

## **6 Potential Impacts by Facility**

Due to the distributed nature of the Project, the unique size and setting of each facility mean that, to some extent, potential impacts can be expected to vary by facility. Impacts for the Project as a whole, and impacts that do not vary by facility are discussed in Section 5. This section provides additional detail on each facility and discusses the setting of the facility and surrounding area with more specific information on potential impacts and mitigation strategies at each facility.

## 6.1 Albany

The proposed Albany facility has a capacity of 10 MW AC and is located northwest of the city of Albany in Sections 8 and 17 of Albany Township, southwest of the intersection of 360<sup>th</sup> Street and 235<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Aurora anticipates the facility will be accessed through a new access road off of 360<sup>th</sup> Street. Preliminary plans anticipate a development area of approximately 107 acres within the 231 acres of Aurora’s site control. The facility will be connected to Xcel Energy’s Albany Substation, located approximately 4,010 feet southeast of the facility.

The facility is located within the Minnesota and Northeastern Iowa Morainal Section of the Eastern Broadleaf Forest Province. Land cover within the preliminary development area (Table 14) is dominated by agricultural vegetation, both cultivated crops (68 percent) and pasture and hay lands (31 percent). The preliminary development area avoids the developed area of Albany southeast of the facility and the larger wetland areas to the south, but is otherwise comparable to the agricultural land cover that dominates the study area around the Albany Substation (Figure 7).

**Table 14: Albany Facility Land Cover**

Land Cover	Control Area		Development Area		Study Area	
	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent
Open Water	-	-	-	-	171.6	1.4%
Developed, Open Space	10.0	4.4%	0.9	0.9%	708.5	5.6%
Developed, Low Intensity	-	-	-	-	660.6	5.3%
Developed, Medium Intensity	-	-	-	-	355.6	2.8%
Developed, High Intensity	-	-	-	-	99.1	0.8%
Barren Land	-	-	-	-	4.1	0.0%
Deciduous Forest	5.9	2.6%	-	-	435.0	3.5%
Evergreen Forest	4.2	1.8%	0.86	0.8%	27.5	0.2%
Mixed Forest	-	-	-	-	0.0	0.0%
Shrub/Scrub	-	-	-	-	11.1	0.1%
Grassland Herbaceous	-	-	-	-	126.9	1.0%
Pasture/Hay	116.1	50.3%	32.9	30.6%	4,736.7	37.7%
Cultivated Crops	92.2	40.0%	72.8	67.8%	5,083.8	40.5%
Woody Wetlands	-	-	-	-	32.5	0.3%
Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands	2.1	0.9%	-	-	103.9	0.8%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>230.6</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>107.4</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>12,556.9</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### 6.1.1 Effects on Human Settlement

The facility is located in a predominantly agricultural area with scattered rural residences. The facility is currently cultivated and the nearest residence is approximately 190 feet north

of the preliminary development area. Construction of the facility will not result in displacement of any homes or businesses. The facility is located in an area zoned as Agricultural 40. Solar farms are a conditional use in the Agricultural 40 zoning classification. The area of site control is designated as Continued Agricultural Use in the *Stearns County Future Land Use Plan*.<sup>83</sup>

The Lake Wobegon Trail, used for biking, hiking, and snowmobiling, is located approximately one-half mile south of the facility along Interstate 94. Construction and operation of the facility would not impact the use of nearby recreational resources.

No mitigation measures beyond those described in Section 5.2 are identified for the Albany facility.

### **6.1.2 Effects on Land Based Economies**

The proposed facility would remove approximately 106 acres of farmland from agricultural use. In addition to the Albany Facility, Aurora's Brooten and Paynesville facilities as well as Geronimo's proposed Paynesville Community Solar Garden are all located in Stearns County. Collectively these four facilities would remove approximately 316 acres of land from agricultural production, or approximately 0.051 percent of Stearns County agricultural land.

Within the preliminary development area, approximately 68 acres (63 percent) are considered to be prime farmland and 30 acres (28 percent) are considered to be prime farmland if drained (Table 13). More than 75 percent of the comparison area in the 2.5 mile buffer around the Albany Substation meets the definition of prime farmland or prime farmland if drained. In order to avoid the developed area around Albany and the wetland complexes to the north and southeast, it is likely that any alternate locations would also be sited on prime farmland or prime farmland if drained (Figure 9).

The proposed project would not impact tourism, mining or mineral extraction activity, or forest resources of economic importance.

No mitigation measures beyond those described in Section 5.3 are identified for the Albany facility.

### **6.1.3 Effects on Archaeological and Historic Resources**

A Century Farm dating to 1885 was identified within Aurora's Area of Site Control, but outside of the preliminary development area. No impacts are anticipated to the potentially historic site and no mitigative measures beyond those described in Section 5.4 are identified for the Albany facility.

---

<sup>83</sup> Stearns County Comments; Application, at Appendix F

#### **6.1.4 Effects on Natural Environment**

There are no rivers, streams or lakes within the area of facility site control. A non-jurisdictional ditch crosses the Albany facility's preliminary development area. Field delineations performed in the summer of 2014 show approximately 14.7 acres of wetlands within the area of site control; 6.07 acres of Type 1 (seasonally flooded basins or floodplains, 0.45 acres of Type 2 (wet meadow), 7.72 acres of Type 3 (shallow marsh), 0.37 acres of Type 4 (deep marsh) and 0.09 acres of Type 7 (wooded swamp).<sup>84</sup>

The preliminary design for the facility anticipates grading of approximately 40.3 acres of the site during construction.<sup>85</sup>

No mitigation measures beyond those described in Section 5.5 are identified for the Albany facility.

#### **6.1.5 Effects on Rare and Unique Natural Resources**

A review of the NHIS database did not identify any documented instances of state or federally listed endangered, threatened or special concern species within one mile of the area of site control for the Albany facility.<sup>86</sup>

No mitigation measures beyond the field survey described in Section 5.6 are identified for the Albany facility.

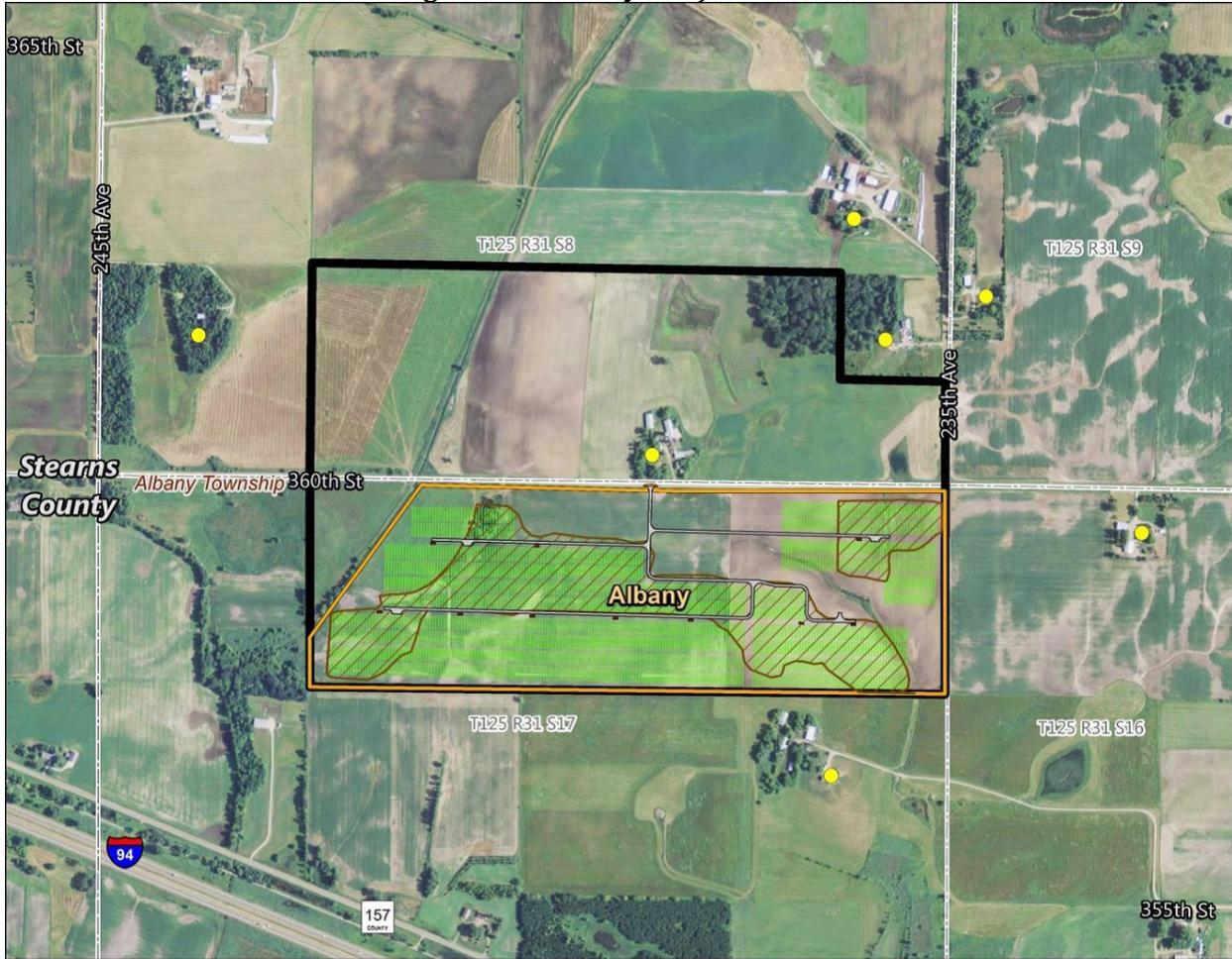
---

<sup>84</sup> Appendix C

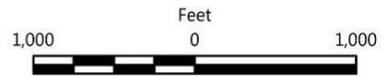
<sup>85</sup> Application, at Appendix F

<sup>86</sup> Application, at p. 81

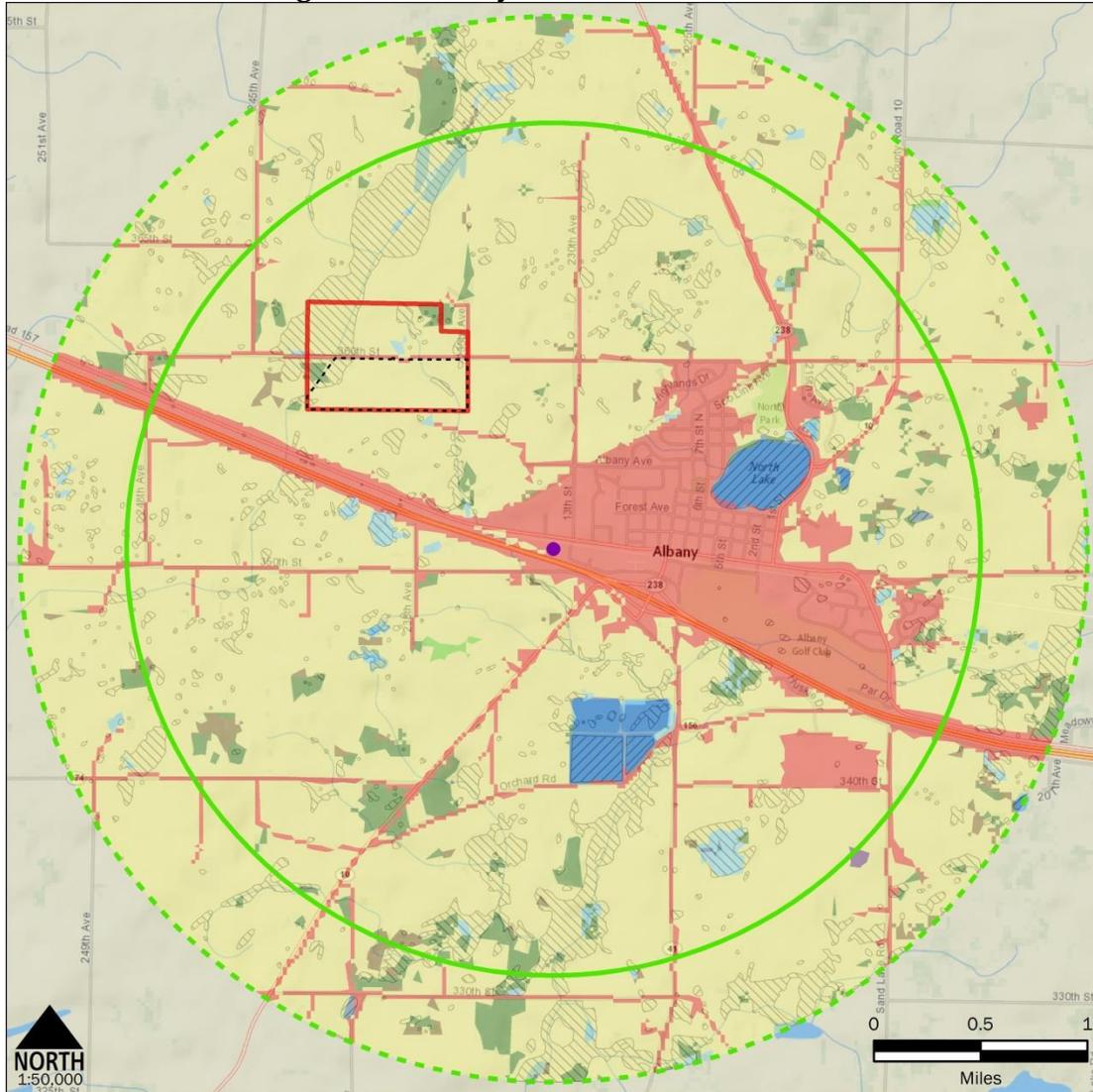
Figure 6: Albany Project Detail



- Residence Location
- Proposed Inverter
- Proposed Arrays
- Proposed Road
- Proposed Grading Area
- Preliminary Development Area
- Facility Land Control



**Figure 7: Albany Land Cover Overview**

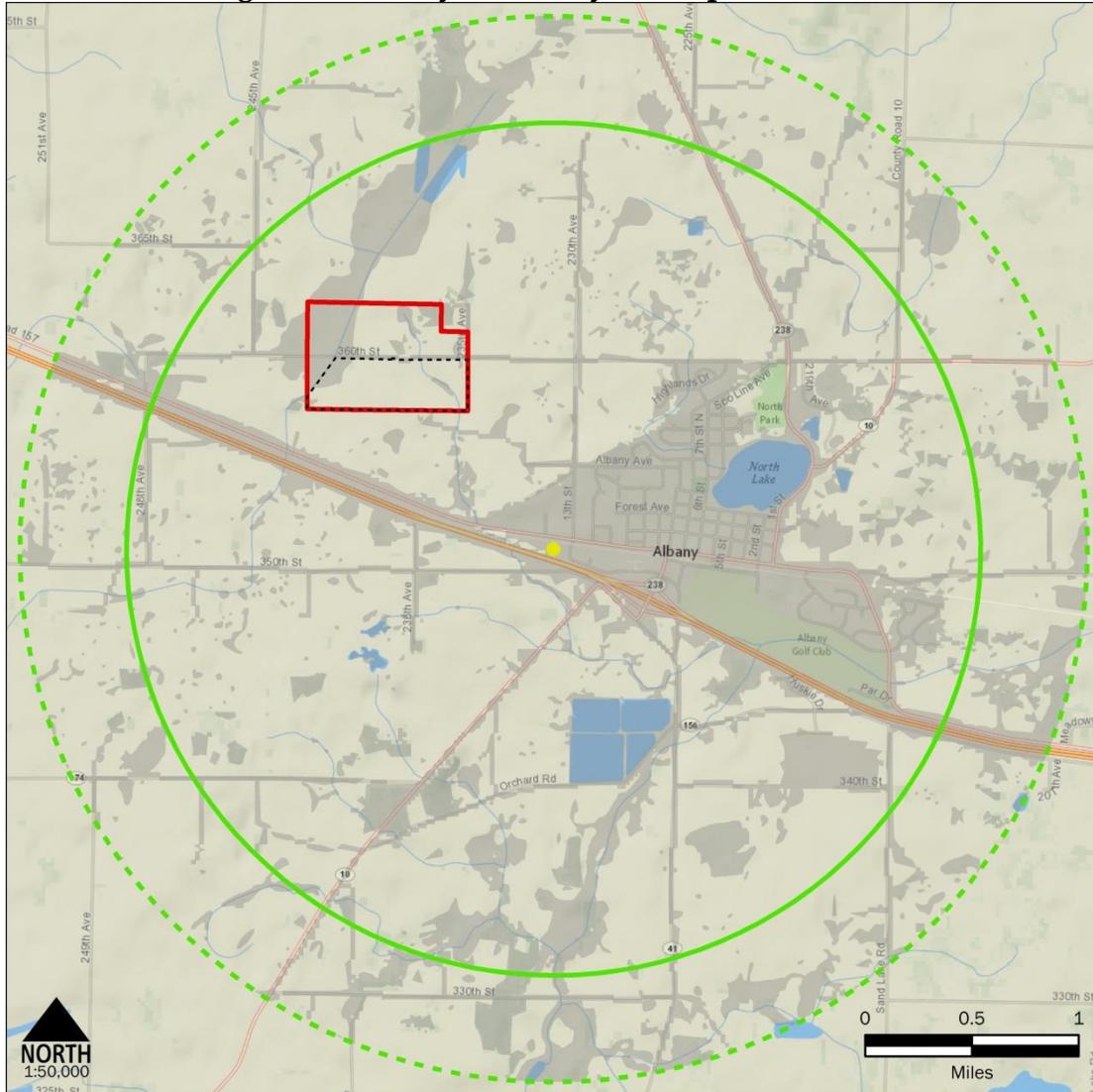


**Albany Facility Land Cover Overview**

	Substation		Barren (NLCD)
	Preliminary Development Area		Cultivated Crops/Pasture (NLCD)
	Facility Control Area		Developed (NLCD)
	2-mile Analysis Buffer		Forests (NLCD)
	2.5-mile Analysis Buffer		Grasslands (NLCD)
	Non-delineated Wetlands (NWI)		Open Water (NLCD)
	Rivers, Lakes, and Ponds (NWI)		Shrubs (NLCD)
			Wetlands (NLCD)

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

**Figure 8: Albany Generally Incompatible Areas**



**Albany Facility  
 Generally Incompatible Areas**

- Substation
- Preliminary Development Area
- Facility Control Area
- 2-mile Analysis Buffer
- 2.5-mile Analysis Buffer
- Generally Incompatible Areas

“Generally Incompatible Areas” include: Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas; Minnesota Wildlife Management Areas; US Fish and Wildlife Service Waterfowl Production Areas; the National Wetland Inventory; and areas classified as open water, developed, forest, and wetland in the National Land Cover Database.



**Figure 9: Albany Prime Farmland**

