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January 14, 2016

Via Electronic Filing

Daniel P. Wolf
Executive Secretary
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
350 Metro Square Building
121 Seventh Place East
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101

Re: Route Permit Compliance Filing: December Status Report and Complaints Summary for Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse Transmission Line Project PUC Docket #TL-09-1448 and the North Rochester to Chester 161 kV Transmission Line Project PUC Docket #TL-11-800

Dear Mr. Wolf:

On May 30, 2012, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission granted Northern States Power Company, doing business as Xcel Energy, ("Permittee") a Route Permit for the Hampton - Rochester - La Crosse Transmission Line Project ("Project"). A separate permit was issued for the related North Rochester to Chester Project on September 12, 2012. The purpose of this letter is to provide an update on project status for the month of December.

North Rochester to Chester

Line crews have completed hauling and setting of all structures for the North Rochester to Chester line. In December crews worked on stringing and clipping conductor on the line. At the end of the month stringing was complete from structures 88 (where is diverges from double circuit with the CapX 345 kV line) to 183 and clipping was complete on a significant portion of that segment. Clipping will continue throughout January as well as completion of the final wire pull from structure 183 to the Chester Substation.

Hampton to North Rochester

Construction continued on the Hampton to North Rochester line segment throughout the month of December. Tree crews returned to the project in December to begin clearing for access for the two remaining foundations at the Cannon Golf Club and at the end of the month civil crews began matting for construction access. Line crews continued hauling and setting structures and stringing and clipping line. Stringing is done and clipping and sagging are nearly complete on the southern end of the line (approximately 6.5 miles north from the North Rochester Substation).

Environmental monitors have been onsite throughout construction of the project and Environmental Monthly Reports are enclosed for both construction segments.

The project team received a complaint on December 10 from a landowner who lives off 170th Street near Zumbrota. He indicated he was concerned that stormwater/erosion controls were not being maintained properly and that there was tracking on roads from construction vehicles. The project team also received a call from Dave Bodovinitz of the MPCA on December 8 regarding a citizen complaint of tracking on roads in the same area (possibly from the same landowner). Project team members conducted a site visit and removed sediment that had been tracked onto the road at three right-of-way access points. Project team members followed up with phone messages to the landowner asking if there were any other issues that needed to be addressed but did not receive further direction. The MPCA was also notified of the repairs and cleanup. The project team is currently wrapping up all work in this area and buttoning up erosion control BMPs (best management practices) and do not plan to be back until restoration activities begin in the spring.

Please feel free to contact me at (612) 330-6073 or ellen.l.heine@xcelenergy.com if you have any questions regarding this filing.

Sincerely,

Ellen Heine
Xcel Energy
Sr. Land Agent

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Environmental Monitor Monthly Report

Date: December 31st, 2015	**Location: Olmsted and Goodhue Counties**
Environmental Monitor(s): Andrew Welch, Andrew Wendlandt, Sarah Duke Middleton	**Segment: Hampton to North Rochester**
Contact #: (608) 807-9806	**Site Conditions:** Temperatures varied greatly throughout the month, ranging from 9 – 47 degrees F. Mild weather resulted in a rain event mid-month, and several storms dropping a wintery mix (snow/rain/ice) across the project. The ROW (Right-of-Way) remained saturated for a large portion of December, and began to freeze at the end of the month. Approximately 6-8 inches of snow covered the ROW by the end of December.

Current Phase of Construction:

Foundations: Crews began drilling foundations at the North Rochester substation, working their way north in early May 2015. By November 30th, 2015 TriState has completed all foundations on the line, except for 61-62 (golf course).

An Xcel crew worked on the Hampton to North Rochester (HR) line the last week of May, drilling the direct imbeds at structures 227 and 212. The crew completed work on June 1st, 2015.

Tree clearing: Wright Tree crews cleared the entire ROW (right-of-way) by the end of November 2015, with the exception of structures 61-62 (golf course).

Restoration: Dahn Construction (Dahn) has worked on the entire HR line installing approaches, staging mats for contractors, and installing mats over gas crossings and in wetland areas since March 2015.

Transmission: The L.E. Meyers Co. (MYR) arrived on the project at the start of August. Work began at the North Rochester substation, progressing quickly northward. By the end of December, MYR crews had set the following structures: 98, 99, 102, 104-107, 109, 112, 113, 127-129, 144, 145, and 147-150. Framing is completed from 237-169, and the majority of structures 167-87. They have pulled conductor from structure 237 to 199. The majority of this span has also been sagged and clipped by MYR.

Work Performed:

Wright Tree crews returned in late December to clear a small section of the golf course (structures 61-62). This work was interrupted due to the holiday break, and will be completed in early January 2016.

MYR began in August with a small hauling crew, and steadily added staff throughout the month. Staffing had progressed to near 45 members by the end of the December, including Haverfield Air and Northern Clearing. Haverfield Air was contracted by MYR to pull line and assist with clipping structures. Northern Clearing was contracted by MYR to mat ROW areas and flag roadways as needed. The MYR hauling crew continues to be closely followed by the framing and setting crews. The grounding crew has rotated throughout the month with grounding structures and completing right-of-way (ROW) cleanup. By the end of the month MYR crews had hauled all structures from 1-11 and 47-237; framed up to 89 (most structures), and grounded up to 98 (most structures), set structures: 98, 99, 102, 104-107, 109, 112, 113, 127-129, 144, 145, and 147-150; pulled conductor from 237 to 199. Clipping and sagging is complete in the majority of this span as well. Poor weather/ROW conditions and the holiday break slowed construction progress this month.

Dahn Construction continued to address any compliance issues found on the ROW this month. Crews also began removing mats from the southern end of the line (North Rochester Substation – structure 218) once MYR crews completed work in the area. It is expected that this stretch of ROW will be turned over to restoration in January 2016. The mats were cleaned and relocated to the Cannon Falls Golf Course, where Dahn crews began matting an access road to structures 61 and 62. This will serve as the ROW access for all construction activity, and will be removed prior to Spring thaw (end of February 2016).

Compliance Issues:
During December, the weather was unpredictable and warm, contributing to a handful of compliance issues. Mid-month, the ROW received a large rain event (1.8 inches) that created some sediment movement, muddy conditions, and led to rutting issues where crews were working in agricultural fields. Crews have been diligent in cleaning mud tracking off roadways and correcting rutting as conditions allowed. Most crews on site have kept clean work areas, back blading when needed, and limiting access when ROW conditions are poor.

Dahn Construction has continued stabilizing compliance issues with BMPs as ROW conditions allowed. This has resulted in only a handful of compliance issues related to construction activity this month. Areas of the ROW where BMPs have repeatedly failed due to sediment movement were reevaluated, and hardier BMPs were installed; silt fence backed with staked biologs.

The major issue of note on the ROW is still the landowner spill that occurred in October 2015 at structure 81. On October 30th, Clean Harbors excavated the remaining contaminated and placed the soils onto poly tarp for control. The contaminated soils where then covered up with additional poly tarp for protection. The liquid waste retrieved was placed into 50 gallon drums, also located on the ROW. At the end of the December Clean Harbors had yet to return and finish the cleanup process. Construction crews were able to conduct work on the ROW and avoid this area.

There were no major issues or concerns in December. Prior to leaving for holiday break, all crews cleaned up the ROW.

SWPPP:
Dahn Construction removed matting in lowland and wetland areas on the southern third of the ROW where construction activity is complete. Restoration will begin in these areas once Spring thaw occurs. The mats were cleaned and relocated to the Cannon Falls Golf Course (structures 61 and 62). The matted access and working pad currently being installed will limit impacts to sensitive areas on the golf course and prevent rutting as both the civil and transmission crews work during this winter. Crews also continue to install and maintain BMPs along the ROW.

The majority of compliance issues noted in December are associated with needed maintenance of erosion control devices. Current outstanding compliance concerns are currently being addressed by both Dahn Construction and Northern Clearing.

Agricultural Summary:

Dahn Construction will decompact the ROW in these agricultural areas once line construction is complete. Foundation contractors are expected to utilize concrete washouts. If a spill occurs, they are advised to immediately remove concrete slurry and impacted soil.

Areas of deeper compaction and other agricultural issues observed since beginning construction:

Nearest structure or span	Issue	Date Mitigated
152	Rutting on ROW in ag field due to construction activity during wet conditions.	10/2/2015
155	Rutting on ROW in ag field due to construction activity during wet conditions.	10/2/2015
183	Concrete slurry poured onto open soil – located in ag field.	7/2015
185	Rutting on ROW in ag field due to construction activity during wet conditions.	7/27/2015
187	Rutting on ROW in ag field due to construction activity during wet conditions.	10/2/2015
194	Rutting on ROW in pasture due to construction movement during wet conditions.	9/16/2015
197	Rutting on ROW in ag field near wetland due to construction activity during wet conditions.	9/9/2015
209	Damaged BMP's and heavy precipitation caused topsoil movement. Soil exited ROW into nearby ditch and plugged culvert.	9/23/2015
222	Concrete slurry poured onto open soil near structure – located in ag field.	5/22/2015
224	Concrete slurry poured onto open soil near structure – located in ag field.	5/14/2015
233	Concrete slurry poured onto open soil near structure – located in ag field.	5/22/2015

Please see attached photos

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Photo Log

Photo – 1 **Date: 12/2/2015**

Location: STR 52

Description: Hauling crew has been delivering structures as soon as they come into the laydown yard. These structures were spotted in a wetland on top of cribbing. Matting will be needed to set the structure or the ground is frozen.

Photo – 2 **Date: 12/2/2015**

Location: STR 64

Description: Slopes are stable after tree removal.

Photo – 3 **Date: 12/2/2015**

Location: STR 66

Description: Stable ROW with snow cover, minimal vehicle traffic, and vegetation intact surrounding ROW.

Photo – 4 **Date: 12/2/2015**

Location: STR 72

Description: Slopes are stable with BMPs in critical area in place.

Photo – 5 **Date: 12/2/2015**

Location: STR 72

Description: Slopes surrounding stream are stable following clearing.

Photo – 6 **Date: 12/2/2015**

Location: STR 76

Description: BMPs surrounding stream area stable with minimal vehicle movement.

Photo – 7 **Date: 12/2/2015**

Location: STR 81

Description: Clean Harbors hasn't removed sediment from site at this time. Both the 55 gal drums and pile are on site awaiting resolution.

Photo – 8 **Date: 12/2/2015**

Location: STR 88

Description: Structure framed on ROW.

Photo – 9 **Date: 12/2/2015**

Location: STR 185

Description: ROW conditions are stable with frozen soils and several inches of snow cover. Vegetation is in place along ROW.

Photo – 10 **Date: 12/3/2015**

Location: STR 24

Description: Local snowmobile clubs have many trails that run along the ROW. They have been out marking the areas where crews will work to provide safety warnings to stay away from structures.

Photo – 11 **Date: 12/3/2015**

Location: HR 61

Description: Dahn has been working to create an access at the Golf Course to minimize impacts to site.

Photo – 12 **Date: 12/3/2015**

Location: STR 103

Description: Slopes remain stable and BMP's in place.

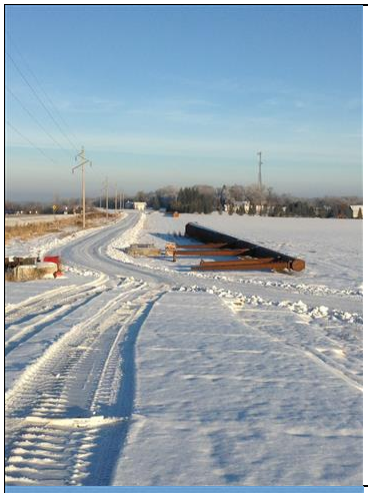	**Photo – 13** **Date: 12/3/2015** **Location:** STR 106 **Description:** Due to snow and frozen ground the hauling and framing crews have been able to ready a lot of structures along the ROW.
	**Photo – 14** **Date: 12/3/2015** **Location:** STR 148 **Description:** Crews working to set structure using lift.
	**Photo – 15** **Date: 12/7/2015** **Location:** Hampton Substation **Description:** Water channeled from access road above infiltration basin and around the culvert leading into it near substation. Sediment was deposited into infiltration basin. A cleanout of the basin and restoration of channel will occur next spring.

	**Photo – 16** **Date: 12/7/2015** **Location:** Hampton Substation **Description:** Additional view of infiltration basin issue.
	**Photo – 17** **Date: 12/7/2015** **Location:** STR 61 **Description:** Wright Tree cleared access to golf course.
	**Photo – 18** **Date: 12/7/2015** **Location:** STR 61 **Description:** Area near golf course after clearing was completed by Wright Tree. Wood and poly matting will be brought in for access to minimize any impacts to turf and wetlands for drilling and setting activities.

Photo – 19 **Date: 12/7/2015**

Location: STR 61

Description: Slopes near golf course after clearing was completed by Wright Tree. Slopes received a layer of mulch to minimize soil movement.

Photo – 20 **Date: 12/7/2015**

Location: STR 61

Description: Additional pictures of clearing near golf course.

Photo – 21 **Date: 12/9/2015**

Location: STR 201

Description: Small amount of mud on public roadway from crews working. These were cleaned off at the end of the day, but caused some consternation from the residents.

Photo – 22 **Date: 12/9/2015**

Location: STR 201

Description: Mud and rutting on matting from vehicle traffic.

Photo – 23 **Date: 12/9/2015**

Location: STR 209

Description: Damaged biologs from vehicle access to structure. Additional biologs were placed on the slope by Dahn to minimize soil movement.

Photo – 24 **Date: 12/9/2015**

Location: STR 209

Description: Vegetation growth and a combination of biologs and silt fence are holding up on access.

Photo – 25 **Date: 12/9/2015**

Location: STR 210

Description: Mud tracking on matting from crews working and leaving ROW.

Photo – 26 **Date: 12/15/2015**

Location: STR 222

Description: BMPs functioning as designed. Holding back sediment and controlling water flow away from wetland.

Photo – 27 **Date: 12/15/2015**

Location: STR 222

Description: Snowmelt run-off channeled sediment down slope, but not off the ROW.

	**Photo – 28** **Date: 12/15/2015** **Location:** STRS 222 **Description:** Matting over wetland was removed and BMPs not replaced leading to sediment channeling through area and depositing in wetland.
	**Photo – 29** **Date: 12/15/2015** **Location:** STR 224 **Description:** Site conditions; rain, snowmelt, and muddy soils led to areas of rutting but not much sediment movement.
	**Photo – 30** **Date: 12/15/2015** **Location:** STR 224 **Description:** BMPs performing at designed. Withholding sediment movement and allowing water infiltration.

Photo – 31 **Date: 12/17/2015**

Location: STR 77

Description: BMPs protecting infiltration basin.

Photo – 32 **Date: 12/18/2015**

Location: STR 208

Description: Haverfield helicopter grounded due to high winds while clipping.

Photo – 33 **Date: 12/21/2015**

Location: STR 209

Description: BMPs stabilizing hillside (silt fence, numerous biolog checks, and vegetation).

Photo – 34 **Date: 12/21/2015**

Location: STR 61 & 62 access road at golf course

Description: Dahn Construction installing mat road to structure.

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Environmental Monitor Monthly Report

Date: December 31st, 2015	**Location: Olmsted and Wabasha Counties**
Environmental Monitor(s): Andrew Welch, Andrew Wendlandt, Sarah Duke Middleton	**Segment: Northern Rochester to Chester**
Contact #: (608) 807-9806	**Site Conditions:** Temperatures varied greatly throughout the month, ranging from 9 – 47 degrees F. Mild weather resulted in a rain event mid-month, and several storms dropping a wintery mix (snow/rain/ice) across the project. The ROW (Right-of-Way) remained saturated for a large portion of December, and began to freeze at the end of the month. Approximately 6-8 inches of snow covered the ROW by the end of December.

Current Phase of Construction:

Foundations (STRs 89 - 204): TriState Drilling (TriState) arrived on the project in January of 2015 with three drilling crews and had completed all foundation work on the 6th of March, with the exception of STR 205 at the Chester substation. One TriState crew returned to the line on the 26th of May to drill and pour STR 205. The foundation was completed on May 27th, 2015.

Tree clearing: Wright Tree began clearing the ROW in November 2014. All clearing activities were completed the week of February 17th, 2015.

Restoration: Dahn Construction (Dahn) installed several approaches on the northern half of the line in December 2014. A small crew also installed a bridge spanning Silver Creek (STR 183) during that time. In February, part of March, and April small crews returned when needed to install and remove matting and fencing, and stabilize small portions of the line. Dahn has been installing and maintaining matting and BMP's as transmission work takes place on the line.

Transmission: The Xcel transmission crew arrived on the project during the middle of September 2015. A crew from Armstrong Crane came onsite on Oct. 14th and began setting structures as Xcel crews framed and installed insulators. Setting was completed by Armstrong Crane on November 30th, 2015. Air2 arrived onsite on Nov. 2nd, and continues to assist Xcel crews with wire pulls and clipping assemblies. Wire/rope was pulled for all structures by the 15th of December 2015.

Work Performed:

This month Xcel crews completed stringing conductor for the entire line with the assistance of Air2. Crews also began pulling conductor, completing the northern two-thirds of the line. In January the wire pull will resume from 183 to 205 (substation). Crews completed pulling wire from structures 88 – 183. As of December 30th, all wire was strung (structures 88-205) and clipping was completed from structures 114 – 162. Impaired equipment and holiday break greatly impacted construction progress this month.

Dahn Construction has continued to maintain matting in lowland and wetland areas along the line. Additional matting was installed for the rope/wire pull. Crews also addressed compliance issues, installed/maintained BMPs along the ROW, and served as flaggers for the transmission crews during wire pulls. A small crew also decompacted the ROW from structures 98 – 147 during the first week of December.

Compliance Issues:

During the month of December most compliance issues were directly tied to crews driving off matting, working on tearing down structures, and minor rutting.

Dahn Construction has been working to address these issues by placing a combination of poly and wooden matting over wetlands and residintial yards where access is needed, protecting adjacent wetlands with BMPs, and stabilizing areas with BMPs as needed. Crews on site have kept clean work areas, correcting rutting when needed, and limiting access when ROW conditions are poor. This has resulted in only a handful of compliance issues related to construction activity this month.

SWPPP:
Dahn Construction continued to install matting in lowland and wetland areas along the NC line. These mats have greatly reduced construction impacts to the ROW. Crews continue to install and maintain BMPs along the ROW as well.

Agricultural Summary:

Dahn Construction will decompact the ROW in these agricultural areas once line construction is complete. Foundation contractors are expected to utilize concrete washouts. If a spill occurs, they are advised to immediately remove concrete slurry and impacted soil.

Areas of deeper compaction and other agricultural issues observed since beginning construction:

Nearest structure or span	Issue	Date Mitigated
92	Concrete slurry poured onto open soil, adjacent to ag field.	4/23/2015
137	Broken dewatering bag and dewatering residue left onsite. Residue flowing off ROW, down adjacent grass water way, into downslope farm field.	4/30/2015
171	Concrete slurry poured onto open soil near structure – located in ag field.	4/30/2015

Please see attached photos

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Photo Log

Photo – 1 **Date: 12/2/2015**

Location: STR 130

Description: (ROW) Right-of-Way is stable and remains heavily vegetated with ECDs (Erosion Control Devices) in place for stabilizing soils or protecting wetland areas.

Photo – 2 **Date: 12/2/2015**

Location: STR 137

Description: Crews set up for wire pull. Equipment area is clean and organized.

Photo – 3 **Date: 12/2/2015**

Location: STR 163

Description: Dahn placed ECDs after restoring slope, seeding, and blanketing once crews finished setting structure and prepping for wire pull.

	**Photo – 4** **Date: 12/2/2015** **Location:** STR 182 **Description:** Crews conducting wire pull operations. Slopes are not showing any sediment movements and BMPs are in place.
	**Photo – 5** **Date: 12/2/2015** **Location:** STR 189 **Description:** Crews are working on matting as much as possible to minimize rutting and compaction issues such as this example.
	**Photo – 6** **Date: 12/8/2015** **Location:** STR 90 **Description:** Structures set with pulleys awaiting wire pull. ROW is stable and wetlands protected in this area.

Photo – 7 **Date: 12/8/2015**

Location: STR 101

Description: ROW after decompaction and cleanup.

Photo – 8 **Date: 12/8/2015**

Location: STR 115

Description: Landowner tiled field and connected it with existed waterway/wetland area. In the process of excavating drainage he damaged the project's biologs and protection. Sediment is piled within wetland and directly on top of biologs.

Photo – 9 **Date: 12/8/2015**

Location: STR 115

Description: Additional photo of landowner damage to wetland/project controls.

	**Photo – 10** **Date: 12/8/2015** **Location:** STR 115 **Description:** Additional photo of landowner damage to wetland/project controls.
	**Photo – 11** **Date: 12/8/2015** **Location:** STR 157 **Description:** Crane pad stable with ECD's in place downstream of exposed soils.
	**Photo – 12** **Date: 12/8/2015** **Location:** STR 174 **Description:** Heavily vegetated ROW. Crews set these structures off of the asphalt road so compaction and rutting are minimal if present at all.

Photo – 13 **Date: 12/8/2015**

Location: STR 200

Description: Air 2 crews working on wire pull. Landing zone and equipment flagged off for safety and the ROW is in great shape.

Photo – 14 **Date: 12/8/2015**

Location: STR 203

Description: Equipment staged on matting road near substation in place to minimize impact and restoration. Vegetated and stable ROW.

Photo – 15 **Date: 12/10/2015**

Location: STR 92

Description: ROW is stable and dried out with minimal traffic and rutting. Matting is staged for wire pull work.

Photo – 16 **Date: 12/10/2015**

Location: STR 137

Description: ROW and wire pull area after cleanup and decompaction activities.

Photo – 17 **Date: 12/10/2015**

Location: STR 137

Description: Additional pictures of ROW and wire pull area after cleanup and decompaction activities.

Photo – 18 **Date: 12/10/2015**

Location: STR 138

Description: Additional view of ROW and wire pull area after cleanup and decompaction activities.

Photo – 19 **Date: 12/10/2015**

Location: STR 167

Description: Heavily vegetated around wetland area. No sediment movement observed.

Photo – 20 **Date: 12/10/2015**

Location: STR 173

Description: ROW cleaned up after structures were setup. Wooden matting was used for access which minimized impacts.

Photo – 21 **Date: 12/10/2015**

Location: STR 204

Description: Wire pull setup. Crews are feeding line from this end to the tensioner at 183.

Photo – 22 **Date: 12/15/2015**

Location: STR 97

Description: Crews finishing guard structures alongside roadway.

Photo – 23 **Date: 12/15/2015**

Location: STR 92

Description: Crews working on wire pull. Dahn placed additional matting and BMPs along access route and wetland areas.

Photo – 24 **Date: 12/15/2015**

Location: STR 92

Description: Additional picture of wire pull setup.

Photo – 25 **Date: 12/15/2015**

Location: STR 93

Description: Additional picture of crew working on wire pull setup. Working mainly out of bucket trucks that are on matting due to soft, muddy ROW conditions.

Photo – 26 **Date: 12/15/2015**

Location: STR 190

Description: Some rutting was observed along the ROW from crews accessing structures in the muddy conditions.

Photo – 27 **Date: 12/15/2015**

Location: STR 203

Description: Crews working on large matted area for this stage of the wire pull to minimize impacts to site.

Photo – 28 **Date: 12/15/2015**

Location: Chester Substation

Description: Some equipment caused rutting and a setback to the restoration of the substation. Issues such as this are examples of restoration work to be completed next growing season.

Photo – 29 **Date: 12/21/2015**

Location: STR 88

Description: Dahn Construction removing matting.

Photo – 30 **Date: 12/21/2015**

Location: STR 96

Description: Xcel crews removing guard structures.

Photo – 31 **Date: 12/21/2015**

Location: STR 203

Description: Xcel crews set up for wire pull.