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May 26, 2016

Jamie MacAlister, Environmental Review Manager
Minnesota Department of Commerce
85 7th Place East, Suite 500
St. Paul MN 55101

Re: Scoping Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) and Draft Scoping Decision Document for Sandpiper Pipeline and Line 3 Replacement Projects
Sandpiper PUC Docket Number PL-6668/CN-13-473 & PL-6668/PPL-13-474
Line 3 PUC Docket Number PL-9/CN-14-916 & PL-9/PPL-15-137

Dear Ms. MacAlister:

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is an Assisting Agency in the development of the Final Scoping Decision Document and EIS for the Sandpiper Pipeline and Line 3 Replacement Projects (Sandpiper and Line 3) and is actively providing input regarding those documents to the Minnesota Department of Commerce. In the interest of providing access to possible route alternatives in the timeliest manner to those subscribed to the project docket, we are submitting an alternative suggested for EIS analysis by comment letter.

Please consider the route alternative depicted in Figure 1 when drafting the Final Scoping Decision Document. Appendix A, (Page 52) of the Line 3 Replacement Project EAW, and Appendix A (Page 45) of the Sandpiper Pipeline Project EAW depict an area of primarily state forest land managed by the DNR. The Sandpiper and Line 3 Routes are proposed by the North Dakota Pipeline Company and Enbridge Energy (the Applicant) to be co-located in this area. Township 50 North, Range 20 West, Section 5 contains a private property with a Forest Legacy Easement, which contains a provision restricting disturbance from a pipeline. The uncertainty associated with restrictions on the easement in this area necessitates an additional option for the proposed route.

The DNR considered routing alternatives in the vicinity that would meet the state policy encouraging co-locating routes with existing infrastructure. We also considered forest resources, Minnesota Biological Survey Sites of Biodiversity Significance, and wetlands, all in the vicinity of the Forest Legacy Easement. Based on these considerations, the DNR suggests analysis of the route alternative depicted in Figure 1 for both the Line 3 and Sandpiper EISs. From the Applicant Proposed Route's southeastward trajectory, the alternative would turn south and follow a Minnesota Power 230 kV transmission line, and then turn east along Aitkin County Route 68 to rejoin the Applicant Proposed Route.

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In addition to helping alleviate concerns regarding crossing a Forest Legacy Easement, the route alternative in Figure 1 would follow existing corridors rather than routing cross-country significantly more than the Applicant Proposed Route does in this area. The Applicant Proposed Route would fragment a state forest that includes a Minnesota Biological Survey Site of Biodiversity Significance (see Figure 2). Also, of the existing corridors in the vicinity (including County State Aid Highway 29 and Soo Line), the alternative suggested by the DNR for analysis appears to cross the less acres of wetland. This route alternative would avoid a recorded location of the Northern Long Eared Bat, a federally-listed threatened species. This recorded location would be crossed by the Applicant Proposed Route.

It is notable that both the Applicant Proposed Route and alternative route are near the White Elk Lake, a wild rice lake. The route alternative suggested for EIS analysis would cross an inlet to the lake, whereas the Applicant Proposed Route would be located within a greater number of acres of the White Elk Lake minor watershed. Along with other natural resource considerations, a comparison of spill risk should be analyzed in the EIS to understand the possible difference in risk between the routes.

The DNR appreciates efforts made by Enbridge Energy to meet and discuss options to address routing challenges associated with the Forest Legacy Easement in this area. The DNR and Enbridge shared data and discussed options in this area. We understand that some of the angles in the alternative suggested by the DNR for analysis may present engineering difficulties. The DNR encourages the thorough analysis of all engineering challenges in the EISs. We also suggest that the EISs consider a wider route width at two locations depicted with a less than 90 degree angle in the route. A wider route near the section of the alternative where Aitkin County Route 68 rejoins the Applicant Proposed Route (See Figure 1) is recommended to allow for routing flexibility in an area with possible wetland crossings.

Thank you for your time reviewing this route for inclusion in the final scope for the EIS. Please contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Jamie Schrenzel
Principal Planner
Environmental Review Unit
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Enclosures: 2

cc: Scott Ek, Public Utilities Commission
Sara Ploetz, Enbridge Energy
Lori Dowling-Hanson, DNR NE Regional Director

Figure 1 – Alternative Route Suggested for EIS Analysis

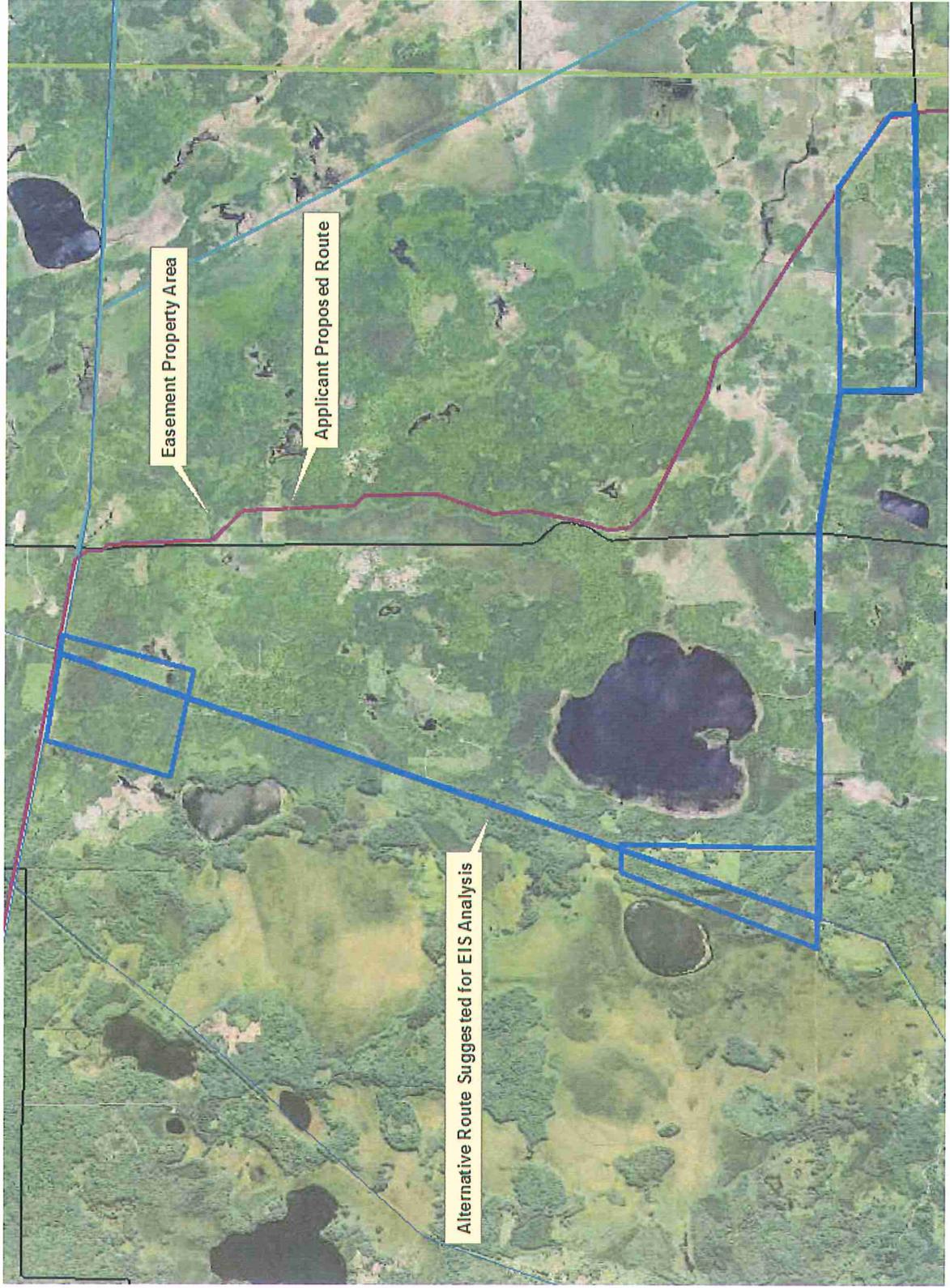


Figure 2 – Minnesota Biological Survey Sites of Biodiversity Significance in Vicinity of Forest Legacy Easement

