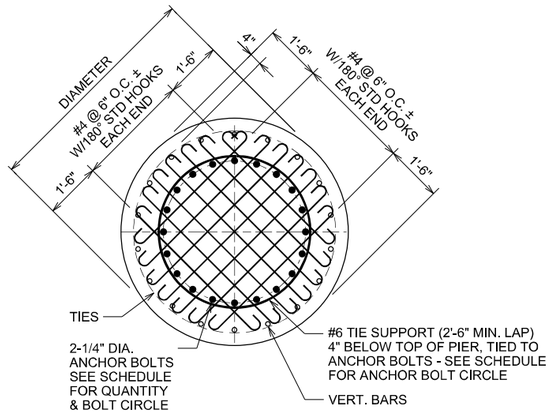
Xcel Energy®

ND-279471-1	SCALE 1/16"=1'-0"	REV 0

ND-279471-1.DGN
7/20/2020 11:25:20 AM

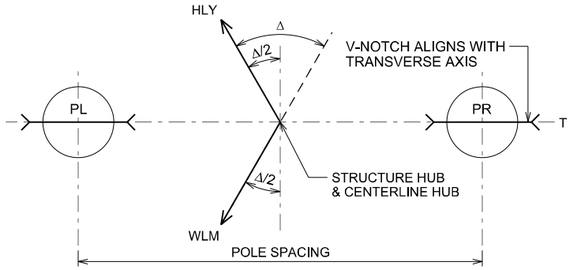


SECTION 2-2

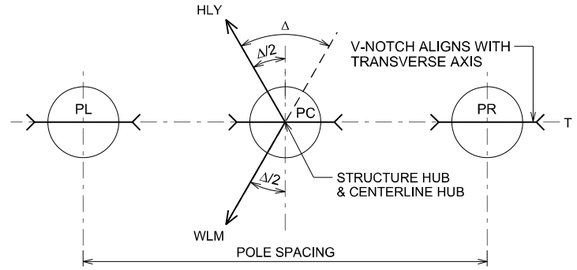


SECTION 3-3

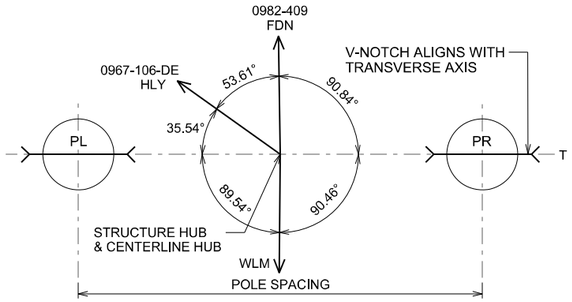
#4 REINFORCING MAT



V-NOTCH ORIENTATION
TYPICAL 2-POLE DEAD END STRUCTURE



V-NOTCH ORIENTATION
TYPICAL 3-POLE DEAD END STRUCTURE



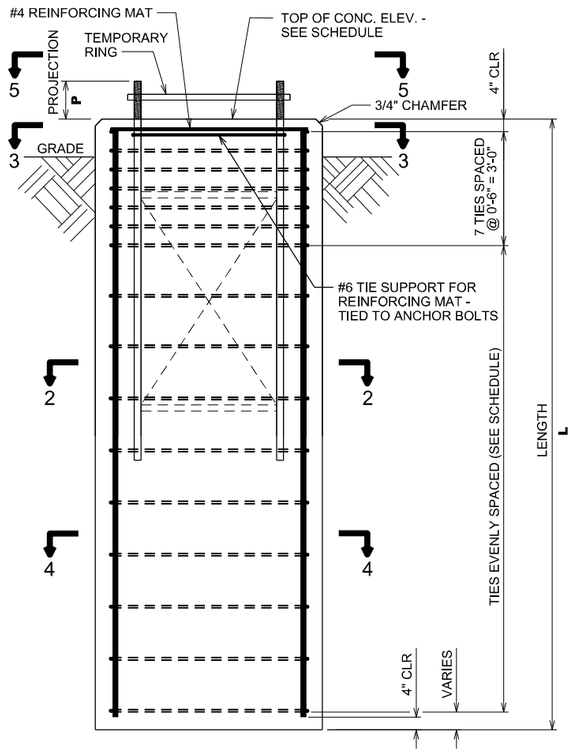
V-NOTCH ORIENTATION
STRUCTURE 0967-105-DE

GENERAL NOTES

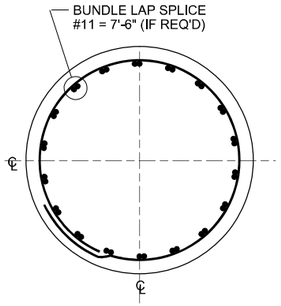
1. REINFORCING STEEL SHALL CONFORM TO ASTM A-615 GRADE 75 FOR VERTICAL BARS. ALL OTHER STEEL SHALL BE GRADE 60. ALL CLEAR DIMENSIONS MEASURED FROM OUTSIDE EDGE OF REINFORCING STEEL.
2. CONCRETE: READY MIX CONCRETE SHALL CONFORM TO ASTM C-94. CEMENT SHALL BE ADDED PER ASTM C-260 TO PRODUCE FROM 6% +/- 1½% ENTRAINED AIR. NO CALCIUM CHLORIDE SOLUTION SHALL BE ADDED TO CONCRETE MIX.
   A) CONCRETE STRENGTH: (MINIMUM 28 DAY COMPRESSIVE STRENGTH) - 4500 P.S.I.
   B) AGGREGATE: SHALL CONFORM TO ASTM C-33. MAXIMUM AGGREGATE SIZE THROUGHOUT SHALL BE 3/4"
   C) SLUMP: SHALL BE 6-9 INCHES.
   D) VIBRATION OF CONCRETE: SHALL BE LIMITED TO THE TOP TEN FEET OF THE FOUNDATION.
3. SOIL OR ROCK CONDITIONS: WHERE SOIL DEPTHS, DEPTHS TO BEDROCK, OR THE CONDITIONS OF SOIL OR BEDROCK DIFFER FROM THAT SHOWN ON THE BORINGS, THE FOUNDATIONS ENGINEER SHALL BE CONTACTED.
4. ALL PIERS SHALL BE FORMED FROM TOP OF FOUNDATION TO ONE FOOT BELOW GRADE BEFORE CONCRETE IS PLACED TO COMPLETE THE PIER.

ADDITIONAL REINFORCING STEEL REQUIRED FOR PIERS - STRUCTURES 001-043 ONLY

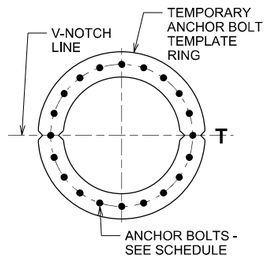
1. LONGITUDINAL SUPPORT BARS: (4) #4 BARS 20 FEET LONG FOR PIER LENGTHS 20 FEET OR LESS, PLUS (6) #4 BARS 20 FEET LONG FOR EACH ADDITIONAL 0-10 FEET OF PIER LENGTH ABOVE 20 FEET.
2. CROSS BRACING BARS TO MAINTAIN SHAPE (DESIRED 8 FEET MAXIMUM SPOKE SPACING):
   A) FOR PIER DIAMETERS 4 FEET TO LESS THAN 7 FEET: (2) #8 BARS 20 FEET LONG FOR PIER LENGTHS 20 FEET OR LESS, PLUS (2) #8 BARS 20 FEET LONG FOR EACH ADDITIONAL 0-10 FEET OF PIER LENGTH ABOVE 20 FEET.
   B) FOR PIER DIAMETERS 7 FEET TO 10 FEET: (2) #11 BARS 20 FEET LONG FOR PIER LENGTHS 20 FEET OR LESS, PLUS (2) #11 BARS 20 FEET LONG FOR EACH ADDITIONAL 0-10 FEET OF PIER LENGTH ABOVE 20 FEET.
   C) FOR PIER DIAMETERS GREATER THAN 10 FEET: (4) #11 BARS 20 FEET LONG FOR PIER LENGTHS 20 FEET OR LESS, PLUS (2) #11 BARS 20 FEET LONG FOR EACH ADDITIONAL 0-10 FEET OF PIER LENGTH ABOVE 20 FEET.



SECTION 1-1

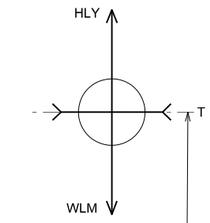


SECTION 4-4

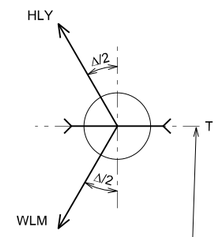


SECTION 5-5

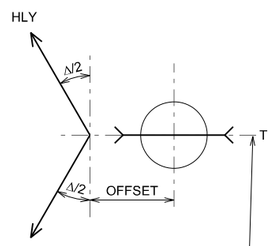
ANCHOR BOLT LAYOUT



V-NOTCH ORIENTATION
TYPICAL 1-POLE
TANGENT STRUCTURE



V-NOTCH ORIENTATION
TYPICAL 1-POLE DEAD END
STRUCTURE



V-NOTCH ORIENTATION
TYPICAL 1-POLE
RUNNING ANGLE STRUCTURE

DRAWING REFERENCE

ANCHOR BOLT DETAILS	ND-279512
FOUNDATION DESIGN CALCULATIONS	NX-279510
PLAN AND PROFILE	ND-279505
SOIL BORINGS	NX-279511
SUBASSEMBLY DRAWING INDEX	NL-279504
FOUNDATION SCHEDULE - WLM SUB TO 0967-020	ND-279509-2
FOUNDATION SCHEDULE - 0967-021 TO 0967-043	ND-279509-3
FOUNDATION SCHEDULE - 0967-044 TO 0967-069	ND-279509-4
FOUNDATION SCHEDULE - 0967-070 TO 0967-097	ND-279509-5
FOUNDATION SCHEDULE - 0967-098 TO 0967-125	ND-279509-6
FOUNDATION SCHEDULE - 0967-126 TO 0967-155	ND-279509-7
FOUNDATION SCHEDULE - 0967-156 TO 0967-185	ND-279509-8
FOUNDATION SCHEDULE - 0967-186 TO 0967-215	ND-279509-9
FOUNDATION SCHEDULE - 0967-216 TO 0967-245	ND-279509-10
FOUNDATION SCHEDULE - 0967-246 TO HLY SUB	ND-279509-11

THIS PE SEAL IS ONLY APPLICABLE TO THE CURRENT CONSTRUCTION REVISION

TRANSMISSION CONSTRUCTION

☐ BUILT AS DESIGNED
☐ REVISE PER MARK-UP

FOREMAN / INSPECTOR SIGNATURE

DATE:

I hereby certify that this plan, specification, or report was prepared by me or under my direct supervision and that I am a duly Licensed Professional Engineer under the laws of the state of Minnesota.

REV	DATE	WBS 4	REVISION DESCRIPTION

ISSUED BY ENGINEERING DEPT FOR: CONSTRUCTION

345 kV

Xcel Energy®

ND-279509-1

SCALE NONE

REV 6

ND-279509-1.DGN

4/7/2021 12:01:16 PM

APPENDIX E

Agency Correspondence

List of Agency Contacts for Project Notification Mailing	
Agency Name	**Contact Name and Title**
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Shauna Marquardt, Field Supervisor
Federal Aviation Administration	Fred Souchet, Air Traffic - Minnesota
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Christopher Hogge
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Jacob Stich
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Melanie Dickman
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Loren Clarke
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Kelly Heather
Fond du Lac Band of the Minnesota Chippewa	Evan Schroeder, THPO
Lower Sioux Indian Community	Cheyanne St. John, THPO
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe	Terry Kemper, THPO
Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe	Rob Hull, THPO
Prairie Island Indian Community	Noah White, THPO
Upper Sioux Community	Samantha Odegard, THPO
White Earth Nation	Jaime Arsenault, THPO
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe	Amy Burnette, THPO
Red Lake Nation	Kade Ferris, THPO
Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community	Leonard Wabasha, THPO
Bois Forte Band of Chippewa	Jaylen Strong, THPO
Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office	Sarah Beimers, Environmental Review Program Manager
Minnesota Indian Affairs Council	Melissa Cerda, Senior Cultural Resources Specialist
Office of the State Archaeologist	Amanda Gronhovd, State Archaeologist
Minnesota Department of Health	Chad Anderson, Planner
Minnesota Department of Health	Anneka Munsell, Hydrologist
Minnesota Department of Health	Gail Haglund, Hydrologist
Minnesota Department of Health	Yarta Clemens-Billaigbakpu, Hydrologist
Minnesota Department of Health	Amanda Strommer, Planner
Yellow Medicine County SWCD	Brayden Anderson , BWSR LGU
Wright County SWCD	Andrew Grean, BWSR LGU
Stearns County	Shelby Richard-Hoffman and Jennifer Kaminskie, BWSR LGU

List of Agency Contacts for Project Notification Mailing	
Agency Name	**Contact Name and Title**
Sherburne County	Zach Guttormson, BWSR LGU
City of Becker	Joel Asp (SEH Inc.), BWSR LGU
Renville County SWCD	Kyle Richter, BWSR LGU
Redwood County SWCD	Ben Bauer, BWSR LGU
Meeker County SWCD	Joe Norman, BWSR LGU
Lyon County SWCD	Luke Olson, BWSR LGU
Kandiyohi County	Gary Geer, BWSR LGU
Chippewa County SWCD	Tom Warner, BWSR LGU

Representative Project Notification Letter

Minnesota Energy Connection Project
Route Permit Application
MPUC Docket No. E002/TL-22-132
October 2023

414 Nicollet Mall
Minneapolis, MN 55401

1-800-895-4999
Xcelenergy.com

September 21, 2023

XXXXX

RE: Minnesota Energy Connection Project

Dear XX:

Xcel Energy is proposing to construct a new double circuit 345 kilovolt (kV) high voltage transmission line, extending from Xcel Energy's Sherburne County Generating Station (Sherco) located in Becker, Minnesota, to a new substation near the Town of Garvin in Lyon County, Minnesota (refer to attached Project Study Area Map). The project, referred to as the Minnesota Energy Connection Project (Project), was included in Xcel Energy's 2020-2034 Upper Midwest Integrated Resource Plan (IRP). The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission or MPUC) approved Xcel Energy's plan to retire Sherco Units 1 and 2 in 2026 and 2023, respectively; and, in the most recent IRP proceeding, the Commission directed Xcel Energy to retire Sherco Unit 3 by 2030. The Commission further approved Xcel Energy's procurement of 600 megawatts (MW) of solar and 2,150 MW of wind, or an equivalent amount of energy and capacity from a combination of wind, solar and/or storage between 2027 and 2032. A significant portion of these acquisitions will maximize the use of the Project and the Sherco interconnection rights. Therefore, Xcel Energy plans to use the proposed Project to connect renewable energy-rich areas in southern and southwestern Minnesota and deliver carbon-free, renewable energy to its customers throughout the Upper Midwest.

Xcel Energy is in the process of evaluating route options within its study area based on analysis of publicly available data that minimize socioeconomic and environmental impacts, maximize co-location with other infrastructure, and satisfy regulatory routing and facility siting requirements. Xcel Energy identified many potential route options within a large study area in order to obtain agency and public input to support the route selection process. Field review of select locations along several route options were also conducted to clarify or confirm potential route issues or constraints.

Xcel Energy filed a Certificate of Need (CN) application in March 2023 and plans to file a Route Permit application in the Fall of 2023 to the MPUC for the Project. On May 2, 2023, the Commission issued an Order accepting Xcel Energy's CN application as complete and in August 2023, the Commission issued an order directing joint proceedings to be held on the CN and Route Permit applications.[1]

As part of this process, Xcel Energy conducted public open houses and stakeholder outreach, as well as continued coordination with applicable regulatory and government offices. Xcel Energy also maintains a website that includes additional project information at:

[1] Order – Authorizing Joint Proceedings (August 10, 2023). E-docket ID No. 20238-198151-01, Available online at https://efiling.web.commerce.state.mn.us/edockets/searchDocuments.do?method=showPoup&documentId={104AE089-0000-C816-959D-CA6A611D6E9D}&documentTitle=20238-198151-01.

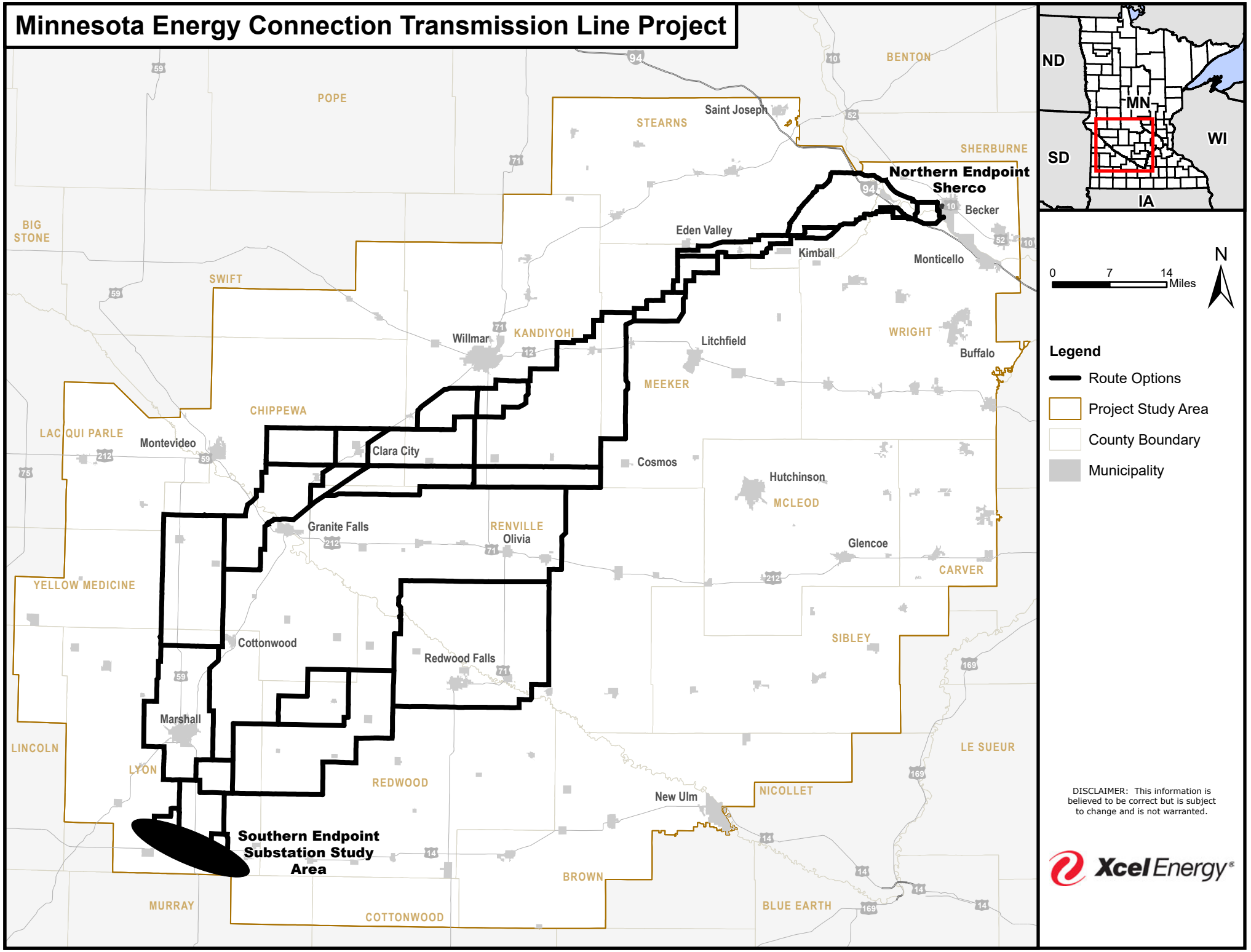
https://www.mnenergyconnection.com/. We appreciate your assistance as we evaluate siting and routing information and work through the MPUC's approval process. If you have questions and would like additional information about the proposed Project or if you have any information we should consider evaluating, please contact me at Matthew.A.Langan@xcelenergy.com or (612) 330-6954.

Sincerely,

Matthew Langan
Principal Agent, Siting and Land Rights

Enclosure: Project Study Area Map

Minnesota Energy Connection Transmission Line Project



Federal Agency Responses

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, ST. PAUL DISTRICT
332 MINNESOTA STREET, SUITE E1500
ST. PAUL, MN 55101-1323

09/26/2023

Regulatory File No. MVP-2023-01209-JST

THIS IS NOT A PERMIT

Matt Langan
414 Nicollet Mall
Minneapolis, MN 55401

To: Matt Langan:

We have received your submittal described below. You may contact the Project Manager with questions regarding the evaluation process. The Project Manager may request additional information necessary to evaluate your submittal.

File Number: MVP-2023-01209-JST

Applicant: Matt Langan

Project Name: Xcel Energy Sherco to Garvin Transmission Line - Pre-App

Project Location: Section #FOLDER_SECTION# of Township #FOLDER_TOWNSHIP#, Range #FOLDER_RANGE#, #FOLDER_COUNTY#, #FOLDER_STATE_FULL# (Latitude: ; Longitude:)

Received Date: 09/22/2023

Project Manager: Joseph Toth
(651) 290-5532
Joseph.Toth@usace.army.mil

Additional information about the St. Paul District Regulatory Program can be found on our web site at http://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/missions/regulatory.

Please note that initiating work in waters of the United States prior to receiving Department of the Army authorization could constitute a violation of Federal law. If you have any questions, please contact the Project Manager.

Thank you.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
St. Paul District
Regulatory Branch

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, ST. PAUL DISTRICT
332 MINNESOTA STREET, SUITE E1500
ST. PAUL, MN 55101-1323

October 12, 2023

Regulatory File No. MVP-2023-01209-JST

Xcel Energy
c/o Matthew Langan
414 Nicollet Mall
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Dear Mr. Langan:

This letter is in response to correspondence we received from Merjent Inc. regarding the Minnesota Energy Connection Project. This letter contains our initial comments on this project for your consideration. The purpose of this letter is to inform you that based on the Minnesota Energy Connection Project: Introduction Letter, a Department of the Army (DA) permit would be required if there will be impacts to aquatic resources for your proposed activity. In lieu of a specific response, please consider the following general information concerning our regulatory program that may apply to the proposed project.

If the proposal involves activity in navigable waters of the United States, it may be subject to the Corps of Engineers' jurisdiction under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (Section 10). Section 10 prohibits the construction, excavation, or deposition of materials in, over, or under navigable waters of the United States, or any work that would affect the course, location, condition, or capacity of those waters, unless the work has been authorized by a Department of the Army permit.

If the proposal involves discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, it may be subject to the Corps of Engineers' jurisdiction under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA Section 404). Waters of the United States include navigable waters, their tributaries, and adjacent wetlands (33 CFR § 328.3). CWA Section 301(a) prohibits discharges of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, unless the work has been authorized by a Department of the Army permit under Section 404. Information about the Corps permitting process can be obtained online at http://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/regulatory.

The Corps evaluation of a Section 10 and/or a Section 404 permit application involves multiple analyses, including (1) evaluating the proposal's impacts in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (33 CFR part 325), (2) determining whether the proposal is contrary to the public interest (33 CFR § 320.4), and (3) in the case of a Section 404 permit, determining whether the proposal complies with the Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines (Guidelines) (40 CFR part 230).

If the proposal requires a Section 404 permit application, the Guidelines specifically require that "no discharge of dredged or fill material shall be permitted if there is a practicable alternative to the proposed discharge which would have less adverse impact on the aquatic ecosystem, so long as the alternative does not have other significant adverse environmental consequences" (40 CFR § 230.10(a)). Time and money spent on the proposal prior to applying

for a Section 404 permit cannot be factored into the Corps' decision whether there is a less damaging practicable alternative to the proposal.

If an application for a Corps permit has not yet been submitted, the project proposer may request a pre-application consultation meeting with the Corps to obtain information regarding the data, studies or other information that will be necessary for the permit evaluation process. A pre-application consultation meeting is strongly recommended if the proposal has substantial impacts to waters of the United States, or if it is a large or controversial project.

If you have any questions, please contact me in our St. Paul office at (651) 290-5532 or Joseph.Toth@usace.army.mil. In any correspondence or inquiries, please refer to the Regulatory file number shown above.

Sincerely,

Joseph Toth

Joseph Toth
Regulatory Specialist

cc:
Naomi Christenson, (Agent – Merjent Inc.)
Zach Guttormson, (LGU – Sherburne County)
Ben Meyer, BWSR

From:	Naomi Christenson
To:	Monika Davis
Subject:	FW: EXTERNAL: RE: Xcel Energy Minnesota Energy Connection Project Introduction
Date:	Friday, September 22, 2023 8:46:34 AM
Attachments:	image002.png image003.png

FYI

Naomi Christenson
612.746.1616 direct
612.210.1192 mobile
naomi.christenson@merjent.com

merjent.
1 Main Street SE, Suite 300
Minneapolis, MN 55414
612.746.3660
www.merjent.com

From: Souchet, Fred (FAA) <Fred.Souchet@faa.gov>
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2023 8:24 AM
To: Naomi Christenson <naomi.christenson@merjent.com>
Cc: Langan, Matthew A <Matthew.A.Langan@xcelenergy.com>; Kiser, Robert K-CTR (FAA) <Robert.K-CTR.Kiser@faa.gov>
Subject: EXTERNAL: RE: Xcel Energy Minnesota Energy Connection Project Introduction

We are unable to determine if notice is necessary based on the email. In administering Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) Part 77, the prime objectives of the FAA are to promote air safety and the efficient use of the navigable airspace. To accomplish this mission, aeronautical studies are conducted based on information provided by proponents on an FAA Form 7460-1, Notice of Proposed Construction or Alteration.

You may use the Notice Criteria Tool link on the oeaaa.faa.gov website to determine whether notice is required. The tool is based on Title 14, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 77 (14 CFR Part 77). There is also a link to Part 77 on the home page of the website. Subpart B of part 77 identifies when construction or alteration requires or does not require notice.

If notice is required, please submit your filing electronically via the mentioned website. If you don't have an account for e-filing, there are instructions on the home page for setting up your account and e-filing the notice ("Click Here for Instructions on how to E-file your proposal with the FAA").

If you need additional assistance or have questions in filing the studies please contact Mr. Robert Kiser at (404) 305-6616. I have included Mr. Kiser in this response.

Thank you,

Fred Souchet
Air Traffic Control Specialist
FAA Obstruction Evaluation Group, AJV-A520
Office: 847-294-7458
Fax: 847-294-7457

https: oeaaa.faa.gov

From: Naomi Christenson <naomi.christenson@merjent.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 21, 2023 4:34 PM
To: Souchet, Fred (FAA) <Fred.Souchet@faa.gov>
Cc: Langan, Matthew A <Matthew.A.Langan@xcelenergy.com>
Subject: Xcel Energy Minnesota Energy Connection Project Introduction

Good afternoon,

Xcel Energy is proposing to construct a new double circuit 345 kilovolt (kV) high voltage transmission line, extending from Xcel Energy's Sherburne County Generating Station located in Becker, Minnesota, to a new substation near the Town of Garvin in Lyon County, Minnesota. Please see the attached letter which includes a Project Study Area Map. Xcel Energy would appreciate any comments you may have on the proposed Project. Please contact Matt Langan at Matthew.A.Langan@xcelenergy.com or (612) 330-6954 if you have questions or would like additional information.

Thank you,
Naomi Christenson on behalf of Matt Langan, Xcel Energy

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Tribal Nation Responses

From: Samantha Odegard
To: Naomi Christenson
Cc: Langan, Matthew A
Subject: EXTERNAL: Re: Xcel Energy Minnesota Energy Connection Project Introduction
Date: Tuesday, October 10, 2023 12:47:30 AM
Attachments: image001.png

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of Merjent.

Good evening Mr. Langan,

The Upper Sioux Community THPO has an interest in consulting on the project as the project areas are part of our ancestral homelands, pass near our current reservation boundaries and from the maps provided cross through some high potential areas for cultural significant sites.

We've had earlier conversations about the project and would like to discuss options of continued involvement and review of cultural resources and the work to identify them.

Thank you,

Samantha Odegard
Tribal Historic Preservation Officer |Upper Sioux Community | Phone: 320-564-6334

From: Naomi Christenson <naomi.christenson@merjent.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 21, 2023 4:55 PM
To: Samantha Odegard <samanthao@uppersiouxcommunity-nsn.gov>
Cc: Langan, Matthew A <Matthew.A.Langan@xcelenergy.com>
Subject: Xcel Energy Minnesota Energy Connection Project Introduction

Good afternoon,

Xcel Energy is proposing to construct a new double circuit 345 kilovolt (kV) high voltage transmission line, extending from Xcel Energy's Sherburne County Generating Station located in Becker, Minnesota, to a new substation near the Town of Garvin in Lyon County, Minnesota. Please see the attached letter which includes a Project Study Area Map. Xcel Energy would appreciate any comments you may have on the proposed Project. Please contact Matt Langan at Matthew.A.Langan@xcelenergy.com or (612) 330-6954 if you have questions or would like additional information.

Thank you,
Naomi Christenson on behalf of Matt Langan, Xcel Energy

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From:	Naomi Christenson
To:	Monika Davis
Subject:	FW: EXTERNAL: RE: Xcel Energy Minnesota Energy Connection Project Introduction
Date:	Monday, September 25, 2023 8:43:48 AM
Attachments:	image001.png

FYI

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From: Jaylen Strong <jaylen.strong@boisforte-nsn.gov>
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2023 10:55 AM
To: Naomi Christenson <naomi.christenson@merjent.com>
Cc: Langan, Matthew A <Matthew.A.Langan@xcelenergy.com>
Subject: EXTERNAL: RE: Xcel Energy Minnesota Energy Connection Project Introduction

Boozhoo Naomi and Matt,

Bois Forte will defer to the recommendations of Upper Sioux and Lower Sioux Communities, whichever is the lead tribal agency. Bois Forte would also recommend that there are tribal monitoring whenever there are ground disturbing activities within a buffer of 250 yards of known historical sites and near the Minnesota river regardless of known historical activities due to it being a cultural property.

Weweni bimaadizing,

Jaylen Strong
Bebaamoshiiyaan

From: Naomi Christenson <naomi.christenson@merjent.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 21, 2023 4:52 PM
To: Jaylen Strong <jaylen.strong@boisforte-nsn.gov>
Cc: Langan, Matthew A <Matthew.A.Langan@xcelenergy.com>
Subject: Xcel Energy Minnesota Energy Connection Project Introduction

Good afternoon,

Xcel Energy is proposing to construct a new double circuit 345 kilovolt (kV) high voltage transmission line, extending from Xcel Energy's Sherburne County Generating Station located in Becker, Minnesota, to a new substation near the Town of Garvin in Lyon County, Minnesota. Please see the attached letter which includes a Project Study Area Map. Xcel Energy would appreciate any comments you may have on the proposed Project. Please contact Matt Langan at Matthew.A.Langan@xcelenergy.com or (612) 330-6954 if you have questions or would like additional information.

Thank you,
Naomi Christenson on behalf of Matt Langan, Xcel Energy

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State Agency Responses

414 Nicollet Mall
Minneapolis, MN 55401

1-800-895-4999
Xcelenergy.com

May 25, 2023

Cynthia Warzecha
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Division of Ecological and Water Resources
520 Lafayette Road
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: Minnesota Energy Connection Project

Dear Ms. Warzecha:

As you are aware, Xcel Energy is proposing to construct a new double circuit 345 kilovolt (kV) high voltage transmission line (HVTL), extending from Xcel Energy's Sherburne County Generating Station Substation (Sherco Substation) located in Becker, Minnesota, to a new substation in Lyon County. The project, referred to as the Minnesota Energy Connection Project (Project), was included in Xcel Energy's 2016-2030 Integrated Resource Plan (IRP). The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission or MPUC) approved Xcel Energy's plan to retire Sherco Units 1 and 2 in 2026 and 2023, respectively; and, in the most recent IRP proceeding, the Commission directed Xcel Energy to retire Sherco Unit 3 by 2030. The Commission further approved Xcel Energy's procurement of 600 megawatts (MW) of solar and 2,150 MW of wind, or an equivalent amount of energy and capacity from a combination of wind, solar and/or storage between 2027 and 2032. A significant portion of these acquisitions will maximize the use of the Project and the Sherco interconnection rights. Therefore, Xcel Energy plans to use the proposed Project to connect renewable energy-rich areas in southern and southwestern Minnesota and deliver carbon-free, renewable energy to its customers throughout the Upper Midwest.

Xcel Energy is in the process of evaluating route options within its study area based on analysis of publicly available data that minimize socioeconomic and environmental impacts, maximize co-location with other infrastructure, and satisfy regulatory routing and facility siting requirements. Xcel Energy identified many potential route options within a large study area in order to obtain agency and public input to support the route selection process. Field review of select locations along several route options were also conducted to clarify or confirm potential route issues or constraints.

Xcel Energy filed a Certificate of Need (CON) Application on March 9, 2023 and plans to file a Route Permit (RP) Application in the Fall of 2023, in accordance with Minnesota Rules (Minn. R.) 7829 and 7849, and Minn. R. 7850 respectively, to the MPUC for the Project. As part of this process, Xcel Energy is conducting public open houses and stakeholder outreach, as well as coordinate with applicable regulatory and government offices.

Thank you for your early coordination efforts thus far, and we appreciate your continued assistance as we evaluate siting and routing information and work through the MPUC's approval process. Included with this letter are geographic information system (GIS) shapefiles of the Project's route options to aid in your review. We look forward to receiving the results of your review of the route

options, as well as any additional information your agency recommends we consider during the routing process. Finally, although we understand further coordination will occur, if possible, Xcel Energy requests your response by June 30, 2023.

If you have questions and would like additional information about the proposed Project, please contact me at Matthew.A.Langan@xcelenergy.com or (612) 330-6954.

Sincerely,

Matthew Langan
Principal Agent, Siting and Land Rights

Enclosure: Project Shapefiles

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Division of Ecological and Water Resources
Region 3 Headquarters
1200 Warner Road
Saint Paul, MN 55106

Transmitted by Email

July 10, 2023

Matt Langan
Xcel Energy
414 Nicollet Mall, 414-6A
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Dear Matt Langan,

Thank you for engaging with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in early coordination during the development on the Minnesota Energy Connection double circuit 345 kV High Voltage Transmission Line (HVTL). This HVTL proposes to connect energy generating Sherco Solar facilities in Becker, MN southwest across the state to Lyon County. We appreciate your willingness to identify a route that minimizes impacts to natural resources. DNR respectfully submits the following comments for your consideration as you prepare to submit a route permit application to the Public Utilities Commission (PUC).

General Comments:

1. Habitat fragmentation is one of the largest threats to wildlife as increasing development pressures push wildlife into what few natural areas remain intact. The DNR encourages the proposer to prioritize avoiding natural areas that would require vegetation and tree removal or ground disturbance in shoreland, prairies, wetlands, Minnesota Biological Sites of Biodiversity Significance, and DNR Native Plant Communities. Habitat preservation should also be prioritized near public lands, wildlife management areas (WMA), state parks and county parks.
2. The DNR recommends that impacts to MBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance and DNR Native Plant Communities with a Conservation Status Rank of S1-S3 be avoided to the greatest extent feasible. MBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance and DNR Native Plant Communities can be viewed using the Minnesota Conservation Explorer or downloaded from the MN Geospatial Commons. Xcel should use the NHIS Rare Features Data received under License Agreement 1058 to avoid impacts to known occurrences of state-listed endangered and threatened species and nearby habitat. To ensure compliance with state law regarding rare features, please request a Natural Heritage Review via the Minnesota Conservation Explorer. To ensure compliance with federal law, please conduct a federal regulatory review using the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's online Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) tool.

3. At this time in the coordination process, DNR has not received or reviewed plans for temporary or permanent access roads and construction staging areas. Once the routes have been established, further coordination with DNR regarding impacts to rare features and public waters may be necessary to review these additional impacts.
4. A DNR Water Appropriation Permit is required if the water pumped exceeds 10,000 gallons in a day, or one million gallons in one year. The DNR General Permit for Temporary Appropriation, with its lower permit application fee and reduced time for review, may be used for the dewatering if the dewatering volume is less than 50 million gallons and the time of the appropriation is less than one year.
5. Where the route crosses Public Water Wetlands, a utility license to cross is not required, but a public water work permit is and can be applied for through the Minnesota DNR Permitting and Reporting System.

REGION 3

Region 3 of the DNR includes the following counties in the proposed project area: Sterns, and Sherburne.

Mississippi River Crossing

The DNR strongly prefers a route that utilizes existing crossings over the Mississippi River, especially within a wild and scenic river (WSR) district. Of the route options provided, the only existing crossing is within Wright County. We would prefer this alternative. We would also like to understand if continuing northwest along I-94 and connecting to the northern route alternative that avoids the trout stream and forest impacts in southern Stearns County would be feasible.

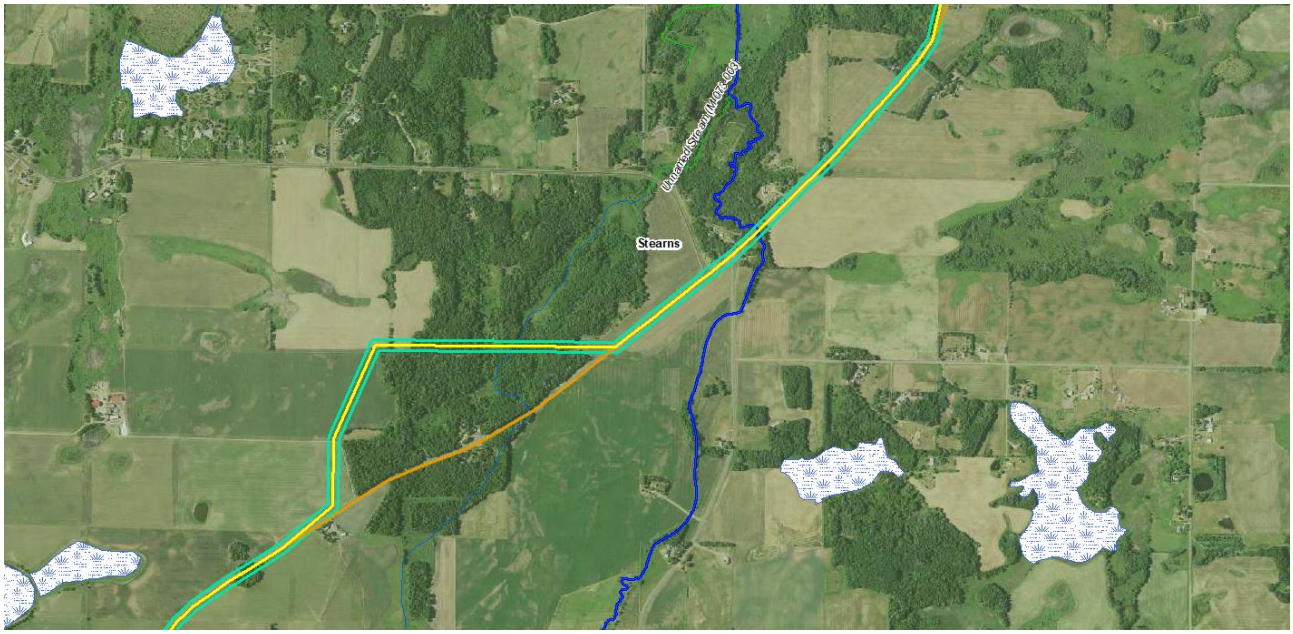
Xcel Energy is involved in the development of multiple HVTL projects right now that may need to cross the Mississippi River to connect to the Sherco Solar Substation. We suggest greater coordination across projects to co-locate as many crossings as possible, especially if a new crossing within the WSR is deemed necessary. Please coordinate further with DNR as these projects move forward to identify the least impactful solution for all projects currently in development.

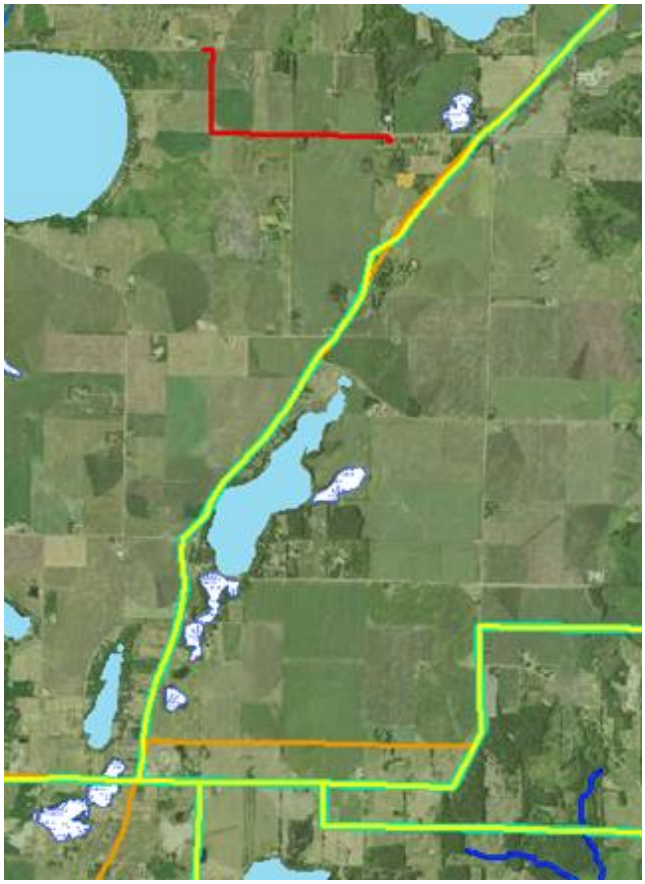
Please be aware that in Sherburne County, most of the Mississippi River bank within the WSR district is also in a Bluff Impact Zone and may be subject to additional restrictions.

Stearns County

The proposed route alternatives below would cut new right-of-way (ROW) through forested areas further fragmenting what little intact forest remains in Stearns County, which is heavily dominated by agriculture. It is also important that tree canopy be maintained over cold water habitats, such as trout streams.

If the route must cross a designated trout stream, DNR would prefer the route alternative to the north that crosses Johnson Creek (M-073) following an existing road and bridge crossing. The previous alternative proposed in February 2023 continued to the southwest along the existing road. This new preferred route proposes to cut a new ROW through shoreland in a forested area that provides tree canopy and cover to a headwaters stream that flows into Johnson Creek, a designated trout stream. If the route cannot continue on the existing road, then we would prefer that it avoid fragmenting the forested area any further by cutting a corner below the road to the southeast through agricultural fields.

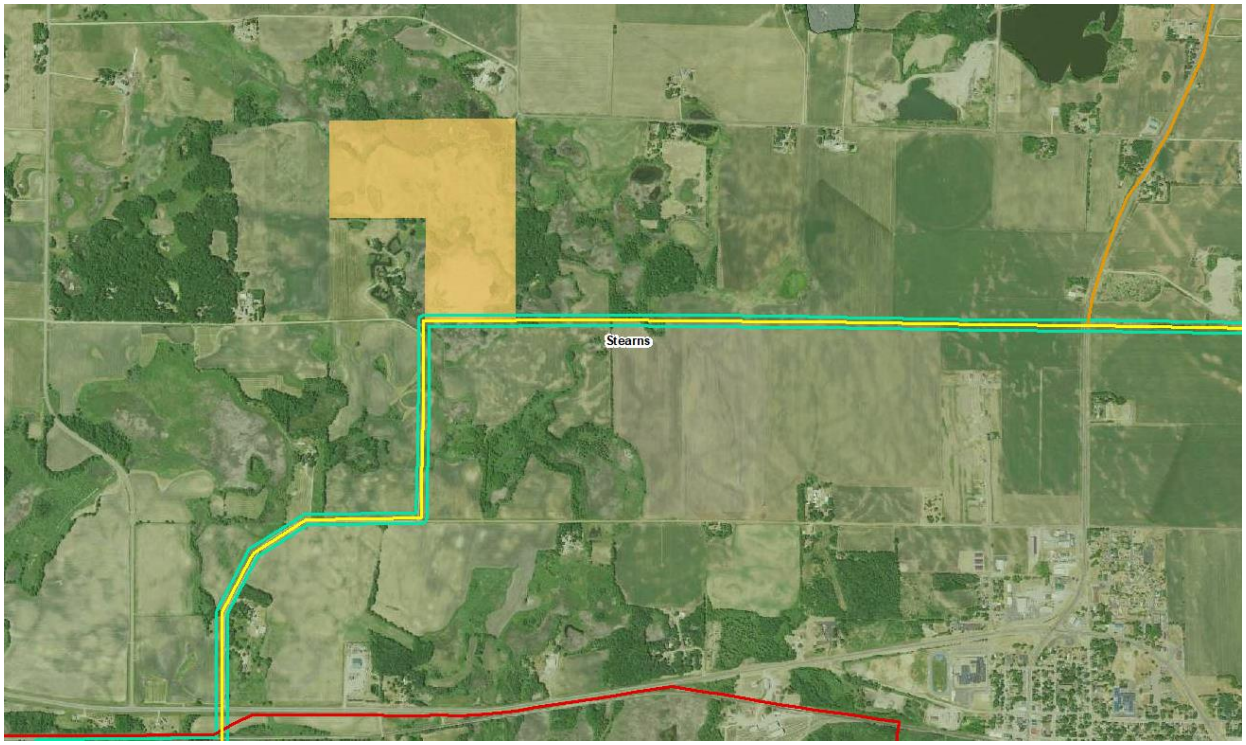




This potential route from the north closely follows Carnelian Lake (PW 73003800) and cuts through migratory flight paths between Murray Lake (PW73004400) and Carnelian Lake.

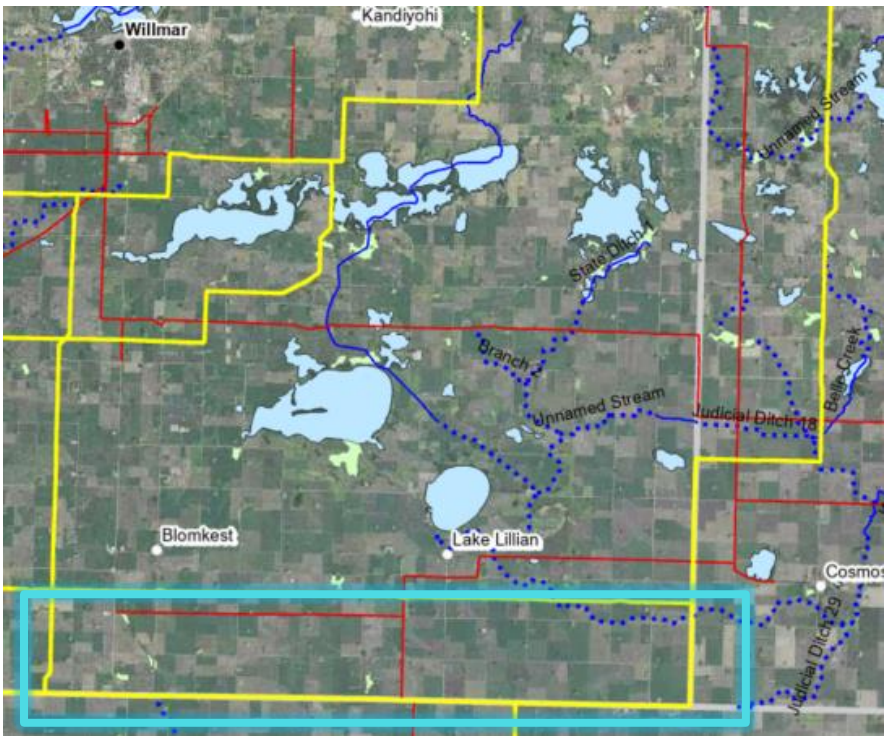
Would it be possible to follow 66th Ave south in order to connect to a western route rather than follow those two public water basins so closely?

We also do not support a new ROW cutting through Alice Hamm Wildlife Management Area and dissecting a public water wetland (73042900). We strongly prefer that any new ROW corridors utilize existing roads to the greatest degree possible to avoid habitat fragmentation and impacting public waters.



Region 4

Region 4 of the DNR includes the following counties in the proposed project area: Meeker, Kandiyohi, Chippewa, Renville, Yellow Medicine, Redwood, and Lyon Counties. Route options in this Region generally avoid special and rare plant and wildlife communities. For this reason, a county-by-county breakdown of potential impacts is not provided. Route placement preferences are identified below.

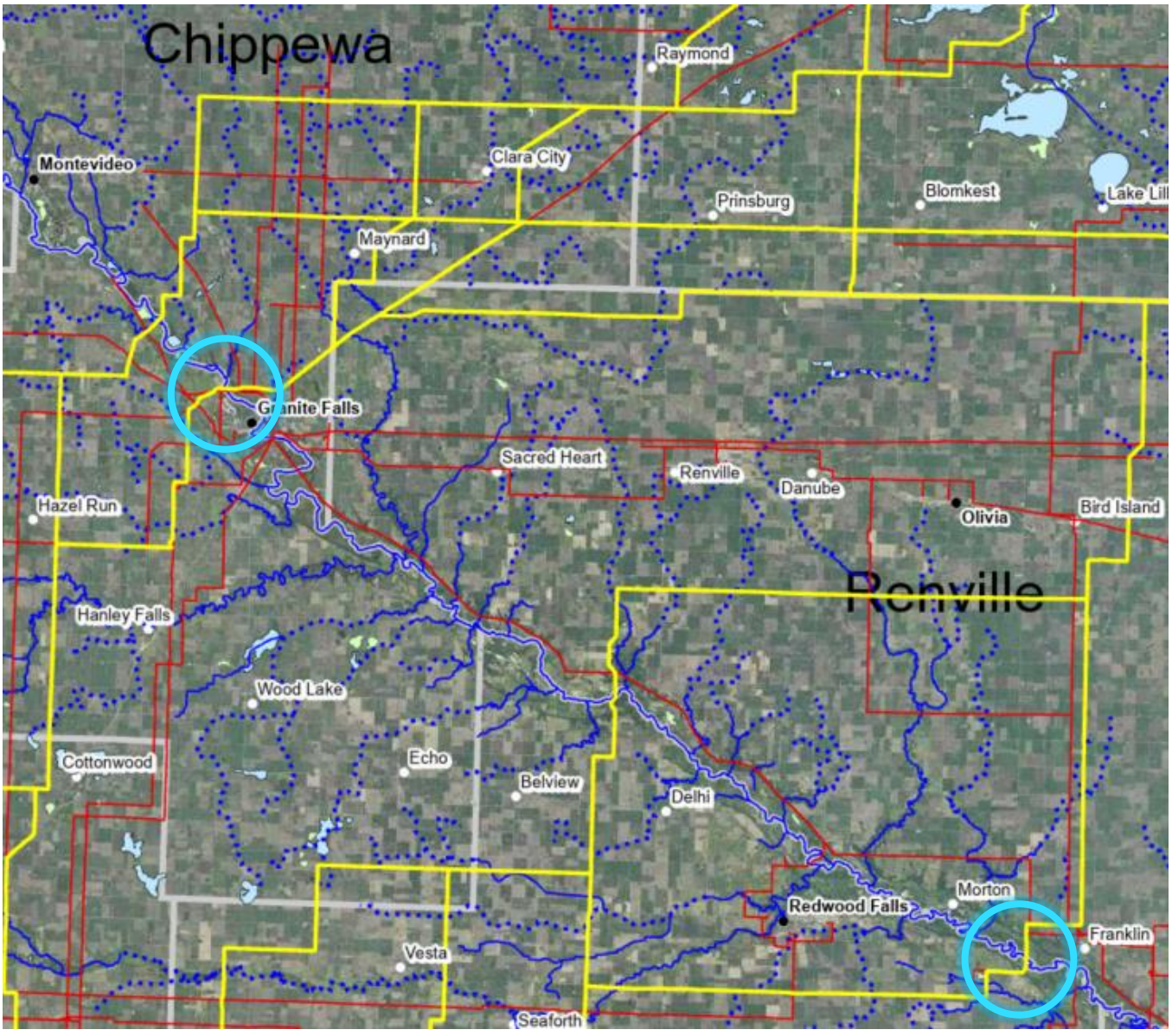


Kandiyohi County

Proposed routes in Kandiyohi County run adjacent to and intersect an area with high bird traffic among neighboring lakes. A route south of Lake Lillian (PW34007200), outlined in light blue, is preferred to limit impacts.

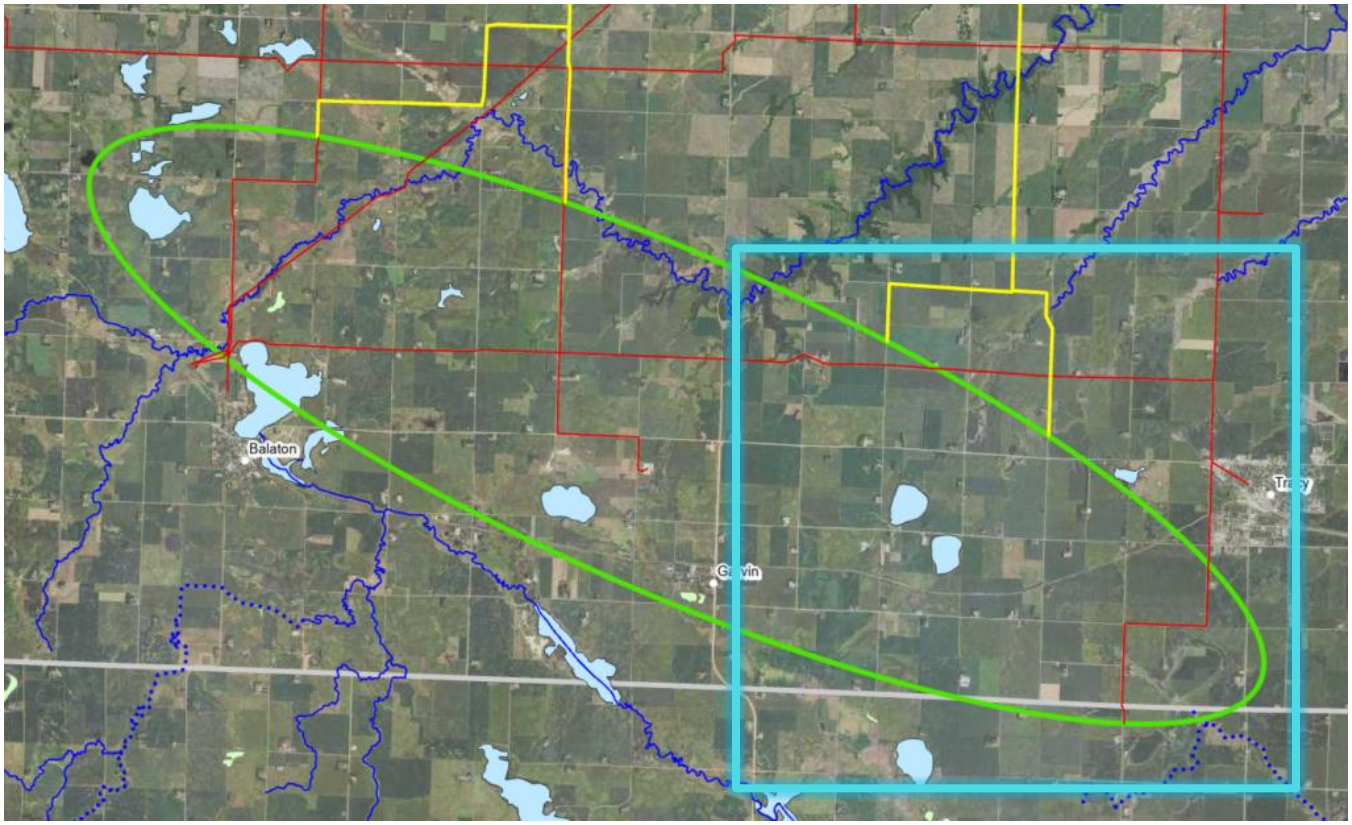
Minnesota River Crossing

The DNR strongly prefers routes that utilize existing crossings over the Minnesota River, especially within the wild and scenic river (WSR) district. Two potential crossings, circled in light blue, meet this criterion. There are areas of native prairie at all potential crossings and measures should be taken to avoid disturbing these areas.



Substation Placement

In order to reduce potential impacts to species of special concern, WMAs, and sites of biological significance the southeastern portion of the substation polygon, outlined in light blue, is preferred.



Thank you again for your ongoing coordination. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Melissa Collins

/s/ Haley Byron

Melissa Collins and Haley Byron

Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist | Ecological and Water Resources

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

CC: Cynthia Warzecha, DNR Energy Planner

Office of Land Management
395 John Ireland Blvd MS 678
St. Paul, MN 55155

August 30, 2023

Matt Langan
Principal Agent, Siting and Land Rights
Xcel Energy
414 Nicollet Mall
414-6A
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Mr. Langan,

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has reviewed of the information available for the MN Energy Connection Project (Project) and offers the following comments, concerns and recommendations for routing considerations moving forward.

The proposed Project consists of approximately 170–175-mile 345kV, double-circuit, greenfield transmission line between the City of Becker and southern Lyon County. The purpose of this project is to replace retiring coal-fired generation with renewable energy sources in southwest MN. The Project is broken into two main Routes (Blue and Purple) and one additional "crossover" route (Orange). MnDOT's initial review of this project consists of overall potential impacts as well as potential impacts broken down by function group. Below, **Table 1** identifies which (crossing, colocation, or both) State Trunk Highway (TH), United States Highway (US) and Interstate (I) could be affected by the proposed Project. Please note that, based on Policy, Statute and Rule, MnDOT's ability to permit any route is dependent on road types as defined above.

Agency comments, concerns, requests for additional information, and recommendations are provided in the following attachments to this letter:

Attachment 1 – MnDOT OES & Functional Group Comments

Attachment 2 – MNDOT District 8 Planning and Permitting Comments

Attachment 3 – ENM Vegetation Review Memo

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Table 1

	THs Crossed	TH Colocated	Comments
Purple Route	I-94, TH 24, TH 15, TH 55, TH 22, TH 4, TH 12, US 71, TH 23, TH 7, US 212, TH 67, TH 19, US 59, US 14	Co. Road 75/Great River Road (Scenic Byway) - 2 miles TH 24 (0.25 mile) TH 23 (~19 miles total, multiple segments) US 59 (2.5 miles)	Also involves crossing and ~2 miles of colocation with Co Rd 75/Great River Road (scenic byway); US 212 crossing near Granite Falls is also a Scenic Byway
Blue Route	TH 24, I-94, TH 15, TH 55, TH 22, TH 4, US 12, TH 7, US 212, TH 19, TH 67, US 71, TH 68, US 14	I-94 (0.2 mile) TH 55 (1.5 miles, two segments) TH 22 (2 miles) TH 4 (9 miles, two segments) TH 68 (4 miles) US 14 (1 mile)	Crossing of Co Rd 75/Great River Road (scenic byway); crossing of Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway near Morton.
Orange Route	US 71	none	Line runs parallel with (~ 1/2 south of TH 7)

For any temporary or permanent construction associated with this project, including new pole placement, aerial encroachment, and blowout in areas over/within other state trunk highways, please adhere to the following Statute, Rule, Policy and other MnDOT permitting requirements:

- MnDOT Utility Accommodation Policy
- MnDOT Utility Accommodation and Coordination Manual
- MnDOT Environmental Requirements (updated version available soon)

MnDOT appreciates Xcel's early outreach and recommends continued, close coordination regarding areas of this Project that may affect the State trunk highway system.

Sincerely,

Stacy Kotch Egstad
Utility Routing & Siting Coordinator | Office of Land Management
Minnesota Department of Transportation

CC: MnDOT ENM review team

Equal Opportunity Employer

2023

Attachment 1

MNDOT OES & FUNCTIONAL GROUP COMMENTS

MN ENERGY CONNECTION – XCEL ENERGY

	Xcel Energy – MN Energy Connection 345kV Project Summary of OES & Functional Group Comments and Recommendations
Resource	**Comments and Recommendations**
Protected Species	1. Occurrences of federal or state protected species is expected throughout the project area(s) and consultation will be required for each occurrence. Request further review of final route(s). 2. Minimize ground disturbances to the extent possible. Revegetation of disturbed soils must follow District Environmental Establishment Recommendations and use native seed mixes in areas that are not proposed for turf grass. Include mowing and weed spraying as indicated in the District Vegetation Establishment Recommendations. 3. Winter tree removal required - any proposed tree removals must occur during the winter months (November 15 to March 31, inclusive).
Contaminated Materials Management	A review of the three alternative routes for the HVTL was conducted and known leak sites are identified at different locations along the routes. It is possible that undiscovered or unknown contaminated and/or regulated materials exist in the permit area. Contaminated materials encountered during any work within MnDOT ROW is required to be managed in accordance with applicable federal/state and location regulations and/or guidance documents. It is the responsibility of the Permittee to identify the potential to encounter contaminated materials (soil/groundwater/vapor) within or adjacent to the proposed permit area. Further review will be conducted by MnDOT after an alternative is selected. If contaminated materials are encountered within the area, the Permittee or their consultant will immediately notify MnDOT's Environmental Investigation Unit (EIU) at EnvironmentalInvestigationPermits.DOT@state.mn.us and report the contamination to the MN Duty Officer. The Permittee or their consultant will provide a summary of what and where contamination was encountered, along with proposed actions for management of contaminated materials. Actions completed with management of contaminated materials will be provided to MnDOT EIU including: figures, analytical reports, field observations, disposal or reuse locations, and any other documentation.
Vegetation Review and Survey	Threatened and Endangered Species may be impacted on the Blue Route at the intersection of US 212. If this route is chosen a field survey will need to be completed between May 15th and June 30th. Also, if trees will be removed a tree survey will also need to be completed, no time restrictions on this survey. **See ENM Vegetation Review Memo - Attachment 3**.

Wetlands Coordination	Any ground disturbance (fill, excavation, direct or indirect drainage) of regulated aquatic resources must comply with all applicable federal Clean Water Act Section 404 and Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) requirements. If ground-disturbing activities are proposed within MnDOT ROW, MnDOT may require an aquatic resource delineation to be performed throughout the areas of proposed disturbance. The delineation would require approval by MnDOT OES, as the Local Government Unit (LGU) responsible for administering the WCA within state TH ROW. The project must restore any temporary impacts and avoid, minimize, and mitigate any permanent impacts to delineated aquatic resources to the extent required by state and federal law.
Water Permits - Federal Agencies, Floodplains	It appears that the project is likely to cross numerous FEMA mapped floodplains. Efforts should be made to avoid placement of structures or fill in floodplain areas in order to minimize adverse floodplain impacts and increase risk of flooding. The project may also involve work affecting waters of the US in which case authorization from the Corps of Engineers would be needed.
Cultural Resources	(Please note MnDOT CRU has only reviewed the portions of the routes within MnDOT R/W.) Additional archaeological investigations are warranted where co-location is proposed or where temporary easement is required within MnDOT R/W. Investigations should include in-field inspections to document areas of soil disturbance and to identify potentially unknown archaeological sites within areas of moderate to high archaeological potential. A discovery plan should be developed for the project in advance of construction. This plan should outline the steps to be followed in the event of an unanticipated discovery of archaeological materials, human remains, or burials, and include language specific to the coordination with MnDOT when a discovery is on MnDOT R/W. Purple Route: TH 23 and TH 7 have not been evaluated for the National Register. Evaluation of these highways is not required under Minnesota state statute but may be needed for federal compliance. Two historic cemeteries are intersected or adjacent to TH 23 R/W along this route (Unknown Cemetery - Sec. 17 T118N - R36W and East Cemetery – Sec. 12 - T114N - R40W). Both are recorded at the 40-acre level. Two recorded archaeological sites are intersected or adjacent to MnDOT R/W (21YM0074 – Sec. 12 -T114N – R40W and 21LY0039 – Sec. 3 – T110N – R41W). Site 21YM0074 is unevaluated for the National Register, while site 21LY0039 is considered eligible. Additional investigations maybe warranted to determine the impact of the project on these resources. Blue Route: TH 7 has not been evaluated for the National Register. Evaluation of this highway is not required under Minnesota state statute but may be needed for federal compliance. Two

	historic cemeteries are intersected or adjacent to MnDOT R/W along this route (Pearson Family Gravesite, recorded at the township level in T118N - R32W and Curtin Burial, recorded at the section level in Sec. 20 – T111N- R38W). One archaeology Alpha Site 21RNad is partly within or adjacent to MnDOT R/W in Sec. 3 – 112N – R34W. The St. Paul and Pacific Railroad Mainline: St. Anthony to Breckenridge RR Corridor Historic District (HE-MPC-16387, Pending district also includes HE-SLC-1092, WR-CKT-015) is also intersected or adjacent to TH 12 at a proposed route crossing. Additional investigations may be warranted to determine the impact of the project on these resources. Orange East/West Crossover (3 miles east of TH 4 to TH 23): No known or suspected archaeological or architecture-history properties along this route that warrant additional consideration under Minnesota state statute.
Scenic Byways	Future Consultation with Scenic Byways may be needed dependent on the final route chosen. We request the final route to have the least impacts to the All-American Great River Road Scenic Byway and to the National MN River Valley Scenic Byway.
Railroad	Consultation will be required for any transmission line work impacting the state rail system. State Rules covering railroads: 8830 - MN Rules Chapter
Airport Influence Area	The proposed Purple Route conflicts with Granite Falls Municipal Airport's horizontal surface (about 1.5 miles of the Purple Route), this would be considered an obstruction and impact aviation operations. An FAA Form 7460-1 would need to be filed in order for an evaluation on the effect of construction and potential hazards that may result. Additionally, there is local zoning in place that restricts structure heights to 150 feet along this segment. The proposed Purple Route does have aviation impacts and therefore of the Office of Aeronautics disapproves this proposed segment of the Purple Route.
Blowing Snow Control	The proposed project should not alter existing blowing and drifting snow control measures in all affected areas.
Design Support	Lateral placement of utility poles or non-crashworthy must be placed outside the roadways clear zone. Avoid the need for traffic barrier shielding. Any side slope grading within the roadway clear zone must not result in a hazardous geometry for run-off vehicles. See the MnDOT Facility Design Guide - Chapter 10. Utility poles/devices must not obstruct intersection sight lines.

Safety and Operations Management	All utility poles and non-crashworthy devices shall be placed outside of the minimum clear zone per MnDOT standards and guidance for this type of roadway and traffic volumes. Additional distance from the roadway is encouraged. Construction of such items should be reviewed, even when outside of MnDOT ROW. Any installation within intersection sight distances should be avoided and reviewed to ensure driver sight lines are not blocked or impeded. Addtional access points off of the trunk highway are discouraged and should be avoided. If needed, they should follow all MnDOT standards for access construction. Intersection related and roadway departure crashes are two of the leading types of fatal and serious injury crashes on Minnesota Roadways. These comments reflect measures needed to continue to prevent these types of crashes. To find out more about Minnesota safety efforts, please see our Strategic Highway Safety Plan. https://www.dot.state.mn.us/trafficeng/safety/shsp/
District Planning and Permitting Staff	D8: **See Attachment 2**. High-level clearance, clear zone and future projects included. D3: MnDOT D3 created a 150-foot ROW buffer (75 feet from center) along the proposed Orange/Blue Route alignment from the original .kmz file and then added in the State ROW data layer. With these additions to the original map, we were able to identify those locations where the proposed Orange/Blue Route R/W alignment could parallel or cross the State TH system and, in some instances, overlap/encroach upon the State TH ROW. See .kmz map –  OrangeRouteIntersections_MnDOTROW_
Soil Erosion and Sediment Control	Given the size of the Project, we assume the Applicant will be required to obtain coverage under the MPCA Construction Stormwater General Permit (MNR100001). If a portion of the final alignment(s) (and/or temporary workspace(s)) are located within MnDOT ROW, we request that the Applicant submit a copy of its Construction Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP)/ erosion and sediment control details to MnDOT OES prior to filing its Notice of Intent for coverage under MPCA's MNR100001. Xcel Energy will be the Owner on this permit for any work on MnDOT ROW. MnDOT will not be a co-permittee. In addition, MnDOT reserves the right to conduct inspections of the project for portions that are within MnDOT ROW during and after construction. Seeding on MnDOT ROW must follow standards in MnDOT Seeding Manual. Any erosion control blanket installed on MnDOT ROW must use natural fiber netting. Erosion and sediment control materials utilized within MnDOT's ROW must comply with MnDOT specifications (e.g., no plastic netting in erosion control blanket). Please refer to: https://dot.state.mn.us/pre-letting/spec/

2023

Attachment 2

MNDOT DISTRICT 8 PLANNING AND PERMITTING COMMENTS

MN ENERGY CONNECTION – XCEL ENERGY

Route review for potential Xcel Energy Project transmission line- D8 Comments:

- District 8 is concerned with paralleling the transmission line along TH 23, and along high-volume and high-speed corridors. The potential for future expansion, intersection improvements, turn lanes/bypass lanes, shoulder widening, passing lane expansion is much higher for these types of highways.
    - Risk of losing District 8's ability to expand as needed and limiting design options.
    - With the railroad on one side of the TH, and the transmission line on the other, boxing in a trunk highway is a risk. Recommend placement on same side as rail.
    - Clear zone issues: High-speed, high-volume corridors equates to wide/large clear zones; and any utility poles need to be located/positioned outside this clear zone. Future expansion results in even wider/larger clear zones, this in turn requires the poles and any aerial wires be moved further out. It is recommended any poles and aerial wires be set back enough distance from MnDOT right-of-way to allow for this. A minimum of 50 feet, which equates to the width of two full lane expansion with shoulder is an initial recommendation.
        - Example, in the TH23 (SP3405-95) Raymond LTL project, existing utility poles limited the District's design ability to add a left turn lane (LTL) at CSAH 1 intersection with TH23. The relocation cost for those utility poles was higher (over a million dollars) than installing the proposed LTL.
- Concerns remain with above-ground utilities' desire to share our right-of-way as there are OSHA issues with our own maintenance activities.
    - MnDOT needs to retain the ability to have no restrictions for our own maintenance activities.
    - OSHA regulations requires work ***not*** to be performed under power lines for safety reasons, and recommend powerline be de-energize if work is to be performed.

OrangeRouteInterse
ctions_MnDOTROW_

Purple Route:

1. Crossing TH 55 east of Eden Valley. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 Utility Accommodation Manual [UAM])
2. Crossing TH 22 south of Eden Valley. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
3. Crossing TH 4 north of Grove City. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
4. Crossing TH 12 west of Atwater. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
5. Crossing TH 71 south of Willmar. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
6. Crossing TH 23 south of Willmar. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
7. Along TH 23 for 4 miles between Willmar and Raymond. Check clear zones.
8. Crossing TH 23 north of Raymond. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
9. Along TH 23 for 3 miles between Raymond and Clara City. Check Clear zones.
10. Crossing TH 7 east of Clara City. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
11. Along TH 23 for 1.5 miles between Clara City and Maynard. Check Clear zones.
12. Along TH 23 for 2.5 miles between Maynard and Granite Falls. Check Clear zones.
13. Crossing TH 23 northeast of Granite Falls. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
14. Crossing TH 212 and TH 67 west of Granite Falls. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
15. Crossing TH 23 north of Hanley Falls, south of Hanley Falls and south of Cottonwood. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
16. Along TH 23 for 7.5 miles north of Hanley Falls and south of Cottonwood. Check Clear zones.
17. Crossing TH 19 east of Marshall. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
18. Crossing TH 59 south of Marshall. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
19. Along TH 59 for 2.5 miles south of Marshall. Check Clear zones.
20. Crossing TH 14 north of Gavin. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
21. Crossing TH 59 north of Gavin. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)

Future Projects:

TH 14 CIR and medium overlay from Lincoln/Lyon line to City of Tracy year 2032

TH 59 CIR and medium overlay from TH 14 to CSAH 6 (Marshall) year 2028

TH 23 Construct Left Turn Lane at CSAH 1 north of Raymond year 2025

TH 71 CIR from TH 71 to the beginning of 4 lane in Willmar year 2032

TH 22 CIR from TH 12 to City of Eden Valley year 2032

Blue Route:

1. Crossing TH 55 west of Watkins. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
2. Along TH 55 for 1 mile between Watkins and Eden Valley. Check clear zones.
3. Crossing TH 55 east of Eden Valley. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
4. Crossing TH 22 south of Eden Valley three times. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM). Check if three crossings in two miles are needed.
5. Along TH 22 for 2 miles between Eden Valley and Litchfield. Check Clear zones.
6. Crossing TH 4 north of Grove City. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
7. Crossing TH 12 west of Grove City. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM
8. Crossing TH 4 south of Grove City four times. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM). Check if four crossings are needed.
9. Along TH 4 for 10.5 miles between Grove City and Cosmos. Check clear zones.
10. Crossing TH 7 west of Cosmos. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
11. Crossing TH 212 east of Bird Island. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
12. Crossing TH 19 west of Franklin. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
13. Crossing TH 67 and TH 71 south of Redwood Falls. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
14. Along TH 68 for 4 miles between Wabasso and Lucan. Check Clear zones.
15. Crossing TH 68 west of Lucan. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
16. Crossing TH 14 west of Tracy. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
17. Along TH 14 for 1 mile between Tracy and Garvin. Check Clear zones.

Future Projects:

TH 14 CIR and medium overlay from Lincoln/Lyon line to City of Tracy year 2032

TH 71 Reclaim and overlay from TH 68 to CSAH 101 (Redwood Falls) year 2028

TH 7 Reclaim TH 71 to TH 4 City of Cosmos 2032

TH 22 CIR from TH 12 to City of Eden Valley year 2032

Orange Route:

1. Crossing TH 55 west of Watkins. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
2. Along TH 55 for 1 mile between Watkins and Eden Valley. Check clear zones.
3. Crossing TH 55 east of Eden Valley. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
4. Crossing TH 22 south of Eden Valley three times. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM). Check if three crossings in two miles are needed.
5. Along TH 22 for 2 miles between Eden Valley and Litchfield. Check Clear zones.
6. Crossing TH 4 north of Grove City. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
7. Crossing TH 12 west of Grove City. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM
8. Crossing TH 4 south of Grove City four times. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM). Check if four crossings are needed.
9. Along TH 4 for 10.5 miles between Grove City and Cosmos. Check clear zones.
10. Crossing TH 7 west of Cosmos. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
11. Crossing TH 71 south of TH 7 intersection. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
12. Along TH 23 for 1.5 miles between Clara City and Maynard. Check Clear zones.
13. Along TH 23 for 2.5 miles between Maynard and Granite Falls. Check Clear zones.
14. Crossing TH 23 northeast of Granite Falls. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
15. Crossing TH 212 and TH 67 west of Granite Falls. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
16. Crossing TH 23 north of Hanley Falls, south of Hanley Falls and south of Cottonwood. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
17. Along TH 23 for 7.5 miles north of Hanley Falls and south of Cottonwood. Check Clear zones.
18. Crossing TH 19 east of Marshall. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
19. Crossing TH 59 south of Marshall. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
20. Along TH 59 for 2.5 miles south of Marshall. Check Clear zones.
21. Crossing TH 14 north of Gavin. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)
22. Crossing TH 59 north of Gavin. Check 34’ clearance. (Table 1 UAM)

Future Projects:

TH 14 CIR and medium overlay from Lincoln/Lyon line to City of Tracy year 2032

TH 59 CIR and medium overlay from TH 14 to CSAH 6 (Marshall) year 2028

TH 7 Reclaim TH 71 to TH 4 City of Cosmos 2032

TH 22 CIR from TH 12 to City of Eden Valley year 2032

2023

Attachment 3

ENM VEGETATION REVIEW

MN ENERGY CONNECTION – XCEL ENERGY

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

2505 Transportation Road
Willmar, MN 56201
612-723-4288 (mobile)
nathan.d.johnson@state.mn.us

Memo

Date: 8/16/2023

To: Paul Hartzheim - OES Utility Review Coordinator

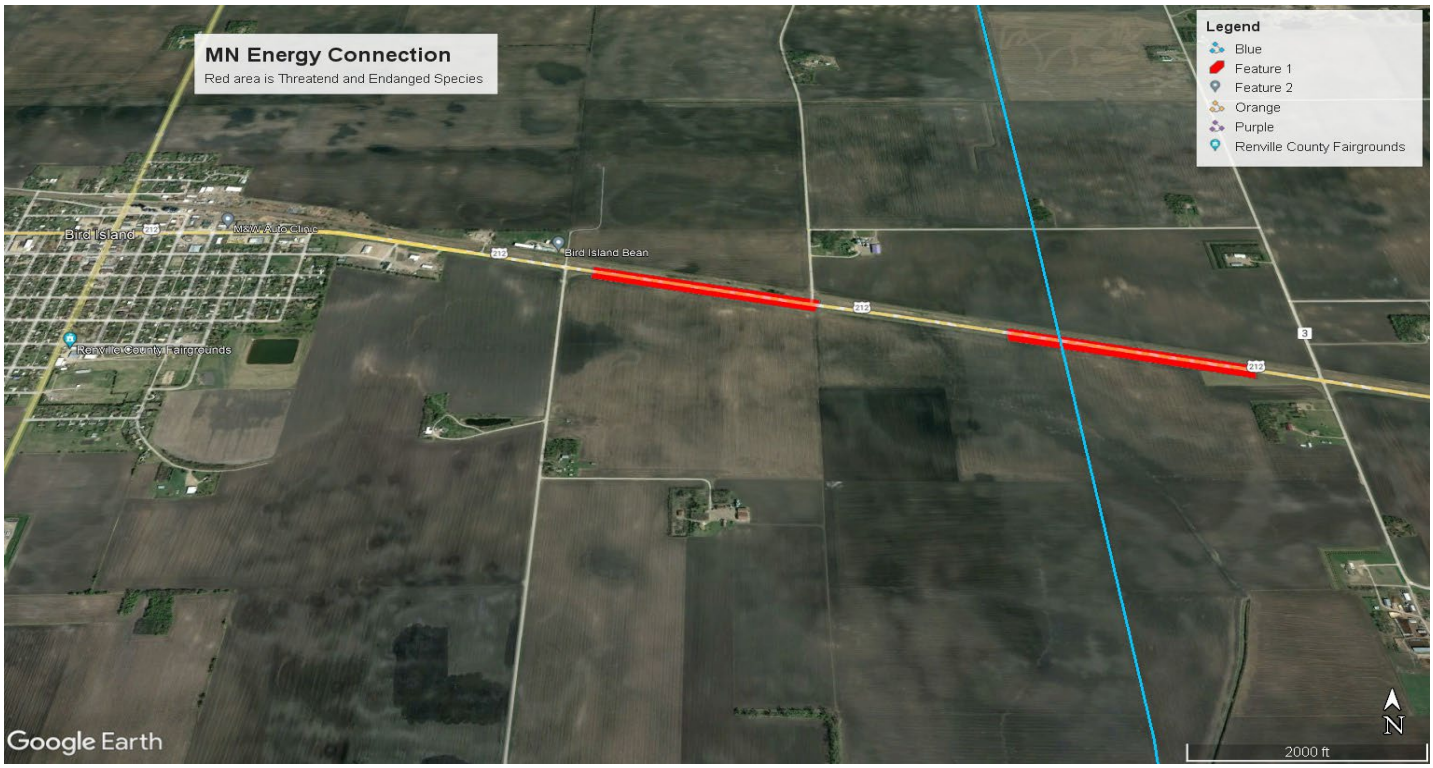
Stacy Kotch – Report Writer

From: Nate Johnson - Roadside Vegetation Specialist
MnDOT Office of Environmental Stewardship

RE: SP MN Energy Connection ENM Vegetation Review

In preparing this vegetation review, background information, maps, and images from GIS layers, Videolog, and Google™ Earth were used. Review is in response to ENM dated June 8/9/2023.

Vegetation:
Current information based on Minnesota DNR Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) **does** indicate Threatened, Endangered or Special Concern Plant species as present on MnDOT right-of-way on the blue route.



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

2505 Transportation Road
Willmar, MN 56201
612-723-4288 (mobile)
nathan.d.johnson@state.mn.us

Potential Impacts:
Potential impacts are related Threatened and Endangered Plant species where construction will be done on construction of powerline. **A field survey will need to be conducted in this area, to determine the extent of impact.**

If trees need to be removed, prior to any work being completed under this permit, a MnDOT Roadside Vegetation Management Unit person should conduct a valuation of the potential impacted vegetation and will be required to pay MnDOT for the value of any lost resources due to their work.

Areas of natural vegetation and sites where State Listed species have been identified **should NOT become staging areas for parking, equipment, or materials**. Driving through these areas, **such as natural prairie**, should not be allowed. Activities of that nature can alter sensitive soil chemistry, compact soils, and otherwise disturb ecosystems resulting in additional stress for the plant community on already stressful roadsides.

Protection of Vegetation:
As for protection, Standard Specification 2572 discusses construction requirements related to vegetation protection. As construction limits are defined, verify the presence of, or lack thereof, areas of natural vegetation to be protected and if necessary, protect with fencing.

Noxious Weeds:
Minnesota State listed noxious weeds can be found at the following web address:
https://www.mda.state.mn.us/plants-insects/minnesota-noxious-weed-list
GIS layers **do not** identify noxious weed infestations at these locations. However, it is likely that some common noxious weeds such as Canada thistle, spotted knapweed or leafy spurge may be present.
Following are some general guidelines that can help to limit the spread of noxious weeds during the construction phase:

- identify where weeds are present
- prioritize these areas for weed control before construction begins
- prevent movement of soil harboring a strong seed bank (soil under a weed infestation)
- prevent spread of reproductive weed parts (seed and roots) by cleaning equipment before it is moved from one site to another
- keep equipment clean, keep it out of infested areas, possibly with protective fencing.
- post construction, monitor for noxious weeds and control as necessary.

For specific noxious weed identification and basic control information visit:
https://www.dot.state.mn.us/roadsides/vegetation/pdf/noxiousweeds.pdf

Vegetation Replacement:
There may be opportunities with this project to revegetate areas. It is recommended that replanting plans incorporate native plant materials and seed mixes appropriate to site conditions.

If ground disturbance occurs on MnDOT's ROW, the area must be restored to a similar vegetation cover, except when that vegetation will endanger safe operation or maintenance of the utility/facility. Seeding should match existing surrounding vegetation, and native seed must have a yellow tag through the Source Identified Native Seed Program. Any seed that is to be planted on MnDOT's ROW must be a mix approved in MnDOT's seeding manual: https://www.dot.state.mn.us/environment/erosion/pdf/seedingmanual.pdf.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

2505 Transportation Road
Willmar, MN 56201
612-723-4288 (mobile)
nathan.d.johnson@state.mn.us

P6 Scheduling and Activities:
Further review of the project is needed when the 30% construction limits have been established a field survey will be needed to see if the species of concern are within the construction limits. Please add VGT1020, VGT1030, and VGT1040 to the project schedule. **The Threated and Endangered Species field survey will need to be conducted between May 15th and June 30th.**

Thank you for the opportunity to review this project, if there are further concerns as this project draws closer, please feel free to contact me.

Cc: Roadside Vegetation Management Unit

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office
3815 American Blvd East
Bloomington, MN 55425-1659
Phone: (952) 858-0793 Fax: (952) 646-2873

In Reply Refer To: September 11, 2023
Project Code: 2023-0127384
Project Name: Minnesota Energy Connection Project - Green Segment

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

To Whom It May Concern:

This response has been generated by the Information, Planning, and Conservation (IPaC) system to provide information on natural resources that could be affected by your project. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) provides this response under the authority of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531-1543), the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668d), the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703-712), and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661 *et seq.*).

Threatened and Endangered Species
The enclosed species list identifies threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate species, as well as proposed and final designated critical habitat, that may occur within the boundary of your proposed project and may be affected by your proposed project. The species list fulfills the requirement for obtaining a Technical Assistance Letter from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

New information based on updated surveys, changes in the abundance and distribution of species, changed habitat conditions, or other factors could change this list. Note that under 50 CFR 402.12(e) of the regulations implementing section 7 of the Act, the accuracy of this species list should be verified after 90 days. The Service recommends that verification be completed by visiting the IPaC website at regular intervals during project planning and implementation for updates to species lists and information. An updated list may be requested through the IPaC system by completing the same process used to receive the enclosed list.

Consultation Technical Assistance
Please refer to refer to our Section 7 website for guidance and technical assistance, including step-by-step instructions for making effects determinations for each species that might be present and for specific guidance on the following types of projects: projects in developed areas, HUD, CDBG, EDA, USDA Rural Development projects, pipelines, buried utilities, telecommunications, and requests for a Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) from FEMA.

We recommend running the project (if it qualifies) through our **Minnesota-Wisconsin Federal Endangered Species Determination Key (Minnesota-Wisconsin ("D-key"))**. A demonstration video showing how-to access and use the determination key is available. Please note that the Minnesota-Wisconsin D-key is the third option of 3 available d-keys. D-keys are tools to help Federal agencies and other project proponents determine if their proposed action has the potential to adversely affect federally listed species and designated critical habitat. The Minnesota-Wisconsin D-key includes a structured set of questions that assists a project proponent in determining whether a proposed project qualifies for a certain predetermined consultation outcome for all federally listed species found in Minnesota and Wisconsin (except for the northern long-eared bat- see below), which includes determinations of “no effect” or “may affect, not likely to adversely affect." In each case, the Service has compiled and analyzed the best available information on the species’ biology and the impacts of certain activities to support these determinations.

If your completed d-key output letter shows a "No Effect" (NE) determination for all listed species, print your IPaC output letter for your files to document your compliance with the Endangered Species Act.

For Federal projects with a “Not Likely to Adversely Affect” (NLAA) determination, our concurrence becomes valid if you do not hear otherwise from us after a 30-day review period, as indicated in your letter.

If your d-key output letter indicates additional coordination with the Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office is necessary (i.e., you get a “May Affect” determination), you will be provided additional guidance on contacting the Service to continue ESA coordination outside of the key; ESA compliance cannot be concluded using the key for “May Affect” determinations unless otherwise indicated in your output letter.

Note: Once you obtain your official species list, you are not required to continue in IPaC with d-keys, although in most cases these tools should expedite your review. If you choose to make an effects determination on your own, you may do so. If the project is a Federal Action, you may want to review our section 7 step-by-step instructions before making your determinations.

Using the IPaC Official Species List to Make No Effect and May Affect Determinations for Listed Species

1. If IPaC returns a result of “There are no listed species found within the vicinity of the project,” then project proponents can conclude the proposed activities will have **no effect** on any federally listed species under Service jurisdiction. Concurrence from the Service is not required for **no effect** determinations. No further consultation or coordination is required. Attach this letter to the dated IPaC species list report for your records.
2. If IPaC returns one or more federally listed, proposed, or candidate species as potentially present in the action area of the proposed project – other than bats (see below) – then project proponents must determine if proposed activities will have **no effect** on or **may affect** those species. For assistance in determining if suitable habitat for listed, candidate, or proposed species occurs within your project area or if species may be affected by project activities, you can obtain Life History Information for Listed and Candidate Species on our office website. If no impacts will occur to a species on the IPaC species list (e.g., there is no habitat present in the project area), the appropriate determination is **no effect**. No further consultation or coordination is required. Attach this letter to the dated IPaC species list report for your records.

3. Should you determine that project activities **may affect** any federally listed, please contact our office for further coordination. Letters with requests for consultation or correspondence about your project should include the Consultation Tracking Number in the header. Electronic submission is preferred.

Northern Long-Eared Bats
Northern long-eared bats occur throughout Minnesota and Wisconsin and the information below may help in determining if your project may affect these species.

This species hibernates in caves or mines only during the winter. In Minnesota and Wisconsin, the hibernation season is considered to be November 1 to March 31. During the active season (April 1 to October 31) they roost in forest and woodland habitats. Suitable summer habitat for northern long-eared bats consists of a wide variety of forested/wooded habitats where they roost, forage, and travel and may also include some adjacent and interspersed non-forested habitats such as emergent wetlands and adjacent edges of agricultural fields, old fields and pastures. This includes forests and woodlots containing potential roosts (i.e., live trees and/or snags ≥3 inches dbh for northern long-eared bat that have exfoliating bark, cracks, crevices, and/or hollows), as well as linear features such as fencerows, riparian forests, and other wooded corridors. These wooded areas may be dense or loose aggregates of trees with variable amounts of canopy closure. Individual trees may be considered suitable habitat when they exhibit the characteristics of a potential roost tree and are located within 1,000 feet (305 meters) of forested/wooded habitat. Northern long-eared bats have also been observed roosting in human-made structures, such as buildings, barns, bridges, and bat houses; therefore, these structures should also be considered potential summer habitat and evaluated for use by bats. If your project will impact caves or mines or will involve clearing forest or woodland habitat containing suitable roosting habitat, northern long-eared bats could be affected.

Examples of unsuitable habitat include:

- Individual trees that are greater than 1,000 feet from forested or wooded areas,
- Trees found in highly developed urban areas (e.g., street trees, downtown areas),
- A pure stand of less than 3-inch dbh trees that are not mixed with larger trees, and
- A monoculture stand of shrubby vegetation with no potential roost trees.

If IPaC returns a result that northern long-eared bats are potentially present in the action area of the proposed project, project proponents can conclude the proposed activities **may affect** this species **IF** one or more of the following activities are proposed:

- Clearing or disturbing suitable roosting habitat, as defined above, at any time of year,
- Any activity in or near the entrance to a cave or mine,
- Mining, deep excavation, or underground work within 0.25 miles of a cave or mine,
- Construction of one or more wind turbines, or
- Demolition or reconstruction of human-made structures that are known to be used by bats based on observations of roosting bats, bats emerging at dusk, or guano deposits or stains.

If none of the above activities are proposed, project proponents can conclude the proposed activities will have **no effect** on the northern long-eared bat. Concurrence from the Service is not required for **No**

Effect determinations. No further consultation or coordination is required. Attach this letter to the dated IPaC species list report for your records.

If any of the above activities are proposed, and the northern long-eared bat appears on the user's species list, the federal project user will be directed to either the range-wide northern long-eared bat D-key or the Federal Highways Administration, Federal Railways Administration, and Federal Transit Administration Indiana bat/ Northern long-eared bat D-key, depending on the type of project and federal agency involvement. Similar to the Minnesota-Wisconsin D-key, these d-keys helps to determine if prohibited take might occur and, if not, will generate an automated verification letter.

Please note: On November 30, 2022, the Service published a proposal final rule to reclassify the northern long-eared bat as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. On January 26, 2023, the Service published a 60-day extension for the final reclassification rule in the Federal Register, moving the effective listing date from January 30, 2023, to March 31, 2023. This extension will provide stakeholders and the public time to preview interim guidance and consultation tools before the rule becomes effective. When available, the tools will be available on the Service's northern long-eared bat website (https://www.fws.gov/species/northern-long-eared-bat-myotis-septentrionalis). Once the final rule goes into effect on March 31, 2023, the 4(d) D-key will no longer be available (4(d) rules are not available for federally endangered species) and will be replaced with a new Range-wide NLEB D-key (range-wide d-key). For projects not completed by March 31, 2023, that were previously reviewed under the 4(d) d-key, there may be a need for reinitiation of consultation. For these ongoing projects previously reviewed under the 4(d) d-key that may result in incidental take of the northern long-eared bat, we recommend you review your project using the new range-wide d-key once available. If your project does not comply with the range-wide d-key, it may be eligible for use of the Interim (formal) Consultation framework (framework). The framework is intended to facilitate the transition from the 4(d) rule to typical Section 7 consultation procedures for federally endangered species and will be available only until spring 2024. Again, when available, these tools (new range-wide d-key and framework) will be available on the Service's northern long-eared bat website.

Whooping Crane
Whooping crane is designated as a non-essential experimental population in Wisconsin and consultation under Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act is only required if project activities will occur within a National Wildlife Refuge or National Park. If project activities are proposed on lands outside of a National Wildlife Refuge or National Park, then you are not required to consult. For additional information on this designation and consultation requirements, please review "Establishment of a Nonessential Experimental Population of Whooping Cranes in the Eastern United States."

Other Trust Resources and Activities
Bald and Golden Eagles - Although the bald eagle has been removed from the endangered species list, this species and the golden eagle are protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Should bald or golden eagles occur within or near the project area please contact our office for further coordination. For communication and wind energy projects, please refer to additional guidelines below.

Migratory Birds - The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) prohibits the taking, killing, possession, transportation, and importation of migratory birds, their eggs, parts, and nests, except when specifically authorized by the Service. The Service has the responsibility under the MBTA to proactively prevent the

mortality of migratory birds whenever possible and we encourage implementation of recommendations that minimize potential impacts to migratory birds. Such measures include clearing forested habitat outside the nesting season (generally March 1 to August 31) or conducting nest surveys prior to clearing to avoid injury to eggs or nestlings.

Communication Towers - Construction of new communications towers (including radio, television, cellular, and microwave) creates a potentially significant impact on migratory birds, especially some 350 species of night-migrating birds. However, the Service has developed voluntary guidelines for minimizing impacts.

Transmission Lines - Migratory birds, especially large species with long wingspans, heavy bodies, and poor maneuverability can also collide with power lines. In addition, mortality can occur when birds, particularly hawks, eagles, kites, falcons, and owls, attempt to perch on uninsulated or unguarded power poles. To minimize these risks, please refer to guidelines developed by the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee and the Service. Implementation of these measures is especially important along sections of lines adjacent to wetlands or other areas that support large numbers of raptors and migratory birds.

Wind Energy - To minimize impacts to migratory birds and bats, wind energy projects should follow the Service's Wind Energy Guidelines. In addition, please refer to the Service's Eagle Conservation Plan Guidance, which provides guidance for conserving bald and golden eagles in the course of siting, constructing, and operating wind energy facilities.

State Department of Natural Resources Coordination
While it is not required for your Federal section 7 consultation, please note that additional state endangered or threatened species may also have the potential to be impacted. Please contact the Minnesota or Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for information on state listed species that may be present in your proposed project area.

Minnesota
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - Endangered Resources Review Homepage
Email: Review.NHIS@state.mn.us

Wisconsin
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources - Endangered Resources Review Homepage
Email: DNRERReview@wi.gov

We appreciate your concern for threatened and endangered species. Please feel free to contact our office with questions or for additional information.

Attachment(s):

- Official Species List
- USFWS National Wildlife Refuges and Fish Hatcheries
- Migratory Birds
- Wetlands

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
3815 American Blvd East
Bloomington, MN 55425-1659
(952) 858-0793

PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Code: 2023-0127384
Project Name: Minnesota Energy Connection Project - Green Segment
Project Type: Transmission Line - New Constr - Above Ground
Project Description: Green Segment
Project Location:

The approximate location of the project can be viewed in Google Maps: https://www.google.com/maps/@45.3894792,-93.90143795419104,14z

Counties: Sherburne County, Minnesota

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[1], 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
Northern Long-eared Bat *Myotis septentrionalis* No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9045	Endangered
Tricolored Bat *Perimyotis subflavus* No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10515	Proposed Endangered

BIRDS

NAME	STATUS
Whooping Crane *Grus americana* Population: U.S.A. (AL, AR, CO, FL, GA, ID, IL, IN, IA, KY, LA, MI, MN, MS, MO, NC, NM, OH, SC, TN, UT, VA, WI, WV, western half of WY) No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/758	Experimental Population, Non-Essential

INSECTS

NAME	STATUS
Monarch Butterfly *Danaus plexippus* No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9743	Candidate

CRITICAL HABITATS

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

YOU ARE STILL REQUIRED TO DETERMINE IF YOUR PROJECT(S) MAY HAVE EFFECTS ON ALL ABOVE LISTED SPECIES.

USFWS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE LANDS AND FISH HATCHERIES

Any activity proposed on lands managed by the National Wildlife Refuge system must undergo a 'Compatibility Determination' conducted by the Refuge. Please contact the individual Refuges to discuss any questions or concerns.

THERE ARE NO REFUGE LANDS OR FISH HATCHERIES WITHIN YOUR PROJECT AREA.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Certain birds are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act[1] and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act[2].

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)

The birds listed below are birds of particular concern either because they occur on the USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC) list or warrant special attention in your project location. To learn more about the levels of concern for birds on your list and how this list is generated, see the FAQ below. This is not a list of every bird you may find in this location, nor a guarantee that every bird on this list will be found in your project area. To see exact locations of where birders and the general public have sighted birds in and around your project area, visit the E-bird data mapping tool (Tip: enter your location, desired date range and a species on your list). For projects that occur off the Atlantic Coast, additional maps and models detailing the relative occurrence and abundance of bird species on your list are available. Links to additional information about Atlantic Coast birds, and other important information about your migratory bird list, including how to properly interpret and use your migratory bird report, can be found below.

For guidance on when to schedule activities or implement avoidance and minimization measures to reduce impacts to migratory birds on your list, click on the PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE

SUMMARY at the top of your list to see when these birds are most likely to be present and breeding in your project area.

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities.	Breeds Dec 1 to Aug 31
Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3093	Breeds May 15 to Aug 20
Canada Warbler *Cardellina canadensis* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds May 20 to Aug 10
Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8745	Breeds May 1 to Jul 20
Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9679	Breeds elsewhere
Long-eared Owl *asio otus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3631	Breeds Mar 1 to Jul 15
Red-headed Woodpecker *Melanerpes erythrocephalus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds May 10 to Sep 10
Rusty Blackbird *Euphagus carolinus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA	Breeds elsewhere
Wood Thrush *Hylocichla mustelina* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds May 10 to Aug 31

PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE SUMMARY

The graphs below provide our best understanding of when birds of concern are most likely to be present in your project area. This information can be used to tailor and schedule your project activities to avoid or minimize impacts to birds. Please make sure you read and understand the

FAQ "Proper Interpretation and Use of Your Migratory Bird Report" before using or attempting to interpret this report.

Probability of Presence (■)

Each green bar represents the bird's relative probability of presence in the 10km grid cell(s) your project overlaps during a particular week of the year. (A year is represented as 12 4-week months.) A taller bar indicates a higher probability of species presence. The survey effort (see below) can be used to establish a level of confidence in the presence score. One can have higher confidence in the presence score if the corresponding survey effort is also high.

How is the probability of presence score calculated? The calculation is done in three steps:

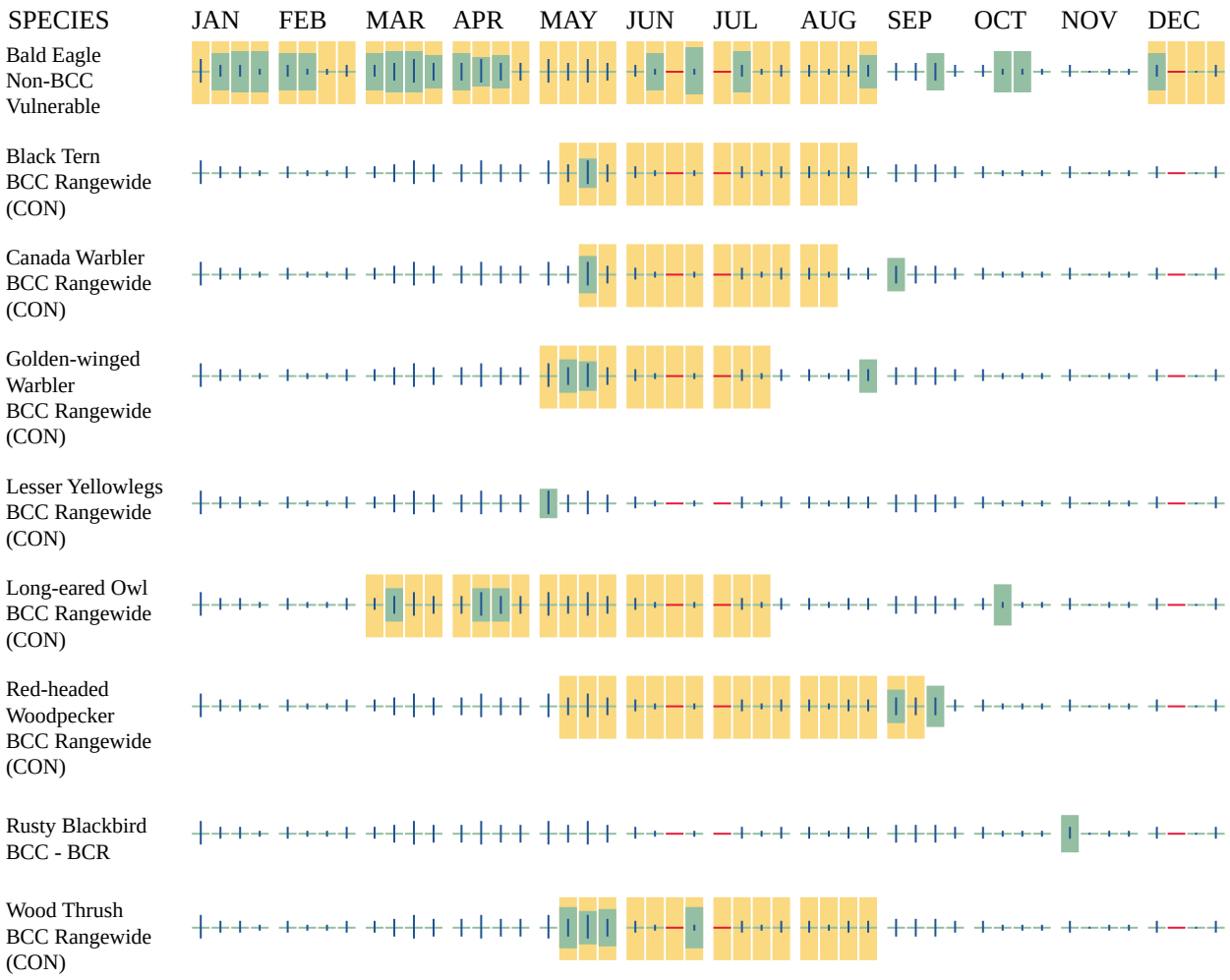
1. The probability of presence for each week is calculated as the number of survey events in the week where the species was detected divided by the total number of survey events for that week. For example, if in week 12 there were 20 survey events and the Spotted Towhee was found in 5 of them, the probability of presence of the Spotted Towhee in week 12 is 0.25.
2. To properly present the pattern of presence across the year, the relative probability of presence is calculated. This is the probability of presence divided by the maximum probability of presence across all weeks. For example, imagine the probability of presence in week 20 for the Spotted Towhee is 0.05, and that the probability of presence at week 12 (0.25) is the maximum of any week of the year. The relative probability of presence on week 12 is 0.25/0.25 = 1; at week 20 it is 0.05/0.25 = 0.2.
3. The relative probability of presence calculated in the previous step undergoes a statistical conversion so that all possible values fall between 0 and 10, inclusive. This is the probability of presence score.

Breeding Season (■)
Yellow bars denote a very liberal estimate of the time-frame inside which the bird breeds across its entire range. If there are no yellow bars shown for a bird, it does not breed in your project area.

Survey Effort (|)
Vertical black lines superimposed on probability of presence bars indicate the number of surveys performed for that species in the 10km grid cell(s) your project area overlaps. The number of surveys is expressed as a range, for example, 33 to 64 surveys.

No Data (–)
A week is marked as having no data if there were no survey events for that week.

Survey Timeframe
Surveys from only the last 10 years are used in order to ensure delivery of currently relevant information. The exception to this is areas off the Atlantic coast, where bird returns are based on all years of available data, since data in these areas is currently much more sparse.



Additional information can be found using the following links:

- Birds of Conservation Concern https://www.fws.gov/program/migratory-birds/species
- Measures for avoiding and minimizing impacts to birds https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/avoiding-and-minimizing-incidental-take-migratory-birds
- Nationwide conservation measures for birds https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/nationwide-standard-conservation-measures.pdf

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 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 list of migratory birds that potentially occur 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.

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 Rapid Avian Information Locator (RAIL) 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 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 or migrating in my 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 query your location using the RAIL Tool and look at the range maps provided for birds in your area at the bottom of the profiles provided for each bird in your results. 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

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.

WETLANDS

Impacts to NWI wetlands and other aquatic habitats may be subject to regulation under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, or other State/Federal statutes.

For more information please contact the Regulatory Program of the local U.S. Army Corps of Engineers District.

Please note that the NWI data being shown may be out of date. We are currently working to update our NWI data set. We recommend you verify these results with a site visit to determine the actual extent of wetlands on site.

THERE ARE NO WETLANDS WITHIN YOUR PROJECT AREA.

IPAC USER CONTACT INFORMATION

Agency: Private Entity
Name: Angela Durand
Address: 1 Main Street SE
Address Line 2: Suite 300
City: Minneapolis
State: MN
Zip: 55414
Email angela.durand@merjent.com
Phone: 6127463666

LEAD AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Lead Agency: Army Corps of Engineers

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office
3815 American Blvd East
Bloomington, MN 55425-1659
Phone: (952) 858-0793 Fax: (952) 646-2873

In Reply Refer To: September 11, 2023
Project Code: 2023-0127395
Project Name: Minnesota Energy Connection Project - Purple Route

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

To Whom It May Concern:

This response has been generated by the Information, Planning, and Conservation (IPaC) system to provide information on natural resources that could be affected by your project. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) provides this response under the authority of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531-1543), the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668d), the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703-712), and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661 *et seq.*).

Threatened and Endangered Species
The enclosed species list identifies threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate species, as well as proposed and final designated critical habitat, that may occur within the boundary of your proposed project and may be affected by your proposed project. The species list fulfills the requirement for obtaining a Technical Assistance Letter from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

New information based on updated surveys, changes in the abundance and distribution of species, changed habitat conditions, or other factors could change this list. Note that under 50 CFR 402.12(e) of the regulations implementing section 7 of the Act, the accuracy of this species list should be verified after 90 days. The Service recommends that verification be completed by visiting the IPaC website at regular intervals during project planning and implementation for updates to species lists and information. An updated list may be requested through the IPaC system by completing the same process used to receive the enclosed list.

Consultation Technical Assistance
Please refer to refer to our Section 7 website for guidance and technical assistance, including step-by-step instructions for making effects determinations for each species that might be present and for specific guidance on the following types of projects: projects in developed areas, HUD, CDBG, EDA, USDA Rural Development projects, pipelines, buried utilities, telecommunications, and requests for a Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) from FEMA.

We recommend running the project (if it qualifies) through our **Minnesota-Wisconsin Federal Endangered Species Determination Key (Minnesota-Wisconsin ("D-key"))**. A demonstration video showing how-to access and use the determination key is available. Please note that the Minnesota-Wisconsin D-key is the third option of 3 available d-keys. D-keys are tools to help Federal agencies and other project proponents determine if their proposed action has the potential to adversely affect federally listed species and designated critical habitat. The Minnesota-Wisconsin D-key includes a structured set of questions that assists a project proponent in determining whether a proposed project qualifies for a certain predetermined consultation outcome for all federally listed species found in Minnesota and Wisconsin (except for the northern long-eared bat- see below), which includes determinations of “no effect” or “may affect, not likely to adversely affect." In each case, the Service has compiled and analyzed the best available information on the species’ biology and the impacts of certain activities to support these determinations.

If your completed d-key output letter shows a "No Effect" (NE) determination for all listed species, print your IPaC output letter for your files to document your compliance with the Endangered Species Act.

For Federal projects with a “Not Likely to Adversely Affect” (NLAA) determination, our concurrence becomes valid if you do not hear otherwise from us after a 30-day review period, as indicated in your letter.

If your d-key output letter indicates additional coordination with the Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office is necessary (i.e., you get a “May Affect” determination), you will be provided additional guidance on contacting the Service to continue ESA coordination outside of the key; ESA compliance cannot be concluded using the key for “May Affect” determinations unless otherwise indicated in your output letter.

Note: Once you obtain your official species list, you are not required to continue in IPaC with d-keys, although in most cases these tools should expedite your review. If you choose to make an effects determination on your own, you may do so. If the project is a Federal Action, you may want to review our section 7 step-by-step instructions before making your determinations.

Using the IPaC Official Species List to Make No Effect and May Affect Determinations for Listed Species

1. If IPaC returns a result of “There are no listed species found within the vicinity of the project,” then project proponents can conclude the proposed activities will have **no effect** on any federally listed species under Service jurisdiction. Concurrence from the Service is not required for **no effect** determinations. No further consultation or coordination is required. Attach this letter to the dated IPaC species list report for your records.
2. If IPaC returns one or more federally listed, proposed, or candidate species as potentially present in the action area of the proposed project – other than bats (see below) – then project proponents must determine if proposed activities will have **no effect** on or **may affect** those species. For assistance in determining if suitable habitat for listed, candidate, or proposed species occurs within your project area or if species may be affected by project activities, you can obtain Life History Information for Listed and Candidate Species on our office website. If no impacts will occur to a species on the IPaC species list (e.g., there is no habitat present in the project area), the appropriate determination is **no effect**. No further consultation or coordination is required. Attach this letter to the dated IPaC species list report for your records.

3. Should you determine that project activities **may affect** any federally listed, please contact our office for further coordination. Letters with requests for consultation or correspondence about your project should include the Consultation Tracking Number in the header. Electronic submission is preferred.

Northern Long-Eared Bats
Northern long-eared bats occur throughout Minnesota and Wisconsin and the information below may help in determining if your project may affect these species.

This species hibernates in caves or mines only during the winter. In Minnesota and Wisconsin, the hibernation season is considered to be November 1 to March 31. During the active season (April 1 to October 31) they roost in forest and woodland habitats. Suitable summer habitat for northern long-eared bats consists of a wide variety of forested/wooded habitats where they roost, forage, and travel and may also include some adjacent and interspersed non-forested habitats such as emergent wetlands and adjacent edges of agricultural fields, old fields and pastures. This includes forests and woodlots containing potential roosts (i.e., live trees and/or snags ≥3 inches dbh for northern long-eared bat that have exfoliating bark, cracks, crevices, and/or hollows), as well as linear features such as fencerows, riparian forests, and other wooded corridors. These wooded areas may be dense or loose aggregates of trees with variable amounts of canopy closure. Individual trees may be considered suitable habitat when they exhibit the characteristics of a potential roost tree and are located within 1,000 feet (305 meters) of forested/wooded habitat. Northern long-eared bats have also been observed roosting in human-made structures, such as buildings, barns, bridges, and bat houses; therefore, these structures should also be considered potential summer habitat and evaluated for use by bats. If your project will impact caves or mines or will involve clearing forest or woodland habitat containing suitable roosting habitat, northern long-eared bats could be affected.

Examples of unsuitable habitat include:

- Individual trees that are greater than 1,000 feet from forested or wooded areas,
- Trees found in highly developed urban areas (e.g., street trees, downtown areas),
- A pure stand of less than 3-inch dbh trees that are not mixed with larger trees, and
- A monoculture stand of shrubby vegetation with no potential roost trees.

If IPaC returns a result that northern long-eared bats are potentially present in the action area of the proposed project, project proponents can conclude the proposed activities **may affect** this species **IF** one or more of the following activities are proposed:

- Clearing or disturbing suitable roosting habitat, as defined above, at any time of year,
- Any activity in or near the entrance to a cave or mine,
- Mining, deep excavation, or underground work within 0.25 miles of a cave or mine,
- Construction of one or more wind turbines, or
- Demolition or reconstruction of human-made structures that are known to be used by bats based on observations of roosting bats, bats emerging at dusk, or guano deposits or stains.

If none of the above activities are proposed, project proponents can conclude the proposed activities will have **no effect** on the northern long-eared bat. Concurrence from the Service is not required for **No**

Effect determinations. No further consultation or coordination is required. Attach this letter to the dated IPaC species list report for your records.

If any of the above activities are proposed, and the northern long-eared bat appears on the user's species list, the federal project user will be directed to either the range-wide northern long-eared bat D-key or the Federal Highways Administration, Federal Railways Administration, and Federal Transit Administration Indiana bat/ Northern long-eared bat D-key, depending on the type of project and federal agency involvement. Similar to the Minnesota-Wisconsin D-key, these d-keys helps to determine if prohibited take might occur and, if not, will generate an automated verification letter.

Please note: On November 30, 2022, the Service published a proposal final rule to reclassify the northern long-eared bat as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. On January 26, 2023, the Service published a 60-day extension for the final reclassification rule in the Federal Register, moving the effective listing date from January 30, 2023, to March 31, 2023. This extension will provide stakeholders and the public time to preview interim guidance and consultation tools before the rule becomes effective. When available, the tools will be available on the Service's northern long-eared bat website (https://www.fws.gov/species/northern-long-eared-bat-myotis-septentrionalis). Once the final rule goes into effect on March 31, 2023, the 4(d) D-key will no longer be available (4(d) rules are not available for federally endangered species) and will be replaced with a new Range-wide NLEB D-key (range-wide d-key). For projects not completed by March 31, 2023, that were previously reviewed under the 4(d) d-key, there may be a need for reinitiation of consultation. For these ongoing projects previously reviewed under the 4(d) d-key that may result in incidental take of the northern long-eared bat, we recommend you review your project using the new range-wide d-key once available. If your project does not comply with the range-wide d-key, it may be eligible for use of the Interim (formal) Consultation framework (framework). The framework is intended to facilitate the transition from the 4(d) rule to typical Section 7 consultation procedures for federally endangered species and will be available only until spring 2024. Again, when available, these tools (new range-wide d-key and framework) will be available on the Service's northern long-eared bat website.

Whooping Crane
Whooping crane is designated as a non-essential experimental population in Wisconsin and consultation under Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act is only required if project activities will occur within a National Wildlife Refuge or National Park. If project activities are proposed on lands outside of a National Wildlife Refuge or National Park, then you are not required to consult. For additional information on this designation and consultation requirements, please review "Establishment of a Nonessential Experimental Population of Whooping Cranes in the Eastern United States."

Other Trust Resources and Activities
Bald and Golden Eagles - Although the bald eagle has been removed from the endangered species list, this species and the golden eagle are protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Should bald or golden eagles occur within or near the project area please contact our office for further coordination. For communication and wind energy projects, please refer to additional guidelines below.

Migratory Birds - The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) prohibits the taking, killing, possession, transportation, and importation of migratory birds, their eggs, parts, and nests, except when specifically authorized by the Service. The Service has the responsibility under the MBTA to proactively prevent the

mortality of migratory birds whenever possible and we encourage implementation of recommendations that minimize potential impacts to migratory birds. Such measures include clearing forested habitat outside the nesting season (generally March 1 to August 31) or conducting nest surveys prior to clearing to avoid injury to eggs or nestlings.

Communication Towers - Construction of new communications towers (including radio, television, cellular, and microwave) creates a potentially significant impact on migratory birds, especially some 350 species of night-migrating birds. However, the Service has developed voluntary guidelines for minimizing impacts.

Transmission Lines - Migratory birds, especially large species with long wingspans, heavy bodies, and poor maneuverability can also collide with power lines. In addition, mortality can occur when birds, particularly hawks, eagles, kites, falcons, and owls, attempt to perch on uninsulated or unguarded power poles. To minimize these risks, please refer to guidelines developed by the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee and the Service. Implementation of these measures is especially important along sections of lines adjacent to wetlands or other areas that support large numbers of raptors and migratory birds.

Wind Energy - To minimize impacts to migratory birds and bats, wind energy projects should follow the Service's Wind Energy Guidelines. In addition, please refer to the Service's Eagle Conservation Plan Guidance, which provides guidance for conserving bald and golden eagles in the course of siting, constructing, and operating wind energy facilities.

State Department of Natural Resources Coordination
While it is not required for your Federal section 7 consultation, please note that additional state endangered or threatened species may also have the potential to be impacted. Please contact the Minnesota or Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for information on state listed species that may be present in your proposed project area.

Minnesota
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - Endangered Resources Review Homepage
Email: Review.NHIS@state.mn.us

Wisconsin
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources - Endangered Resources Review Homepage
Email: DNRERReview@wi.gov

We appreciate your concern for threatened and endangered species. Please feel free to contact our office with questions or for additional information.

Attachment(s):

- Official Species List
- USFWS National Wildlife Refuges and Fish Hatcheries
- Migratory Birds
- Wetlands

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
3815 American Blvd East
Bloomington, MN 55425-1659
(952) 858-0793

PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Code: 2023-0127395
Project Name: Minnesota Energy Connection Project - Purple Route
Project Type: Transmission Line - New Constr - Above Ground
Project Description: Purple Route
Project Location:

The approximate location of the project can be viewed in Google Maps: https://www.google.com/maps/@44.81823495,-95.59180760557308,14z

Counties: Minnesota

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[1], 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
Northern Long-eared Bat *Myotis septentrionalis* No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9045	Endangered
Tricolored Bat *Perimyotis subflavus* No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10515	Proposed Endangered

BIRDS

NAME	STATUS
Whooping Crane *Grus americana* Population: U.S.A. (AL, AR, CO, FL, GA, ID, IL, IN, IA, KY, LA, MI, MN, MS, MO, NC, NM, OH, SC, TN, UT, VA, WI, WV, western half of WY) No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/758	Experimental Population, Non-Essential

INSECTS

NAME	STATUS
Monarch Butterfly *Danaus plexippus* No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9743	Candidate

CRITICAL HABITATS

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

YOU ARE STILL REQUIRED TO DETERMINE IF YOUR PROJECT(S) MAY HAVE EFFECTS ON ALL ABOVE LISTED SPECIES.

USFWS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE LANDS AND FISH HATCHERIES

Any activity proposed on lands managed by the National Wildlife Refuge system must undergo a 'Compatibility Determination' conducted by the Refuge. Please contact the individual Refuges to discuss any questions or concerns.

The following FWS National Wildlife Refuge Lands and Fish Hatcheries lie fully or partially within your project area:

FACILITY NAME	ACRES
KANDIYOHI COUNTY WATERFOWL PRODUCTION AREA https://www.fws.gov/our-facilities?$keywords="%5C%22KANDIYOHI+COUNTY+WATERFOWL+PRODUCTION+AREA%5C%22"	21,929.309

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Certain birds are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act[1] and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act[2].

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)

The birds listed below are birds of particular concern either because they occur on the USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC) list or warrant special attention in your project location. To learn more about the levels of concern for birds on your list and how this list is generated, see the FAQ below. This is not a list of every bird you may find in this location, nor a guarantee that every bird on this list will be found in your project area. To see exact locations of where birders and the general public have sighted birds in and around your project area, visit the E-bird data mapping tool (Tip: enter your location, desired date range and a species on your list). For projects that occur off the Atlantic Coast, additional maps and models detailing the relative occurrence and abundance of bird species on your list are available. Links to additional information about Atlantic Coast birds, and other important information about your

migratory bird list, including how to properly interpret and use your migratory bird report, can be found below.

For guidance on when to schedule activities or implement avoidance and minimization measures to reduce impacts to migratory birds on your list, click on the PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE SUMMARY at the top of your list to see when these birds are most likely to be present and breeding in your project area.

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
American Golden-plover *Pluvialis dominica* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds elsewhere
Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities.	Breeds Dec 1 to Aug 31
Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3093	Breeds May 15 to Aug 20
Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythropthalmus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9399	Breeds May 15 to Oct 10
Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds May 20 to Jul 31
Canada Warbler *Cardellina canadensis* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds May 20 to Aug 10
Cerulean Warbler *Dendroica cerulea* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/2974	Breeds Apr 22 to Jul 20
Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds Mar 15 to Aug 25
Eastern Whip-poor-will *Antrostomus vociferus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds May 1 to Aug 20
Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds May 1 to Jul 31

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1680	Breeds Jan 1 to Aug 31
Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8745	Breeds May 1 to Jul 20
Henslow's Sparrow *Ammodramus henslowii* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3941	Breeds May 1 to Aug 31
Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds elsewhere
Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9679	Breeds elsewhere
Long-eared Owl *asio otus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3631	Breeds Mar 1 to Jul 15
Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9481	Breeds May 1 to Jul 31
Red-headed Woodpecker *Melanerpes erythrocephalus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds May 10 to Sep 10
Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres morinella* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA	Breeds elsewhere
Rusty Blackbird *Euphagus carolinus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA	Breeds elsewhere
Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9480	Breeds elsewhere

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9294	Breeds May 1 to Aug 31
Western Grebe *aechmophorus occidentalis* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/6743	Breeds Jun 1 to Aug 31
Willet *Tringa semipalmata* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds Apr 20 to Aug 5
Wood Thrush *Hylocichla mustelina* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds May 10 to Aug 31
Yellow Rail *Coturnicops noveboracensis* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9476	Breeds May 15 to Sep 10

PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE SUMMARY

The graphs below provide our best understanding of when birds of concern are most likely to be present in your project area. This information can be used to tailor and schedule your project activities to avoid or minimize impacts to birds. Please make sure you read and understand the FAQ "Proper Interpretation and Use of Your Migratory Bird Report" before using or attempting to interpret this report.

Probability of Presence (■)

Each green bar represents the bird's relative probability of presence in the 10km grid cell(s) your project overlaps during a particular week of the year. (A year is represented as 12 4-week months.) A taller bar indicates a higher probability of species presence. The survey effort (see below) can be used to establish a level of confidence in the presence score. One can have higher confidence in the presence score if the corresponding survey effort is also high.

How is the probability of presence score calculated? The calculation is done in three steps:

1. The probability of presence for each week is calculated as the number of survey events in the week where the species was detected divided by the total number of survey events for that week. For example, if in week 12 there were 20 survey events and the Spotted Towhee was found in 5 of them, the probability of presence of the Spotted Towhee in week 12 is 0.25.
2. To properly present the pattern of presence across the year, the relative probability of presence is calculated. This is the probability of presence divided by the maximum

probability of presence across all weeks. For example, imagine the probability of presence in week 20 for the Spotted Towhee is 0.05, and that the probability of presence at week 12 (0.25) is the maximum of any week of the year. The relative probability of presence on week 12 is 0.25/0.25 = 1; at week 20 it is 0.05/0.25 = 0.2.

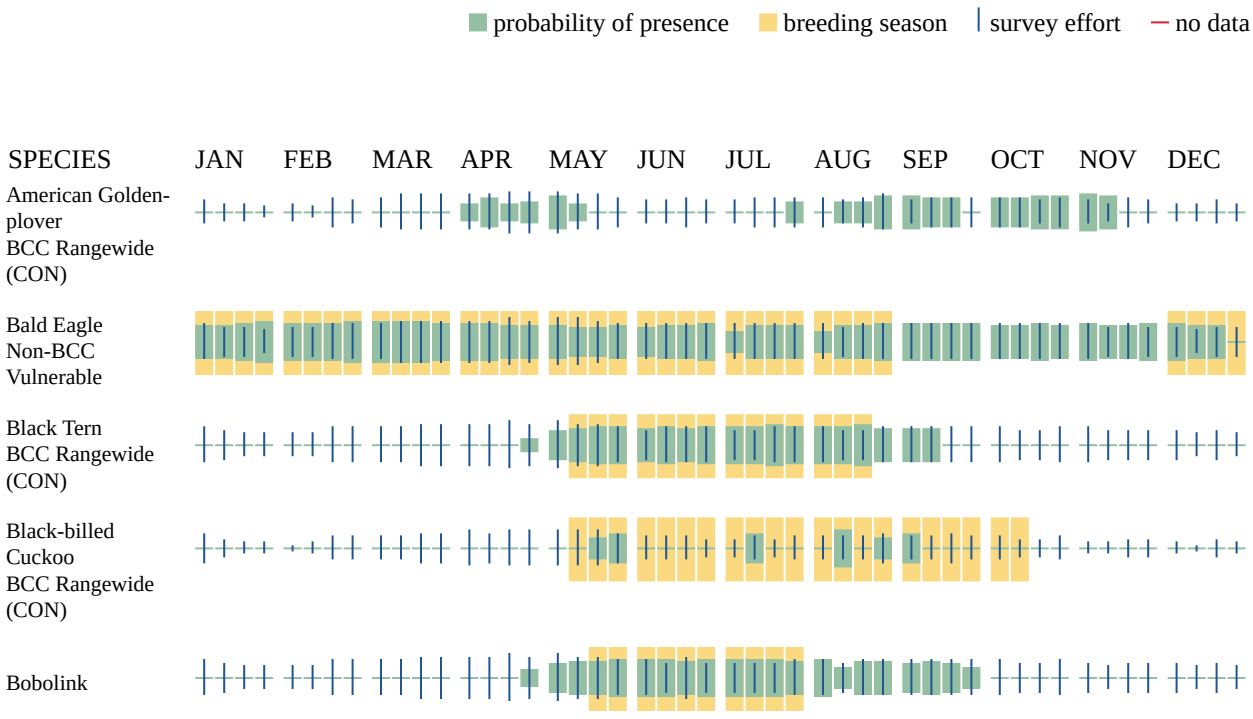
3. The relative probability of presence calculated in the previous step undergoes a statistical conversion so that all possible values fall between 0 and 10, inclusive. This is the probability of presence score.

Breeding Season (■)
Yellow bars denote a very liberal estimate of the time-frame inside which the bird breeds across its entire range. If there are no yellow bars shown for a bird, it does not breed in your project area.

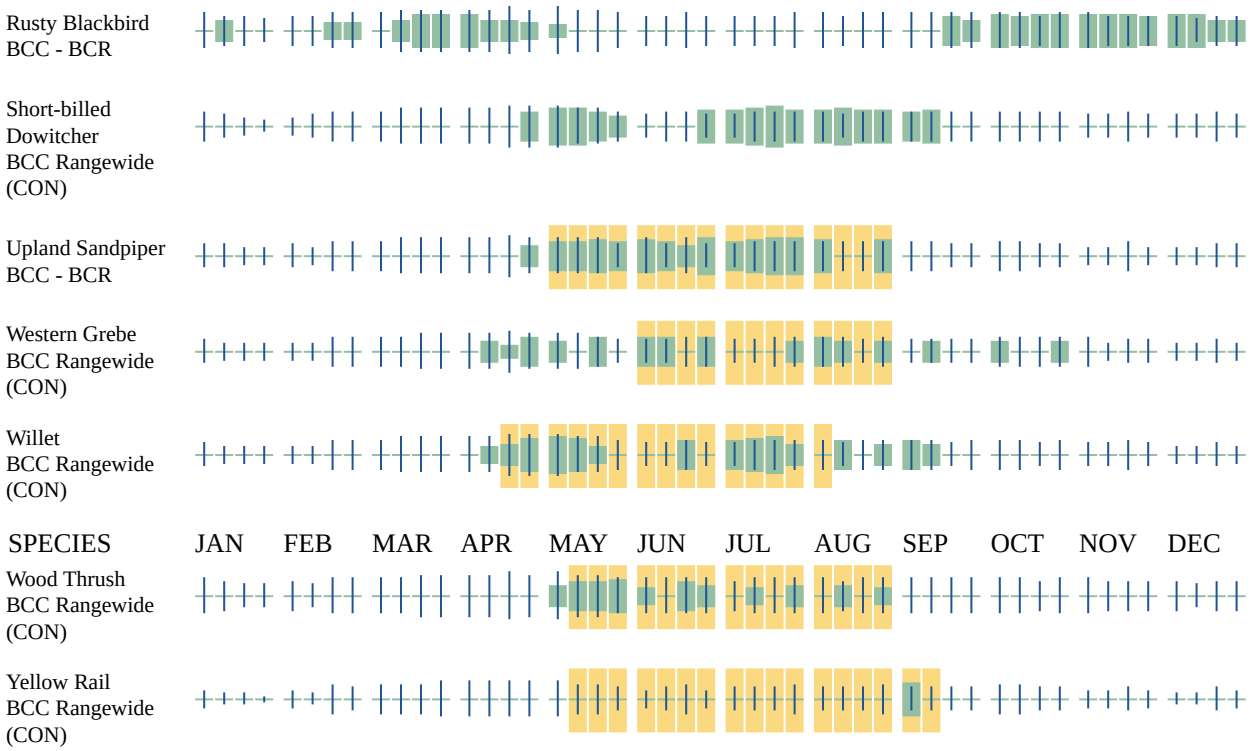
Survey Effort (|)
Vertical black lines superimposed on probability of presence bars indicate the number of surveys performed for that species in the 10km grid cell(s) your project area overlaps. The number of surveys is expressed as a range, for example, 33 to 64 surveys.

No Data (–)
A week is marked as having no data if there were no survey events for that week.

Survey Timeframe
Surveys from only the last 10 years are used in order to ensure delivery of currently relevant information. The exception to this is areas off the Atlantic coast, where bird returns are based on all years of available data, since data in these areas is currently much more sparse.




BCC Rangewide (CON)
Canada Warbler BCC Rangewide (CON)
Cerulean Warbler BCC Rangewide (CON)
Chimney Swift BCC Rangewide (CON)
Eastern Whip-poor-will BCC Rangewide (CON)
Franklin's Gull BCC Rangewide (CON)
Golden Eagle Non-BCC Vulnerable
Golden-winged Warbler BCC Rangewide (CON)
SPECIES
JAN
FEB
MAR
APR
MAY
JUN
JUL
AUG
SEP
OCT
NOV
DEC
Henslow's Sparrow BCC Rangewide (CON)
Hudsonian Godwit BCC Rangewide (CON)
Lesser Yellowlegs BCC Rangewide (CON)
Long-eared Owl BCC Rangewide (CON)
Marbled Godwit BCC Rangewide (CON)
Red-headed Woodpecker BCC Rangewide (CON)
Ruddy Turnstone BCC - BCR



Additional information can be found using the following links:

- Birds of Conservation Concern https://www.fws.gov/program/migratory-birds/species
- Measures for avoiding and minimizing impacts to birds https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/avoiding-and-minimizing-incidental-take-migratory-birds
- Nationwide conservation measures for birds https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/nationwide-standard-conservation-measures.pdf

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 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 list of migratory birds that potentially occur 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.

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 Rapid Avian Information Locator (RAIL) 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 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 or migrating in my 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 query your location using the RAIL Tool and look at the range maps provided for birds in your area at the bottom of the profiles provided for each bird in your results. 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
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.

WETLANDS

Impacts to NWI wetlands and other aquatic habitats may be subject to regulation under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, or other State/Federal statutes.

For more information please contact the Regulatory Program of the local U.S. Army Corps of Engineers District.

Please note that the NWI data being shown may be out of date. We are currently working to update our NWI data set. We recommend you verify these results with a site visit to determine the actual extent of wetlands on site.

Due to your project's size, the list below may be incomplete, or the acreages reported may be inaccurate. For a full list, please contact the local U.S. Fish and Wildlife office or visit https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/data/mapper.HTML

FRESHWATER POND

- PUBH
- PUBKx
- PUBFh
- PABF
- PUBF
- PUBFx

FRESHWATER FORESTED/SHRUB WETLAND

- PFO1B
- PSS1Ah
- PFO1A
- PSS1A
- PSS1B
- PSS1/EM1C
- PFO1C
- PFO1Ad
- PSS1C
- PSS1Ad
- PSS1/EM1Ad

FRESHWATER EMERGENT WETLAND

- PEM1Cd
- PEM1Ch
- PEM1Cx
- PEM1B
- PEM1Ad

- PEM1C
- PEM1Ax
- PEM1A
- PEM1Af
- PEM1Ah
- PEM1Fd
- PEM1F

RIVERINE

- R4SBC
- R4SBCx
- R2UBG
- R2UBFx
- R2UBH
- R2UBF
- R5UBFx
- R2UBHx
- R5UBH
- R2UBGx

IPAC USER CONTACT INFORMATION

Agency: Private Entity
Name: Angela Durand
Address: 1 Main Street SE
Address Line 2: Suite 300
City: Minneapolis
State: MN
Zip: 55414
Email angela.durand@merjent.com
Phone: 6127463666

LEAD AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Lead Agency: Army Corps of Engineers

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office
3815 American Blvd East
Bloomington, MN 55425-1659
Phone: (952) 858-0793 Fax: (952) 646-2873

In Reply Refer To: September 11, 2023
Project Code: 2023-0127390
Project Name: Minnesota Energy Connection Project - Blue Route

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

To Whom It May Concern:

This response has been generated by the Information, Planning, and Conservation (IPaC) system to provide information on natural resources that could be affected by your project. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) provides this response under the authority of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531-1543), the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668d), the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703-712), and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661 *et seq.*).

Threatened and Endangered Species
The enclosed species list identifies threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate species, as well as proposed and final designated critical habitat, that may occur within the boundary of your proposed project and may be affected by your proposed project. The species list fulfills the requirement for obtaining a Technical Assistance Letter from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

New information based on updated surveys, changes in the abundance and distribution of species, changed habitat conditions, or other factors could change this list. Note that under 50 CFR 402.12(e) of the regulations implementing section 7 of the Act, the accuracy of this species list should be verified after 90 days. The Service recommends that verification be completed by visiting the IPaC website at regular intervals during project planning and implementation for updates to species lists and information. An updated list may be requested through the IPaC system by completing the same process used to receive the enclosed list.

Consultation Technical Assistance
Please refer to refer to our Section 7 website for guidance and technical assistance, including step-by-step instructions for making effects determinations for each species that might be present and for specific guidance on the following types of projects: projects in developed areas, HUD, CDBG, EDA, USDA Rural Development projects, pipelines, buried utilities, telecommunications, and requests for a Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) from FEMA.

We recommend running the project (if it qualifies) through our **Minnesota-Wisconsin Federal Endangered Species Determination Key (Minnesota-Wisconsin ("D-key"))**. A demonstration video showing how-to access and use the determination key is available. Please note that the Minnesota-Wisconsin D-key is the third option of 3 available d-keys. D-keys are tools to help Federal agencies and other project proponents determine if their proposed action has the potential to adversely affect federally listed species and designated critical habitat. The Minnesota-Wisconsin D-key includes a structured set of questions that assists a project proponent in determining whether a proposed project qualifies for a certain predetermined consultation outcome for all federally listed species found in Minnesota and Wisconsin (except for the northern long-eared bat- see below), which includes determinations of “no effect” or “may affect, not likely to adversely affect." In each case, the Service has compiled and analyzed the best available information on the species’ biology and the impacts of certain activities to support these determinations.

If your completed d-key output letter shows a "No Effect" (NE) determination for all listed species, print your IPaC output letter for your files to document your compliance with the Endangered Species Act.

For Federal projects with a “Not Likely to Adversely Affect” (NLAA) determination, our concurrence becomes valid if you do not hear otherwise from us after a 30-day review period, as indicated in your letter.

If your d-key output letter indicates additional coordination with the Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office is necessary (i.e., you get a “May Affect” determination), you will be provided additional guidance on contacting the Service to continue ESA coordination outside of the key; ESA compliance cannot be concluded using the key for “May Affect” determinations unless otherwise indicated in your output letter.

Note: Once you obtain your official species list, you are not required to continue in IPaC with d-keys, although in most cases these tools should expedite your review. If you choose to make an effects determination on your own, you may do so. If the project is a Federal Action, you may want to review our section 7 step-by-step instructions before making your determinations.

Using the IPaC Official Species List to Make No Effect and May Affect Determinations for Listed Species

1. If IPaC returns a result of “There are no listed species found within the vicinity of the project,” then project proponents can conclude the proposed activities will have **no effect** on any federally listed species under Service jurisdiction. Concurrence from the Service is not required for **no effect** determinations. No further consultation or coordination is required. Attach this letter to the dated IPaC species list report for your records.
2. If IPaC returns one or more federally listed, proposed, or candidate species as potentially present in the action area of the proposed project – other than bats (see below) – then project proponents must determine if proposed activities will have **no effect** on or **may affect** those species. For assistance in determining if suitable habitat for listed, candidate, or proposed species occurs within your project area or if species may be affected by project activities, you can obtain Life History Information for Listed and Candidate Species on our office website. If no impacts will occur to a species on the IPaC species list (e.g., there is no habitat present in the project area), the appropriate determination is **no effect**. No further consultation or coordination is required. Attach this letter to the dated IPaC species list report for your records.

3. Should you determine that project activities **may affect** any federally listed, please contact our office for further coordination. Letters with requests for consultation or correspondence about your project should include the Consultation Tracking Number in the header. Electronic submission is preferred.

Northern Long-Eared Bats
Northern long-eared bats occur throughout Minnesota and Wisconsin and the information below may help in determining if your project may affect these species.

This species hibernates in caves or mines only during the winter. In Minnesota and Wisconsin, the hibernation season is considered to be November 1 to March 31. During the active season (April 1 to October 31) they roost in forest and woodland habitats. Suitable summer habitat for northern long-eared bats consists of a wide variety of forested/wooded habitats where they roost, forage, and travel and may also include some adjacent and interspersed non-forested habitats such as emergent wetlands and adjacent edges of agricultural fields, old fields and pastures. This includes forests and woodlots containing potential roosts (i.e., live trees and/or snags ≥3 inches dbh for northern long-eared bat that have exfoliating bark, cracks, crevices, and/or hollows), as well as linear features such as fencerows, riparian forests, and other wooded corridors. These wooded areas may be dense or loose aggregates of trees with variable amounts of canopy closure. Individual trees may be considered suitable habitat when they exhibit the characteristics of a potential roost tree and are located within 1,000 feet (305 meters) of forested/wooded habitat. Northern long-eared bats have also been observed roosting in human-made structures, such as buildings, barns, bridges, and bat houses; therefore, these structures should also be considered potential summer habitat and evaluated for use by bats. If your project will impact caves or mines or will involve clearing forest or woodland habitat containing suitable roosting habitat, northern long-eared bats could be affected.

Examples of unsuitable habitat include:

- Individual trees that are greater than 1,000 feet from forested or wooded areas,
- Trees found in highly developed urban areas (e.g., street trees, downtown areas),
- A pure stand of less than 3-inch dbh trees that are not mixed with larger trees, and
- A monoculture stand of shrubby vegetation with no potential roost trees.

If IPaC returns a result that northern long-eared bats are potentially present in the action area of the proposed project, project proponents can conclude the proposed activities **may affect** this species **IF** one or more of the following activities are proposed:

- Clearing or disturbing suitable roosting habitat, as defined above, at any time of year,
- Any activity in or near the entrance to a cave or mine,
- Mining, deep excavation, or underground work within 0.25 miles of a cave or mine,
- Construction of one or more wind turbines, or
- Demolition or reconstruction of human-made structures that are known to be used by bats based on observations of roosting bats, bats emerging at dusk, or guano deposits or stains.

If none of the above activities are proposed, project proponents can conclude the proposed activities will have **no effect** on the northern long-eared bat. Concurrence from the Service is not required for **No**

Effect determinations. No further consultation or coordination is required. Attach this letter to the dated IPaC species list report for your records.

If any of the above activities are proposed, and the northern long-eared bat appears on the user's species list, the federal project user will be directed to either the range-wide northern long-eared bat D-key or the Federal Highways Administration, Federal Railways Administration, and Federal Transit Administration Indiana bat/ Northern long-eared bat D-key, depending on the type of project and federal agency involvement. Similar to the Minnesota-Wisconsin D-key, these d-keys helps to determine if prohibited take might occur and, if not, will generate an automated verification letter.

Please note: On November 30, 2022, the Service published a proposal final rule to reclassify the northern long-eared bat as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. On January 26, 2023, the Service published a 60-day extension for the final reclassification rule in the Federal Register, moving the effective listing date from January 30, 2023, to March 31, 2023. This extension will provide stakeholders and the public time to preview interim guidance and consultation tools before the rule becomes effective. When available, the tools will be available on the Service's northern long-eared bat website (https://www.fws.gov/species/northern-long-eared-bat-myotis-septentrionalis). Once the final rule goes into effect on March 31, 2023, the 4(d) D-key will no longer be available (4(d) rules are not available for federally endangered species) and will be replaced with a new Range-wide NLEB D-key (range-wide d-key). For projects not completed by March 31, 2023, that were previously reviewed under the 4(d) d-key, there may be a need for reinitiation of consultation. For these ongoing projects previously reviewed under the 4(d) d-key that may result in incidental take of the northern long-eared bat, we recommend you review your project using the new range-wide d-key once available. If your project does not comply with the range-wide d-key, it may be eligible for use of the Interim (formal) Consultation framework (framework). The framework is intended to facilitate the transition from the 4(d) rule to typical Section 7 consultation procedures for federally endangered species and will be available only until spring 2024. Again, when available, these tools (new range-wide d-key and framework) will be available on the Service's northern long-eared bat website.

Whooping Crane
Whooping crane is designated as a non-essential experimental population in Wisconsin and consultation under Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act is only required if project activities will occur within a National Wildlife Refuge or National Park. If project activities are proposed on lands outside of a National Wildlife Refuge or National Park, then you are not required to consult. For additional information on this designation and consultation requirements, please review "Establishment of a Nonessential Experimental Population of Whooping Cranes in the Eastern United States."

Other Trust Resources and Activities
Bald and Golden Eagles - Although the bald eagle has been removed from the endangered species list, this species and the golden eagle are protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Should bald or golden eagles occur within or near the project area please contact our office for further coordination. For communication and wind energy projects, please refer to additional guidelines below.

Migratory Birds - The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) prohibits the taking, killing, possession, transportation, and importation of migratory birds, their eggs, parts, and nests, except when specifically authorized by the Service. The Service has the responsibility under the MBTA to proactively prevent the

mortality of migratory birds whenever possible and we encourage implementation of recommendations that minimize potential impacts to migratory birds. Such measures include clearing forested habitat outside the nesting season (generally March 1 to August 31) or conducting nest surveys prior to clearing to avoid injury to eggs or nestlings.

Communication Towers - Construction of new communications towers (including radio, television, cellular, and microwave) creates a potentially significant impact on migratory birds, especially some 350 species of night-migrating birds. However, the Service has developed voluntary guidelines for minimizing impacts.

Transmission Lines - Migratory birds, especially large species with long wingspans, heavy bodies, and poor maneuverability can also collide with power lines. In addition, mortality can occur when birds, particularly hawks, eagles, kites, falcons, and owls, attempt to perch on uninsulated or unguarded power poles. To minimize these risks, please refer to guidelines developed by the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee and the Service. Implementation of these measures is especially important along sections of lines adjacent to wetlands or other areas that support large numbers of raptors and migratory birds.

Wind Energy - To minimize impacts to migratory birds and bats, wind energy projects should follow the Service's Wind Energy Guidelines. In addition, please refer to the Service's Eagle Conservation Plan Guidance, which provides guidance for conserving bald and golden eagles in the course of siting, constructing, and operating wind energy facilities.

State Department of Natural Resources Coordination
While it is not required for your Federal section 7 consultation, please note that additional state endangered or threatened species may also have the potential to be impacted. Please contact the Minnesota or Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for information on state listed species that may be present in your proposed project area.

Minnesota
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - Endangered Resources Review Homepage
Email: Review.NHIS@state.mn.us

Wisconsin
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources - Endangered Resources Review Homepage
Email: DNRERReview@wi.gov

We appreciate your concern for threatened and endangered species. Please feel free to contact our office with questions or for additional information.

Attachment(s):

- Official Species List
- USFWS National Wildlife Refuges and Fish Hatcheries
- Migratory Birds
- Wetlands

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
3815 American Blvd East
Bloomington, MN 55425-1659
(952) 858-0793

PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Code: 2023-0127390
Project Name: Minnesota Energy Connection Project - Blue Route
Project Type: Transmission Line - New Constr - Above Ground
Project Description: Blue Route
Project Location:

The approximate location of the project can be viewed in Google Maps: https://www.google.com/maps/@44.83746145,-94.84425904099584,14z

Counties: Minnesota

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT SPECIES

There is a total of 6 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[1], 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
Northern Long-eared Bat *Myotis septentrionalis* No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9045	Endangered
Tricolored Bat *Perimyotis subflavus* No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10515	Proposed Endangered

BIRDS

NAME	STATUS
Whooping Crane *Grus americana* Population: U.S.A. (AL, AR, CO, FL, GA, ID, IL, IN, IA, KY, LA, MI, MN, MS, MO, NC, NM, OH, SC, TN, UT, VA, WI, WV, western half of WY) No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/758	Experimental Population, Non-Essential

CLAMS

NAME	STATUS
Salamander Mussel *Simpsonaias ambigua* No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/6208	Proposed Endangered

INSECTS

NAME	STATUS
Monarch Butterfly *Danaus plexippus* No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9743	Candidate

FLOWERING PLANTS

NAME	STATUS
Prairie Bush-clover *Lespedeza leptostachya* No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/4458	Threatened

CRITICAL HABITATS

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

YOU ARE STILL REQUIRED TO DETERMINE IF YOUR PROJECT(S) MAY HAVE EFFECTS ON ALL ABOVE LISTED SPECIES.

USFWS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE LANDS AND FISH HATCHERIES

Any activity proposed on lands managed by the National Wildlife Refuge system must undergo a 'Compatibility Determination' conducted by the Refuge. Please contact the individual Refuges to discuss any questions or concerns.

The following FWS National Wildlife Refuge Lands and Fish Hatcheries lie fully or partially within your project area:

FACILITY NAME	ACRES
MEEKER COUNTY WATERFOWL PRODUCTION AREA https://www.fws.gov/our-facilities?$keywords="%5C%22MEEKER+COUNTY+WATERFOWL+PRODUCTION+AREA%5C%22"	10,682.799

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Certain birds are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act[1] and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act[2].

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)

The birds listed below are birds of particular concern either because they occur on the USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC) list or warrant special attention in your project location. To learn more about the levels of concern for birds on your list and how this list is generated, see the FAQ below. This is not a list of every bird you may find in this location, nor a guarantee that every bird on this list will be found in your project area. To see exact locations of where birders and the general public have sighted birds in and around your project area, visit the E-bird data mapping tool (Tip: enter your location, desired date range and a species on your list). For projects that occur off the Atlantic Coast, additional maps and models detailing the relative occurrence and abundance of bird species on your list are available. Links to additional information about Atlantic Coast birds, and other important information about your migratory bird list, including how to properly interpret and use your migratory bird report, can be found below.

For guidance on when to schedule activities or implement avoidance and minimization measures to reduce impacts to migratory birds on your list, click on the PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE SUMMARY at the top of your list to see when these birds are most likely to be present and breeding in your project area.

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
American Golden-plover *Pluvialis dominica* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds elsewhere
Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities.	Breeds Dec 1 to Aug 31
Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3093	Breeds May 15 to Aug 20
Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythropthalmus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9399	Breeds May 15 to Oct 10
Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds May 20 to Jul 31
Canada Warbler *Cardellina canadensis* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds May 20 to Aug 10

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Cerulean Warbler *Dendroica cerulea* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/2974	Breeds Apr 22 to Jul 20
Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds Mar 15 to Aug 25
Eastern Whip-poor-will *Antrostomus vociferus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds May 1 to Aug 20
Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds May 1 to Jul 31
Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8745	Breeds May 1 to Jul 20
Henslow's Sparrow *Ammodramus henslowii* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3941	Breeds May 1 to Aug 31
Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds elsewhere
Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9679	Breeds elsewhere
Long-eared Owl *asio otus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3631	Breeds Mar 1 to Jul 15
Red-headed Woodpecker *Melanerpes erythrocephalus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds May 10 to Sep 10
Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres morinella* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA	Breeds elsewhere
Rusty Blackbird *Euphagus carolinus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA	Breeds elsewhere

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9480	Breeds elsewhere
Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9294	Breeds May 1 to Aug 31
Western Grebe *aechmophorus occidentalis* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/6743	Breeds Jun 1 to Aug 31
Willet *Tringa semipalmata* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds Apr 20 to Aug 5
Wood Thrush *Hylocichla mustelina* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska.	Breeds May 10 to Aug 31

PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE SUMMARY

The graphs below provide our best understanding of when birds of concern are most likely to be present in your project area. This information can be used to tailor and schedule your project activities to avoid or minimize impacts to birds. Please make sure you read and understand the FAQ "Proper Interpretation and Use of Your Migratory Bird Report" before using or attempting to interpret this report.

Probability of Presence (■)

Each green bar represents the bird's relative probability of presence in the 10km grid cell(s) your project overlaps during a particular week of the year. (A year is represented as 12 4-week months.) A taller bar indicates a higher probability of species presence. The survey effort (see below) can be used to establish a level of confidence in the presence score. One can have higher confidence in the presence score if the corresponding survey effort is also high.

How is the probability of presence score calculated? The calculation is done in three steps:

1. The probability of presence for each week is calculated as the number of survey events in the week where the species was detected divided by the total number of survey events for that week. For example, if in week 12 there were 20 survey events and the Spotted Towhee was found in 5 of them, the probability of presence of the Spotted Towhee in week 12 is 0.25.
2. To properly present the pattern of presence across the year, the relative probability of presence is calculated. This is the probability of presence divided by the maximum

probability of presence across all weeks. For example, imagine the probability of presence in week 20 for the Spotted Towhee is 0.05, and that the probability of presence at week 12 (0.25) is the maximum of any week of the year. The relative probability of presence on week 12 is 0.25/0.25 = 1; at week 20 it is 0.05/0.25 = 0.2.

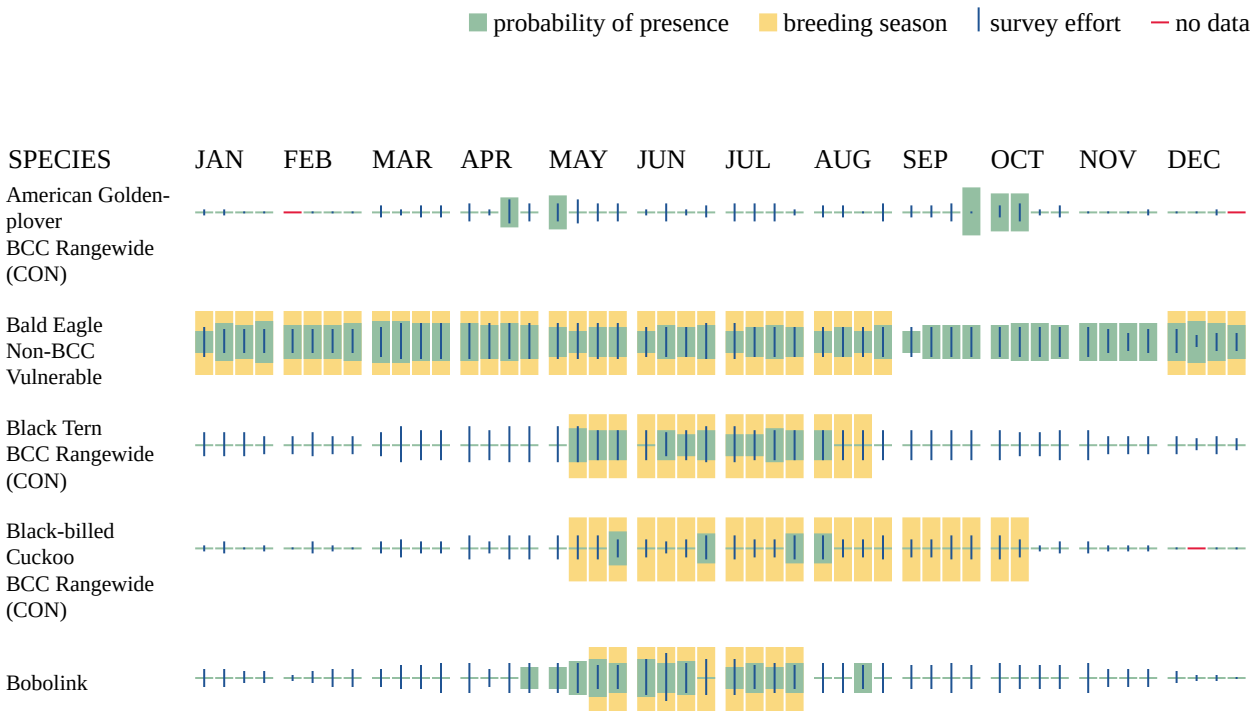
3. The relative probability of presence calculated in the previous step undergoes a statistical conversion so that all possible values fall between 0 and 10, inclusive. This is the probability of presence score.

Breeding Season (▪)
Yellow bars denote a very liberal estimate of the time-frame inside which the bird breeds across its entire range. If there are no yellow bars shown for a bird, it does not breed in your project area.

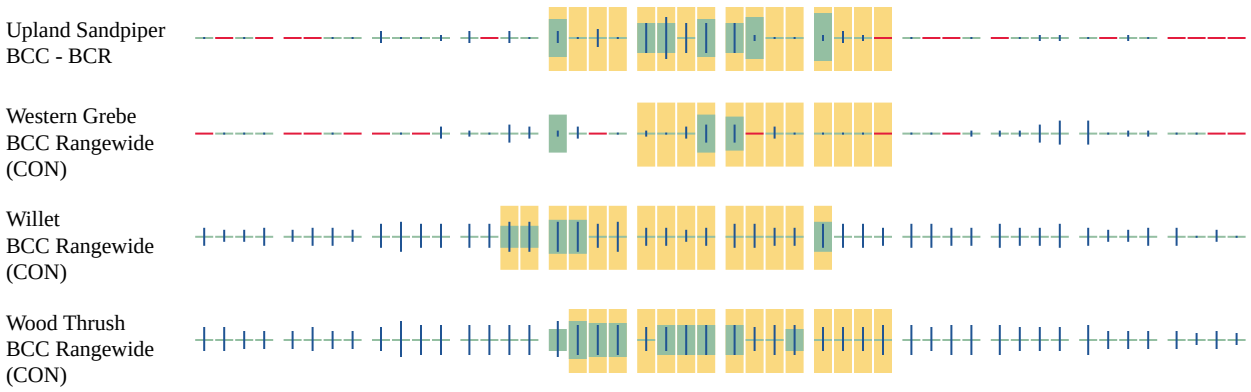
Survey Effort (|)
Vertical black lines superimposed on probability of presence bars indicate the number of surveys performed for that species in the 10km grid cell(s) your project area overlaps. The number of surveys is expressed as a range, for example, 33 to 64 surveys.

No Data (–)
A week is marked as having no data if there were no survey events for that week.

Survey Timeframe
Surveys from only the last 10 years are used in order to ensure delivery of currently relevant information. The exception to this is areas off the Atlantic coast, where bird returns are based on all years of available data, since data in these areas is currently much more sparse.




BCC Rangewide (CON)
Canada Warbler BCC Rangewide (CON)
Cerulean Warbler BCC Rangewide (CON)
Chimney Swift BCC Rangewide (CON)
Eastern Whip-poor-will BCC Rangewide (CON)
Franklin's Gull BCC Rangewide (CON)
Golden-winged Warbler BCC Rangewide (CON)
Henslow's Sparrow BCC Rangewide (CON)
SPECIES
JAN
FEB
MAR
APR
MAY
JUN
JUL
AUG
SEP
OCT
NOV
DEC
Hudsonian Godwit BCC Rangewide (CON)
Lesser Yellowlegs BCC Rangewide (CON)
Long-eared Owl BCC Rangewide (CON)
Red-headed Woodpecker BCC Rangewide (CON)
Ruddy Turnstone BCC - BCR
Rusty Blackbird BCC - BCR
Short-billed Dowitcher BCC Rangewide (CON)



Additional information can be found using the following links:

- Birds of Conservation Concern https://www.fws.gov/program/migratory-birds/species
- Measures for avoiding and minimizing impacts to birds https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/avoiding-and-minimizing-incidental-take-migratory-birds
- Nationwide conservation measures for birds https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/nationwide-standard-conservation-measures.pdf

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 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 list of migratory birds that potentially occur 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.

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 Rapid Avian Information Locator (RAIL) 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 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 or migrating in my 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 query your location using the RAIL Tool and look at the range maps provided for birds in your area at the bottom of the profiles provided for each bird in your results. 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
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.

WETLANDS

Impacts to NWI wetlands and other aquatic habitats may be subject to regulation under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, or other State/Federal statutes.

For more information please contact the Regulatory Program of the local U.S. Army Corps of Engineers District.

Please note that the NWI data being shown may be out of date. We are currently working to update our NWI data set. We recommend you verify these results with a site visit to determine the actual extent of wetlands on site.

Due to your project's size, the list below may be incomplete, or the acreages reported may be inaccurate. For a full list, please contact the local U.S. Fish and Wildlife office or visit https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/data/mapper.HTML

RIVERINE

- R5UBH
- R2UBH
- R4SBC
- R4SBCx
- R2UBFx
- R2UBHx
- R2UBG
- R5UBFx

FRESHWATER EMERGENT WETLAND

- PEM1C
- PEM1Af
- PEM1Fh
- PEM1Cd
- PEM1Cx
- PEM1Ad
- PEM1A
- PEM1B
- PEM1F
- PEM1Ch
- PEM1Ax
- PEM1Ah
- PEM1Fx

FRESHWATER POND

- PABFx
- PUBFx
- PUBKx
- PABFh
- PUBF
- PUBFh
- PABF
- PUBH

FRESHWATER FORESTED/SHRUB WETLAND

- PFO1Cx
- PFO1C
- PFO1Ax
- PFO1Ah
- PFO1B
- PSS1C
- PFO1Ad
- PFO1/EM1Cx
- PFO1A
- PSS1B
- PSS1A
- PSS1Ad

LAKE

- L2UBH

IPAC USER CONTACT INFORMATION

Agency: Private Entity
Name: Angela Durand
Address: 1 Main Street SE
Address Line 2: Suite 300
City: Minneapolis
State: MN
Zip: 55414
Email angela.durand@merjent.com
Phone: 6127463666

LEAD AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Lead Agency: Army Corps of Engineers

Local Government Unit Responses

Wright Soil & Water Conservation District

Wright SWCD
311 Brighton Avenue S., Suite C
Buffalo, MN, 55313

Tel. (763) 682-1933 Ext. 3
(763)682-1970
Fax. (763) 682-0262
www.wrightswcd.org

July 10, 2023

Matthew Langan
Xcel Energy – MN Energy Connection
414 Nicollet Mall, 6th Floor
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Dear Mr. Langan,

The Wright Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors would like to express our preference to have the proposed 345-kV transmission line follow the western option of the northern most section of the line along state highway 15 and county roads 142 and 7, then crossing the Mississippi River northwest of the City of Clearwater. After reviewing a preliminary desktop review of project information, followed by a field evaluation of the proposed line routes, it is our belief that the western option will result in reduced impacts to natural resources and higher-value agricultural land.

We understand the need for long-term energy infrastructure security and appreciate multiple options being provided. While each option provided will have pros and cons, it is our belief that selecting the option running through Silver Creek and Clearwater townships will create a higher level of impact to wetlands, blocks of old growth forestry, natural meandering streams, and Fish Creek.

We thank you for taking the time to review our comments on this project, appreciate your being mindful of impacts to natural resources and welcome any questions or discussion on this matter.

Wright Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors

Christopher Decker, Board Chair

From: Kaminskie, Jennifer
To: Langan, Matthew A
Cc: Richard-Hoffman, Shelby; Naomi Christenson
Subject: EXTERNAL: RE: Xcel Energy Minnesota Energy Connection Project Introduction
Date: Friday, September 29, 2023 12:44:09 PM
Attachments: image001.png

Hello,
Thank you for providing the information, and the opportunity to comment.

Regarding the MN Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) within Stearns County: All wetland impacts will need to meet the requirements of WCA. As you may be aware, there is an exemption in WCA that applies to utilities. If the requirements of the exemption are met wetland impacts from the proposed project may be allowed without the need for an approved wetland replacement plan. Also, depending on the proposed activities within wetlands, a No-Loss exemption may apply as well. All aquatic resources should be identified, as well as any proposed wetland impacts.

The route that would result in the least amount of wetland impacts would be the preferred route.

When the route is narrowed down we can review it and provide additional comments.

Thank you,

Jennifer Kaminskie
Stearns County Environmental Services/Wetlands

jennifer.kaminskie@co.stearns.mn.us | (320) 656-3613 | 800-450-0852
www.co.stearns.mn.us
STEARNS COUNTY SERVICE CENTER
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT
3301 COUNTY RD 138
WAITE PARK MN 56387
Please note the Environmental Services Department moved!

From: Naomi Christenson <naomi.christenson@merjent.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 21, 2023 4:43 PM
To: Richard-Hoffman, Shelby <Shelby.Richard-Hoffman@stearnscountymn.gov>; Kaminskie, Jennifer <Jennifer.Kaminskie@stearnscountymn.gov>
Cc: Langan, Matthew A <Matthew.A.Langan@xcelenergy.com>
Subject: Xcel Energy Minnesota Energy Connection Project Introduction

Good afternoon,

Xcel Energy is proposing to construct a new double circuit 345 kilovolt (kV) high voltage transmission line, extending from Xcel Energy's Sherburne County Generating Station located in Becker, Minnesota, to a new substation near the Town of Garvin in Lyon County, Minnesota. Please see the attached letter which includes a Project Study Area Map. Xcel Energy would appreciate any comments you may have on the proposed Project. Please contact Matt Langan at Matthew.A.Langan@xcelenergy.com or (612) 330-6954 if you have questions or would like additional information.

Thank you,
Naomi Christenson on behalf of Matt Langan, Xcel Energy

Naomi Christenson
612.746.1616 direct
612.210.1192 mobile
naomi.christenson@merjent.com

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1 Main Street SE, Suite 300
Minneapolis, MN 55414
612.746.3660
www.merjent.com

From:	Langan, Matthew A
To:	Naomi Christenson
Subject:	EXTERNAL: FW: Xcel Energy Minnesota Energy Connection Project
Date:	Monday, September 25, 2023 1:48:09 PM

From: Ben Bauer <Ben_B@co.redwood.mn.us>
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2023 8:21 AM
To: Langan, Matthew A <Matthew.A.Langan@xcelenergy.com>
Cc: Nick Brozek <nick_b@co.redwood.mn.us>
Subject: Xcel Energy Minnesota Energy Connection Project

Good morning Matthew,

I have received your letter. I want to confirm that this a below ground transmission line. How much of this would be replacement and how much of it would be new line? I ask because the proposed route through Redwood County may go through wetlands, RIM (Reinvest In MN) easements and CRP (Conservation Reserve Program). Granted CRP is a federal program so I have no say in it. I need detail on how this line will be installed and if the method of installation would impact wetlands.

Thanks,

Ben Bauer
Conservation Specialist

REDWOOD
SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Redwood County SWCD
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