

6.20 Waseca

The proposed Waseca facility has a capacity of 10 MW AC and is located in Section 12 of St. Mary Township in Waseca County. The site is located northwest of the city of Waseca on the west side of 120th Street. Aurora anticipates that the facility will be accessed through an extension of an existing farm access road off of 120th Street. Preliminary plans anticipate a development area of approximately 85.2 acres within the 89.2 acres of Aurora’s site control. Electricity from the facility would be delivered to Xcel Energy’s Waseca Substation located approximately 1.1 miles 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 37) is comprised entirely of cultivated crops. The proposed location avoids the developed areas of Waseca to the east, but is otherwise similar to the agricultural land cover that is dominant in the western and southern portion of the study area surrounding the Waseca Substation (Figure 84).

Table 37: Waseca Facility - Land Cover

Land Cover	Control Area		Development Area		Study Area	
	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent
Open Water	--	--	--	--	799.9	6.4%
Developed, Open Space	--	--	--	--	1,627.5	13.0%
Developed, Low Intensity	--	--	--	--	1,405.4	11.2%
Developed, Medium Intensity	--	--	--	--	506.2	4.0%
Developed, High Intensity	--	--	--	--	229.2	1.8%
Barren Land	--	--	--	--	--	--
Deciduous Forest	--	--	--	--	65.4	0.5%
Evergreen Forest	--	--	--	--	0.0	0.0%
Mixed Forest	--	--	--	--	1.4	0.0%
Shrub/Scrub	--	--	--	--	--	--
Grassland Herbaceous	--	--	--	--	320.1	2.6%
Pasture/Hay	--	--	--	--	750.0	6.0%
Cultivated Crops	89.3	100.0%	85.2	100.0	6,408.7	51.1%
Woody Wetlands	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0%	88.3	0.7%
Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0%	350.7	2.8%
Totals	89.3	100.0%	85.2	100.0%	12,552.7	100.0%

6.20.1 Effects on Human Settlement

The location is a cultivated parcel northwest of Waseca in a rural area with scattered rural residences. The nearest home is located approximately 130 feet south of the preliminary development area. Construction of the facility will not result in displacement of any homes

or businesses. The location is zoned as Agricultural Protection District A-1 by Waseca County. Solar farms would require a conditional use permit if permitted by the County.¹⁷⁸ The area of site control is designated as Agricultural in the 2005 *Waseca County Comprehensive Plan*.¹⁷⁹

A snowmobile trail follows the section line along the northwestern portion of the facility. The City Nature Area and Loon Lake Park and a local bike trail are located within one-half mile of the proposed facility. Construction and operation of the facility would not impact the use of nearby recreational resources.

No mitigation measures beyond those discussed in Section 5.2 are identified for the Waseca facility.

6.20.2 Effects on Land Based Economies

The proposed facility would remove approximately 85 acres from agricultural use for at least 25 years. At this time EERA staff is not aware of other solar facilities in the area of the proposed facility, so there is no indication that the conversion of land from agricultural uses would be part of a cumulative reduction of available land for crops or pasture.

Approximately 16 acres (19 percent) of the developed area are considered to be prime farmland and 29 acres (34 percent) are considered to be prime farmland if drained (Table 13). Within the comparison area surrounding the Waseca Substation, approximately 34 percent is considered to be prime farmland and 39 percent is considered to be prime farmland if drained. It is likely that any alternate locations that avoided the developed area around Waseca would also be sited on prime farmland if drained (Figure 86).

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

No mitigation measures beyond those discussed in Section 5.3 are identified for the Waseca facility.

6.20.3 Effects on Archaeological and Historic Resources

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

¹⁷⁸ Waseca County Comments, August 27, 2014

¹⁷⁹ Waseca County, *Waseca County Comprehensive Plan*. 2005.

<http://www.co.waseca.mn.us/DocumentCenter/View/127>, at *Draft Waseca Area Future Land Use Map*

6.20.4 Effects on Natural Environment

There are no rivers, streams or lakes within the area of facility site control. Although a ditch is shown crossing the Waseca Facility in some maps, aerial photography and site visits indicate that a stream feature is not present. Field delineations performed in the summer of 2014 did not identify any wetlands in the area of land control.¹⁸⁰

The preliminary design for the facility anticipates grading of approximately 43.6 acres of the site during construction.¹⁸¹

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

6.20.5 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 or threatened species within the preliminary development area of the Waseca facility. The NHIS database review did show records for three state listed threatened species (Sullivant's Milkweed (*Asclepias sullivantii*), Tuberous Indian-plantain (*Arnoglossum plantagineum*) and Valerian (*Valeriana edulis* var. *ciliate*)), one state listed special concern species (Rattlesnake-master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*)) and one state listed tracked species (Cowbane (*Oxypolis rigidior*)) within one mile of the area of site control for the facility.¹⁸²

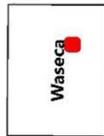
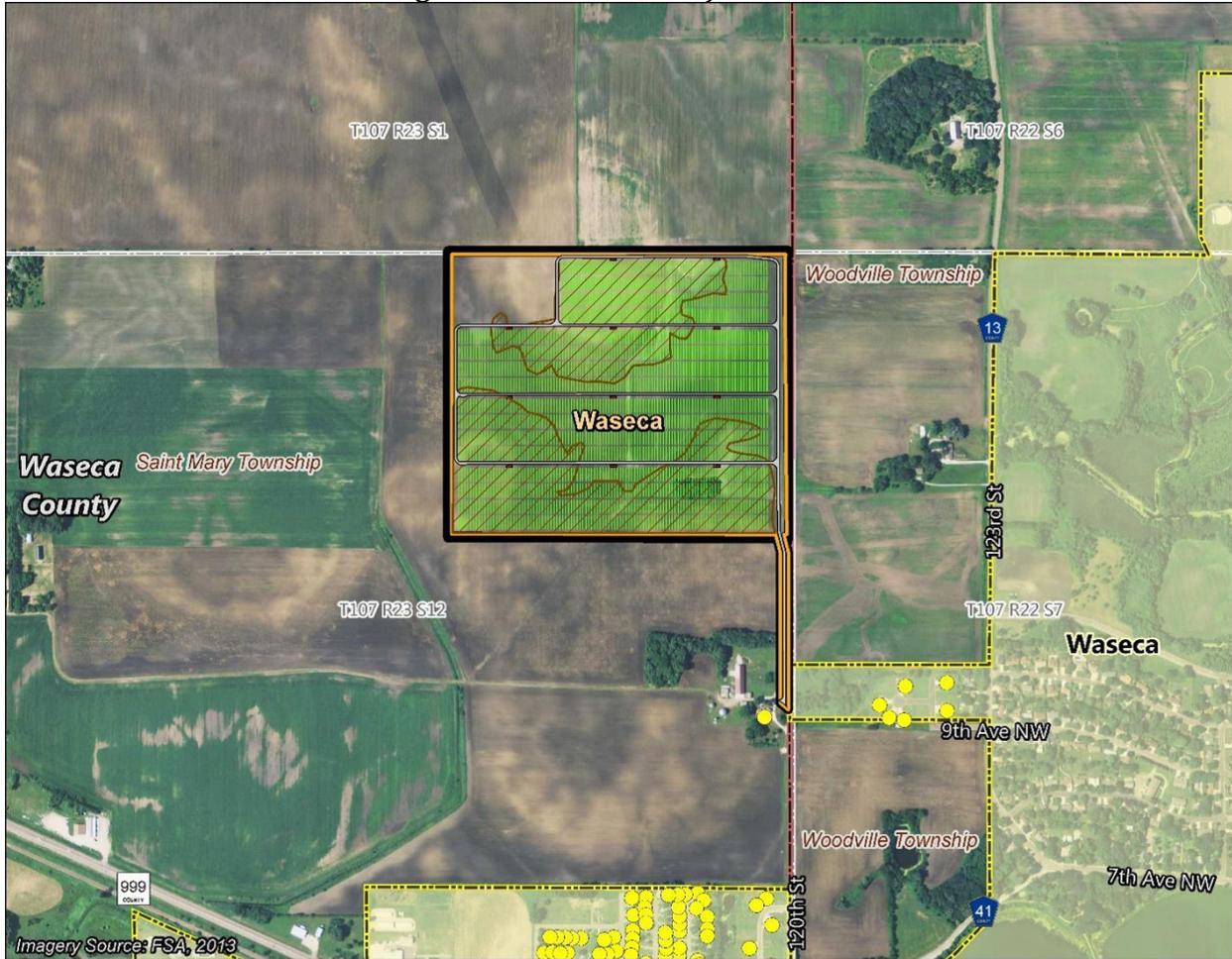
No mitigation measures beyond the field survey described in Section 5.6 are identified for the Waseca facility.

¹⁸⁰ Appendix C

¹⁸¹ Application, at Appendix F

¹⁸² Application, at p. 81, Appendix I

Figure 83: Waseca Project Detail



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

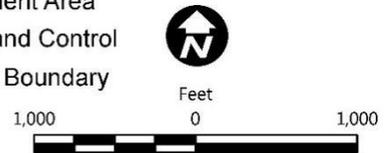


Figure 84: Waseca Land Cover Overview

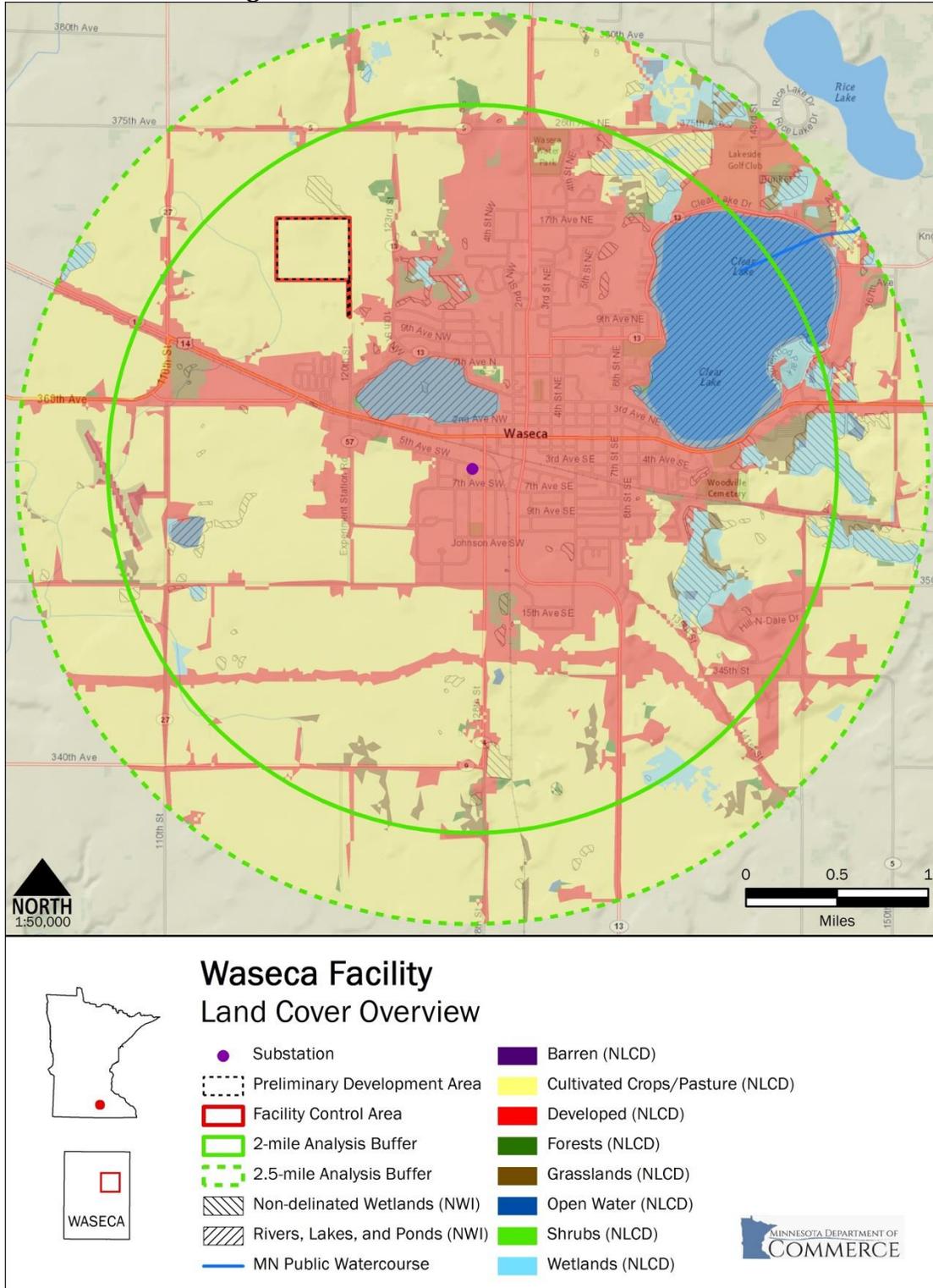
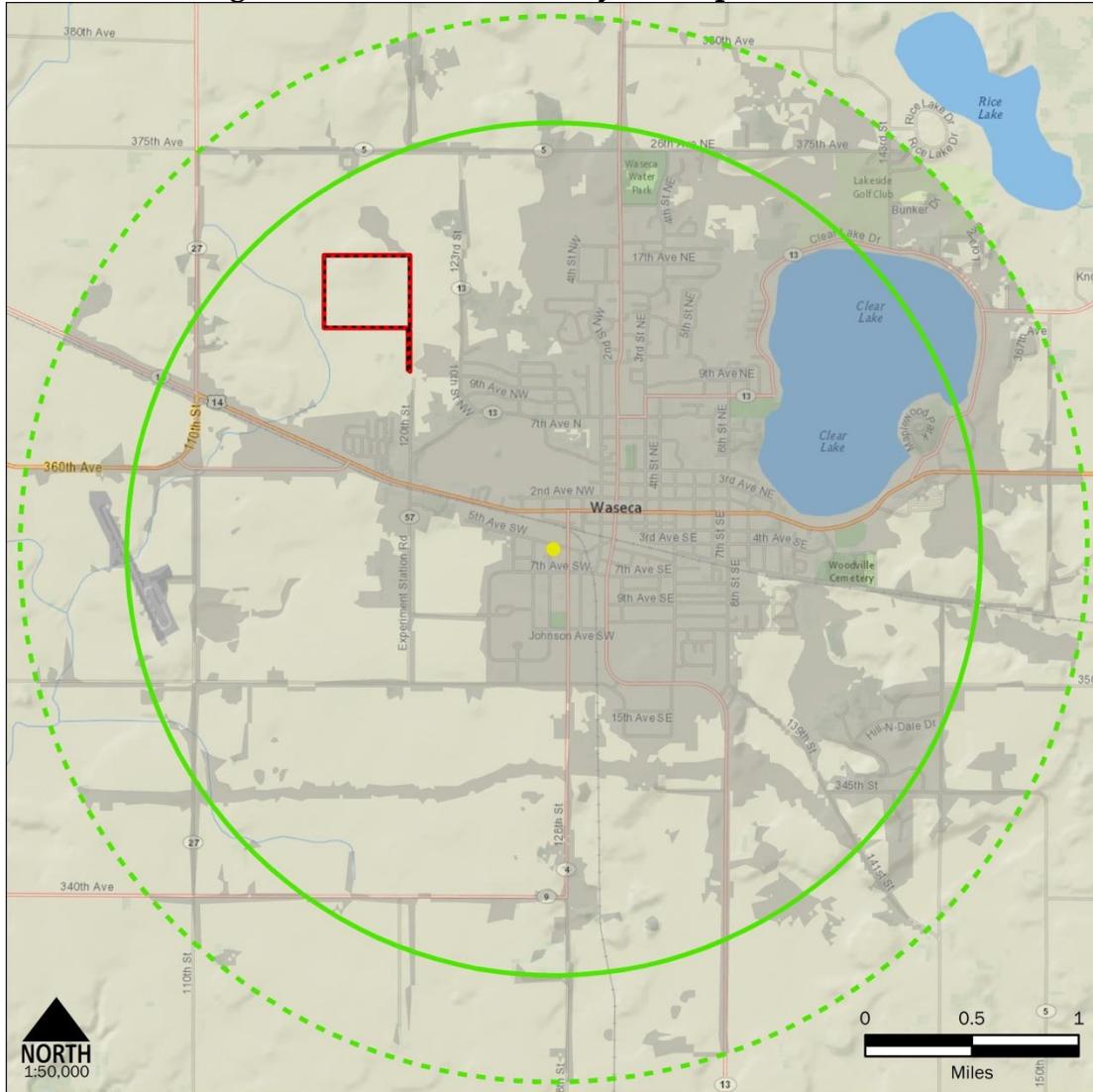


Figure 85: Waseca Generally Incompatible Areas



NORTH
 1:50,000

0 0.5 1
 Miles



**Waseca 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 86: Waseca Prime Farmland



Waseca Facility Prime Farmland

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

