David Birkholz
OES Permitting Staff Project Manager
MN Department of Commerce
85 7th Place East,. Suite 500
St. Paul, MN 55101

Subject: TL-09-1056

Dear Mr. Birkholz:

It seems like only yesterday that we looked for a place to build our home. Because of my job we decided to drive only twenty minutes from the hospital. We drove in all directions but loved the land we found here near St. Wendel. We loved it so much that we put an ad in the paper and found a piece of land just a little beyond our twenty minute limit. I was pregnant when we first walked these 60 acres of woods and wetland and dream of the home we would build and the family we would raise here. It was spring and the red winged blackbirds were noisy; the blue flag iris in bloom.

Our sons have grown up here and make daily walks down to the wetlands. We see raccoons, fox, turkeys, badgers, deer and many kinds of waterfowl. Last summer our sons spotted a young bobcat in a tree and it was kind enough to stay there until we could see it as well. The boys sit in their deer stands and watch the nesting Sandhill Cranes on Shepard Lake. Last summer we had eight nesting pairs!

We have respected the land. We recycled before our trash service provided recycling. My sons really think I am old when I tell them I picked up trash during the first ever Earth Day, and I am really in trouble if I come home with groceries in a plastic sack rather than the reusable cloth ones I carry in my purse. We have decreased our fuel consumption drastically by installing a geothermal system.

These are some of the reasons it pains me to see the new route planned for CapX2020; the new power line being strung across Minnesota. A new line to carry the old dirty technology of coal. A new line that if the latest "preferred" route is used comes down our driveway then makes a sharp turn north to cross the wetlands. You see, there are laws about how close you can build or have farm animals to a wetland. Apparently those laws don't apply to power companies. It would be a travesty if these power lines are allowed in this rare and vital habitat.

The state has already acquired the land along I-94 and would need fewer additional easements if they hold to this, their original route. Areas of difficulty could be managed by underground placement of lines. This is more expensive in the short term but would decrease the amount of property the state would need to obtain and the number of families put at risk. Underground lines minimize electromagnetic fields to protect our families and wildlife. They are mandatory in some states.

I support the recommendations of Stearns County in their letter of November 4, 2009 that the preferred route be located as close to the current I-94 freeway corridor as possible to affect as few homes and business as possible.

Ideally we would spend more of our time and energy supporting the development of alternative clean energy sources. The very fact that no one wants these lines on their land should tell us that we are spending billions to build infrastructure that is outdated and unsafe.

Sincerely,

Vickie Ebaugh
12992 380th Street
Avon, MN 56310