



IN REPLY REFER TO

FWS/MNV

United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
3815 American Blvd E.
Bloomington, MN 55425



December 3, 2008

Ms. Angela Piner
HDR Engineering, Inc.
701 Xenia Avenue South, Suite 600
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55416

Dear Ms. Piner:

On November 3, 2008, you requested that the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District (Refuge) provide you with comments for use in your route application for the CapX 2020 Project (Project) to the Public Utilities Commission (PUC). As stated in your letter, the purpose of this Project is to install a new 345 kV transmission line between South Dakota and the Twin Cities Metropolitan area of Minnesota with the goal of improving the capacity and distribution of electricity to the Metropolitan area. Your letter states that, if approved by the PUC, the Project is to be implemented in a way that will minimize the impact to the public and public resources, including wildlife and their habitats.

Although the proposed Project consists of a linear corridor crossing the entire south central portion Minnesota, I am responsible for managing U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) trust resources in Sibley, Le Sueur, Scott, Rice and Dakota Counties so my comments pertain to only this portion of the project corridor. Service trust resources include migratory birds, Federally listed species of concern, and lands owned, leased, or managed by the Service.

Overall Project

Aerial obstructions, including overhead transmission lines and supporting facilities, have been documented to adversely affect migratory birds if those obstructions are not sited or designed to minimize collisions and electrocution. Aerial obstructions are especially hazardous when located in migration corridors, such as river valleys and landscape ridges or passes, and other areas that are especially attractive to wildlife such as wetlands and other waterbodies. As identified in our 2004 Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District Comprehensive Conservation Plan, we have plans to continue to acquire lands and develop wildlife habitat resources in the project corridor. Our highest priority areas for acquisition and development in the project area are migration corridors and other areas with high habitat restoration potential. Thus, we have a continuing interest in how project features are sited, designed, constructed, and maintained.

In previous correspondence, we have provided you with a GIS data layer that identifies areas we currently manage and are proposing to acquire in the next few years. As we accomplish our

annual goals, that data layer is updated and would be available for your use as you refine project plans and design. Service's policy regarding adverse effects on these resources is that effects first should be avoided and minimized. Project features to off-set adverse effects is the least desirable mitigation action.

Proposed Minnesota River Crossings

Your letter of November 3, identified two proposed locations for the project to cross the Minnesota River at the Sibley – Le Sueur County line. These locations are identified as the Le Sueur crossing and the Belle Plaine crossing. In our evaluation of the relative merits of these crossing locations, we considered both the impacts to our trust resources at the crossing-sites and impacts to resources within the project corridor east and west of the river.

Belle Plaine Crossing The Belle Plaine location has more continuous native flood plain habitat than the Le Sueur location. Also, the Belle Plaine location is within the Refuge's authorized expansion area. However, this site has an existing transmission line. During a September 19th on-site meeting, engineers representing Great River Energy stated that the existing line likely would remain at this location and the new 345 kV line would be added directly next to it. This would widen the area cleared of trees and brush and further fragment native floodplain habitat. The new lines likely would be higher in the air than the existing lines and so having both lines at this location would result in obstructions occupying a larger 3-dimensional area than having one transmission line cross the river at a single location. This web of transmission lines would increase the likelihood of strikes by birds using the river corridor.

We have records of individual eagles using the Belle Plaine location and an active nest within a half mile of the location. Although the bald eagle has been delisted under the Endangered Species Act, it is still protected by the Bald Eagle Act of 1940. This Act requires that human activities in close proximity to an active nest be restricted during the bald eagle's mating and rearing season. In the Belle Plaine vicinity this season is approximately from February through July.

Given these considerations, we believe that using the Belle Plaine crossing for this project would have relatively high, unacceptable adverse effects on our trust resources.

Le Sueur Crossing The proposed Le Sueur crossing location supports some native floodplain habitat but includes a water treatment facility and is adjacent to U.S. Highway 169. The water treatment facility is immediately west of the river and next to U.S.169. The facility is scheduled to be decommissioned in the next three to five years. After decommissioning, these lands, which are already cleared of native floodplain habitat, may enable the transmission line to reach the Minnesota River without additional clearing thereby minimizing resource damage. The Le Sueur crossing has the potential for relatively less adverse effects on our trust resources.

In summary, we prefer the Le Sueur crossing and its southern route at this time. Even this route includes sensitive trust resources and the project should be planned with these in mind. Considering that this project will not be completed until 2020 and our very active habitat acquisition and restoration program, it is likely that our trust resources in the project corridor will

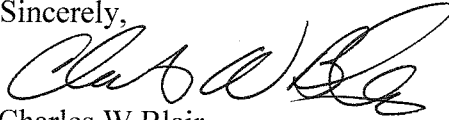
Environmental Scientist, Angela Piner

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increase over the next 11 years. We wish to continue to be included in discussions as the Sibley, Le Sueur, Scott, Rice, and Dakota County portions of this project are refined. This way we will be able to provide you with up-to-date information regarding our trust resources and appropriate project mitigation features.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project. If you have questions or need any additional information please contact me at 952.858.5900.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles W Blair". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Charles" being the most prominent.

Charles W Blair
Refuge Manager

United States Department of Agriculture



Natural Resources Conservation Service
375 Jackson Street, Suite 600
St. Paul, MN 55101-1854

Phone: (651) 602-7900
FAX: (651) 602-7914

File Code: 190-15-13

December 15, 2008

RE: CapX 2020 345 kV Transmission Line, Brookings County to Southeast Twin Cities Project
Lincoln, Lyon, Redwood, Yellow Medicine, Renville, Brown, Chippewa, Sibley, Le Sueur,
Rice, Scott, and Dakota Counties, Minnesota

Angela Piner
Environmental Scientist
HDR Engineering
701 Xenia Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55416

Dear Ms. Piner:

I'm pleased that I had the opportunity to meet with you, and with Craig Poorker and Carole Schmidt from Great River Energy this morning in my office. NRCS appreciates the opportunity to have discussed this subject project with all of you.

As I determined from our discussion, the Federal Farmland Policy Protection Act (FPPA) assessment will not apply with this subject CApX2020 project. Since no federal sponsoring agency financial, nor technical assistance will be involved in the implementation of this project, FPPA review and compliance will not be required because the project is exempt from federal review by NRCS.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM E. LORENZEN
Environmental Review/Justice Coordinator

cc: Craig Poorker, SR/WA, Sr. Field Rep, GRE, Maple Grove, MN
Carole Schmidt, Super. Trans. Permit & Compl, GRE, Maple Grove, MN

Piner, Angela

From: Matthew Langan [matt.langan@dnr.state.mn.us]
Sent: Friday, November 21, 2008 3:40 PM
To: Piner, Angela
Cc: Fischer, Paul
Subject: CAPX 2020 BRTC River Crossings

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Green

Angela-

Thank you for hosting field visits at the various Minnesota River crossing alternatives along the proposed transmission line route(s). Our staff was able to participate in the field visits, and has subsequently reviewed the field visit notes prepared by your staff. We have no corrections or additions to make to those notes. Based on the discussions at the field visits, DNR believes HDR has identified the important natural resources at each location, as well as the potential impacts. DNR intends to participate in the review of the Route Permit Application and environmental documents, once published.

-Matt

Matthew Langan, Environmental Planner
Environmental Policy and Review Unit
MN Dept. of Natural Resources
500 Lafayette Rd.
St. Paul, MN 55155
#(651) 259-5115



Minnesota Department of Transportation

District 8 - Willmar/Marshall/Hutchinson
2505 Transportation Road
Willmar, MN 56201

Office Tel: 320-231-5195
800-657-3792
Fax: 320-214-6305
www.dot.state.mn.us

December 5, 2008

Craig Poorker
Field Representative, Land Rights
Great River Energy
P.O. Box 238
Elk River, MN 553330

RECEIVED
DEC 09 2008
LAND RIGHTS

RE: CapX 2020 – Routes Parallel to State Highways

Dear Mr. Poorker:

Thank you for sending the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) maps of the proposed route for the 345kV transmission line to run from Brookings, South Dakota to the southeast side of the Twin Cities. According to the provided maps, the proposed 230 mile transmission line would be ran parallel to state trunk highways up to five times within the twelve county area comprising Mn/DOT District 8. Upon review of the parallel routes, Mn/DOT District 8 offers the following comments;

- In 2013, Mn/DOT has programmed an overlay of State Highway 19 from Ivanhoe to County Road 5 west Marshall. At this time, the project does not require additional right of way but the project could have an impact on the following parallel transmission line routes:
 - State Highway 19 in Lincoln County from 230th Avenue to 260th Avenue (County Road 114)
 - State Highway 19 in Lyon County from 170th Avenue to east of 200th Avenue (County Road 5)
- In 2015, Mn/DOT plans on completing an overlay of State Highway 23 from Hanley Falls to Granite Falls. At this time, the project does not require additional right of way but the project could have an impact on the following parallel transmission line route:
 - State Highway 23 in Yellow Medicine County from 210th Avenue to 530th Avenue

Mn/DOT appreciates the opportunity to comment on any proposed utility lines next to or crossing over any State Highways. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 320.214.6362.

Sincerely,

Jarrett Hubbard
Senior Transportation Planner
Mn/DOT District 8, Willmar

cc: Stacy Kotch, Mn/DOT
Geri Vick, Mn/DOT



SCOTT COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

GOVERNMENT CENTER 114 • 200 FOURTH AVENUE WEST • SHAKOPEE, MN 55379-1220
(952) 496-8475 • Fax (952) 496-8496 • Web www.co.scott.mn.us

September 30, 2008

Craig Poorker
Routing Team Lead
CapX 2020 Brookings-Twin Cities
Great River Energy
PO Box 238
Elk River, MN 55330

Re: Route Permit Application for the Brookings-Twin Cities 345 kV Project

Dear Mr. Poorker:

On behalf of the Scott County Community Development and Public Works Divisions, I want to thank you and your consultant team for inviting local government participation throughout the CapX 2020 routing evaluation process. Through our attendance at scheduled workshops, meetings and open houses, County staff has gained a better insight into the range of criteria that must be considered by utilities when determining potential routes for transmission lines.

Now that two alternative route corridors have been identified through the Scott County area, County staff is requesting more detailed data and information based on the set of criteria used during the route evaluation process. This information will help County staff assess the potential impacts of the two alternative route corridors on Scott County's existing and planned land use and transportation systems. Staff requests the following information:

1. Please provide the number of existing homes located within all 1,000-foot corridor segments in Scott County. For comparison, please provide the number of existing homes located within all 1,000-foot corridor segments in Le Sueur and Rice County (from the Minnesota River crossing to Interstate 35).
2. Please break down which 1,000-foot corridor segments in Scott County parallel existing road right of way and report the mileage of each segment by road designation (e.g. 5 miles along 260th Street). Using the County's Future Right-of-Way Needs map previously provided, include in this break down which segments parallel roadways planned for expansion and/or extension (e.g., 3 miles along 280th Street guided as a Principal Arterial with needed 200-foot ROW).

Please provide this information by October 31 to enable County staff to assess the implications of the two alternative route corridors and help determine how staff should advise the County Board and local units of government along the corridor segments. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Brad Davis, AICP
Planning Manager
Scott County Planning Department

-----Original Message-----

From: Nanett Sandstrom [mailto:eurekatn@frontiernet.net]

Sent: Thursday, September 11, 2008 2:23 PM

To: Poorker, Craig GRE/MG

Subject: CapX2020

September 11, 2008

RE: In the Matter of the Application of Great River Energy, Northern States Power Company (d/b/a Xcel Energy) and Others for CapX2020 Application for Routing a 345 kV Transmission Line.

MPUC Docket No. ET-02, E-002, et al./CN-06-1115

OAH Docket No. 15-2500-19350-2

Enclosed in connection with the above-referenced matter, please find the following:

Eureka Township Resolution No. 72

This document have been filed through the e-filing system at www.edockets.state.mn.us and have been served by email or hard copy mail delivery in compliance with the attached August 18, 2008 Service List.

Sincerely,

*Nanett Sandstrom
Clerk/ Treasurer Eureka Township
952-469-3736, Fax 952-469-5525*

9/11/2008

Supplement 12/31/08