



**In the Matter of the Prairie Rose
Transmission, LLC Route Permit Application
for a 115 kV Transmission Line in Rock
County for Interconnection of the Prairie
Rose Wind Farm**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
SCOPING DECISION**

PUC Docket No. IP-6838/TL-10-134

The above matter has come before the Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Commerce (DOC) for a decision on the scope of the Environmental Assessment (EA) to be prepared for the Prairie Rose Transmission, LLC (Applicant) application for a permit to construct a 115 kilovolt (kV) High Voltage Transmission Line (Project) in Rose Dell Township in Rock County.

Prairie Rose Transmission, LLC is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Geronimo Wind Energy, LLC, a Minnesota limited liability renewable energy company. A route permit application was filed on March 10, 2011, and accepted as complete by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission on April 15, 2011.

The Project is a 115 kV transmission line that would be built to interconnect the Prairie Rose 200 MW Wind Farm to the transmission grid. The complete proposed transmission line would span approximately 24 miles, from the Prairie Rose Wind Farm Substation in Rose Dell Township in Rock County to the Split Rock Substation in Brandon, South Dakota. The Minnesota portion of the proposed Project would be approximately 5.5 to seven miles long. The single-circuit transmission line would head west along County Highway 7 to County Highway 23. There it would continue due west along Township Road 72 to the Minnesota-South Dakota border. The proposed route would be sited along a combination of existing road right-of-way (ROW) and private land adjacent the public road ROW.

The DOC Energy Facility Permitting (EFP) staff held a public information and environmental assessment scoping meeting on June 7, 2011, at Memorial Hall in Jasper, Minnesota, to discuss the project with the public and gather public input on the scope of the Environmental Assessment to be prepared. Four people attended the meeting. A member of the public requested information on the type of structure planned for the Project, especially concerning the possible use of self-weathering poles.

The public was given until June 20, 2011, to submit written comments. EFP received one comment letter to review and consider during preparation of the scope of the Environmental Assessment. The letter was from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requesting review in the EA of the placement of the substation and routing the line near Minnesota County Biological Survey sites. Specifically, the DNR requests the EA evaluate on which side of the road an alignment would cause the least impact on biologically significant areas.

No additional environmental questions were recommended to staff, and no alternative routes were recommended to staff for analysis in the EA.

Having reviewed the matter, consulted with the EFP staff, and in accordance with Minnesota Rule 7850.3700, I hereby make the following Scoping Decision:

MATTERS TO BE ADDRESSED

The Environmental Assessment on the proposed Prairie Rose 115 kV High Voltage Transmission Line Project will address the following matters:

A. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

1. Purpose of the Transmission Line
2. Project Location and Environmental Setting
3. Engineering and Operation Design
 - a. Transmission Line and Structures
 - b. Transmission Capacity
 - c. Construction Procedures
 - d. Right-of-Way Maintenance

B. IMPACTS AND MITIGATIVE MEASURES

1. Human Settlement
2. Public Health and Safety (including electromagnetic fields [EMF] and safety codes)
3. Noise
4. Aesthetics
5. Recreation
6. Transportation
7. Soils and Geology
8. Land Use
9. Archaeological and Historic Features
10. Air Quality Resources
11. Surface Water Resources
12. Wetlands
13. Flora
14. Fauna
15. Rare and Unique Natural Resources
16. Radio, Television, and Cellular Phone Interference

EFP staff is not recommending that any additional routes other than the one presented in the Route Permit Application be evaluated in the EA. The EA will evaluate the relative impact of the two substation alternatives noted in the Application.

D. IDENTIFICATION OF PERMITS

The Environmental Assessment will include a review of permits that will be required or likely required for construction of this project.

ISSUES OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The EA will not consider whether a different size or type of transmission line should be built instead, nor will the EA consider the no-build option. The EA will also not consider the following:

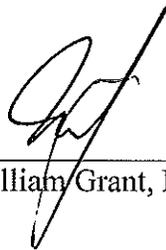
1. The manner in which land owners are paid for transmission rights-of-way easements, as that is outside the jurisdiction of the Commission.
2. Alternatives not described specifically in this Scoping Decision.

SCHEDULE

The Environmental Assessment shall be completed and available by August 31, 2011. A public hearing will be held in the Project area after the Environmental Assessment has been issued and notice served.

Signed this 28th day of June 2011

STATE OF MINNESOTA
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



William Grant, Deputy Commissioner

