

6.15 Montrose

The proposed Montrose facility has a capacity of 4.0 MW AC and is located in Section 2 of Woodland Township in Wright County. The site is located south of the city of Montrose, approximately one-half mile west of State Highway 25 and one-half mile south of State Highway 12, at the end of Bishop Avenue. Aurora anticipates that the facility will be accessed through a newly constructed extension of Bishop Avenue. Preliminary plans anticipate a development area of approximately 34.8 acres within the 37.7 acres of Aurora’s site control. Electricity from the facility would be delivered to Xcel Energy’s Montrose Substation located approximately 0.5 miles east 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 31) is dominated by agricultural cover (75 percent in cultivated crops and 20.2 percent in pasture and haylands). The proposed facility location avoids the developed area of Montrose located generally north of the facility and the lakes and associated wetlands to the west, otherwise the land cover is similar to the largely agricultural cover present in the study area (Figure 63).

Table 31: Montrose Facility

Land Cover	Control Area		Development Area		Study Area	
	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent
Open Water	--	--	--	--	1,020.6	8.1%
Developed, Open Space	0.6	1.5%	0.6	1.6%	321.1	2.6%
Developed, Low Intensity	1.0	2.6%	1.0	2.9%	533.3	4.3%
Developed, Medium Intensity	--	--	--	--	362.0	2.9%
Developed, High Intensity	--	--	--	--	37.4	0.3%
Barren Land	--	--	--	--	--	--
Deciduous Forest	0.1	0.3%	0.1	0.3%	712.9	5.7%
Evergreen Forest	--	--	--	--	25.6	0.2%
Mixed Forest	--	--	--	--	4.6	--
Shrub/Scrub	--	--	--	--	203.7	1.6%
Grassland Herbaceous	--	--	--	--	107.8	0.9%
Pasture/Hay	9.5	25.1%	7.0	20.2%	2,430.2	19.4%
Cultivated Crops	26.5	70.5%	26.1	75.0%	6,411.9	51.1%
Woody Wetlands	--	--	--	--	7.1	0.1%
Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands	--	--	--	--	375.7	3.0%
Totals	37.7	100.0%	34.8	100.0%	12,553.8	100.0%

6.15.1 Effects on Human Settlement

The proposed facility is located on a cultivated parcel in a rural area with scattered rural residences. The nearest home is located approximately 83 feet north of the preliminary development area. Construction of the facility will not result in displacement of any homes or businesses. The location is within an orderly annexation area and is zoned as a Transitional Area by Wright County. Solar farms are not specifically addressed in the Wright County Zoning Ordinances.¹⁴⁶ The area of site control is designated as a Transition Area in the Wright County Land Use Plan.¹⁴⁷

In addition to the snowmobile trail along the northern edge of the area of site control maintained by the Wright County Trails Association, several snowmobile trails and the Malardi Lake WMA are located within one mile of the proposed facility. Construction and operation of the facility would not impact the use of nearby recreational resources.

The preliminary development areas of several other facilities also overlap with snowmobile trails that are located in road ditches; these include the Annandale and Montrose facilities (trails maintained by Wright County Trails Association); Lester Prairie Facility (maintained by the Crow River Sno Pros); the Waseca Facility (maintained by the Waseca County Trails Association), and the Mayhew Lake Facility (maintained by the Benton County Trails Association). These trails likely will not be affected and would not need to be realigned; however, Aurora is coordinating with the trail associations for these trails as well.

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

6.15.2 Effects on Land Based Economies

The proposed facility would remove approximately 27 acres of farmland from agricultural use. Aurora's proposed Annandale and Lake Pulaski facilities are also proposed in Wright County. If all three of the Aurora facilities were constructed, approximately 159 acres of farmland would be taken out of production for the useful life of the project (estimated to be at least 25 years).

Approximately 18 acres (51 percent) of the developed area are considered to be prime farmland and 16 acres (47 percent) are considered to be prime farmland if drained (Table 13 – Within the comparison area surrounding the Montrose Substation, approximately 32 percent is considered to be prime farmland and 22 percent is considered to be prime farmland if drained. The prime farmland exclusion in Minnesota Rule 7850.4400, Subpart 4 does not apply to the Montrose facility as it is within an orderly annexation area.

¹⁴⁶ Wright County Comments, September 25, 2014.

¹⁴⁷ Wright County, *Wright County Land Use Plan. 2011.* <http://www.co.wright.mn.us/184/Wright-County-Land-Use-Plan> , See Woodland County Land Use Plan <http://www.co.wright.mn.us/DocumentCenter/Home/View/254>

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 Montrose facility.

6.15.3 Effects on Archaeological and Historic Resources

No archaeological sites were identified in a survey of the Montrose facility. No mitigation measures beyond those described in Section 5.4 are identified for the Montrose facility.

6.15.4 Effects on Natural Environment

There are no rivers, streams or lakes within the area of facility site control. Field delineations performed in the summer of 2014 identified approximately 0.35 acres of wetlands within the preliminary development area; 0.07 acres of Type 2 and 3 (wet meadow and shallow marsh), 0.02 acres of Type 3 (shallow marsh), 0.11 acres of Type 6 (shrub swamp) and 0.15 acres of Type 7 (wooded swamp).¹⁴⁸

The preliminary design for the facility anticipates grading of approximately 22.6 acres of the site during construction.¹⁴⁹

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

6.15.5 Effects on Rare and Unique Natural Resources

A review of the NHIS database did not identify any documented instances of federally listed endangered or threatened species within the land control boundary of the Mayhew Lake facility. The NHIS database review did show records for one state-listed special concern species (Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccianator*)) within one mile of the area of site control for the facility.¹⁵⁰

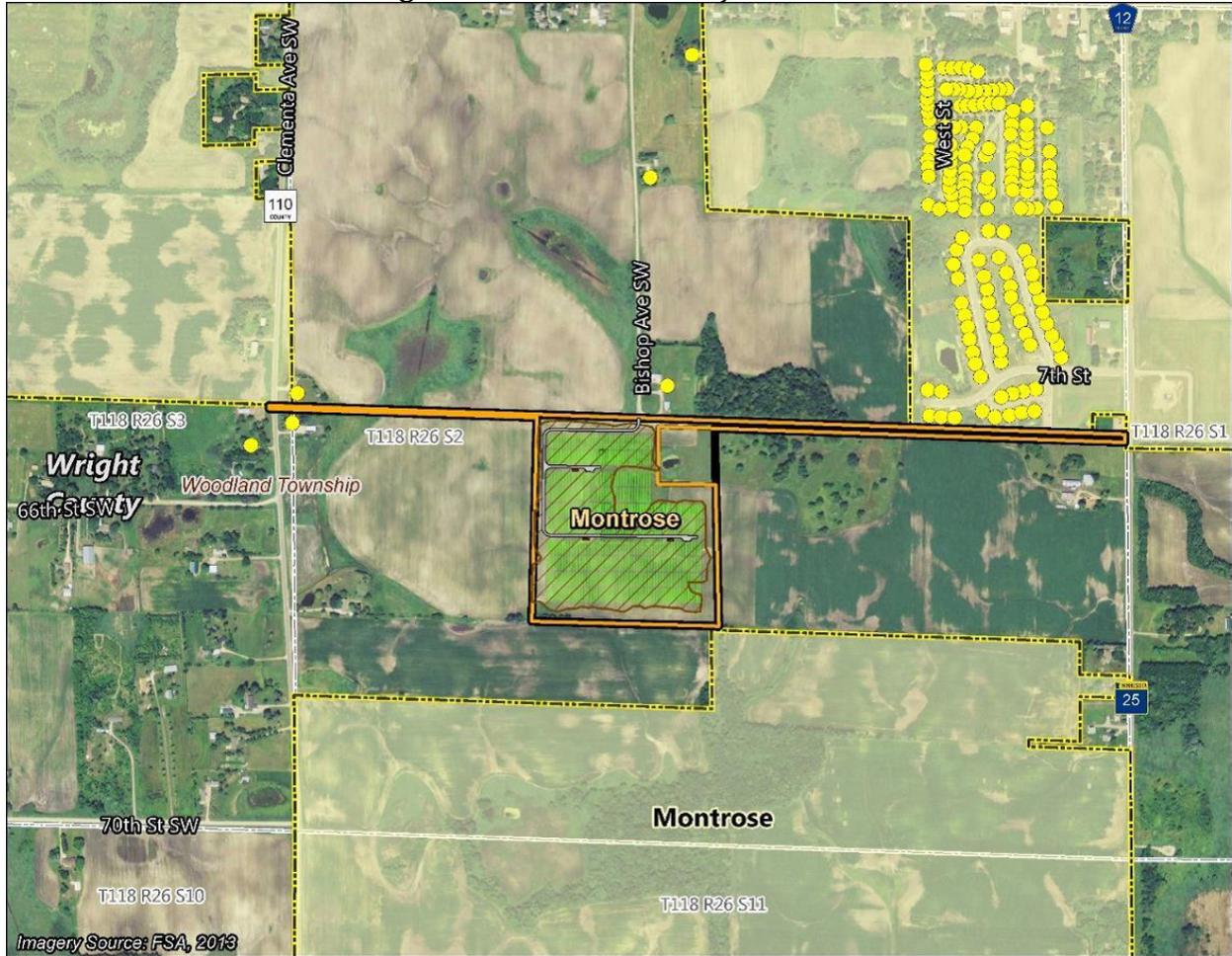
No mitigation measures beyond the field survey described in Section 5.6, are identified for the Montrose facility.

¹⁴⁸ Appendix C

¹⁴⁹ Application, at Appendix F

¹⁵⁰ Application, at p. 81, Appendix I

Figure 62: Montrose Project Detail



- Residence Location
- Proposed Inverter
- ▨ Proposed Arrays
- Proposed Road
- ▨ Proposed Grading Area

- Preliminary Development Area
- Facility Land Control
- Municipal Boundary

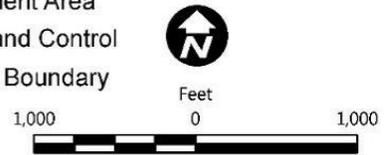


Figure 63: Montrose Land Cover Overview

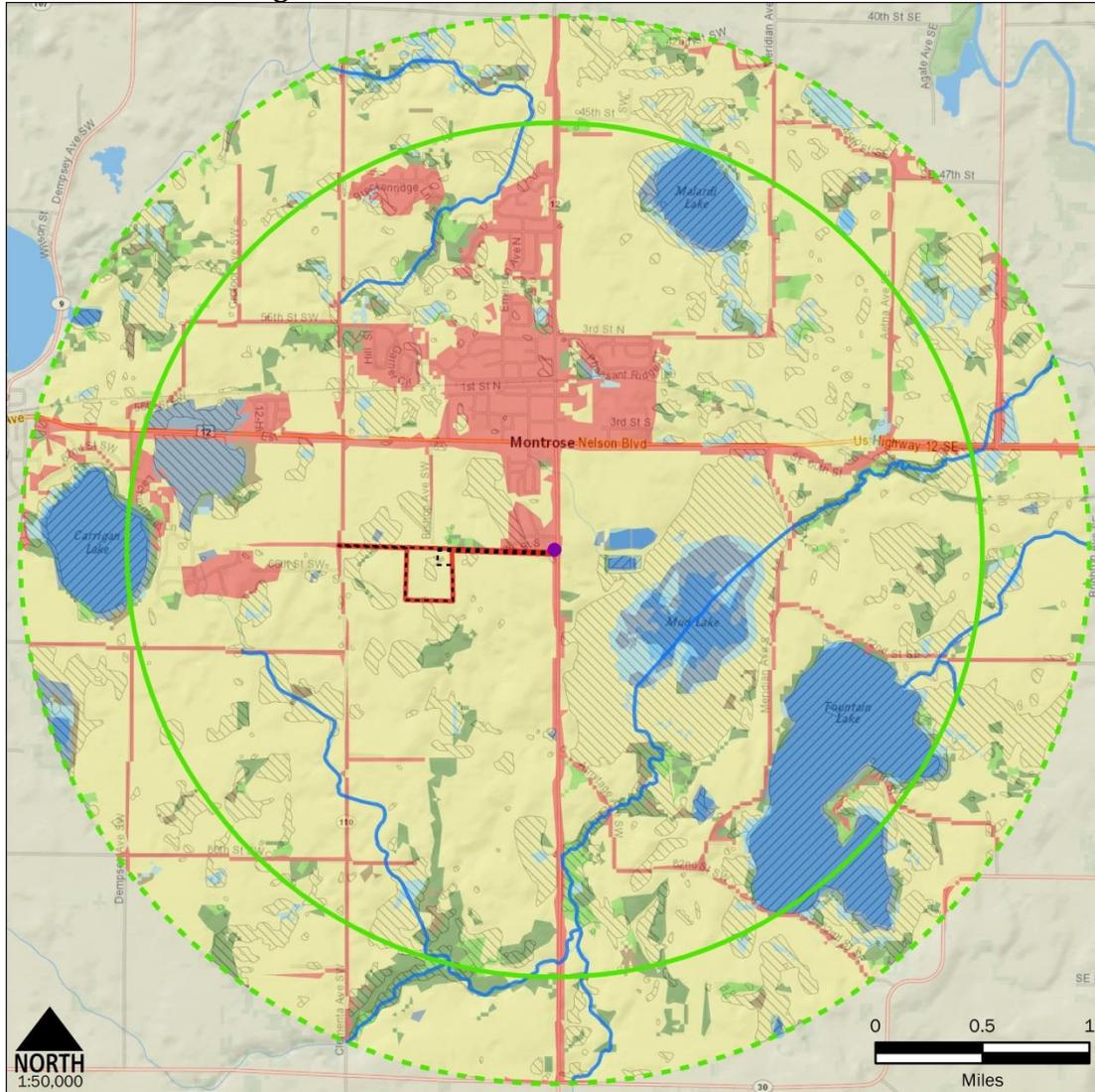
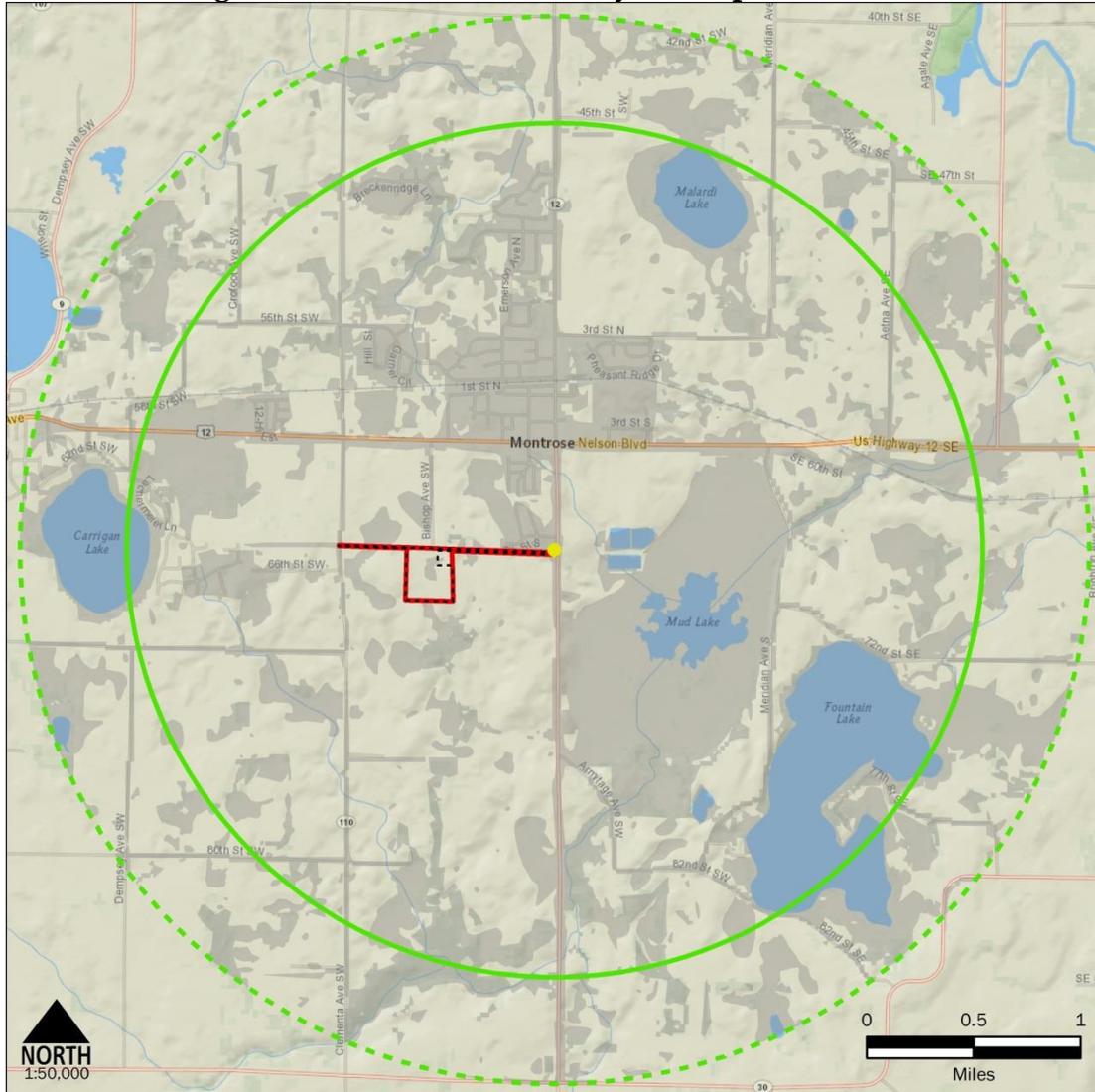


Figure 64: Montrose Generally Incompatible Areas



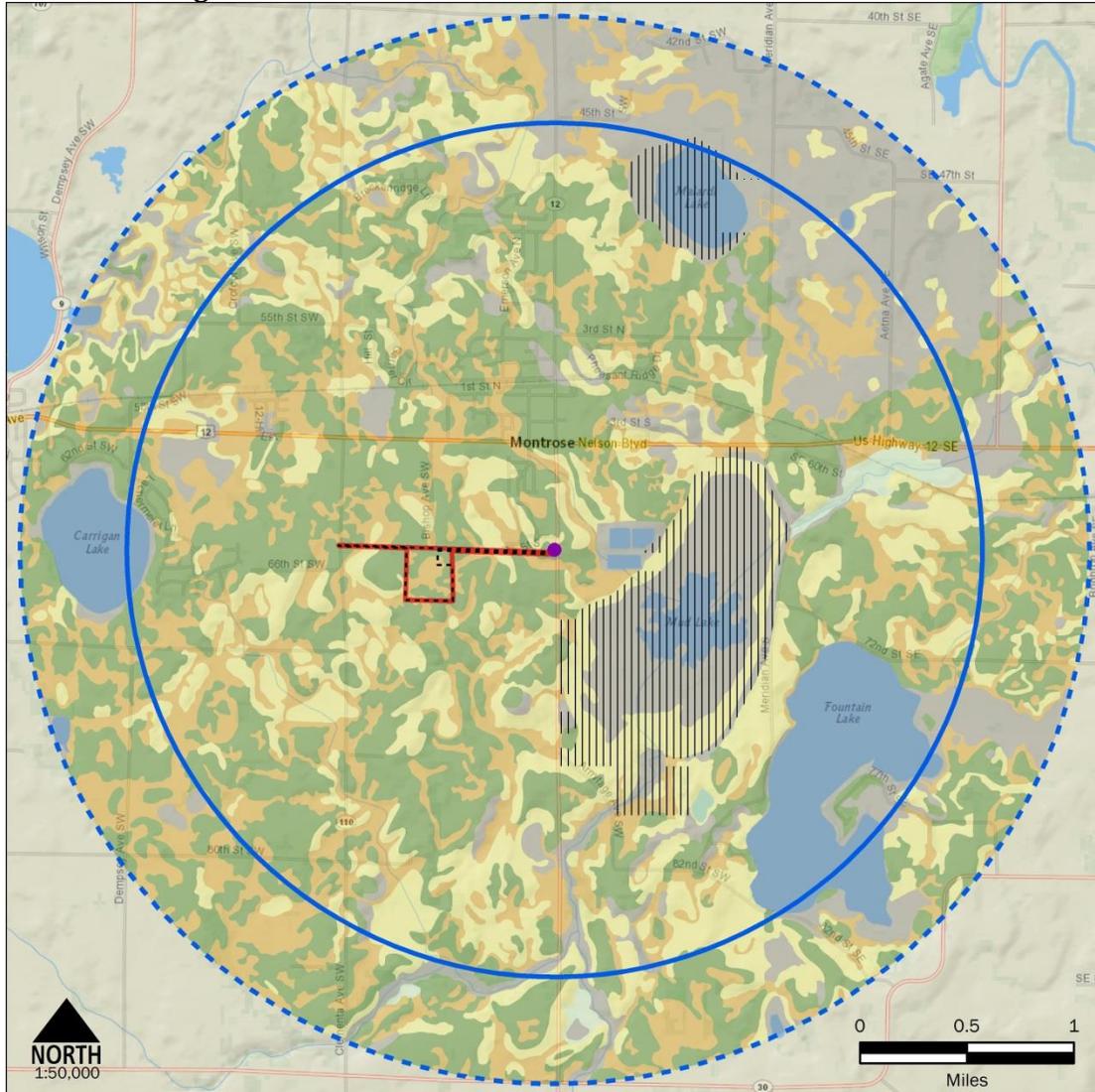
**Montrose Facility
 Generally Incompatible Areas**

- 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 65: Montrose Prime Farmland and Other Areas



**Montrose Facility
 Prime Farmland and Other Areas**

- Substation
- Preliminary Development Area
- Facility Control Area
- 2-mile Analysis Buffer
- 2.5-mile Analysis Buffer
- MN Wildlife Management Areas
- Prime Farmland
- Prime Farmland if Drained
- Farmland of Statewide Importance
- Not Prime Farmland
- Other Farmland

