



Energy Facility Permitting
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April 8, 2013

Mayana Rice
Greater Bemidji Area Joint Planning Board
317 4th Street NW
Bemidji, MN 56601

Vicki Severson
Otter Tail Power Company
215 South Cascade Street
PO Box 496
Fergus Falls, Minnesota 56538

**Re: Local Review of Otter Tail Power Company's 115 kV Transmission Line Upgrade in the City of Bemidji, Minnesota
Commission Docket Number: E017/LR-12-888**

Dear Ms. Rice and Ms. Severson,

Greetings. This letter confirms that the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) has received notification that Otter Tail Power Company (OTP) intends to seek local review to upgrade approximately eight (8) miles of existing 69 kilovolt (kV) transmission line to 115 kV, to construct a 0.4 mile long segment of new 115 kV line, and to modify associated distribution substations. The project would be located in the city of Bemidji, Minnesota.

Under the Power Plant Siting Act, a permit from the Commission is required for transmission line projects over 100 kV (Minn. Stat. § 216E). However, local review and permitting is possible for eligible projects (Minn. Stat. § 216E.05). For such projects, a utility may apply to a local unit of government instead of the Commission for a permit to build the project. This letter confirms that OTP's proposed project is eligible for local review.

Based on the proposed location of the project, the Greater Bemidji Area Joint Planning Board (GBAJPB) is the local unit of government with jurisdiction to permit the project. OTP relates that it submitted a letter of application to the board on August 3, 2012, requesting that the board act as the local unit of government for the project. A local unit of government may relinquish its permitting jurisdiction by requesting that the Commission assume jurisdiction within 60 days of the filing of an application with the local unit of government (Minn. Rules 7850.5300, Subp. 4).

An environmental review process, including the development of an environmental assessment

(EA), must be conducted by a local unit of government with jurisdiction over the project (Minn. Rules 7850.5300). OTP indicates that the GBAJPB will be responsible for the environmental review process for the proposed project.

Specific requirements with regard to the environmental review process include (Minn. Rules 7850.5300, Subp. 5):

- (1) Providing an opportunity for the public to participate in the development of the scope of the environmental assessment before it is prepared,
- (2) Publishing notice in the EQB Monitor when the assessment is available for review and the procedure for commenting on the assessment, and
- (3) Withholding a final decision on the project until at least ten days after the notice appears in the EQB Monitor.

The GBAJPB must provide a copy of the environmental assessment to the Commission when it is completed (Minn. Rules 7850.5300, Subp. 5). Electronic filing (eFiling) of the environmental assessment is encouraged (<https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling>).

This letter confirms that the GBAJPB has sent the required notice to those persons on the Commission's general notification list that a permit has been applied for from a local unit of government (Minn. Rules 7850.5300, Subp. 3).

Please contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ray Kirsch', written in a cursive style.

Ray Kirsch
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651-296-7588