

From: [kepeters](#)
To: [Storm, Bill \(COMM\)](#)
Cc: [don Peterson](#); [jason Peterson](#); jbatkinson@mnpower.com; [staff_cao \(PUC\)](#)
Subject: great northern transmission line project
Date: Tuesday, March 04, 2014 8:54:32 AM

Dear Mr. Storm,

I attended the recent public information meeting in International Falls regarding the proposed Great Northern Transmission Line Project (PUC Docket Number E-015/CN-12-1163). I own property along one of the routes under consideration in Koochiching County: SE1/4 of SE1/4, Section 35, Township 63, Range 27, West of the Fourth Principle Meridian. My understanding is that you are requesting comments on the potential environmental affects of the proposed project and therefore I will focus this on this topic in this correspondence. However, I would also like to point out that I did not receive notice from anyone about this proposed project and only became aware of it through another property owner in the area. I understand that we are early in the overall process, but am also aware that other route alternatives were considered and have been dropped, so it seems that I am at a disadvantage in this public process already.

I have been living, working and recreating in Koochiching County for the past 20 years. I have hunted the area described above for the past 15 years and have seen a dramatic change in the amount and type of forest during this time. Though timber harvesting has a long history in this part of Minnesota and is one of our main economic drivers, the size and scope of these operations has altered wildlife habitat in the area of concern. Where individual logging jobs were small and scattered across the landscape in the past, providing some benefits for wildlife (especially deer and grouse), they are now massive in size and scope. An example of this can be seen by examining an aerial photo of the landscape near my property. A large cut, several hundred acres in size will be evident on my southern property line. Better yet, review a series of photos from the past 20 or 30 years and you will see what I mean. As a result of the size and intensity and frequency of cutting, there is much less winter cover available for deer today. There are several stands of White Cedar in this area (located North, West, and East of my property) and on a recent visit I found evidence of whitetail deer yarding in these cedar stands. Cedars provide thermal cover and browse and developed over hundreds of years. With current land use, it is likely these stands will never be replaced. I am concerned that the large right-of-way required for the proposed transmission line will result in additional losses of older aged forest, create more open lands, and more fragmentation of the remaining forest, with negative impacts on whitetail deer and other forest wildlife which requires this type of habitat. Abundance of deer has declined in this area in recent years and I believe it is a direct result of the harsh winters and the loss of this critical habitat. Fisher and pine marten abundance has also declined. Recent studies have shown the importance of large (old) aspen trees for den sites for fisher and this habitat type is disappearing.

The transition to a younger forest may be affecting the hydrology of nearby Bowerman Brook and the Bigfork River Watersheds. The Littlefork River is listed as an impaired water by the MN PCA. Land use practices, including timber harvesting and the proliferation of young forest have likely contributed to this impairment by altering the hydrology and should be taken into consideration for the Bowerman Brook/Bigfork watersheds as well.

Finally, I am concerned about the "need" for this new line and the associated environmental impacts. What if the anticipated future demands for electrical power do not materialize? My recommendation would be to build the line *when* the need is demonstrated, and only then. It would be irresponsible to make all the sacrifices (environmental, social, economic, cultural, etc.) required for a need that never developed.

I will conclude by saying that one of the qualities of this part of northern Minnesota that appealed to me was how natural and undeveloped it was. I fondly call it "the middle of nowhere" and plan to build a rustic cabin on my property. I dream of using this cabin to teach my grand children about the ways of the forest and give them a glimpse into a simpler time, away from cell phones and computers and modern

conveniences. Looking at a 500 kv Transmission line and listening to the ever present buzzing of the electricity will severely limit the use and enjoyment of my property. I believe this would be described as a "cultural impact" and could render my property unfit for the purpose for which I bought it (and pay taxes on).

Thank you for the opportunity for comments and forgive me if I have rambled or strayed from the scope of comments requested at this time. You can probably tell by my comments, that I care deeply about my land and am very concerned about the possible consequences of this proposed action. Please let me know if you have any questions about any of the above and I will look forward to your response.

Regards,

Kevin E. Peterson
3075 Town Rd 225
International Falls, MN 56649
218-540-1982