

Appendix I: Meetings Notes

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IMPORTANT Landowner meetings scheduled to share additional project information.

You are receiving this invitation because you live or farm within one mile of one of the proposed route options or you have requested to be added to the Project mailing list.

Center to Grand Forks Project

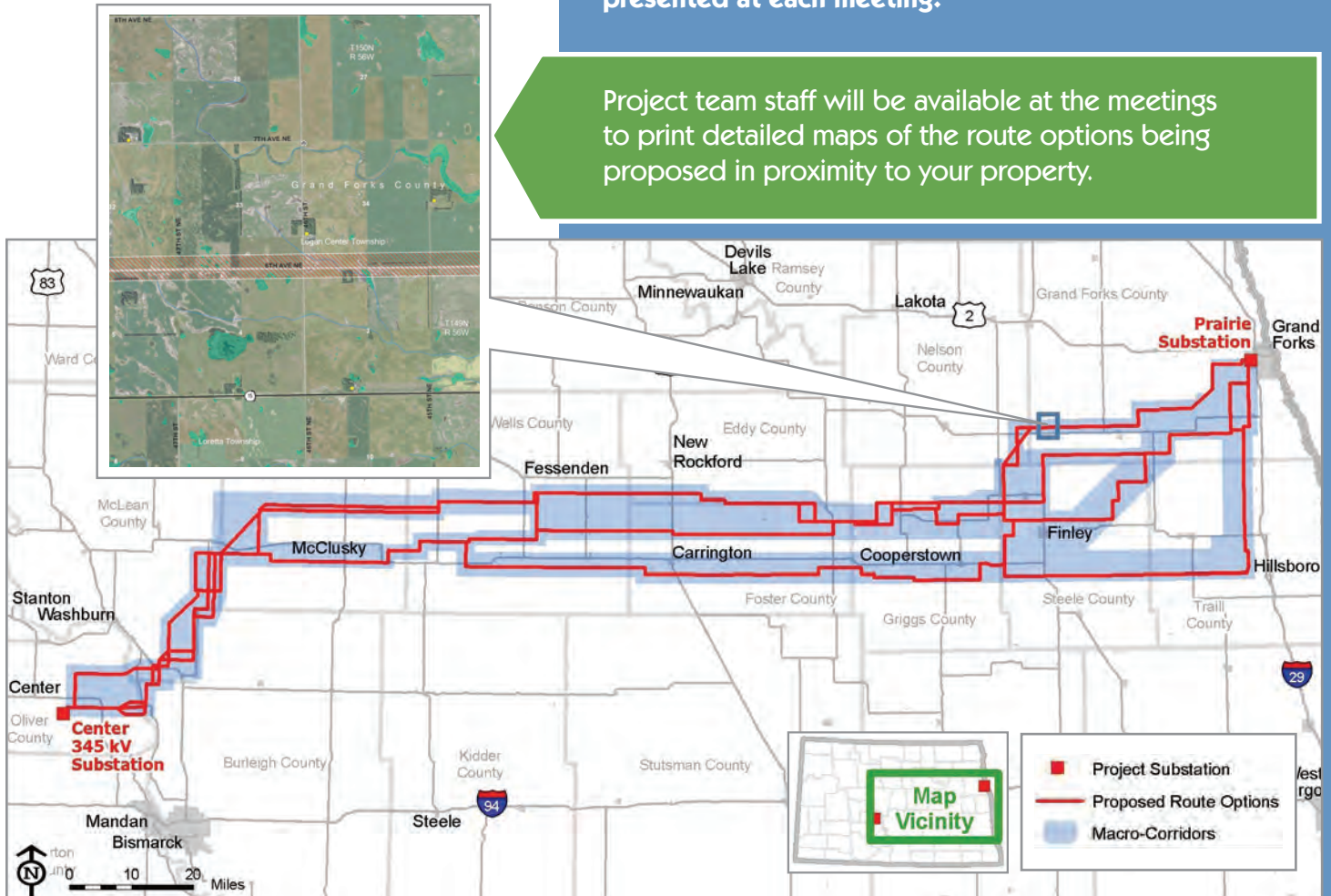


Minnkota has proposed the construction of approximately 260 miles of 345-kilovolt (kV) transmission line from Center to Grand Forks, N.D., to deliver additional energy recently secured from Milton R. Young 2, a 455-megawatt (MW) coal-fired plant near Center, N.D., owned by Square Butte Electric Cooperative.

Minnkota Power Cooperative Inc. (Minnkota) has announced a series of six public meetings for the proposed Center to Grand Forks transmission line project April 12–April 15, 2010.

The purpose of these public meetings will be to provide updated information regarding the Center to Grand Forks Project and discuss proposed route options with impacted landowners. A presentation will be given 30 minutes into the meeting. Project staff will be available to answer questions in an open-house format prior to and following the presentation. The same materials will be presented at each meeting.

Project team staff will be available at the meetings to print detailed maps of the route options being proposed in proximity to your property.



Proposed Routing Options: Minnkota developed proposed route options, shown on the overview map, based on environmental and engineering data, feedback from landowners who participated in previous meetings, government officials, county staff, state and federal agencies and other interest groups. Detailed maps of the route options and segment alternatives will be on display during the April meetings and can also be viewed on the Project Web page.

Center to Grand Forks Project



Minnkota Power Cooperative

% HDR

8404 Indian Hills Drive

Omaha, NE 68114-4098

IMPORTANT Landowner meeting invitation.

Transmission line project meeting announcement.
Please join us for an important meeting in your area.

Monday April 12	Grand Forks	Alerus Center, Junior Ballroom Entrance Door #6 1200 S 42 nd St	5:30 – 7:30 pm Presentation at 6 pm
Tuesday April 13	Finley	American Legion 600 Lincoln Ave	11:30 am – 1:30 pm Presentation at noon
	McClusky	McClusky Community Hall 117 Ave B	5:30 – 7:30 pm Presentation at 6 pm
Wednesday April 14	Carrington	Chieftain Conference Center, Tee Pee Room 60 4th Ave S, Hwy 281	11:30 am – 1:30 pm Presentation at noon
	Wilton	Wilton Memorial Hall 105 Dakota Ave	5:30 – 7:30 pm Presentation at 6 pm
Thursday April 15	Center	Civic Center Building 312 N Lincoln Ave	5:30 – 7:30 pm Presentation at 6 pm

Minnkota Power Cooperative Announces Public Meetings for the Center to Grand Forks Transmission Line Project

Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc. (Minnkota) has announced a series of six public meetings for the Center to Grand Forks (CGF) Transmission Line Project, a 260-mile, 345-kilovolt transmission line. The purpose of these public meetings will be to discuss proposed route options with potentially affected landowners and to provide additional updated Project information.

Most landowners located within one mile of the proposed route options and all participants on the Project mailing list have been sent a meeting invitation. If you did not receive a meeting invitation and are interested in the location of the proposed routes, please view the maps on our CGF Project Web site at www.minnkotacgf.com. Anyone interested in the Project is welcome to attend these meetings.

Please join us at one of the following Public Meetings:

Monday April 12	Grand Forks	Alerus Center. Junior Ballroom Entrance Door #6 1200 S 42 nd St	5:30 – 7:30 PM Presentation at 6 PM
Tuesday April 13	Finley	American Legion 600 Lincoln Ave	11:30 AM – 1:30 PM Presentation at noon
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A presentation will be given 30 minutes into the meeting. Project staff will be available to answer questions in an open-house format prior to and following the presentation. The same materials will be presented at each meeting.

For more information, please visit the CGF Project Web site at www.minnkotacgf.com or call Minnkota's toll free project information line at 800-473-5679. All meetings are held in buildings that are accessible to persons with disabilities. Any individual who requires special assistance should call the Project information line at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Kevin Fee, Communications Supervisor, Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc.
(701) 795-4280, kfee@minnkota.com

Minnkota Power Cooperative Announces Public Meetings for the Center to Grand Forks Transmission Line Project

GRAND FORKS, N.D. – Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc. (Minnkota) has announced a series of six public meetings for the proposed Center to Grand Forks transmission line project April 12–April 15, 2010.

Minnkota has proposed the construction of approximately 260 miles of 345-kilovolt (kV) transmission line from Center to Grand Forks, N.D. to deliver additional energy recently secured from Milton R. Young 2, a 455-megawatt (MW) coal-fired plant near Center, N.D., owned by Square Butte Electric Cooperative.

Minnkota’s proposed new line provides needed voltage stability improvements to the northern Red River Valley and insures Minnkota’s ability to meet its owners energy requirements well in to the future.

The purpose of these public meetings will be to provide updated information regarding Minnkota’s proposed Project and discuss proposed route options with potentially affected landowners. A presentation will be given 30 minutes into the meeting, and project staff will be available to answer questions afterward in an open-house format. The same materials will be presented at each meeting.

Meeting Dates and Locations:

Monday April 12	Grand Forks	Alerus Center. Junior Ballroom Entrance Door #6 1200 S 42 nd St	5:30–7:30 PM Presentation at 6 PM
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For more information please visit the CGF Project Web site or call Minnkota's toll free project information line at 800-473-5679. All meetings are held in buildings that are accessible to persons with disabilities. Any individual who requires special assistance should call the toll free project information line at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.

##

Center to Grand Forks Project



The Rural Utilities Service Scoping Report for the Center to Grand Forks Project has been published

Thank you for your participation in the scoping process for the Center to Grand Forks Transmission Line Project, a 260-mile 345-kilovolt transmission line proposed by Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc.

The Rural Utilities Service Scoping Report summarizes all comments received during the scoping process and is available electronically on the Web at www.minnkotaagf.com. All comment subjects identified in the scoping report will be addressed in the Environmental Assessment Report which is currently being prepared.

Please visit the CGF Project Web site for additional information.

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Please visit the CGF Project Web site for additional information.

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United States Department of Agriculture
Rural Development
Washington, DC

November 2, 2009

To: [insert name and address here]

RE: Agency Scoping Meeting for Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc. Proposed 345 kV high-voltage transmission line from the Milton R. Young Power Plant Station located near Center, North Dakota, to the existing Prairie Substation near Grand Forks, North Dakota.

Dear [insert name here]:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Utilities Service (RUS) will hold an Agency Scoping meeting to provide information regarding the Project, answer questions, and accept comments regarding the potential environmental and cultural resource impacts that may result from Project construction and operation. The meeting is scheduled for:

Thursday, November 19, 2009

9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

North Dakota Field Office

3425 Miriam Avenue

Bismarck, North Dakota 58501-7926

The objective of the Agency Scoping meeting is to discuss the following items:

- Project permitting concerns
- Scoping of environmental issues to be analyzed
- Roles and expectations of the lead and cooperating agencies
- Schedule

If your staff is unable to attend the Agency Scoping meeting, please provide written comments to RUS (contact information below). RUS appreciates your participation in the NEPA review process. Enclosed is a figure of the macro-corridors which may assist you in your review of the Project.

RUS is serving as the lead federal agency responsible for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the proposed 260-mile 345 kV high-voltage transmission line from the Milton R. Young Power Plant Station located near Center, North Dakota, to an existing substation near Grand Forks, North Dakota. Existing substations near Center and Grand Forks would be modified to accommodate the new transmission line. This project is referred to as the Center to Grand Forks (CGF) Project. The Project would deliver energy produced by the Young 2 power station to north-eastern North Dakota and northern Minnesota. In addition, the CGF Project would allow additional renewable wind energy to be delivered over the existing 250 kV DC transmission line that currently serves Young 2. Minnkota Power is seeking RUS financing.

Prior to making a decision on whether to loan funds, guarantee a loan, or award a grant for the Project, RUS is required to conduct an environmental review under NEPA in accordance with 7

Committed to the future of rural communities.

"USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender."

To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800)795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).

Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/>

CFR Part 1794, as amended. According to these regulations, this Project is classified as an Environmental Assessment with Scoping.

The Macro-Corridor Study (MCS) and Alternative Evaluation Study (AES) have been filed and are available for review at local libraries or on the RUS website at:

<http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/ea.htm>.

RUS will also hold six Public Scoping meetings, in open house format, to provide information regarding the Project, answer questions, and collect comments regarding potential environmental concerns.

Public Scoping Meeting dates and locations:

- **Monday, November 16, 2009**
 - Grand Forks, ND, Alerus Center, Eagle Room 10, 1200 S. 42nd St., 5 pm - 8 pm
- **Tuesday, November 17, 2009**
 - Cooperstown, ND, Cooperstown City Hall, 611 9th St. 10 am – 1 pm
 - Carrington, ND, The Chieftain Conference Center, Tee Pee Room 60, 4th Ave S, Highway 281, 5 pm - 8 pm
- **Wednesday, November 18, 2009**
 - McClusky, ND, McClusky Community Hall, 117 Ave. B North, 10 am – 1 pm
 - Wilton, ND, City of Wilton Memorial Hall, 10 Dakota Ave, 5 pm - 8 pm
- **Thursday, November 19, 2009**
 - Center, ND, Civic Center Building, 312 N Lincoln Ave, 5 pm - 8 pm

Comments will be accepted until December 18, 2009. Information from this meeting will help RUS determine the scope of the Environmental Assessment. Based on comments received during scoping and impact analyses in the Environmental Assessment, RUS would either prepare a Finding of No Significant Impact or make a decision to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. RUS will provide public notice of its decision.

Questions and comments should be directed to Dennis Rankin, Environmental Protection Specialist, USDA Rural Utilities Service, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Stop 1571, Washington, DC 20250-1571, or e-mail: dennis.rankin@wdc.usda.gov.

For more information, please visit www.minnkota.com or call Minnkota's toll free project information line at 800-473-5679.

Sincerely,



Mark S. Plank
Director
Engineering and Environmental Staff
Rural Utilities Service

Enclosure (1)

Scoping Postcards

Center to Grand Forks Project



The proposed corridor for this project may include or pass near your property.
Please share the following information with your neighbors.

The Rural Utilities Service Announces Public Scoping Meetings

The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) has announced six public scoping meetings for the Center to Grand Forks Transmission Line Project, a 260-mile 345-kilovolt transmission line proposed by Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc. (Minnkota). The purpose of these meetings is to provide information about the proposed project, answer questions, and collect comments regarding potential environmental concerns. These comments become part of an Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluating the proposal. All meetings will provide the same information in open house format; RUS and Minnkota staff will be available.

Monday November 16, 2009	Tuesday November 17, 2009	Wednesday November 18, 2009	Thursday November 19, 2009
Grand Forks, N.D. Alerus Center Eagle Room 10 1200 S 42nd St 5 - 8 pm	Cooperstown, N.D. Cooperstown City Hall 611 9th St 10 am - 1 pm	McClusky, N.D. McClusky Community Hall 117 Ave B North 10 am - 1 pm	Center, N.D. Center Civic Center Building 312 N Lincoln Ave 5 - 8 pm
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For more information, please visit www.minnkota.com or call Minnkota's toll free project information line: 800-473-5679.

Center to Grand Forks Project



Thank you for your participation in the scoping process for the Center to Grand Forks Transmission Line Project, a 260-mile 345-kilovolt transmission line proposed by Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc.

Comments collected during the scoping period will be considered during the environmental review; the Scoping Report will be published by the Rural Utility Service in early 2010. You will be notified when the report is published.

For more information, please visit www.minnkota.com or call the toll free project information line: 800-473-5679.

The Rural Utilities Service Announces Public Scoping Meetings for the Center to Grand Forks Transmission Line Project

The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) has announced six Public Scoping meetings for the Center to Grand Forks Transmission Line Project, a 260-mile 345-kilovolt transmission line proposed by Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc. (Minnkota). The purpose of these meetings is to provide information about the proposed project, answer questions, and collect comments regarding potential environmental concerns. These comments become part of an Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluating the proposal. All meetings will provide the same information in open house format; RUS and Minnkota staff will be available.

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- **Wilton, N.D.**, City of Wilton Memorial Hall, 10 Dakota Ave, 5 - 8 pm

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- **Center, N.D.**, Civic Center Building, 312 N Lincoln Ave, 5 - 8 pm

The Alternative Evaluation Study (AES) and Macro-corridor Study (MCS) for the proposed project will be available for review at all meetings, on RUS web site at <http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/ea.htm>, at Minnkota offices, on the web at www.minnkota.com (look for the CGF Project link) and at the following locations:

Aneta Public Library
Bismarck's Veterans Memorial Library
City of Carrington Library
Goodrich Public Library
Grand Forks Library
Griggs County Library
Harvey Public Library

Mayville Library
New Rockford Public Library
Northwood Public Schools and City Library
Oliver County Auditor
Sheridan County Auditor
Turtle Lake Public Library
Washburn Public Library

Direct comments to: Dennis Rankin, USDA Rural Development - Utilities Program, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250-1571, or dennis.rankin@wdc.usda.gov.

For more information, please visit www.minnkota.com or call Minnkota's toll free project information line: 800-473-5679

The Rural Utilities Service Announces Public Scoping Meetings for the Center to Grand Forks Transmission Line Project

The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) has announced six public scoping meetings for the Center to Grand Forks Transmission Line Project, a 260-mile 345-kilovolt transmission line proposed by Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc. (Minnkota). The purpose of these meetings is to provide information about the proposed project, answer questions, and collect comments regarding potential environmental concerns. These comments become part of an Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluating the proposal. All meetings will provide the same information in open house format; RUS and Minnkota staff will be available.

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 - **Center, N.D.**, Civic Center Building, 312 N Lincoln Ave, 5 - 8pm

RUS and Minnkota staff will be on hand to provide information, answer questions and address concerns.

The Alternative Evaluation Study (AES) and Macro-corridor Study (MCS) for the proposed project will be available at all meetings. The documents are also available for review on RUS web site at <http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/ea.htm>, at the offices of Minnkota and on their web site at www.minnkota.com, look for the CGF Project link and at the following locations:

Aneta Public Library
Bismarck's Veterans Memorial Library
City of Carrington Library
Goodrich Public Library
Grand Forks Library
Griggs County Library
Harvey Public Library
Mayville Library
New Rockford Public Library
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Oliver County Auditor
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Washburn Public Library

Direct comments to: Dennis Rankin, USDA Rural Development - Utilities Program, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250-1571, or dennis.rankin@wdc.usda.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Dennis Rankin, USDA Rural Development - Utilities Program,
(202) 720-1953, dennis.rankin@wdc.usda.gov

The Rural Utilities Service Announces Public Scoping Meetings for the Center to Grand Forks Transmission Line Project

GRAND FORKS, N.D. – The Rural Utilities Services (RUS), an Agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Utilities, has announced a series of six public scoping meetings for the Center to Grand Forks transmission line project proposed by Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc. (Minnkota). Minnkota is a generation and transmission cooperative headquartered in Grand Forks, N.D.

Minnkota has proposed the construction of approximately 260 miles of 345 kilovolt (kV) transmission line from Center to Grand Forks, N.D. to secure additional energy from Milton R. Young 2, a 455-megawatt (MW) coal-fired plant near Center, N.D., owned by Square Butte Electric Cooperative.

To bring the energy generated by Young 2 into the Red River Valley, Minnkota will construct a new 345-kilovolt (kV) transmission line from Center to Grand Forks. Building the new transmission line will enable the existing DC transmission line from the Milton R. Young Station to carry more renewable wind energy.

The purpose of these open houses will be to provide information regarding Minnkota's proposed project, answer questions, and collect comments regarding potential environmental concerns.

Meeting dates and locations:

- ▶ **Monday, November 16, 2009**
 - **Grand Forks, N.D.**, Alerus Center, Eagle Room 10, 1200 S 42nd St, 5 - 8 pm
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An Alternatives Evaluation Study (AES) and a Macro-Corridor Study (MCS), prepared by Minnkota will be available for review at the public meetings, and at a number of locations throughout the corridor; a list of viewing locations as well as the studies themselves can be found online at www.minnkota.com (look for the CGF project link) and on RUS web site at <http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/ea.htm>.

Comments concerning the potential environmental impacts and related review of this project are encouraged and will be incorporated into RUS' Environmental Assessment for this project. Written comments will be accepted until December 18, 2009 and can be submitted at any of the public meetings or to Dennis Rankin, USDA Rural Development - Utilities Program at:

1400 Independence Avenue, SW

Washington, DC 20250-1571

dennis.rankin@wdc.usda.gov

For more information please visit www.minnkota.com or call Minnkota's toll free project information line at 800-473-5679.

**Public Service Announcement
CGF RUS Scoping Meetings
November 9 – November 16, 2009**

CONTACT: Dennis Rankin, USDA Rural Development - Utilities Program,
(202) 720-1953, dennis.rankin@wdc.usda.gov

**The Rural Utilities Service Announces Public Scoping
Meetings for the Minnkota, Center to Grand Forks
Transmission Line Project**

The Rural Utilities Service has announced public scoping meetings for the Center to Grand Forks Transmission Line Project, 260 miles of 345 kV transmission line proposed by Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc. The public is invited to attend the open house meetings held at the following times and locations:

Grand Forks, Alerus Center, Monday, November 16, 5 - 8pm
Cooperstown, City Hall, Tuesday, November 17, 10am - 1pm
Carrington, The Chieftain Conference Center, Tuesday, November 17, 5 - 8pm
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For more information, please visit www.minnkota.com or call Minnkota's toll free project information line at 800-473-5679.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Forest Service****California Recreation Resource Advisory Committee**

AGENCY: Pacific Southwest Region, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

ACTION: Request for applications.

SUMMARY: Applications are being sought for certain positions on the California Recreation Resource Advisory Committee. New members will be appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture and serve three year terms. Appointments will begin July 2010 when current member appointments expire. One member is being sought to represent each of the following interests: (1) Winter Non-Motorized Recreation, (2) Summer Motorized Recreation, (3) Summer Non-Motorized Recreation, (4) Non-Motorized Outfitters and Guides, (5) Local Environmental Groups, (6) State Tourism, (7) Indian Tribes, and (8) Local Government.

The public is invited to submit applications for these positions. Current members who have only served one term may reapply. Application packages can be obtained at <http://www.fs.fed.us/passespermits/rrac-application.shtml> or by e-mailing R5rrac@fs.fed.us. Interested parties may also contact Frances Enkoji, US Forest Service, at 707-562-8846.

DATES: All applications must be received by December 11, 2009. This timeframe can be extended if officials do not receive applications for the needed positions.

ADDRESSES: Interested parties may submit applications by mail to Frances Enkoji, US Forest Service, 1323 Club Drive, Vallejo, CA 94592.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Anyone wanting further information regarding the California Recreation Resource Advisory Committee may contact Marlene Finley, Designated Federal Official, Pacific Southwest Region Recreation RAC, 1323 Club Drive, Vallejo, CA 94592; 707-562-8856.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA), signed December 2004, requires that the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management provide Recreation RACs with an opportunity to make recommendations to the two agencies on implementing or eliminating standard amenity fees; expanded amenity fees; and noncommercial special recreation

permit fees; expanding or limiting the recreation fee program; and fee level changes. Each Recreation RAC consists of 11 members appointed by the Secretary.

Nomination Information: Applicants must complete an AD-755 form (Advisory Committee or Search and Promotion Background Information) and provide a narrative that addresses the following:

(1) What group or perspective they represent and how they are qualified to represent that group;

(2) Why they want to serve on the committee and what they can contribute;

(3) Their past experience in working successfully as part of a collaborative group.

Letters of recommendation are welcome but not required. Applicants do not need to live in a state within a particular Recreation RAC's area of jurisdiction nor live in a state in which Forest Service managed lands are located. Application packages, including evaluation criteria and AD-755 are available at <http://www.fs.fed.us/passespermits/rracapplication.shtml> or by contacting the Pacific Southwest Region as identified in this notice. Completed application packages must be received by December 11, 2009. Additional information about the California Recreation RAC can be found at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/passes/rrac> or about recreation fees at <http://www.fs.fed.us/passespermits/about-rec-fees.shtml>. The Forest Service will also work the Governor and local officials to identify potential applicants. The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management will review applications and prepare a list of qualified applicants from which the Secretary shall appoint both members and alternates. The alternate will become a participating member of the Recreation RAC only if the member for whom the alternate is appointed to replace leaves the committee permanently. Recreation RAC members serve without pay but are reimbursed for travel and per diem expenses for regularly scheduled meetings. All Recreation RAC meetings are open the public and an open public forum is part of each meeting. Meeting dates and time will be determined by agency officials in consultation with the Recreation RAC members.

Dated: October 21, 2009.

Marlene Finley,

Designated Federal Official, Recreation RAC, Pacific Southwest Region.

[FR Doc. E9-26086 Filed 10-29-09; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Rural Utilities Service****Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc.: Notice of Intent To Hold Public Scoping Meetings and Prepare an Environmental Assessment**

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to hold public scoping meetings and prepare an Environmental Assessment.

SUMMARY: The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) intends to hold public scoping meetings and prepare an Environmental Assessment with Scoping (EA) to meet its responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and 7 CFR part 1794 in connection with potential impacts related to a proposed project by Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc. (Minnkota). The proposed Center to Grand Forks Transmission Line Project (proposed action) consists of: the construction of approximately 260 miles of 345 kilovolt (kV) transmission line from Center to Grand Forks, North Dakota; upgrades at the Center 345 kV substation; upgrades at the Square Butte 230 kV Substation; an additional 230 kV tie line; and upgrades at the Prairie Substation and fiber optic regeneration stations. Minnkota is requesting that RUS provide financial assistance for the proposed action.

DATES: RUS will conduct public scoping meetings in an open house format to provide information and solicit comments for the preparation of the EA. Scoping meetings will be held on the following dates: Grand Forks, ND, Alerus Center, Eagle Room 10, 1200 S. 42nd St., Monday, November 16, 2009, 5-8 p.m.; Cooperstown, ND, Cooperstown City Hall, 611 9th St., Tuesday, November 17, 2009, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.; Carrington, ND, Chieftain Conference Center, Tee Pee Room 60, 4th Avenue S., Tuesday, November 17, 2009, 5:00-8:00 pm; McClusky, ND, McClusky Community Hall, 117 Avenue B North, Wednesday, November 18, 2009, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.; Wilton, ND, City of Wilton Memorial Hall, 105 Dakota Avenue, Wednesday, November 18, 2009, 5-8 p.m.; and Center, ND, Center Civic Center Building, 312 N Lincoln Ave., Thursday, November 19, 2009, 5-8 p.m.

ADDRESSES: To send comments or request additional information, contact: Mr. Dennis Rankin, Environmental Protection Specialist, USDA, Rural Utilities Service, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Stop 1571, Washington, DC 20250-1571, telephone: (202) 720-1953 or e-mail:

dennis.rankin@wdc.usda.gov. An Alternative Evaluation Study (AES) and a Macro Corridor Study (MCS) has been prepared for the proposed project. All documents are available for public review prior to and during the public scoping meetings. The reports are available at the RUS address provided in this notice and on the agency's Web site at: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/ea.htm>, the offices of Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc. and their Web site at: <http://www.minnkota.com>; and the following repositories: Aneta Public Library, 11995 19th St., Aneta, ND 58212-0088; Bismarck's Veterans Memorial Library, 515 N. 5th St., Bismarck, ND 58501-4057; Oliver County Auditor, 115 West Main, Center, ND 58530; City of Carrington Library, 55 9th Ave., Carrington, ND 58421-2017; Griggs County Library, 902 Burrell Ave., Cooperstown, ND 58425-0546; Goodrich Public Library, 122 McKinley Ave., Goodrich, ND 58444-0175; Grand Forks Library, 2110 Library Circle, Grand Forks, ND 58201-6324; Harvey Public Library, 119 10th St., Harvey, ND 58341-1531; Mayville Library, 52 Center Ave., Mayville, ND 58257-1299; Sheridan County Auditor, 215 East 2nd St., McClusky, ND 58356-1510; New Rockford Public Library, 811 First Ave. N, New Rockford, ND 58356-1510; Turtle Lake Public Library, 107 Eggert St., Turtle Lake, ND 58575-0540; Washburn Public Library, 705 Main Ave., Washburn, ND 58577-0637; and Northwood Public Schools and City Library, 300 35th St., Northwood, ND 58267.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The purpose of the proposed action is to reallocate energy presently transmitted on an existing direct current (DC) line to the proposed 345 kV line. Currently, the output from the Milton R. Young Generation Station Unit 2 (Young 2) is purchased under contract by Minnkota and Minnesota Power; each utility receives approximately 50 percent of the output. Electricity generated by Young 2 flows over a dedicated DC, 465-mile transmission line from Center, North Dakota to Duluth, Minnesota, where it is converted back to alternating current (AC) for further transmission into the Minnesota Power and Minnkota service areas. Minnesota Power will take 100 percent ownership of the existing DC line and DC/AC conversion facilities in early 2010; the DC line will be used to deliver wind energy. In 2013, Minnkota will receive increasing allocations of Young 2 output until the year 2026 when Minnkota will purchase 100 percent of the Young 2 output. With no continuous capacity available to

Minnkota on the HVDC system, the power needs be moved over the AC transmission system to Minnkota's service territory.

Minnkota is seeking financing from RUS for its ownership of the proposed project. Before making a decision to provide financing for the proposed project, RUS is required to conduct an environmental review under NEPA in accordance with RUS's Environmental Policies and Procedures (7 CFR Part 1794). Government agencies, private organizations, and the public are invited to participate in the planning and analysis of the proposed action. Representatives from RUS and Minnkota will be available at the scoping meetings to discuss the environmental review process, describe the proposed action, discuss the scope of environmental issues to be considered, answer questions, and accept comments. RUS will use comments and input provided in the preparation of the Draft EA. If RUS finds, based on the EA, that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, RUS will prepare a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Public notification of the FONSI would be published in the **Federal Register** and in newspapers with circulation in the project area. RUS may take its final action on proposed actions requiring an EA (§ 1794.23) any time after publication of applicant notices that a FONSI has been made and any required review period has expired. When substantive comments are received on the EA, RUS may provide an additional period (15 days) for public review following the publication of its FONSI determination. Final action will not be taken until this review period has expired. Where appropriate to carry out the purposes of NEPA, RUS may impose, on a case-by-case basis, additional requirements associated with the preparation of an EA. If at any point in the preparation of an EA, RUS determines that the proposed action will have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement will be required. Any final action by RUS related to the proposed action will be subject to, and contingent upon, compliance with all relevant Federal, State, and local environmental laws and regulations and completion of the environmental review requirements as prescribed in RUS's Environmental Policies and Procedures (7 CFR Part 1794).

Dated: October 23, 2009.

Mark S. Plank,

Director, Engineering and Environmental Staff, Rural Utilities Service.

[FR Doc. E9-26146 Filed 10-29-09; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Shasta Trinity National Forest, South Fork Management Unit, California Rattlesnake Fuel Reduction and Forest Health Project

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The Hayfork District of the Shasta Trinity National Forest is proposing to use vegetation treatments to reduce risks from fire, improve forest health, and provide forest products on approximately 6,028 acres within the Rattlesnake watershed on the South Fork Management Unit of the Shasta Trinity National Forest. The active management needed in the Rattlesnake Fuel Reduction and Forest Health Project (Rattlesnake project) area to reduce fuels and stocking levels through thinning requires the removal of trees and biomass, some of which have commercial value. An estimated 33 million board feet of merchantable sawtimber, and an estimated 35,092 bone dry tons of biomass are expected to be removed. Providing wood products to meet regional and national needs is consistent with Forest Plan goals, standards and guidelines. The initial economic analysis shows that the average diameter and quantity of the material treated under this project would generally be insufficient to support a viable timber sale in today's market. The Forest Service will analyze these vegetation treatments within the constraints of the Shasta Trinity National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, 1995.

The proposed Rattlesnake project is in the vicinity of the Post Mountain and Forest Glen communities in southern Trinity County, California. The project area is within portions of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) boundaries for both of these communities and within the Hayfork Adaptive Management Area (AMA), and Management Area 19, Indian Valley/Rattlesnake, of the Shasta-Trinity Land and Resource Management Plan (USFS 1995, p. 4-64 & 4-65).

The project includes acreage in Township 1 North, Range 7 East, Sections 25 and 36, Township 1 North, Range 8 East, Sections 19-21, and 28-



October 20, 2009

Agency: Rural Utilities Service, USDA

Action: Notice of Intent to Hold Public Scoping Meetings and Prepare an Environmental Assessment.

Summary:

The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) intends to hold public scoping meetings and prepare an Environmental Assessment with Scoping (EA) to meet its responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and 7 CFR part 1794 in connection with potential impacts related to a proposed project by Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc. (Minnkota). The proposed Center to Grand Forks Transmission Line Project (proposed action) consists of the following; the construction of approximately 260 miles of 345 kilovolt (kV) transmission line from Center to Grand Forks, North Dakota, upgrades at the Center 345 kV substation, upgrades at the Square Butte 230 kV Substation, additional 230 kV tie line, upgrades at the Prairie Substation, and fiber optic regeneration stations. Minnkota is requesting that RUS provide financial assistance for the proposed action.

Dates:

RUS will conduct public scoping meetings in an open house format to provide information and solicit comments for the preparation of the EA. The scoping meetings will be held on the following dates:

Grand Forks, ND, Alerus Center, Eagle Room 10, 1200 S. 42nd St, Monday, November 16, 2009, 5:00 - 8:00 pm

Cooperstown, ND, Cooperstown City Hall, 611 9th St. Tuesday, November 17, 2009, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Carrington, ND, Chieftain Conference Center, Tee Pee Room 60, 4th Avenue S., Tuesday, November 17, 2009, 5:00 - 8:00 pm

McClusky, ND, McClusky Community Hall, 117 Avenue B North, Wednesday, November 18, 2009, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Wilton, ND, City of Wilton Memorial Hall, 105 Dakota Avenue, Wednesday, November 18, 2009, 5:00 - 8:00 pm

Center, ND Center Civic Center Building, 312 N Lincoln Ave., Thursday, November 19, 2009, 5:00 - 8:00 PM

Addresses:

To send comments or for further information, contact: Dennis Rankin, Environmental Protection Specialist, USDA Rural Utilities Service, at 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Stop 1571, Washington, DC 20250-1571, or e-mail: dennis.rankin@wdc.usda.gov. An Alternative Evaluation Study (AES) and a Macro Corridor Study (MCS) has been prepared for the proposed project. All documents are available for public review prior to and at the public scoping meetings. The reports are available at the RUS address provided in this notice and on the agency's Web site: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/eis.htm>. The documents are also available for review at the offices of Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc. and on their Web site at www.minnkota.com. In addition, the following repositories will have the AES and MCS available for public review:



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Aneta Public Library, 11995 19th St, Aneta, ND 58212-0088
Bismarck's Veterans Memorial Library, 515 N. 5th St, Bismarck, ND 58501-4057
Oliver County Auditor, 115 West Main, Center, ND 58530
City of Carrington Library, 55 9th Ave, Carrington, ND 58421-2017
Griggs County Library, 902 Burrel Ave, Cooperstown, ND 58425-0546
Goodrich Public Library, 122 McKinley Ave, Goodrich, ND 58444-0175
Grand Forks Library, 2110 Library Circle, Grand Forks, ND 58201-6324
Harvey Public Library, 119 10th St, Harvey, ND 58341-1531
Mayville Library, 52 Center Ave, Mayville, ND 58257-1299
Sheridan County Auditor, 215 East 2nd St, McClusky, ND 58356-1510
New Rockford Public Library, 811 1st Ave N, New Rockford, ND 58356-1510
Turtle Lake Public Library, 107 Eggert Street, Turtle Lake, ND 58575-0540
Washburn Public Library, 705 Main Ave, Washburn, ND 58577-0637
Northwood Public Schools and City Library, 300 35th St, Northwood, ND 58267

Supplementary Information:

The primary purpose for the proposed action is for the reallocation of energy presently transmitted on the existing direct current (DC) line to this new 345 kV line. Currently, the output from the Milton R. Young Generation Station Unit 2 (Young 2) is purchased under contract by Minnkota and Minnesota Power, with each utility receiving approximately 50 percent of the output. Electricity generated by Young 2 flows over a dedicated DC, 465-mile-long transmission line from Center, North Dakota to Duluth, Minnesota, where it is converted back to alternating current (AC) for further transmission into the Minnesota Power and Minnkota service areas. Minnesota Power will take 100 percent ownership of the existing DC line and DC/AC conversion facilities in early 2010, and will utilize the DC line to deliver additional wind energy. Starting in 2013 Minnkota will begin receiving increasing allocations of Young 2 output until the year 2026, when Minnkota will purchase 100 percent of the Young 2 output. With no continuous capacity available to Minnkota on the HVDC system, the power will need to be moved over the AC transmission system to Minnkota's service territory.

Minnkota is seeking financing from RUS for its ownership of the proposed project. Prior to making a financial decision about whether to provide financial assistance for the proposed project, RUS is required to conduct an environmental review under the NEPA in accordance with RUS policies and procedures codified in 7 CFR Part 1794. Government agencies, private organizations, and the public are invited to participate in the planning and analysis of the proposed action. Representatives from RUS and Minnkota will be available at the scoping meetings to discuss the environmental review process, describe the proposed action, discuss the scope of environmental issues to be considered, answer questions, and accept comments. RUS will use comments and input provided by government agencies, private organizations, and the public in the preparation of the Draft EA. If RUS finds, based on the EA, that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, RUS will prepare a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Public notification of a Finding of No Significant Impact would be published in the Federal Register and in newspapers with circulation in the project area. RUS may take its final action on proposed actions requiring an EA (§ 1794.23) any time after publication of applicant notices that a FONSI has been made and any required review period has expired. When substantive comments are received on the EA, RUS may provide an additional period (15 days) for public review following the publication of its FONSI determination. Final action will not be taken until this review period has expired. Where appropriate to carry out the purposes of NEPA, RUS may impose, on a case-by-case basis, additional requirements associated with the preparation of an EA. If at any point in the preparation of an EA, RUS determines that the proposed action will have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement will be

required. Any final action by RUS related to the proposed action will be subject to, and contingent upon, compliance with all relevant Federal, State, and local environmental laws and regulations and completion of the environmental review requirements as prescribed in RUS Environmental Policies and Procedures (7 CFR Part 1794).



United States Department of Agriculture
Rural Development
Local Entity Name or Office

October 21, 2009

To: [insert name and address here]

RE: Proposed 345 kV high-voltage transmission line from the Milton R. Young Power Plant Station located near Center, North Dakota to an existing substation near Grand Forks, North Dakota.

Dear [insert name here]:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is serving as the lead Federal agency responsible for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the proposed 345 kV high-voltage transmission line from the Milton R. Young Power Plant Station located near Center, North Dakota to Grand Forks, North Dakota. Existing substations near Center and Grand Forks will be modified to accommodate the new transmission line. The proposed project will be the construction of approximately 260 miles of 345 kV transmission line. This project is referred to as the Center to Grand Forks (CGF) Project. The CGF Project will deliver energy produced by the Young 2 power station to the areas of north-eastern North Dakota and northern Minnesota. In addition, the CGF Project would allow for additional renewable wind energy to be delivered over the existing 250 kV DC transmission line that currently serves Young 2. Minnkota Power is seeking RUS financing for its portion of the investment.

Prior to making a financial decision about whether to loan funds, guarantee a loan, or award a grant for a proposed Project, the RUS is required to conduct an environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act. It conducts reviews in accordance with RUS regulations outlined in 7 CFR Part 1794. According to these regulations this project is classified as an Environmental Assessment with Scoping.

Enclosed for your review is a copy of the Alternatives Evaluation Study and the Macro Corridor Study prepared for the Proposed 345 kV transmission line.

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Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800)795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).

Public scoping meetings will be held at the following dates, times, and locations:

- **Monday, November 16, 2009**
 - **Grand Forks, N.D.**, Alerus Center, Eagle Room 10, 1200 S. 42nd St., 5 - 8pm
- **Tuesday, November 17, 2009**
 - **Cooperstown, N.D.**, Cooperstown City Hall, 611 9th St. 10am – 1pm
 - **Carrington, N.D.**, The Chieftain Conference Center, Tee Pee Room 60, 4th Ave S, Highway 281, 5 - 8pm
- **Wednesday, November 18, 2009**
 - **McClusky, N.D.**, McClusky Community Hall, 117 Ave. B North, 10am – 1pm
 - **Wilton, N.D.**, City of Wilton Memorial Hall, 10 Dakota Ave, 5 - 8pm
- **Thursday, November 19, 2009**
 - **Center, N.D.**, Civic Center Building, 312 N Lincoln Ave, 5 - 8pm

The purpose of the meetings is to provide information regarding the proposed project, answer questions, and accept comments regarding the potential environmental and cultural resource impacts that may result from construction and operation of the Project. Comments will be accepted for 30 days after the meeting. Information from this meeting will help RUS determine the scope of environmental review. Based on the comments received from public scoping, RUS will either prepare a finding of No Significant Impact or make a decision to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. RUS will provide public notice of their decision.

Questions and comments should be directed to Dennis Rankin, Environmental Protection Specialist, USDA Rural Utilities Service, at 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Stop 1571, Washington, DC 20250–1571, or e-mail: dennis.rankin@wdc.usda.gov.

Sincerely,

Mark S. Plank
Director
Engineering and Environmental Staff
Rural Development, Utilities Programs

Enclosures (2)





**United States Department of Agriculture
Rural Development**

September 10, 2009

Name

RE: Proposed Center-Grand Forks 345 kV Transmission System
North Dakota

Dear Name:

The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is considering an application for financial assistance from Minnkota Power Cooperative (Minnkota) for the construction of an approximately 260 mile long 345 kV electric transmission line and associated facilities to deliver power from the Milton R. Young Station Unit 2 (Young 2) power plant located near Center, North Dakota, to a delivery point in Minnkota's service area near Grand Forks, North Dakota. The proposed line would be constructed using single pole steel structures typically about 150 feet tall and placed approximately 1,000 feet apart. In addition, various modifications to associated substations in the area of the proposed line also would be needed.

Since 2005, regional transmission-system studies have demonstrated that, even without additional load growth, there are system voltage stability and load serving issues in eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota. The proposed transmission line project would provide a sound technical solution to the well-identified northern Red River Valley voltage stability issue and a major improvement to the regional transmission grid. In addition, the proposed line would provide a direct link into Minnkota's service territory.

RUS is considering funding this application, thereby making the proposal an undertaking subject to review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), 16 U.S.C. § 470f, and its implementing regulations, "Protection of Historic Properties" (36 CFR Part 800). The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is considering issuance of a permit under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act for this proposal to cross the Missouri and Sheyenne Rivers, thereby making it an undertaking subject to Section 106 review. While both RUS and USACE have responsibilities under NEPA and Section 106, the agencies have yet to resolve lead agency status.

To meet RUS requirements and provide general baseline information to support review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 106, Minnkota is developing two documents. The *Alternative Evaluation Study* (AES) explains the need for the proposal, discusses the alternatives that have been considered to meet the need, and establishes the alternative that Minnkota believes will best meet that need. In addition to the AES, RUS requires that Minnkota prepare a Macro Corridor Study (MCS)

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to describe the macro corridors that have been developed by the applicant based on environmental, engineering, economic, land use and permitting constraints. These documents along with the views of agencies, consulting parties, tribes and the public will inform RUS's decision regarding which alternatives to carry forward to analysis in the NEPA Environmental Assessment (EA) document.

The following counties could be affected by this proposal – Oliver, Burleigh, McLean, Sheridan, Wells, Foster, Eddy, Griggs, Nelson, Steele, Traill, and Grand Forks. As initially defined by RUS, the area of potential effects (APE) for the referenced undertaking includes a broad area encompassed by the macro corridors that will be described in the MCS. RUS will refine the scope of the APE as Section 106 review proceeds and more specific information is gathered about likely effects to historic properties.

By letter dated September 10, 2009 to Marcus Levings, RUS invited the Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation, ND to participate in government-to-government consultation for the referenced undertaking. Please advise RUS in writing as soon as possible if the Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation, ND will participate in consultation so that your concerns and recommendations may be considered as early as possible in development of this proposal.

RUS and Minnkota plan to review the potential Missouri and Sheyenne River crossing locations within the next few weeks. We are asking that one representative from your respective Tribe attend. Meeting details:

Sheyenne River Meeting

When: Tuesday, September 22, 2009

Time: 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm (CST)

Location: Cooperstown – Town & Country Gas Station (corner of ND-200 and ND-45)

Missouri River Meeting

When: Wednesday, September 23, 2009

Time: 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm (CST)

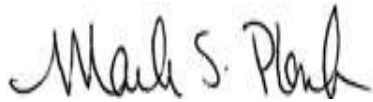
Location: Cross Ranch State Park – Sanger Campground Boat Ramp

Minnkota will be sending you maps and other details pertaining to these meetings.

RUS is hopeful that the Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation, ND will work directly with the Center to Grand Forks utilities and their representatives as review under Section 106 proceeds. Should you have any questions or require

additional information, please contact Michael Justin at 763-591-5423 or via email at michael.justin@hdrinc.com. RUS appreciates your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark S. Plank". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Mark S. Plank
Director
Engineering and Environmental Staff
Water and Environmental Programs

Cc: Laura Dean, RUS
Dennis Rankin, RUS
Michelle Bissonnette, HDR
John Graves, Minnkota





**United States Department of Agriculture
Rural Development**

September 10, 2009

Name

RE: Proposed Center-Grand Forks 345 kV Transmission System
North Dakota

Dear Name:

The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is considering an application for financial assistance from Minnkota Power Cooperative (Minnkota) for the construction of an approximately 260 mile long 345 kV electric transmission line and associated facilities to deliver power from the Milton R. Young Station Unit 2 (Young 2) power plant located near Center, North Dakota, to a delivery point in Minnkota's service area near Grand Forks, North Dakota. The proposed line would be constructed using single pole steel structures typically about 150 feet tall and placed approximately 1,000 feet apart. In addition, various modifications to associated substations in the area of the proposed line also would be needed.

Since 2005, regional transmission-system studies have demonstrated that, even without additional load growth, there are system voltage stability and load serving issues in eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota. The proposed transmission line project would provide a sound technical solution to the well-identified northern Red River Valley voltage stability issue and a major improvement to the regional transmission grid. In addition, the proposed line would provide a direct link into Minnkota's service territory.

RUS is considering funding this application, thereby making the proposal an undertaking subject to review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), 16 U.S.C. § 470f, and its implementing regulations, "Protection of Historic Properties" (36 CFR Part 800). The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is considering issuance of a permit under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act for this proposal to cross the Missouri and Sheyenne Rivers, thereby making it an undertaking subject to Section 106 review. While both RUS and USACE have responsibilities under NEPA and Section 106, the agencies have yet to resolve lead agency status.

To meet RUS requirements and provide general baseline information to support review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 106, Minnkota is developing two documents. The *Alternative Evaluation Study* (AES) explains the need for the proposal, discusses the alternatives that might be considered to meet the need, and establishes the alternative that Minnkota believes will best meet that need. In addition to the AES, RUS requires that Minnkota prepare a Macro Corridor Study (MCS) to describe the macro corridors that have been developed by the applicant based on environmental, engineering, economic, land use and permitting constraints. These documents along with the views of agencies, consulting parties, tribes and the public will inform RUS's decision

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Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).

regarding which alternatives to carry forward to analysis in the NEPA Environmental Assessment (EA) document.

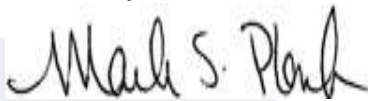
The following counties could be affected by this proposal: Oliver, Burleigh, McLean, Sheridan, Wells, Foster, Eddy, Griggs, Nelson, Steele, Traill, and Grand Forks. As initially defined by RUS, the area of potential effects (APE) for the referenced undertaking includes a broad area encompassed by the macro corridors that will be described in the MCS. RUS will refine the scope of the APE as Section 106 review proceeds and more specific information is gathered about likely effects to historic properties.

RUS is writing to invite the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe of South Dakota to participate in government-to-government consultation for the referenced undertaking. Please advise RUS in writing of your decision as soon as possible so that your input can be incorporated as early as possible in project development. Your decision about consultation should be sent to Mark Plank at 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 1571, Room 2244, Washington, D.C. 20250-1571 or via email at mark.plank@wdc.usda.gov. In order to facilitate your tribe's participation, RUS also has notified Carol Robertson, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe of South Dakota, about the referenced proposal.

In order to get more information about this proposal, RUS is inviting the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe of South Dakota to attend meetings on September 22nd and 23rd, 2009 in Cooperstown and Cross Ranch State Park to review the Sheyenne and Missouri River crossings. Because the options for crossing the Missouri River are constrained, RUS and Minnkota want to hear your concerns as soon as possible. Minnkota has supplied the attached reimbursement policy for consultation meeting attendance. RUS requests that you notify Michael Justin, HDR Engineering, by phone or email at 763-591-5423, Michael.justin@hdrinc.com in advance if you plan to attend this meeting.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me at 202-720-1649. RUS appreciates your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Mark S. Plank
Director
Engineering and Environmental Staff
Water and Environmental Programs

Cc: Laura Dean, RUS
Dennis Rankin, RUS
Michelle Bissonnette, HDR
John Graves, Minnkota



April 27, 2009

To: Project Notice Distribution List
Mr. Dennis Breitzman, Area Manager
Bureau of Reclamation
304 E Broadway Ave
Bismarck, ND 58501

RE: Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc. proposed 345 kV high-voltage transmission line from the Milton R. Young Power Plant Station located near Center, North Dakota to an existing substation near Grand Forks, North Dakota.

Dear Mr. Breitzman:

Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc. (Minnkota) requests your review of the above-mentioned project for potential impacts to Bureau of Reclamation lands that may be present within the preliminary corridor areas. On behalf of Minnkota, HDR Engineering, Inc. (HDR) will be preparing an application for a *Certificate of Corridor Compatibility and Route Permit* to the North Dakota Public Service Commission (PSC) and an Environmental Assessment with Scoping for the Rural Utilities Services (RUS). RUS will be the lead federal Agency in the environmental review process for NEPA compliance.

Minnkota has proposed the construction of approximately 225 miles of 345 kilovolt (kV) transmission line. The project will originate near Center, N.D. at the Milton R. Young Station and terminate in Grand Forks, N.D. Existing substations near Center and Grand Forks will be modified to accommodate the new transmission line. This project is referred to as the Center to Grand Forks (CGF) Project. The CGF Project will deliver energy produced by the Young 2 power station to the areas of north-eastern North Dakota and northern Minnesota. In addition, the CGF Project would allow for additional renewable wind energy to be delivered over the existing 250 kV DC transmission line that currently serves Young 2. The project is anticipated to be completed by early 2013. The preliminary CGF Project corridors may include the following counties: Oliver, McLean, Burleigh, Sheridan, Kidder, Wells, Foster, Eddy, Griggs, Nelson, Steele, Grand Forks, Traill.

The project is in the preliminary stages of planning; exact route alternatives have not yet been established within the study corridors. HDR is currently gathering data for the preparation of the above mentioned PSC Application and RUS EA with Scoping. This letter is intended to inform you of the project and to provide you with the opportunity to review the corridors to assist in project siting and design. Enclosed is a project location

map identifying preliminary corridor areas and end points of the project to facilitate your review.

We plan to meet with agencies and the public several times before the route is finalized. Minnkota is scheduled to give a presentation at the North Dakota interagency meeting on April 30, 2009 at the US Army Corps of Engineer's office in Bismarck, N.D. Attending this meeting will provide an opportunity for you to share with Minnkota any initial feedback on the project you may have.

We would appreciate comments by May 29, 2009 to allow time to incorporate them into the RUS Macrocorridor Study that will be completed this summer. Information will also be used during scoping meetings that are scheduled for this fall. If you require additional information or have questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We will be seeking on-going feedback from you and your agency as this project proceeds through review. Your comments on the project will assist the Applicants, HDR, RUS, and the PSC in their project review. We look forward to working with you.

Thank you for your assistance.

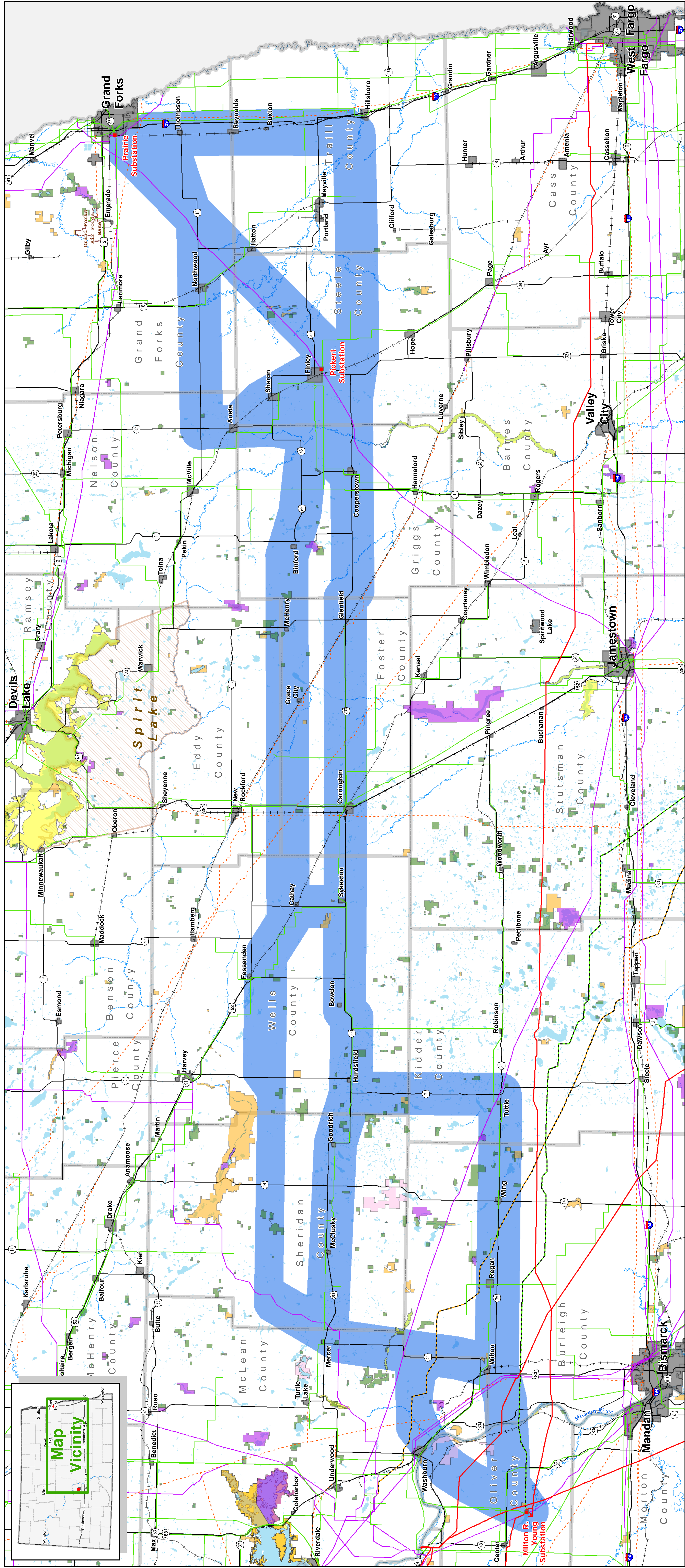
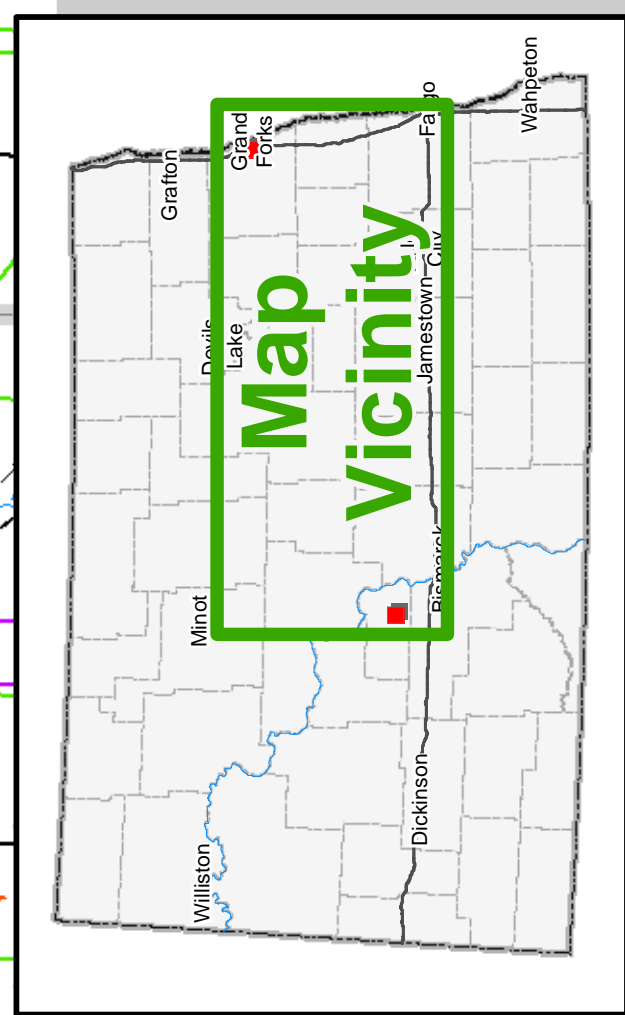
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Hennes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

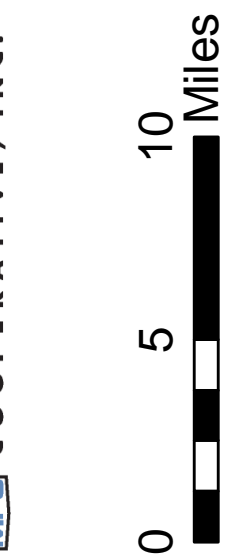
Michael Hennes
Minnkota Project Manager

Enclosure: Project Area Map

Cc: Michelle Bissonnette, HDR



Center to Grand Forks Project



- Existing Transmission Lines**
- 400 kV DC
 - 345 kV
 - 250 kV DC
 - 230 kV
 - 115 kV or less

- Gas Pipeline**
- USFWS NWR
 - USFWS WPA or WDA
 - USBOR or USACOE Land

- State Park, Recreation Area, or WMA**
- TNC Preserve
 - Tribal Lands

- Highway**
- In-Use Railroad
 - Incorporated Area
 - County Boundary

Preliminary Corridors
Center to Grand Forks Transmission Line
Eastern North Dakota

April 2009



April 22, 2009

Mr. Jason Vollmer
Chairman
Cherry Lake Township
1258 85th Ave NE

Grace City, ND 58445

**Re: Proposed construction of a 345 kilovolt (kV) transmission line from Milton R.
Young Power Plant Station located near Center, N.D. to Grand Forks, N.D.**

Dear Mr. Vollmer:

Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc. (Minnkota) with headquarters in Grand Forks, ND has proposed the construction of approximately 225 miles of 345 kilovolt (kV) transmission line from Center, N.D. to Grand Forks, N.D. This Project is referred to as the Center to Grand Forks (CGF) Transmission Line Project. The enclosed map identifies the project area.

HDR Engineering, Inc. (HDR) is preparing an application on Minnkota's behalf for a *Certificate of Corridor Compatibility and Route Permit* to the North Dakota Public Services Commission (PSC). Minnkota anticipates submitting the application to the PSC by early 2010 to allow construction to start late fall of 2010. You will receive notice when the PSC application is filed. At the onset of the project, we are currently analyzing several possible corridors that will ultimately lead to the identification of a preferred route for the transmission line.

Minnkota wishes to inform you early in the process that this project may require a conditional use permit from your township. Minnkota will initiate the permit process when a route has been identified. In the short term, Minnkota is planning to hold open house meetings in the project area in May to announce the project and gather public input. Notice of those meetings will be published in local newspapers. Your attendance and participation is appreciated.

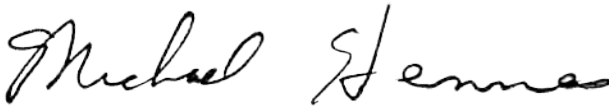
A Web site has been developed for the project and can be accessed through Minnkota's homepage at www.minnkota.com. This site will contain the most current project documentation and information about public meetings as well as a place to submit comments on the project. Minnkota has also developed a project hotline to receive project comments and allow the public to be added to the project mailing list. The hotline number is 1-800-347-0689.

Comments received will be included in the Certificate of Corridor Compatibility and Route Permit application. If you have questions or concerns contact me at 800-347-0689 or mhennes@minnkota.com. Other project team leaders and I are happy to meet with you at your convenience.

Minnkota is dedicated to working with all the communities that fall within a potential corridor route. It is our goal to provide information and address questions and concerns quickly and educate the public about the transmission line siting process being followed.

Thank you for your assistance.

| Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Hennes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" and last name "Hennes" clearly distinguishable.

Michael Hennes
Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc.
Systems Project Manager

Enclosure: Project Area Map

Cc: Michelle Bissonnette, HDR

Meeting Notes

Subject:	Section 106 Consultation Meeting		
Client:	Minnkota Power Cooperative		
Project:	Center to Grand Forks Phase II	Project No:	110900
Meeting Date:	August 17, 2010	Meeting Location:	Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Fort Yates, ND
Notes by:	HDR		

Attendees

Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate: Diane Desrosiers, Jim Whitted
Standing Rock Sioux: Waste'win Young; George Ironshield; Tim Mentz, Sr.; Terry Clouthier; LaDonna Allard
RUS: Dennis Rankin, Laura Dean
Minnkota: John Graves
HDR: Brian Hunker, Mike Justin

1. Meeting Intent

- The meeting was held with Standing Rock and Sisseton Wahpeton tribes because they expressed interest in participating and gathering more information on the project and providing input on the surveys
- The plan was to develop an approach for the cultural surveys – how best to proceed and what information the tribes had to share
- A predictive model was shared with the group

2. Tribes questions/concerns and RUS responses

- **Diane Desrosiers** expressed her concern with methodology and involvement of the tribes. She felt that this meeting was not a good faith effort nor should it be considered consultation because of the following reasons:
 - There was no one physically at the meeting from RUS, she felt a conference call was inappropriate
 - Only two tribes were represented, she didn't feel comfortable having discussions when other tribes were not present to comment
- **Tim Mentz** – had concerns with the predictive model and its lack of supporting data. He felt that because of the lack of data there was nothing to measure the model against. Absent of the data it is in the projects' best interest to do a 100% survey. Tim stated the area is rich in resources. Tim was also concerned with there only being two tribes present and no one from the RUS physically present. He asked who's responsibility was the predicative model.
 - **Laura Dean** – RUS is relying on consultants and the tribes expertise
- **Laura Dean's** responses to both commenter's
 - Unlike other agencies RUS does not have the resources to attend every consultation meeting

- Laura did attend the river crossing meetings last fall, if participants cannot make it to the meetings there are other opportunities to participate
- The project consists of 1,000ft corridor which is mostly privately owned land; there may be a few small areas that are state and federally owned. RUS will identify ownership of all lands within corridors.
- The project does not entail continuous excavation it is structures every 1,000ft. Determine what is the level of effort needed to make intelligent decisions on where to put structures.
- 100% survey is not a requirement; RUS needs to figure out what is reasonable.
- **Tribal Member** – What is required from FWS for surveys?
 - **Minnkota** –FWS owned land is being cross there are wetland easements under private ownership.
- **Laura Dean** – Expected Missouri and Sheyenne River crossings to be the primary areas of concern. Focus attention there with an intensive survey of high probability areas.
- **Diane Desrosiers** reiterated her concerns with this meeting and RUS not attending in person. She stated the items necessary and needed for consultation are as follows:
 - RUS needs to send official notice to the tribes that they are requesting consultation. Send notice allowing enough time for tribes to make arrangements.
 - Request RUS be at the table to discuss 100% surveys.
 - Would like financial assistance for the tribes to attend meetings.
 - Request data and supporting documentation on predictive model and an adequate amount of time to review.
 - **Laura Dean** –Tribes were invited to officially participate. RUS is obliged to offer the opportunity for consultation cannot make anyone participate.
 - RUS does not have the resources nor is there a requirement to attend every meeting and they cannot put projects on hold because they are unable to physically be there.
 - The tribes were sent the Class I survey and scope a few weeks ago.
 - Purpose of this meeting was to work one on one with tribes in order to get input from tribes. On most projects the surveys are done first then shared with the tribes.
 - COE issues a section 10 permit; they have stated they did not want to be part of the consultation.
 - There are limits to how and what the RUS can contribute to the tribes to support consultation. RUS can request that the applicants help but can not demand. There are also limitations and restrictions for the applicants.
 - Sisseton and Standing Rock were invited to this meeting because they expressed an interest. It is not a requirement for all tribes to attend together.
- **Tim Mentz** – stated that he is an interested party and he and his family are very familiar with the area. He requested info that has been sent to the tribes previously as well as past

correspondence; he would like to know who has been informed. He is concerned that RUS will move forward without consultation.

- **Laura Dean**– RUS will send the info Tim has requested
- **Tim Mentz** – stated that consultation has not been initiated in a reasonable manner.
 - **Laura Dean**– Tribal leaders and THPO's have been notified by mail.
 - Laura has been present at a meeting as well as Dennis.
 - RUS wants the tribes to help them make decisions on where to look and how to proceed.
 - Requirements under 110 are limited because RUS does not manage land, only provides loans and grants.
- **Tim Mentz** – Funding does impact sites.
- **Laura Dean** – If any particular concerns are known, identify on a map and get it back to RUS and a copy to Mike Justin by the end of next week.
- **Both Tribes** – feel that the area needs to be walked, not a windshield survey. They have trained staff that could help.
 - **Laura Dean** – The requirement does not ask for a perfect survey it asks for a good faith one. What about tribal monitors on the intensive Class III survey, not going to do the corridor in its entirety
 - **Tim Mentz** – there are certain areas that have been restricted from the tribes for many years; hard to know what's out there.
 - **Laura Dean** – Is there an oral history?
 - **Diane Desrosiers** – Oral history does not provide specifics, 100% survey is the only way.
 - **Laura Dean** – Conduct a Class III survey of high probability areas and see what info we have.
- **Tribal Member** – All sites by structures are impacted by construction
 - **John Graves** There are lead lines with a pulley system every few miles will use that to pull the conductor several miles at a time. Will definitely survey ROW and corridor. Will also survey construction/storage yards.
 - **Tribes** - Would like design plans on how structures are erected
- **Laura Dean** – Next steps; intensive survey of high probability areas within the corridor, will share the info and ask input from the tribes. PSC makes final determination on route. After the application is filed there will be an opportunity to participate at the PSC hearing.
- SHPO provided comments on PA – RUS will revise and send out to the tribes.
- Laura stated this is not the last meeting wanted to know if the week of October 4th was open for the tribes. She also mentioned the EA will be available the beginning of September and she will send out the RUS link.

Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc.

Center to Grand Forks Project

Section 106 Meetings – June 8, 2010 to June 10, 2010

June 8, 2010

At 8:30am, The Project team and consulting parties gathered at the Prairie Rose Conference Room at the Expressway Suites. Minnkota provided an overview of the Project description, purpose and need, structure descriptions, visual simulations, regulatory process, and consultation/meetings to date. Team departed for the Missouri River crossing at 10 am. From about 10:30 am to 12 pm, team toured the preferred crossing points of the Missouri River from a pontoon boat. The Standing Rock Sioux tribe asked if Minnkota had access to other tribal records. Minnkota replied that they only have access to records stored at SHPO. From 12pm to 1pm the team had lunch at the Missouri River. At 1pm the team returned to the Prairie Rose Conference Room at the Expressway Suites. Mille Lacs had no questions or comments on the potential crossing of the Missouri River.

June 9, 2010

At about 8am, the team departed the Expressway Suites to tour the James and Sheyenne river crossings. Tribal questions and concerns included:

- Class II survey at mapped cultural sites within the route and close to the route
- A tribal construction monitor at the Sheyenne River
- A tribal monitor at Class III survey locations
- Most of the project area appeared flat and cropped
- Many of the cropped areas may not have site integrity

June 10, 2010

Meeting began shortly after 8 am. After introductions, Minnkota gave a brief overview of the new mapbook. Route A is the shortest and has the least perceived environmental impact. When coming up with the route, Minnkota tried to pick the least impact to occupied houses. Questions raised included:

- how existing lines are crossed
- Do we know what are the 3 historic properties listed within the route's 1000-foot width? Not yet.
- Has the Bureau of Reclamation had any comments?
- Will the USFWS sign the PA? No. As with the USACE, they have limited areas of interest. A similar position is expected from the Bureau of Rec.
- Has Advisory Council on Historic Preservation been contacted? No.

RUS stated the purpose of the meeting and explained where we are in the Section 106 process. Tribal representatives stated that river crossings would need tribal monitoring, and noted that other areas besides the main river crossings would need survey, also.

A Class II survey was discussed, with SHPO agreeing that this type of survey is helpful, and mentioning that there are other landscapes, named and unnamed streams and elevated areas with good viewsheds that deserve attention.

USFWS stated that on they require 100% survey on their fee land.

RUS plans to do intensive survey within 150' ROW after the route is selected, although survey of river crossings could occur before the EA is complete.

Tribes mentioned that during the drive to the major river crossings there were many areas where the proposed route was too far in the distance to see.

The possibility of using a helicopter to facilitate assessing landforms for potential was discussed.

Programmatic Agreement Discussion

Suggestions for the PA included pulling the USACE "whereas" clause and using a similar clause for the USFWS, correcting typos, including attachments (map of APE). Process and protocols for discovery of human remains was discussed. Usually local law enforcement contacts county coroner. If discovery is not a crime scene and is on state or private land, SHPO does a site visit, and consults with ND intertribal reinterment committee. Suggestion to attach the ND Administrative Rules concerning human remains as an appendix.

Additional discussion on the definition of historic property. Avoidance of sites or historic properties infers evaluation against the criteria of eligibility for the NRHP. RUS position is that if sites cannot be avoided they will be evaluated.

Class II and III need to occur in late summer 2010.

USFWS will agree with SHPO on what land needs Class III survey on easements. A permit is required from USFWS in order to survey fee land. A State Land Department Permit is required if subsurface testing occurs on state land.

After a 20 tribal caucus... Tribes requested:

1. Another meeting with additional tribes
2. 100% survey of entire route
3. Detailed site information on 3 sites previously recorded in APE
4. Topographic maps of proposed route

RUS stated it will take tribes concerns under advisement and will keep tribes informed. Standing Rock THPO referred to the NDDOT PA as a good example. Standing Rock THPO offered available staff to help identify areas of “high potential”



**United States Department of Agriculture
Rural Development**

June 4, 2010

Mr. Jeffrey Towner, Field Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
North Dakota Field Office
3425 Miriam Avenue
Bismarck, North Dakota 58501

RE: Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation, Proposed Center-Grand Forks Transmission Line Project - Oliver, Burleigh, McLean, Sheridan, Wells, Eddy, Griggs, Nelson, Steele, Traill and Grand Forks Counties, South Dakota

Dear Mr. Towner:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is currently considering whether to provide financing for the construction of 345 kV transmission line between Center, North Dakota, and Grand Forks, North Dakota. The proposed facility would be constructed, and operated and maintained by Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc., of Grand Forks, North Dakota.

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of our intended approach to consultation under Section 7(a) of the ESA, and designate a non-federal agent for consultation. Your June 2, 2009, letter provided sufficient information on listed species in the project counties to allow us to begin the preparation of a biological assessment (BA) and related activities. Per your letter, the following are the current Federally-listed species in the proposed project counties:

Species/Listing Name	Status
Gray wolf (<i>Canis lupus</i>)	E
Whooping Crane (<i>Grus Americana</i>)	E
Piping plover (<i>Charadrius meladus</i>)	T

Interior least tern (<i>Sterna antillarum</i>)	E
Pallid sturgeon (<i>Scaphirhynchus albus</i>)	E
Black footed ferret (<i>Mustela nigripes</i>)	E
Dakota skipper (<i>Hesporia dacotae</i>)	C

We request that you provide any updates or changes to this list, otherwise we will proceed with our analyses based on the seven species listed. A project description was provided in a letter dated April 27, 2009, and in a meeting on May 6, 2009.

RUS will be the lead agency for Section 7 consultation, We wish therefore to designate as our agent for consultation Mr. Brian Hunker of HDR Engineering, Inc.

Questions or requests for information may be addressed to Dennis Rankin, telephone: 202-720-1953, e-mail dennis.rankin@wdc.usda.gov.

Sincerely,



Mark S. Plank
 Director, Engineering and Environmental Staff
 Rural Utilities Service

Subject:	Section 106 Consultation Meeting		
Client:	Minnkota Power Cooperative		
Project:	Center to Grand Forks Phase II	Project No:	110900
Meeting Date:	April 22, 2010	Meeting Location:	Bismarck, ND
Notes by:	HDR		

Attendees

Wahpekute: Dennis Gill, Bonnie Rencountre

Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate: Diane Desrosiers, Jim Whitted

NDSHPO: Paul Picha, Susan Quinnell

Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe: Natalie Weyaus, Alicia Skinaway

RUS: Dennis Rankin

Minnkota: Mike Hennes, John Graves

HDR: Brian Hunker, Mike Justin

Stanley: Duane Phillips

1. Opening blessing by Dennis Gill

2. Introductions and project overview

- Dennis Rankin provided an overview of the RUS and the EA process
 - Dennis Rankin and Laura Dean are the primary contacts for tribal representatives
- Mike Hennes provided a project overview

3. General Discussion - Comments and Concerns

- Jim Whitted (Sisseton-Wahpeton) had requested another opportunity for site visits.
 - Previous site visit in September 2009 – concern short notice (less than 2wks) no one came (note: meeting notice for April 22 meeting sent out on March 19th)
- Ensure that tribes are accommodated due to budget restrictions, other project commitments etc. Tribes do not have time to attend meetings.
 - Suggested standard mileage and per diem given out at meeting rather than sending in reimbursement forms.
 - Need adequate time for tribes and tribes have limited time
- Tribes have oral histories of burial areas and other significant areas.
 - Tribes could help avoid inadvertent discoveries during construction
- Tribal participation is necessary for meaningful consultation
 - Concerned that other tribes are not present for the meeting or site visit
- Concerns with river crossings
 - Along the James River from near Devils Lake to Jamestown
 - Avoidance is the key. Federal agencies need to accommodate.
 - High density of sites along rivers
 - The project crosses homelands for many different nations

- Tribes feel that the September river crossings did not constitute Government-Government meetings because no tribes were present.
 - Government-Government meetings are separate from Section 106 Consultation meetings, need to satisfy Section 106 & THPOs before Gov-Gov consultation can occur.
- Minnkota requested location data of sites or burial areas to assist in route selection. Dennis Gill offered to draw circles on maps around areas of particular concern to the Wahpekute without giving specific resource location information.
- Confidentiality issues addressed
 - Concerns with looting of sites if location data is provided
 - Would like tribal representatives to be present during Class III survey and construction to identify sensitive and sacred areas
 - Field representatives could help avoid inadvertent discoveries during construction
- Dennis Gill (Wahpekute tribe) asked about eminent domain. Minnkota stated that eminent domain is a last resort option that Minnkota would rather avoid if possible.

4. Cultural Resources

- John Whitted (Sisseton-Wahpeton) would like representatives to be in field during the Class III surveys, and construction monitoring.
 - Tribes have access to areas beyond the reservation lands
 - Construction monitors for pole placement
- Make sure sites are avoided
- Tribes don't want to mitigate anything, can't mitigate a site, site needs to be avoided
- How to pick a route before the Class III survey?
 - Based upon preliminary data
- Provide tribes with copy of Class I report on CD.
- Wahpekute have a high interest in Map 5 area near James River
- Dennis Gill (Wahpekute) mentioned cultural sensitivity training
- Suggested that the Pillager Band of Ojibwe were in the project area at one time.
- For the Enbridge Pipeline, Enbridge drove tribal representatives over the entire route – took a week. Suggested a tour of the route after preferred route is selected and after pedestrian surveys are complete.

5. Programmatic Agreement (PA)

- There was a question on how the PA was developed
 - Recommend ND DOT MOA and process could be used as an example or model. Tribes agreed and they don't want to reinvent the wheel.
 - Another meeting in early June to try to get more tribes involved
 - Other tribes to involve include: Fort Peck, Santee, Northern Cheyenne
 - Tribes want COE and USFWS at meeting
- Federal agencies need to be better at consultation
- Tribes felt it was too premature to sign agreement

6. Caucus – discussion with SHPO and RUS

7. Concerns following caucus

- PA needs to be reviewed more closely by all tribes. Another meeting in early June to try to get more tribes involved, more discussion, and site visits at the water crossings.
- Want more input from other tribes. Some claim they cannot afford to send representatives to meetings. Suggested standard mileage and per diem be given out at meetings rather than sending in reimbursement forms. Other tribes should include Fort Peck, Santee, Northern Cheyenne. Main reason tribes don't show up is they cannot afford the upfront expenses
- This meeting should be considered a preliminary consultation.
- Want Corps and USFW to be in attendance at additional meetings.

Subject:	USFWS – Section 7 Consultation Meeting		
Client:	Minnkota Power Cooperative		
Project:	Center to Grand Forks Phase II	Project No:	110900
Meeting Date:	April 21, 2010	Meeting Location:	
Notes by:	HDR		

Attendees

USFWS: Terry Ellsworth

RUS: Dennis Rankin, Tim Bohan

Minnkota: Mike Hennes, John Graves

HDR: Brian Hunker,

Stanley: Duane Phillips

1. Introductions and project overview

2. Letter to initiate Section 7 consultation process

- RUS to send USFWS letter to initiate Section 7 consultation process
- RUS asks for formal or informal consultation based upon affects or no affects to species
 - Formal = not following USFWS line marking
 - Informal = following USFWS line marking

3. Line Marking Protocol

- Mark new lines and not existing lines would not follow USFWS recommendations
- In Biological Assessment (BA) have section on biological justification for measures taken that would reduce or eliminate affects to migratory birds, including the whooping crane (line marking methods)
- Line marking within crane corridor
- Need justification of how marked lines – characterization of wetland and vegetation. Habitat would be shallow water with good visibility
- Timing to mark lines
 - USFWS – ASAP after construction
 - Develop marking schedule – can mark 2yrs later
- Upsize of static line – not larger cost depends on line and structures
 - Bring static wire size to that of phase wire
 - Static = 1/4" up to T2
 - Up static = \$2,200/mile
 - Mark = \$2,300/mile
 - Cannot mark 345 kV conductor because it gets too hot

4. Minnkota/HDR as designated agent

- RUS will designate Minnkota/HDR as agent for consultation until the RUS makes a determination

- RUS issues determination

5. Route Review

- Grassland easements
 - ROW Permit needed to place a pole in a grassland or wetland easement.
 - No permit needed if no surface disturbance
 - No permit needed to cross an easement with overhead wires if no ground disturbance
 - ROW Permit would take about 30-60 days. Issued by the Wetland Management Districts. May need to complete a Compatibility Determination.
 - USFWS easements do not cover a road ROW easement – section or township road ROW. If disturbance is in road ROW then no permit needed from USFWS.
- Permits needed for cultural surveys on USFWS fee-title and easement lands
 - To walk and look at cultural resources
- Permits need for construction access - to drive for construction access
- Surveys
 - No other surveys needed after raptor nest surveys
 - Suitable crane habitat needs to be documented on maps and reviewed by the USFWS
 - Map and field review a few basins
 - General description and photos of wetlands
 - 95% confident
 - Stratified random sample
- Need biological justification of how marked lines – characterization of wetland and vegetation community – confirm wetland
- Dakota Skipper
 - Ron Royer – has maps of skipper locations on USAS topo maps.
 - Butterflies stay at base of plant and only fly two weeks out of the year, so surveys are very difficult

6. Biological Assessment (BA)

- BA is not a decision document, it's a determination document
 - BA used for Section 7 determination of likely to effect or not likely to effect
- Submit preliminary draft BA to USFWS for review
- BA to be put in EA. Section 7 is RUS call, not USFWS.
- FONSI before PSC determination
- Do BA on project if project changes, then reopen Section 7 Consultation on project and have determination and USFWS concurrence
- RUS Environmental fiscal year ends October 2010

7. APLIC Meeting in D.C.

- Investor-owned utilities as member of APLIC have talked about a Habitat Conservation Plan for cranes
- Investor-owned utilities will hire someone to research crane stakes with power-lines – nine cranes killed between 1957-1989
- Look at line and what features of line or project area caused deaths.
- If lack of data, then error on side of birds

Subject:	Interagency Meeting		
Client:	Minnkota Power Cooperative		
Project:	Center to Grand Forks Phase II	Project No:	110900
Meeting Date:	April 15, 2010	Meeting Location:	USACE – Bismarck Office
Notes by:	HDR		

Attendees**SHPO:** Susan Quinzel**USFWS:** Barry Williams, Jeff Towner, Terry Ellsworth**NDOT:** Sheri Lare**COE:** Jason Renschler, Mike Morris, Patsy Crooke**FHWA:** Mark Schrader**State Water Commission:** Jim Lindseth**FAA:** Patricia Dressler**Minnkota:** Mike Hennes, John Graves**HDR:** Michelle Bissonnette, Brian Hunker**Stanley:** Duane Phillips**1. Project Overview**

- Mike Hennes opened the meeting with a project overview and purpose of project

2. EA vs. EIS

- EA would state one route as the preferred
 - Coordinate proposed field studies with USFWS
 - RUS to send letter to USFWS assigning Minnkota and HDR as designated agent with USFWS
- RUS made the determination that an EIS was not needed
- FONSI on one route by the RUS

3. USACE

- Cooperating agency is not needed because the project may not be an EIS
- COE will not be a signatory on the Programmatic Agreement
- Cultural resources scope would be limited to the Missouri River

4. FAA Airports

- Talk with public airports individually
- Contact, ND Aeronautics, Mark Wholler – 701-323-7380 (or 7370)
- FAA only controls airspace

5. ND DOT

- Wetland mitigation areas near Aneta – north of Aneta
 - Search landowner deed for easement lands

- Have upland buffer
- Line protection in wetlands
- Construction in wetlands
- Driveway approaches during construction from state highway
 - Approach permit from DOT district offices – specific locations
 - Put approach site in NEPA EA - need delineation and cultural review
 - Temporary and permanent access areas
 - If landowner wants the access then change permit from Minnkota to the landowner
- Email shapefiles of the routes to DOT for review of mitigation areas

6. Wetland delineations would identify suitable habitat for whooping crane

- One mile either side of line
- Habitat verified by USFWS – field review and maps
- Stratify random sample of field verified wetlands
- Characterize wetlands based on fieldwork
- Critical habitat or historic nesting
 - Restrict timing of construction
 - Line strikes of plover and terns
 - Lake Sakakawea level is up so plovers on river not lake

7. River Crossings

- Blue route close to DC

Meeting Notes

Subject: Agency Scoping Meeting		
Client: Minnkota Power Cooperative	Project No: 110900	
Project: Center to Grand Forks	Meeting Location:	USFWS Office - Bismarck, ND
Meeting Date: November 19, 2009	Notes by:	HDR

ATTENDEES

Floyd Bentz, Bureau of Recreation
 Jesse Hanson, ND Parks and Recreation
 Kathy Duttonhofer, ND Parks and Recreation
 Jim Lindseth, State Water
 Jason Renschler, USACOE
 Terry Ellsworth, USFWS
 Paul Picha, ND SHPO
 Susan Quinnell, ND SHPO
 Make Schrader, FHWA
 Dennis Rankin, RUS
 Tim Bohan, RUS
 Duane Phillips, Stanley Consultants
 Mike Hennes, John Graves & Jennifer Johnson, Minnkota
 Michelle Bissonnette & Brian Hunker, HDR

TOPICS DISCUSSED

1. RUS Introduction – RUS
 - Provided an overview of the RUS
 - RUS provides the financing system
 - Invited agencies to be a cooperating agency and discussed the cooperating agency roles and responsibilities. Noted that cooperating agencies get documents throughout the process, instead of at the end when review may take more time.
2. Schedule – RUS
 - RUS provided an update to the schedule that matches what was discussed at the public scoping meetings
3. Project Description – Minnkota
 - Minnkota provided a description of the project
 - A transmission line would be needed with or without the plant
 - Grand Forks needs voltage stability and is at the heart of Minnkota's service territory. Grand Forks has 4 lines into the area, whereas Fargo has 11 lines into the service area

- A line to Grand Forks would improve reliability because of separation from lines in the southern portion of the state
 - No new plant expansions are warranted at this time
 - Minnkota needs low cost, constant generation
4. Routing – Minnkota
- Commitment to reduce cross-country segments. Use field, section, and half-section lines for routing
 - Eliminate guy wires
 - Towers – average height of 140 feet, river crossing height of 200 feet, 1000 foot intervals
 - 150-foot-wide right-of-way (ROW) is proposed. ROW is designed for wind drift.
 - Bird diverters will be installed. Minnkota is looking for input on diverter type
 - Weed control at the towers
 - Tree control would be used along the ROW. Minnkota is assessing feathering the ROW from the line
 - PSC has a 2:1 mitigation for tree removal
 - Minnkota would recommend multiple route alternatives in the Environmental Assessment (EA)
5. Agency Comments to date – Minnkota
- Minnkota reviewed agency comments to date as follows
 - Cultural Resources
 - Missouri River
 - Native American Concerns
 - Agricultural Impacts
 - NRCS Farmland Protection Act
 - Wetland Conversion
 - Threatened and Endangered Species
 - Whooping Crane
 - Piping Plover
 - Least Tern
 - Piping Plover Critical Habitat
 - Sensitive Communities
 - Native prairie
 - Riparian woodlands
 - Prairie Chicken Leks
 - Bald Eagle and Raptor Nests
 - Migratory and Breeding Birds
 - Management Areas
 - WMAs, WPAs, State Park – Need Special Use Permit to cross these lands.
 - USFWS Wetland, Grassland, and Conservation Easements
 - LAWCON (Land and Water Conservation Fund grant) for Cross Ranch State Park

- Airports – Grand Forks expansion
 - USDA – CRP parcels
 - Surface Waters
 - River Crossings
 - Section 10 and 404 Permits
 - Wetlands
 - Avoid to the extent possible
 - Avoid DOT mitigation sites
 - ROW
 - Routing
 - River Crossings
 - Residences
 - Residences
 - Recreation – Missouri and Sheyenne Rivers
6. Agency Questions and Comments
- SHPO
 - Integrate EA and PSC process – Concern is that PSC has scheduled timelines that the Federal agencies do not
 - Hard to comment on corridors
 - Would like to comment on routes.
 - River crossings are the main area of concern for cultural resources
 - Minnkota and RUS held a river crossing site visit and no tribes participated
 - BOR
 - McClusky Canal and Recreation Areas
 - Parasailing at the recreation areas is becoming a more common event
 - Avoidance Areas (State Parks, WMAs, and WPAs) are red flags for routing. Minnkota is looking for support from the agencies to stay out of avoidance areas.
 - Parks and Recreation
 - River Crossings – Public perspective of river crossings, intrinsic value of river for users
 - Cross Ranch has many bald eagles
 - Keep lines crossing the river with other crossing points
 - Airplane safety
 - USACOE
 - Use EA for decision document
 - Permits depend on impacts – Temporary impacts are preferred under the Nationwide Permit. Missouri River would be the focal point of permits – Letter of Permission or Individual Permit
 - Endangered Species Act – Entire stretch of MO River has historic and active least tern and piping plover nesting locations. Some areas are designated critical

habitat - “adverse modification of critical habitat.” Winter is the best to cross the river, because no birds. Temporary staging on sandbars.

- Section 7 consultation on MO River will be separate
- Section 106 - High likelihood of cultural resources, thus need survey. USACOE will consult with the SHPO on the permit application. Current Programmatic Agreement on the Corp projects will not apply on the MO River—CFG will need a separate Programmatic Agreement.
- Tap lines - Allow taps in the future? Currently no taps, but Minnkota thinks that the line may be tapped in the future. Taps would be paid by the party requesting the tap.
- State Engineer
 - Sovereign Lands Permit needed for river crossings – MO, James, and Sheyenne. Permit applications would be sent to state and federal agencies for comment. Recommend following time-of-year restrictions.
 - Wetlands – drainage areas greater than 80 acres require Drainage Permits. No state mitigation for wetlands.
 - County Water Boards – may take jurisdiction of basins less than 80 acres
- Federal DOT
 - If not in interstate rights-of-way, then no jurisdiction
 - Follow elevation requirements for lines over bridges
 -
- National Heritage MO River – all state lands are within the Heritage Area
- USFWS
 - Recommend wetland impact mitigation – better to restore drained wetlands versus creation
 - Recommend prairie impact mitigation
 - Cumulative Impacts - diversity of DC line. Additional capacity may cause additional wind development – what is the impact of additional development?
 - Avian Protection Plan – USFWS will ask for an APP. The APP should capture known structures where electrocution has occurred and measures to reduce the electrocution potential.

Subject: USFWS Species Survey Meeting		
Client: Minnkota Power Cooperative	HDR Project No:	110900
Project: Center to Grand Forks Project	Meeting Location:	Conference Call
Meeting Date: September 24, 2009	Notes by:	HDR

ATTENDEES

Minnkota – John Graves

HDR – Brian Hunker

Agencies – Terry Ellsworth, USFWS

TOPICS DISCUSSED

John Graves met with Terry Ellsworth at the USFWS office in Bismarck, North Dakota, then conference called Brian Hunker.

1. No tribes attended the field review.
2. Bald eagle and raptor nests
 - North Dakota Game and Fish (NDGF) has a database (including USFWS data) of known nest sites
 - NDGF GIS hub may have shapefile of data
 - Buffer distances
 - 330 foot buffer from the nest if it is screened from construction
 - 660 foot buffer from the nest if it is not screened from construction
 - Active nest – construct outside of the breeding season
 - Recommended to survey the line for new nests. Aerial flights may be done.
 - Begin in February or March
3. Other raptor nest
 - Best survey period late March – early April
 - May take nests down if found and not during the breeding season (no eggs or chicks)
4. Piping Plover and Least Tern
 - Get USACE survey data from the USFWS – Sand bar and alkali wetland data
 - Carol Allen of the USFWS is the plover expert
 - Missouri River crossing construction late in the year – Begin after September or October
 - No need for new surveys
 - Minnkota told the UWFWS that the line may be strung across the river by barge
 - Minnkota informed the USFWS that they plan to place the towers about 150 feet back from the river bank, however they will have to have taller structures.

5. Piping Plover Designated Critical Habitat

- Construction activities should have a 0.5-mile-wide buffer of identified breeding areas during the breeding season
- Avoid spanning alkali wetlands
- Breeding season -April 1 to August 30
- Survey for nests in June if construction near critical habitat. No surveys needed if construction is outside of breeding season.
- With the exception of the Missouri River crossings, our corridors appear to be outside of the other breeding areas.

6. Sprague's Pipet

- Petition to list
- Habitat consists of native prairie and/or grasslands in one-mile-area blocks or larger
- Species may occur in Oliver County and west
- Surveys are not necessary.

7. Dakota Skipper

- Limited number of known sites
- No corridors through known sites
- Bigger issue is ground disturbance, such as pipeline construction or cultivation

8. Migratory / Breeding Birds

- Recommended to have a biologist survey the construction right-of-way for nests during the breeding season
- If active nest found, then provide a buffer
- If not active nest, then construction may proceed
- Game birds – pheasants, partridge – no survey
- Pigeons, rock dove, and English sparrow – no survey
- Transmission lines do not disturb the ROW, like pipeline construction. Terry suggested clearing the ground where structures will be placed in late fall or very early spring, so that birds wouldn't nest there. Construction may use a vehicle to pull and sting the line. Thus minimal ground impacts and may keep birds away from nest for temporary period as vehicles in area of nest.
- Construction technique okay as long as you don't keep birds away from nest for long period of time, like days.
- No permit system in place for take of migratory birds

Subject: North Dakota Inter-Agency Project Introduction Meeting		
Client: Minnkota Power Cooperative	HDR Project No:	104603
Project: Center to Grand Forks Project	Meeting Location:	COE Office Bismarck, ND
Meeting Date: April 30, 2009	Notes by:	HDR

ATTENDEES

Minnkota – Mike Hennes and John Graves

HDR – Michelle Bissonnette and Brian Hunker

Agencies – See attached attendees list - NDGFD, COE, Bureau of Reclamation, USFWS, FHWA, NRCS, NDDOT, ND Office of State Engineer

TOPICS DISCUSSED

1. General Project Introduction

- Introductions – Name and agency represented
- John Graves presented the county meeting PowerPoint presentation
 - RUS is lead federal agency for NEPA process
 - Landowners play a role in selecting the route
 - Get preliminary corridors narrowed down into two RUS corridors
 - Need agency input on any problems or issues of the preliminary corridors
 - More info will be coming in the future as the project develops

2. Discussion Items

There was a discussion about reducing wildlife impacts by paralleling existing corridors/right-of-way (ROW) – road ROWs and section lines – but this reduces reliability of the system. Minnkota state that the only time they will share a corridor is by under-building a 69kV line.

Below is a list of discussion topics by agency.

- USFWS Issues – Terry Ellsworth will be our project contact
 1. Biological assessment of corridors was not presented in the schedule and this will need to be discussed.
 2. RUS should send a letter designated Minnkota, HDR, or both as the designated federal representative.
 3. Whooping Crane
 - a. Background – Presently only about 240 individuals from wintering grounds in Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas, down from 275 last year because lack of freshwater that reduced food supplies and habitat. Thus, the population was reduced by about 20%.

Recovery goal of 1,000 individuals. Please see attached whooping crane migration corridor information sheets.

- b. Minimization Recommendations – Following these recommendations would result in a determination of “may affect, but not likely to affect.” Not following the recommendations may result in a formal Section 7 consultation that would take more time. Recommendations are centered on line marking, the USFWS estimates that line marking would result in a 50% reduction in collision mortality. Mark the static line. No need to mark the phase lines.
 - i. Within 75% sighting area - Mark 100% of the new line AND mark existing line by the same length of new line. For example, if 100 miles of new line is constructed, then mark 100 miles of new line and 100 miles of an existing line.
 - ii. Beyond the 75% sighting area but within the 95% sighting area – Mark new line and an approximate length of existing lines within one mile of wetlands.
 - iii. Beyond the 95% sighting area – Mark new line within one mile of wetlands.
 4. Avian Protection Plan – Monitor and report bird strikes. Will satisfy the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
 5. Easements – Habitat Office administers easements information
 - i. Special Use Permit – for temporary impacts on easement lands
 - ii. Right-of-Way Permit – for permanent impacts on easements lands
 - iii. Wetland Easements – pertain to the wetland-areas of the easement land
 - iv. Grasslands Easements – pertain to surface-areas of the easement land
 - v. Conservation – all land types of the easement land
 6. Native Prairie – Grassland and Song birds
 7. Wetlands – Avoid, if cannot then will request mitigation on jurisdictional basins.
- North Dakota DOT
 1. Work with districts for ROW permits and highway/interstate crossing permits
 2. Avoid wetland mitigation sites – work with districts offices to find the wetland mitigation site locations
 - NRCS
 1. Avoid wetlands
 2. Easements along rivers – request data from Human Resources office
 3. Enforce the Farmland Protection Act (FPPA), thus this agency will keep track of the acres taken out of production.
 - FHWA
 1. Concerned if project infrastructure will be placed within Interstate ROW. If cross Interstate then deal with ND DOT.
 - COE – Jason Renschler will be the project contact
 1. No staging areas within wetlands
 2. Section 10 & 12 & 404 permits may be needed
 3. Missouri River is the only Section 10 river within the project area. The James and Sheyenne rivers within the project area are not Section 10 rivers.

4. May need a Letter of Permission from the Missouri River crossing, due to height restrictions.
- State Engineer
 1. Wetland impacts greater than 80 acres will require individual permits for each wetland basin impacted.
 2. Permits will be required for crossing the Missouri, James, Sheyenne, and Red rivers.
 - Bureau of Recreation
 1. Concerned about the McClusky and New Rockford canals.
 2. Poles should avoid Bureau of Recreation land on either side of the canals.
 - Game and Fish
 1. Echoed USFWS comments
 2. Avoid state lands
 3. Avoid native forests, especially riparian woodlands. Mitigation for riparian woodlands would be at a 2:1 ratio.

ACTION/NOTES

- Obtain easement data from NRCS
- Obtain easement data from Bureau of Reclamation
- Obtain easement data from USFWS
- Obtain wetland mitigation site locations from the ND DOT
- Discussion the Missouri River crossing with the agencies and figure out pole height