

Kevin E. Peterson
3075 Town Rd 225
International Falls, MN 56649

PUC Docket Number E-015/TL-14-21

Here are my comments on the proposed 500 Kilovolt transmission line that could potentially pass through my property located in T.63, R.27, Section 35 of Koochiching County.

I have provided site-specific comments on the back of the map, which shows the proposed orange route through my property. Those comments refer primarily to the potential habitat loss resulting from clearing a large right-of-way through old-growth cedar stands in an area that has already been heavily impacted by logging. The local forest products industry prefers aspen and other upland species, so much of the forest that remains is cedar, balsam, and spruce, which provide thermal cover for deer in winter and moose (there are several moose that live in this area) in summer.

I am a resident of Koochiching County and have recreated in this area for approximately 20 years, so I know it well. I purchased my property in 2012, which lies one mile off the blacktop on a dead-end forest road. I refer to it as the middle-of-nowhere, because it is about as isolated from the sounds and sights of man as one can find these days, without trekking into the wilderness. Indeed, if you spend time there in the winter as I have, you can strain your ears to hear another sound of any kind, save for the wind in the trees. I purchased my property for recreation and solitude and plan to build a cabin there, where I hope to spend time with my grandchildren in retirement. If the proposed powerline is constructed through or near my property, I will no longer be able to use and enjoy it as intended (I think this qualifies as a human/cultural impact). Specifically the human impacts from the powerline will be visual/aesthetic (disrupting and converting a portion of the forest to open grasslands and brush), noise pollution from the constant buzzing that occurs anywhere near the powerline, health effects of stray voltage and magnetic fields, and loss of recreational opportunity (hunting and viewing wildlife) due to reduced abundance of forest wildlife.

The information distributed at the recent public input meeting in International Falls asked for comments on ways to minimize or address the impacts from the proposed powerline. The best way to avoid these impacts on our northern forest is to not build the powerline or put it somewhere else. Placing the line in the western part of the state where there is more open/agricultural land would have less impact on the forest. Another way to minimize impacts would be to use existing corridors (roads and other utilities). The forest has already been fractured in these areas, so a larger right-of-way would have less impact than a totally new corridor. The Environmental Impact Statement should include a thorough discussion of the trade-offs between using existing corridors and developing new ones and citing the land in agricultural versus forested areas. The Environmental assessment should include information on the loss and fracturing of old-growth cedar forest types and the effects on forest wildlife such as whitetail deer, moose, pine marten, fisher, and timber wolves. Route alternatives should include a detailed inventory of these features.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this project which could impact those of us who live and recreate near the proposed route.

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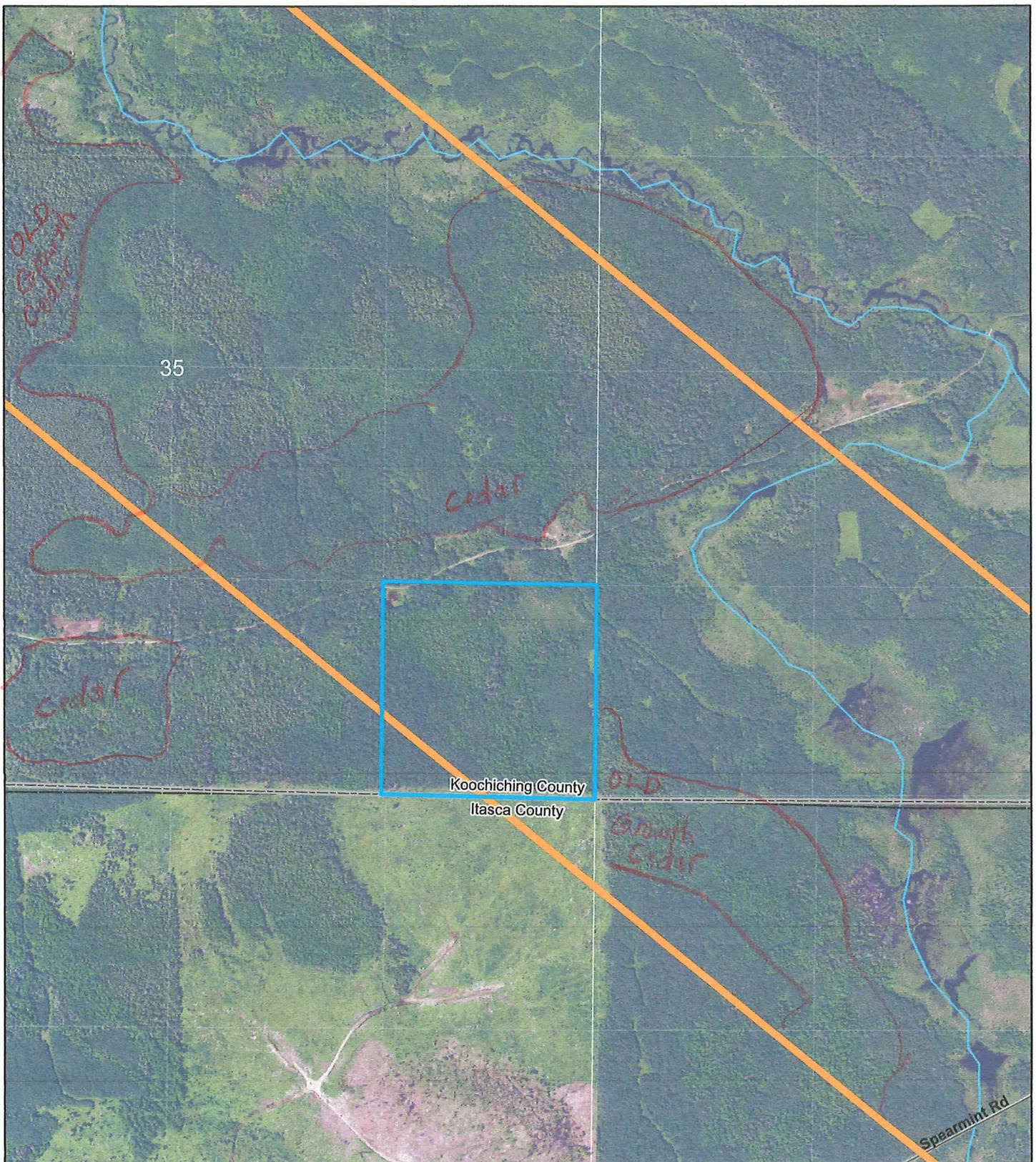
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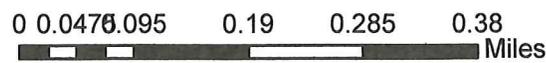
Sincerely,



Kevin E. Peterson



- ROUTE**
- Blue Route
 - Orange Route
 - Route Option



GNTL Scoping Meetings
7/16/2014



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Great Northern Transmission Line GIS Map Comment Form

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State: MN

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Comment:

I've attempted to identify several old-growth cedar stands that I know of in the vicinity of my property (outlined on this map in blue). These cedar stands provided valuable food and thermal cover for deer in this area. The largest concentration of deer were located in the large stand of cedar adjacent to Highway #6. A powerline and right-of-way anywhere within the proposed corridor will fracture and reduce the availability of this important habitat type for deer. As you can see from the photographs, much of this habitat has already been lost due to logging practices in recent years (large clear-cuts), impacting all the creatures that live in the northern forest (deer, moose, timber wolves, fisher, pine marten, etc.).

I do not have site-specific knowledge to recommend an alternative route, but moving the proposed route NE or SW would avoid these beautiful stands of old-growth cedar and the associated impacts to local flora and fauna.