
11.0 FEDERAL, STATE, AND COUNTY RECREATIONAL AREAS

11.1 EXISTING DESIGNATED RECREATIONAL AREAS

The preferred route will not cross any national parks, national forests, national landmarks, wilderness areas, wildlife refuges, waterfowl production areas, or national wildlife management areas. However, the Project will cross a federally designated trail, state and county forests, county parks, state WMAs and AMAs, state-designated trails, designated scenic byways, and state-designated water trails as discussed in the following subsections.

11.1.1 Federally Designated Recreation Areas and Trails

The preferred route will not cross federal recreation areas. However, the North Country Trail, a National Scenic Trail, will be crossed at MP 416.3 in Hubbard County. EPND initiated consultation with NPS and the North Country Trail Association regarding this crossing. Because the trail is on county-owned land, EPND will also consult with Hubbard County to minimize impacts on the trail.

As discussed in Section 9.2, the preferred route will cross four Minnesota rivers that are listed on the NRI. These rivers are the Red Lake River (MP 305.3 and 324.7) in Polk County, the Clearwater River (MP 386.7) in Clearwater County, the Moose River (MP 508.7) in Cass County, and the Willow River in Aitkin County (MP 529.4). None of these are federally designated as National Wild and Scenic River. EPND has initiated consultation with the NPS regarding these river crossings. In addition, EPND will coordinate with the MNDNR regarding these river crossings, as they are all PWI watercourses.

11.1.2 State-Designated Recreation Areas

State Park and Forest Land

The Project will cross state forest land administered by the MNDNR as presented in Table 11.1.2-1, including MNDNR Division of Forestry-administered consolidated conservation and school trust lands. The Project will not cross any state park land. EPND has initiated consultation with MNDNR regarding state land crossings and understands routes passing through school trust lands must produce maximum long-term economic return for the Trust. EPND will continue to work with MNDNR to permit any crossings of state lands.

Table 11.1.2-1 State Forests Crossed by the Sandpiper Pipeline Project		
County/State Park or Forest	Milepost Range	Crossing Length (miles)
Clearwater		
Mississippi Headwaters State Forest	402.8 – 403.4	0.6
Hubbard		
Unidentified State Forest Land	415.8 – 416.1	0.3
Huntersville State Forest	456.6 – 457.6	1.0
Cass		
Foot Hills State Forest	466.4 – 468.4	2.0
Land O' Lakes State Forest	502.6 – 509.6	7.0
	510.0 – 510.5	0.5
Aitkin		
Hill River State Forest	516.4 – 523.5	7.1
Waukenabo State Forest	523.8 – 524.3	0.5
Savanna State Forest	550.0 – 550.8	0.8
	Total	19.8

State Wildlife Management Areas, Scientific Natural Areas, and Aquatic Management Areas

WMAs are state lands that are actively managed for wildlife production and provide habitat for many wildlife species. WMAs are open to the public for recreational activities such as bird and wildlife watching, hunting, and trapping. WMAs generally are closed to motorized vehicles and horses. The Project will cross the following WMAs: Crow Wing Chain WMA in Hubbard County from MP 452.6 to MP 454.6; and Grayling Marsh (MP 547.1 to MP 548.2), Lawler (MP 554.6 to MP 555.1), and Salo Marsh (MP 559.2 to MP 559.4) WMAs in Aitkin County. The Project is co-located with existing rights-of-way through the Crow Wing Chain and Lawler WMAs. The Project deviates from an existing right-of-way through Salo Marsh WMA to avoid a large wetland complex, and crosses Grayling Marsh WMA along a greenfield route. In all instances, EPND attempted to co-locate the Project as much as possible through WMAs unless doing so would result in greater impacts to wetlands or other known sensitive resources, or would present significant constructability concerns.

AMAs are state lands that have been established to protect, develop, and manage lands critical for fish and other aquatic life, for water quality, and for their biological and recreational value. The Project will cross the LaSalle Creek AMA near MP 407.3 and will be co-located with an existing pipeline right-of-way at this crossing. The Project also will cross the Spire Valley Hatchery AMA from MP 501.8 to MP 502.3 and will be co-located with an existing transmission line at this crossing.

The Project will not cross any SNAs or designated State Recreation Areas. EPND has initiated consultation with MNDNR regarding crossings of WMAs and AMAs and will continue to work with MNDNR to permit any crossings of state lands.

State-Designated Trails and Canoe and Boating Routes

The Project will cross the Paul Bunyan State Trail from MP 472.1 to MP 472.7 in Cass County and the Willard Munger State Trail from MPs 581.1 to MP 581.6 in Carlton County. The Project will also cross seven canoe and boating routes: the Red River of the North, Red Lake River (twice), Pine River, Crow Wing River, and the Mississippi River (twice). EPND initiated consultation with the MNDNR and Mississippi Headwaters Commission regarding these waterbody crossings.

11.1.3 County-Designated Recreation Areas

County Park and Forest Land

The Project will cross county park land in Aitkin County in four places (approximate MP 515.4, MP 515.7, MP 553.5, and MP 553.9). The Project will also cross approximately 41 miles of county-managed land. These lands are identified as forested or miscellaneous use tax-forfeited parcels, but may be managed for various natural resource components in addition to providing recreational opportunities, such as hunting and fishing. County-managed lands along the preferred route are located in Clearwater, Hubbard, Cass, Crow Wing, Aitkin, and Carlton counties. EPND initiated consultation with each county to minimize impacts on these lands.

11.1.4 Designated Scenic Byways

Lake Country Scenic Byway

The Lake Country Scenic Byway is an 88-mile-long Minnesota Scenic Byway designated in 1999. A 67-mile stretch follows Minnesota State Highway 34 between Detroit Lakes and Walker, and includes a 21-mile spur on US Highway 71 stretching from Park Rapids to Itasca State Park. The Project will cross Minnesota State Highway 34 at approximate MP 432.3. EPND will consult with Hubbard County and MDOT regarding construction crossing techniques, restoration, and rerouting of traffic to area roadways during the construction period.

The Great River Road

The Great River Road in Minnesota has two components: a federally-designated 430-mile National Route and a 755-mile state-designated alternate route. Combined, the route provides 1,185 miles of scenic, historic, and recreational opportunities for travelers. The Project will cross County Highway 10 at approximate MP 532.5. EPND will consult with

Aitkin County and MDOT regarding construction crossing techniques, restoration, and rerouting of traffic to area roadways during the construction period.

Veterans Evergreen Memorial Scenic Byway

This designated Minnesota Scenic Byway occurs along a 50-mile stretch of State Highway 23 that runs from Banning State Park to New Duluth. The Project will cross Minnesota State Highway 23 at approximate MP 595.6. EPND will consult with Carlton County and MDOT regarding construction crossing techniques, restoration, and rerouting of traffic to area roadways during the construction period.

11.1.5 Other Public Lands

A variety of conservation easements are present in Minnesota, residing with various state and federal agencies such as BWSR, USFWS, and MNDNR. Easements can also reside with non-profit conservation groups such as Minnesota Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy (“TNC”). Additionally, easements that protect wetland mitigation sites are found throughout the state. EPND is engaged in identifying and avoiding to the extent possible all property under the protection of conservation easements.

As suggested by MNDNR (MNDNR, 2013g), EPND reviewed TNC website for tracts that might be crossed by the Project. The website indicated that the preferred route does not cross any lands owned or managed by the TNC. This was also confirmed by EPND’s right-of-way acquisition group; no tracts under TNC management or ownership were identified during a land records inquiry of parcels affected by the Project.

11.2 GENERAL CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION IMPACTS AND MITIGATION

Construction and operation of the pipeline is not expected to have significant impacts on recreational lands. In Minnesota, more than 70 percent of the preferred route will be constructed adjacent to existing EPND rights-of-ways or generally adjacent to existing third-party rights-of-way, which will minimize potential impacts on public lands and recreational areas. The Project will have only minor and temporary impacts on public recreational areas. Impacts on recreational use of public land areas primarily will be limited to temporary inconveniences and localized disturbances, including noise, dust, and visual intrusions associated with construction activities. There will be no long-term impact on recreational activities within the public lands areas as a result of construction and operation of the pipeline. As discussed in Section 7.1.4, vegetation maintenance of the permanent right-of-way will be take place along the pipeline right-of-way, which could have limited visual impacts on public lands that are densely forested.

Project construction could temporarily restrict public use of recreational areas. Potential impacts on recreational activities will be dependent on the timing of construction, the season in which the recreational activity occurs, and the construction methods used. Public

access to state and county lands will be maintained to the greatest extent possible during construction. Short-term closures of some areas may be necessary during construction. After construction is completed, public lands will be restored to allow previous uses and recreational activities to continue. EPND will consult with the appropriate state and county land management agencies to avoid and minimize impacts on recreational areas.

Boating and recreational use of the waterbodies crossed by the Project may be affected during construction of the pipeline, including state- and county-designated canoe routes. Depending on the crossing method used, impacts on recreational users may include construction noise, downstream turbidity, or temporary obstructions such as sediment curtains or construction equipment at the crossing location. EPND initiated consultation with NPS, MNDNR, Mississippi Headwaters Commission, and local governments regarding the waterbody crossings.