

Comments submitted re:
Great Northern Transmission Line
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July 23, 2014

Route location/environmental impacts:

I would like to comment regarding locating a transmission line with a 200 foot open easement and towers above the treeline in the scenic wilderness area south and east of Effie. In this area, which is highly dependent on tourism, there is aesthetic value in not creating visible manmade structures, especially those which can be seen for long distances.

For seasonal residents, there is also value in privacy. A new open path through the forest will create access where none is wanted. I would like to know why this line is not colocated with the existing transmission line running near Highway 65.

These are real, but qualitative comments. However, recent research released this spring indicate that many animals see UV coronal discharge from high voltage lines as "lines of bursting popping lights" [quote from PBS online article, reference below], although human eyes do not pick up the UV, and thus do not see them. Respected media sources like PBS have carried this information. Three references are listed at the end of this written comment.

It now appears that high voltage lines can disrupt animal movement.

Excerpt from a March 2014 UK newspaper article: "Many other species, from birds in the Arctic to elephants in Africa, can also see ultraviolet radiation which may explain why different kinds of animals in widely varying habitats all tend to avoid overhead power lines even though they are considered to be inert and invisible to wildlife, they said."

Excerpt from March 2014 PBS article: The avoidance of power lines can interfere with migration routes, breeding grounds and grazing for both animals and birds.

To me, this is a very strong argument for collocating transmission lines to avoid a pattern of disruption for our wildlife.

Alternate source of power:

My experience is that major utility companies serving Minnesota have not supported the concept of distributed generation and IPPs, which would provide redundant power points with reduced number of transmission lines. I believe smaller, distributed power plants would be a better alternative both for our logging industry and our economy.

References: <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/powerlines-disturb-animal-habitats-by-appearing-as-disturbing-flashes-of-uv-light-invisible-to-the-human-eye-9187631.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/next/nature/power-lines-look-like-terrifying-bursts-of-light-to-animals/>

Video of what the flashes look like in UV: <http://www.bbc.com/news/26548483>

Additional note: Venue chosen for PUC hearing:

On January 25, I sent an email to the PUC contact but did not receive an acknowledgement. I am resubmitting for the second time my comment that the venues selected for the GNTL public hearings were placed at a distance (over 50 miles) from those affected. I believed that Grand Rapids or Bemidji locations would not afford an accessible location for many people living along the east/west southern alternatives because of distance, weather, evening timing and gas prices. There are large meeting rooms in Northome, Effie, Bigfork and Marcell. In fact, myself and two others were unable to attend the February public meeting in Grand Rapids due to weather conditions. Thank you for scheduling this meeting in Bigfork.