

March 1, 2017

Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Place E., Suite 350
St. Paul, MN. 55101

RE: Public Utilities Commission (PUC) Docket Number: ET-6/TL-16-327
RE: Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) Docket Number: 80-2500-34009

Honorable LauraSue Schlatter,

Thank you for taking the time to review my personal thoughts and concerns regarding this important matter. In my professional career as the Executive Director of a Not-for-Profit Organization within the Construction Industry, I review various Environmental Assessments and Geotechnical Reports on a fairly regular basis. Additionally, my brother and sister-in-law are potentially impacted land owners of several of the alternative routes for this proposal. Upon my reviewing of the Case Records for TL-16-327, but most specifically the Environmental Assessment, I personally feel that the best and most ethical option not only for our environment; but also for our area recreations, and the general public, would be the Proposed Route option.

With the Proposed Route, the building of this new power line along the roadways will allow the power company to access the power lines while impacting the least amount of new land by the sharing with the existing roads' right of way. The Environmental Assessment states that IF the power lines share with the existing roads' right of way, like in the Proposed Route; Minnkota Power will only need approx. 55-ft of new easements. This is a huge deal. This would be a staggeringly less amount of new easements that would be required, as compared to the full 100-ft of new easements needed with the other options. Another way the Proposed Route reduces the need for new easements, is by using existing distribution line easements. While it's true that these existing distribution line easements would need to be expanded, the overall total new easements would still be much lower than any of the other options.

According to the Environmental Assessment, if the new power line were to be built parallel to the existing pipeline, a separation of 100-ft would be required by MPL. Meaning that the new power line easement would have to start 50-ft away from the existing MPL easements, which would result in a devastating fragmentation of the forest in not one, but TWO separate clearings with 50-ft of forest in between.

It is also extremely important to remember that the existing MPL easements are on private property and not owned by MPL. This exquisite land is populated with an enormous variety of animals; such as black bear, grouse, and whitetail deer. More importantly, there are several species of animals that are listed on the USFWS Federally-listed Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, and Candidate Species list

(Revised January 11, 2017) that reside within this area as well. Animals like the Gray Wolf, the Canada Lynx, and the Rusty patched bumble bee that are also dependent on this forested land for food, protection and most importantly for reproduction. Clearing a separate 100-ft of easement through this exquisite land would impact not only everyone in the area, but could have devastating impacts on the wildlife, and potentially the disappearance of a species. Thankfully, the Proposed Route primarily follows the roadways, which would significantly reduce the impact on the surrounding wildlife. Consideration of the Thompson Route, MPL Collocate Route, Seeger Route 3, or Seeger Route 5 should not even be considered viable options based on the obvious detriments the pose.

I sincerely appreciate your consideration of my thoughts and my comments on this proposed project. Please approve this new 115 kV power line on Minnkota Power's Proposed Route on the grounds that it is the best and most ethical option not only for our environment; but also for our wildlife, area recreations, and the general public; and because it is just the right choice.

Regards,

Amy Espeseth