



United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

Midwest Region
601 Riverfront Drive
Omaha, Nebraska 68102-4226



1.D(MWR-PCL/PC)

ER-14/0396

Ms. Julie Ann Smith
Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability (OE-20)
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue SW.
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Ms. Smith:

The Midwest Region, National Park Service (NPS) has reviewed the June 27, 2014 Federal Register notice announcing the intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a Presidential Permit for the Great Northern Transmission Line Project in Minnesota. The NPS offers the following comments to help inform the study:

It does not appear the project area includes any National Park units, though alternative C-2 (shown on figure 4-14) would come in close proximity to Voyageurs National Park (VOYA). The NPS would have concerns with this project if transmission line structures built on this alternative would be visible from any portion of that park. We realize the intent to avoid areas like VOYA, but there may be proximity impacts that are not easily discerned with large scale maps.

There are two National Natural Landmark (NNL) sites in Minnesota located within the Great Northern Transmission Line Project study area; the Lake Agassiz Peatlands Natural Area in Koochiching County and the Upper Read Lake Peatland in Beltrami County. Designated NNL's in 1965 and 1975, respectively, these areas illustrate outstanding examples of peatland, including the unusual string bog, the process of peat accumulation, associated geologic processes, and provide outstanding habitat for wildlife. In reviewing the proposed routes in relation to these designated areas, it appears as though the proposed routes are either directly adjacent to or perhaps slightly intersecting the boundaries for these designated areas.

As areas designated as NNL's, these sites are natural areas that have been determined to be nationally significant and have been designated as such by the Secretary of the Interior. Designation as a NNL can be on lands of any ownership, both public and private. The NPS administers the NNL Program and partners with landowners at NNL sites to encourage and assist with landowner's conservation efforts. The NPS also acts as an advocate on behalf of landmark sites by equipping land managers and decision-makers with information regarding designated sites, such that land-use planning decisions can be made that eliminate or minimize impact to

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these significant features. As specified in 36 C.F.R. 62.6(f) of the NNL Program Regulations, "Federal agencies should consider the existence and location of designated national natural landmarks, and of areas found to meet the criteria for national significance, in assessing the effects of their activities on the environment under section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C 4321)."

If you have any questions regarding our comments, please contact Regional Environmental Coordinator Nick Chevance, Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service, 601 Riverfront Drive, Omaha, Nebraska 68102, telephone 402-661-1844, email nicholas_chevance@nps.gov. For questions or additional information regarding the NNL sites, please contact Heather Eggleston, Regional NNL Coordinator, telephone 303-969-2945, or email heather_eggleston@nps.gov.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia S. Trap". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patricia S. Trap
Acting Regional Director