

### 8.7.1.9 Natural Resources

The Zumbro Dam Route Option would result in permanent tree clearing in 1.2 acres of forested wetlands, but would not permanently impact other types of wetlands or FEMA floodplains. The Preferred White Bridge Road Route would not result in any permanent impacts to wetlands, forested wetlands, or FEMA floodplains. Wetlands, FEMA Floodplains, and streams crossed by each route option are identified on Figure 8.5-1.

The Zumbro Dam Route Option crosses the Zumbro River in a location without existing aerial infrastructure and where impacts to a high quality Maple Basswood forest (Maple Basswood) would occur on the east bank of the river. Similarly to the Preferred White Bridge Road Route, no NWRs, WPAs, GBCAs, SNAs, or IBAs are located in the vicinity of this crossing. However, the Isaak Walton League WMA is within 1 mile and south of the Zumbro Dam Route Option. This WMA is comprised of an oak forest located on steep terrain and it is managed to promote forest wildlife. When comparing conservation easement lands between the two Zumbro River crossings, the Preferred White Bridge Road Route has 25 more CRP lands than the Zumbro Dam Route Option. Conservation easements are identified on Figure 8.5-2.

Rare and unique species and MDNR rare native plant communities located within 1 mile of the Preferred Route and Route Option are summarized in Tables 8.7-3 and 8.7-4 respectively. A greater number of MDNR rare native plant communities occur within 1 mile of the Zumbro Dam Route Option centerline compared to the Preferred White Bridge Road Route. In addition, more state special concern species occurrences exist within 1 mile of the Zumbro Dam Route Option centerline compared to the Preferred Route. Both route options have an equal number state threatened species occurrences within 1 mile of the route centerline.

Each route crosses areas that have been identified as having biodiversity significance. The Zumbro Dam Route Option crosses an area having high biodiversity significance for 0.6 mile. This area is comprised of Sugar Maple-Basswood Forest and Red Oak-White Oak Forest. MDNR NHIS data document occurrences of three state special concern plant species in this area, as well as a state threatened mussel at the river crossing. The Preferred White Bridge Road Route crosses an area having moderate biodiversity for 0.9 mile. This area is the Red Oak-White Oak Forest described above in the Preferred Route section. Both areas are located adjacent to the Zumbro River on the east side (Figure 8.5-3).

### 8.7.2 Summary of Potential Impacts

Table 8.7-5 provides a summary comparison of the potential resource impacts of the Zumbro Dam Route Option and the Preferred White Bridge Road Route, based on the factors set forth in Minn. R. 7850.4100. Using this comparison, the Applicant concluded that the Preferred White Bridge Road route best conserves natural resources, minimizes potential environmental and human settlement impacts, as well as minimizing other land use conflicts, and would be the most cost-efficient option.