
7.0 VEGETATION, WILDLIFE, AND FISHERIES

7.1 VEGETATION

7.1.1 Existing Vegetation Resources

As described in Section 4.0, approximately 38 percent of the area affected by the construction right-of-way will involve forest land consisting of deciduous, evergreen, and mixed forests. Construction in most forested areas will be adjacent to existing pipeline or other third-party rights-of-way. Approximately 34 percent of the area affected by the construction right-of-way will be agricultural land. This land consists of pastures or hay fields and cultivated crops such as corn, soybeans, wheat, oats, wild rice, and dry edible beans. Potatoes, sugar beets, vegetables, sod, and Christmas trees are also common crops in the counties crossed by the Project (USDA, 2007). The construction right-of-way will also affect wetlands/open water (approximately 16 percent), open land (approximately 12 percent), and developed land (less than 1 percent). The wetlands include emergent herbaceous wetlands, woody wetlands, and open water; the open land consists of maintained rights-of-way, shrub/scrub areas, grasslands, developed open space, and barren land.

7.1.2 Ecological Classifications

Based on Minnesota's Ecological Classification System (MNDNR, 2013f), the majority of the Project is located in the Laurentian Mixed Forest Province. The Project also will cross small portions of the Prairie Parkland, Tallgrass Aspen Parklands, and Eastern Broadleaf Forest Provinces (MNDNR, 1999).

Laurentian Mixed Forest Province

The preferred route will cross several sections and subsections within the Laurentian Mixed Forest Province between approximate MPs 381.7 and 597.8, as summarized in Table 7.1.2-1. Throughout this province, the most important land uses today are forestry, recreation, tourism, and (in some areas) agriculture.

Prairie Parkland Province

The preferred route will cross the Red River Prairie subsection of the Prairie Parkland Province between approximate MPs 299.0 and 322.5. The majority of this subsection is a glacial lake plain originally dominated by tallgrass prairie and wet prairie, mixed with wetlands, meandering waterways, and old beach ridges. Much of this area has been converted to agriculture and is intensively ditched.

Tallgrass Aspen Parklands Province

The preferred route will cross the Aspen Parklands subsection of the Tallgrass Aspen Parklands Province between approximate MPs 322.5 and 354.0. This subsection is part of a low, level lake plain originally occupied by extensive forested peatlands to the east and tallgrass prairie to the west. Agriculture is the dominant land use in the southern half of the subsection, though more recently extensive areas have also been cleared for farming in the northern half. There are more and larger blocks of presettlement vegetation in this subsection than in others where agriculture is widespread.

Eastern Broadleaf Forest Province

The preferred route will cross the Hardwood Hills subsection within the Eastern Broadleaf Forest Province, between approximate MPs 354.0 and 381.7. The subsection is characterized by steep slopes, high hills, and lakes and wetlands formed in glacial end moraines and outwash plains. Presettlement vegetation included prairies, aspen-oak lands, oak savannas, and mixed forests of oaks, sugar maple, basswood, and other hardwoods. Much of this subsection is now farmed.

Table 7.1.2-1 Ecological Sections and Subsections of the Laurentian Mixed Forest Province in the Sandpiper Pipeline Project Area		
Section	Subsection	Description
Northern Minnesota Drift & Lake Plains	Chippewa Plains (MPs 381.7 to 411.8 and 412.6 to 413.6)	Characterized by three large, heavily used lakes and level to gently rolling plains. Conifers once dominated the sandier portions of the subsection. Aspen is now the most common tree species, found in pure stands and also mixed with birch, maple, oak, white spruce, jack pine, and red pine.
	Pine Moraines & Outwash Plains (MPs 411.8 to 412.6 and 413.6 to 507.3)	Lakes are very common, found on end moraines and outwash plains. Till plains are also present. White and red pine formerly dominated on end moraines and till plains, while jack pine barrens and jack pine woodlands were common on well-drained outwash plains. Black spruce, tamarack, white cedar, and black ash predominated on poorly drained sites.
	St. Louis Moraines (MPs 507.3 to 515.6, 516.5 to 520.6, and 550.8 to 571.9)	Characterized by rolling to steep slopes, with end moraines the dominant landform. Northern hardwood forests were common in the southern portion, while white pine, sugar maple, basswood, and balsam fir characterized the north. Today, quaking aspen is the primary species harvested.

Northern Minnesota Drift & Lake Plains	Tamarack Lowlands (MPs 515.6 to 516.5 and 520.6 to 550.8)	Defined by a glacial lake plain that lacks the well-defined beach ridges of better-known Glacial Lake Agassiz in western Minnesota. Lowland hardwoods (black ash) and lowland conifers (black spruce, tamarack, and white cedar) were originally the most common forest communities. Sedge meadows were extensive, and uplands were largely occupied by aspen-birch forests. Today much of the land is publicly owned.
Southern Superior Uplands	Glacial Lake Superior Plain (MPs 589.4 to 597.8)	A small subsection that extends into Wisconsin, coinciding with the basin of Glacial Lake Superior. Topography is level to gently rolling, except where water has cut deep valleys. Presettlement vegetation consisted of forests dominated by white spruce, white pine, and aspen-birch.
Western Superior Uplands	Mille Lacs Uplands (MPs 571.9 to 589.4)	Characterized by gently rolling till plains and drumlin fields. Dominant feature is Mille Lacs Lake. The original vegetation was a mix of maple-basswood forests in the south; conifer, hardwood, and mixed conifer-hardwood forests elsewhere; and peatland areas inhabited by sedge-fen, black spruce-sphagnum, or white cedar-black ash communities.

7.1.3 Sensitive Plant Communities

Native Plant Communities

Information on Native Plant Communities (“NPC”) within a 2-mile-wide study area was obtained from the MNDNR NHIS in April and May 2013. These communities—a mixture of prairie, wetland, and forest types—are described in Table 7.1.3-1.

NPC Code	NPC Class ^a	NPC Type/Subtype
APn91b	Northern Poor Fen	Graminoid Poor Fen (Basin)
FDc12a	Central Poor Dry Pine Woodland	n/a
FDc23a1	Central Dry Pine Woodland	Jack Pine - (Yarrow) Woodland/ Ericaceous Shrub Subtype
FDc24a1	Central Rich Dry Pine Woodland	Jack Pine - (Bush Honeysuckle) Woodland/ Bracken Subtype
FDc34a	Central Dry-Mesic Pine-Hardwood Forest	Red Pine - White Pine Forest
OPp91a	Prairie Rich Fen	Rich Fen (Mineral Soil)
OPp91c	Prairie Rich Fen	Rich Fen (Prairie Seepage)
OPp93a	Prairie Extremely Rich Fen	Calcareous Fen (Northwestern)

UPn12b	Northern Dry Prairie	Dry Sand - Gravel Prairie (Northern)
UPn23b	Northern Mesic Prairie	Mesic Prairie (Northern)
UPs13	Southern Dry Prairie	n/a
WPn53b	Northern Wet Prairie	Wet Brush-Prairie (Northern)
WPn53c		Wet Prairie (Northern)
WPn53d		Wet Saline Prairie (Northern)
^a Two communities of undetermined class were also reported to occur within the 2-mile-wide study area: Northern Hardwood Forest and Shrub Swamp Seepage Subtype		

From this information, EPND identified rare plant survey sites within a 250- to 450-foot-wide survey area by examining NPCs and other sensitive plant communities, including Sites of Biodiversity Significance (including draft data for Clearwater, Hubbard, Cass, and Aitkin counties), known MNDNR designated Calcareous Fens, and previously unsurveyed sites that may be eligible for mapping in the MNDNR NHIS. The rare plant survey protocol was developed in consultation with the MNDNR. EPND completed 94 percent of early season rare plant surveys and 73 percent of late season rare plant surveys in 2013. The remainder of the rare plant surveys will be completed in early 2014.

EPND has consulted with the MNDNR throughout the 2013 survey season and will continue to consult throughout the 2014 survey season.

Sensitive Forest Resources

MNDNR recommends avoidance of Old Growth Forest special management zones (including 330-feet surrounding the old growth perimeter), Ecologically Important Lowland Conifers (“EILC”), Representative Sample Areas (“RSAs”), and High Conservation Value Forests (“HCVF”) (MNDNR, 2013g). EPND consulted with the MNDNR Regional Plant Ecologist regarding the Project’s impact on these resources and determined that there are no RSAs within the 2-mile-wide-study area. EPND continues to work with the MNDNR to determine if any Old Growth Forest stands, EILCs, and HCVFs are crossed by the preferred route.

Other Sensitive Communities

Peatland SNAs are unique areas identified by an underlying substrate of peat organic soils that support spruce, tamarack and sedge fens and wetlands of important state significance. The Project will not be located within one mile of any Peatland SNAs or other SNAs. Calcareous fens are further discussed in section 9.2.3.

7.1.4 General Construction and Operation Impacts and Mitigation

Clearing of herbaceous vegetation during construction is anticipated to result in a short-term impact to vegetation. Active revegetation measures and rapid colonization by annual and perennial herbaceous species in the disturbed areas will restore most vegetative cover within the first growing season. Clearing of woody shrubs and trees will be the primary long-term impact on vegetation associated with the Project. Woody shrubs and trees will be allowed to recolonize the temporary construction right-of-way and extra workspaces as described in the EPP (see Appendix A). However, recolonization of disturbed areas by woody shrubs and trees will be slower than recolonization by herbaceous species. As natural succession is allowed to proceed in these areas, the early successional or forested communities present before construction will eventually reestablish. EPND will employ best management practices to control the spread of noxious weeds and invasive plants as described in the EPP (see Appendix A).

Clearing trees in the construction right-of-way could affect undisturbed forest vegetation growing along the edges of the cleared areas. By exposing some edge trees to elevated levels of sunlight and wind, evaporation rates and the probability of tree knockdown could increase. Due to the increased light levels penetrating the previously shaded interior, shade-intolerant species will be able to grow, and the species composition of the newly created forest edge will likely change. The proposed clearing could also temporarily reduce local competition for available soil moisture and light and may allow some early successional species to become established and persist on the edge of the undisturbed areas adjacent to the site.

The Project will result in the clearing of approximately 1,946 acres of forest land during construction. Approximately 627 acres of this forest land will be maintained clear of trees for operational purposes, including facilitating aerial inspections, preserving pipeline integrity, and providing access for maintenance or emergency work in compliance with federal regulations.

Impacts on vegetation adjacent to the Project area will be minimized through adherence to soil erosion control specifications and by confining clearing activities to the approved right-of-way and extra workspaces. To prevent damage to adjacent trees, EPND will fell trees toward the cleared right-of-way. Upon completion of construction, EPND will revegetate disturbed areas in accordance with the EPP (see Appendix A) unless otherwise directed by landowners or land managing agencies. Timely restoration of the construction right-of-way and reseeded with an appropriate seed mix will minimize the duration of vegetative disturbance.

7.2 WILDLIFE

7.2.1 Existing Wildlife Resources

As described in Section 7.1.2, the Project will be constructed through several major ecosystems, including deciduous forest, conifer forest, wetlands, and prairie. Wildlife habitats within these ecosystems are diverse. Existing wildlife resources in the construction right-of-way are described below.

The Project will cross land that has been altered for use as hayfields, pastures, and row crop production. These agricultural fields provide limited wildlife habitat. Common mammalian species, including white-tailed deer, woodchucks, striped skunks, raccoons, weasels, Virginia opossum, and various mice and voles, use these areas for feeding and cover. Common bird species, such as European starlings, American crows, eastern meadowlarks, and house sparrows, are also typically found in agricultural fields.

Forested areas affected by the Project are found primarily along the eastern portion of the preferred route. Mammalian species typical of Minnesota's deciduous forests include eastern chipmunks, black bears, snowshoe hares, gray squirrels, gray fox, porcupines, pine martens, and several species of bats. Some of these species also inhabit northern Minnesota's coniferous forests, while others, such as least chipmunks, snowshoe hares, and red squirrels, are more unique to evergreen forests. The structural diversity of forests provides a variety of habitats that can support a large number of avian species, including songbirds, game birds, and raptors.

Wetlands affected by the Project consist primarily of emergent herbaceous wetlands, woody wetlands, and open water. The emergent wetlands and open water provide habitat for a variety of aquatic wildlife, including muskrats, beavers, mink, river otters, waterfowl, wading birds, and numerous species of reptiles and amphibians. The woody wetlands provide additional habitat for terrestrial wildlife, such as white-tailed deer, moose, gray wolves, black bears, and a variety of small mammals and songbirds.

Open lands affected by the Project consist primarily of shrub/scrub areas, grasslands, developed open space, and barren land. The undeveloped, vegetated open lands likely support several species of birds, numerous small rodents, and several species of snakes. Species such as coyote, red fox, and a variety of raptors typically hunt open areas for the varied prey. Other common wildlife species that may use open areas include thirteen-lined ground squirrels, eastern cottontail rabbits, and white-tailed jackrabbits.

7.2.2 Special Wildlife Areas

Wildlife Management Areas

The Project will cross state-designated WMAs (also described in Section 11.0). The following discussion focuses on the wildlife species typically present in these areas. WMAs represent areas with high potential for wildlife production, public hunting, trapping, fishing, and other compatible recreational uses. The type of wildlife habitat in each WMA crossed by the Project is described below.

- The Crow Wing Chain WMA is a complex of lakes, wetlands, old fields, and forests (including a candidate old growth northern hardwood stand) along the Crow Wing River. Half of the WMA is forested with aspen, jack pine, red pines, white pines, and oaks; the other half consists of emergent wetlands and lowland brush. Hunting options include deer, bear, small game, forest game birds, waterfowl, and wolves. Non-game viewing opportunities include pileated woodpeckers, broad-winged hawks, and warblers. The Project is co-located with another third-party right-of-way as it crosses the Crow Wing Chain WMA.
- The Grayling Marsh WMA includes uplands dominated by aspen, low areas that are primarily brush and grass, and a wetland impoundment. There are good opportunities for viewing waterfowl, nesting sandhill cranes, ruffed grouse, woodcock, sharp-tailed grouse, swamp sparrows, gray catbirds, deer, bear, and wolves.
- The Lawler WMA is mostly made up of marsh and low brushy areas; the upland area is limited to a small grass field. Trapping and hunting opportunities include deer and waterfowl. Beaver, mink, deer, common yellowthroats, swamp sparrows and alder flycatchers may be seen. The Project is co-located with another third-party right-of-way as it crosses the Lawler WMA.
- The Salo Marsh WMA is a complex of wetlands and forests dominated by aspen and balsam fir. Management emphasis is on waterfowl in the wetland areas and on deer, bear, woodcock, and ruffed grouse in the upland timber. Wildlife viewing opportunities include red-headed blackbirds, bald eagles, and grebes.

Figure 7.2.2-1 presents the preferred route as it passes through these WMAs. EPND continues to consult with MNDNR regarding these WMA crossings.

Large Block Habitats

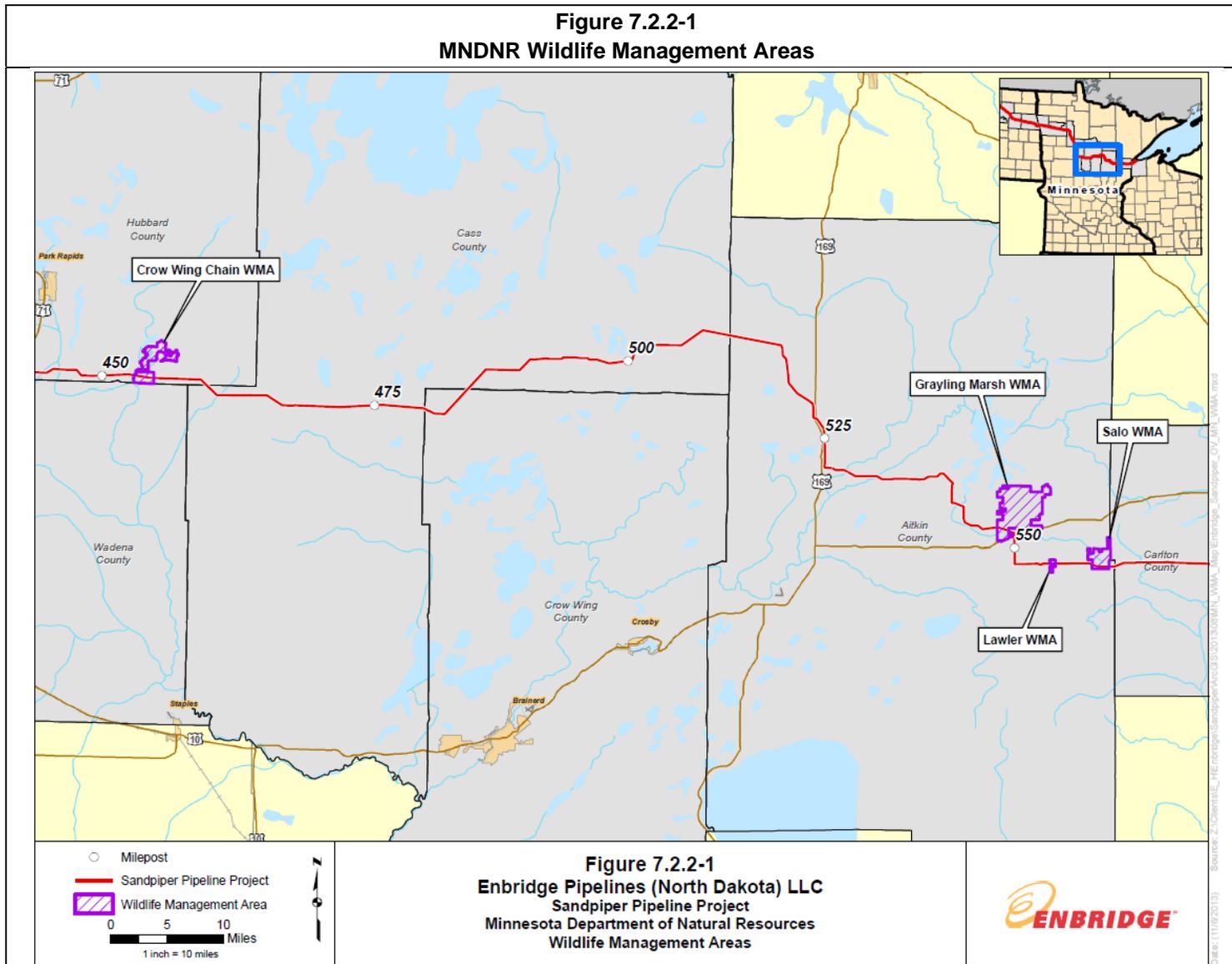
MNDNR recommends that, to the extent feasible, the Project avoids fragmenting large contiguous blocks of habitat of 40 or more acres (MNDNR, 2013g). According to MNDNR, large blocks of habitat and habitat complexes (grassland, wetlands, or forest) can provide

an increased diversity and abundance of wildlife, especially for area- or edge-sensitive species. The Project is co-located with other third-party rights-of-way for over 70 percent of its length, thereby reducing the possibility of segmenting large block habitats. 75 percent of large block habitat crossings will involve widths less than 528 feet, and another 15 percent will be less than 1056 feet wide.

Key Habitats

MNDNR provided EPND with a list of Key Habitats for Minnesota's Species of Greatest Conservation Need ("SGCN") as defined by the State Wildlife Action Plan (MNDNR, 2013g). Key Habitats, defined as the habitats most important to the greatest number of SGCN, are specific to individual ecological subsections. Many of the Key Habitats provided by MNDNR overlap with the NPCs described in Section 7.1.3 and with Large Block Habitats. Consultation with MNDNR regarding minimization of impacts to Key Habitats is ongoing.

**Figure 7.2.2-1
 MNDNR Wildlife Management Areas**



7.2.3 General Construction and Operation Impacts and Mitigation

Construction and operation of the Project are not expected to have a significant impact on wildlife. Temporary impacts will occur during construction due to clearing of vegetation and disturbance in the right-of-way.

Long-term impacts will be limited to a loss of forest habitat because of clearing the temporary construction right-of-way and extra workspaces that are located in forested areas. Because the Project will be generally co-located with other existing pipelines and third-party rights-of-way, construction and operation of the Project will not significantly alter the character of the landscape for the majority of the preferred route. Landscape alteration will occur in areas of the preferred route where greenfield construction will be required.

Clearing the construction right-of-way will remove vegetative cover and will cause temporary displacement of wildlife species along the preferred route. The construction right-of-way and extra workspaces will remain relatively clear of vegetation until the Project is completed. Some smaller, less mobile animals such as amphibians, reptiles, and small mammals may experience direct mortality during clearing and grading activities. Larger and more mobile animals will disperse from the Project area during construction. Displaced individuals may temporarily occupy adjacent, undisturbed areas, possibly causing increased competition with other individuals in those areas. Some individuals may return to their previously occupied habitats after construction has been completed and suitable habitat has become reestablished. The intensity of construction-related disturbances will depend on the particular species and the time of year during construction.

Clearing of herbaceous and shrub communities in the open areas of the temporary right-of-way, both in upland and wetland areas, will cause a short-term impact due to the relatively quick recolonization of plant species that comprise these communities. Herbaceous cover will be seeded on disturbed areas following the completion of pipeline construction and it is expected that pre-existing herbaceous and shrub habitats will quickly become reestablished. It is expected that the wildlife species that use these habitats will also return relatively soon after construction. EPND will employ best management practices as described in its EPP to limit the introduction or spread of invasive plant species.

After post-construction seeding with herbaceous species, temporary right-of-way and additional temporary workspaces in previously forested areas will be allowed to revegetate naturally with tree and shrub species common to the area. There will be medium-term impacts on wildlife that use forests, due to the conversion of previously forested habitat to herbaceous-dominated habitat on the temporary construction right-of-way. Over time, natural growth and succession will restore the temporary portion of the construction right-of-way and extra workspaces to a forested community, with wildlife typical of forest habitats returning.

Potential long-term impacts on wildlife are associated with the permanent clearing of forest vegetation. The Project will involve the permanent removal of 627 acres of forested habitat for the right-of-way, which will be converted to non-forest habitat for the life of the pipeline. Long-term impacts on wildlife species inhabiting undisturbed forests will be minimized in areas where the Project parallels existing, maintained rights-of-way. It is anticipated that the incremental loss of this forested habitat along the existing cleared right-of-way will not have a significant effect on wildlife species.

7.3 FISHERIES

7.3.1 Existing Fisheries Resources

Representative Fish Species

As described in Section 9.2, the Project will cross 149 waterbodies including 73 perennial streams and 76 intermittent streams. Most of these waterbodies contain warm-water fisheries, though some cold-water fisheries are also present in the area. Game fish species found in waterbodies in the vicinity of the Project are listed in Table 7.3.1-1 (MNDNR, 2013h).

Table 7.3.1-1 Game Fish Species in the Sandpiper Pipeline Project Area	
Warm-Water Game Fish	Cold-Water Game Fish
Bass (largemouth, rock, smallmouth)	Brook trout
Bullhead (black, brown, yellow)	Rainbow trout
Catfish (channel)	
Crappie (black)	
Muskellunge	
Perch (yellow)	
Pike (northern)	
Sunfish (bluegill, green, hybrid, pumpkinseed)	
Walleye	

Designated Trout Streams

The preferred route will cross 13 MNDNR designated trout streams (see Table 7.3.1-2). EPND is exploring methods for crossing these streams that will minimize impacts to the resource. EPND will continue to work with Regional Assessment Ecologists from the MNDNR to plan these crossings and to identify other sensitive fisheries crossed by the Project.

Table 7.3.1-2 Trout Stream Locations along the Sandpiper Pipeline Project Area		
County	Waterbody Name	Approximate Milepost
Hubbard	LaSalle Creek	407.3
	Straight River	434.9
Cass	Spring Brook	502.2
Carlton	King Creek	577.6
	Blackhoof River	585.1
	Unnamed Stream	591.7
	Mud Creek	592.3
	Unnamed Stream	592.7
	Clear Creek	593.9
	Unnamed Stream	594.9
	Unnamed Stream	595.3
	Unnamed Stream	595.6
Unnamed Stream	596.1	

Aquatic Management Areas

MNDNR provided EPND with a list of five AMAs in proximity to the Project. AMAs represent lakes, rivers, streams, and adjacent areas that are critical for fish and other aquatic life and compatible recreational uses. Of the five AMAs listed, the Project will cross two, the Spire Valley Hatchery and LaSalle Creek AMAs. These crossings are further described in Section 11.1.2.

7.3.2 General Construction and Operation Impacts and Mitigation

Movement of fish upstream and downstream of crossing sites may be temporarily affected during installation of the pipeline across streams due to disturbances associated with construction. The physical disturbance of the streambed may temporarily displace adult fish and may dislodge other aquatic organisms. Some mortality of less mobile organisms, such as small fish and invertebrates, may occur within the trenching area. Aquatic plants, woody debris, and boulders that provide in-stream fish habitat will also be removed during trenching. Noise disturbances upstream and downstream of the sites will deter fish that may otherwise inhabit the area. These disturbances will be temporary and are not expected to significantly affect fisheries resources. Studies have shown that natural recolonization of the disturbed areas will begin soon after restoration of the streambed and that complete recolonization will occur within 1 year following construction (Schubert et al., 1985; Anderson et al., 1997).

Sediment loads will be temporarily increased downstream during open-cut stream crossings. These increased loads may temporarily affect the more sensitive fish eggs, fish fry, and invertebrates inhabiting the downstream area. However, the suspended sediment levels will quickly attenuate both over time and distance and will not adversely affect resident fish populations or permanently alter existing habitat (McKinnon and Hnytka, 1988). The crossings will be completed as quickly as possible, and the suspended sediment levels will return to pre-construction levels after in-stream work is completed.

Most streambank vegetation will be removed across the right-of-way during construction. After construction, an area over the pipeline will be maintained in an herbaceous state, and trees that are located near the pipeline will be cut and removed from the right-of-way. Changes in the light and temperature characteristics of some streams may affect the behavioral patterns of fish, including spawning and feeding activities, at the pipeline crossing locations. The maintained streambanks, however, are not wide enough to have a significant impact on general temperature and light conditions of the streams crossed by this Project.

To minimize the potential for adverse impacts on the fisheries at river and stream crossings, EPND will implement erosion and sediment control measures specified in the EPP (see Appendix A) and limit the duration of construction in these waterbodies.

7.4 THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

EPND initiated consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (“USFWS”) Twin Cities Field Office in early 2013 to understand the potential presence of threatened and endangered species in the vicinity of the Project. The initial consultation letter from USFWS included a list of federally listed and candidate species that may occur in the Project area in Minnesota. The letter also requested discussions with the USFWS to ensure that EPND considered recommendations regarding the Endangered Species Act (“ESA”), Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act during Project planning. EPND discussed initial recommendations with USFWS staff over the phone and received an email with information on federally listed species in the state. Per the request of USFWS and due to the federal permitting process, further consultations with USFWS are pending the identification of a lead federal agency for the Project and subsequent designation of EPND as the non-federal representative for the federal agency under the ESA.

EPND also initiated consultation with the MNDNR Endangered Species Review Coordinator in early 2013 to understand the potential presence of threatened and endangered species in the vicinity of the Project. EPND conducted a review of the Minnesota NHIS in cooperation with the MNDNR to determine if any federally or state-listed species are known to occur within the 2-mile-wide study area. Specific occurrences for threatened or endangered species found in the 2-mile-wide study area that may be impacted by the Project are summarized in Table 7.4.1-1.

Table 7.4.1-1 Element Occurrences in Minnesota's Natural Heritage Information System for Threatened and Endangered Species		
ZOOLOGICAL RECORDS		
Species	Status	County
Blanding's Turtle	threatened (state)	Cass, Crow Wing
Dakota Skipper	endangered (state), ¹ candidate (federal) ²	Polk
Henslow's Sparrow	endangered (state)	Hubbard, Red Lake
BOTANICAL RECORDS		
<i>Botrychium lanceolatum</i>	threatened (state)	Carlton
Bog Adder's-mouth	endangered (state)	Hubbard
Butternut	endangered (state) ¹	Cass
Clinton's Bulrush	threatened (state) ¹	Clearwater, Hubbard
Oake's Pondweed	endangered (state) ¹	Cass
Sterile Sedge	threatened (state)	Polk
¹ Revised status as of April 19, 2013.		
² Has potential to be federally listed as threatened or endangered in 2014.		

7.4.1 General Construction and Operation Impacts and Mitigation

EPND will continue to consult with USFWS and MNDNR on the status of mitigation strategies for special-status species. If any of these species are identified in the construction right-of-way during surveys, EPND will work with these agencies to develop mitigation plans to avoid or minimize impacts on the potentially affected species.