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May 7, 2004

Carole L. Schmidt
Great River Energy
17845 East Highway 10
P.O. Box 800
Elk River, Minnesota 55330

Pamela J. Rasmussen
Xcel Energy
P.O. Box 8
Eau Claire, WI 54702-0008

**RE: Acceptance of Route Permit Application for an HVTL/Substation
Dakota County, Minnesota
EQB Docket No. 04-81-TR-Air Lake-Empire**

Dear Ms. Schmidt and Ms. Rasmussen:

On April 30, 2004, GRE and Xcel Energy filed a Route Permit application with the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (MEQB) for a new 115 kV transmission line and a new substation to be located in Dakota County.

MEQB staff has reviewed your application and has recommended that I find your application consistent with the requirements of Minnesota Rules, part 4400.1150, subp. 2. Based on the MEQB staff recommendation and my review, I am accepting the Air Lake-Empire application with the understanding that if additional information is requested by the MEQB staff, these requests will be addressed promptly. Considering the application, I believe it is unnecessary to appoint a citizen advisory task force to consider alternative routes for this project.

The route permit application will be reviewed pursuant to the Alternative Permitting Review process procedures (Minnesota Rules, parts 4400.2000 to 4400.2950). Mr. David Birkholz will be the MEQB's staff Project Manager for this project, and you may direct any future questions to him. Mr. George Johnson of the MEQB staff will serve as the Public Advisor for the project. We look forward to working with GRE and Xcel Energy to fully address any issues that may be raised in review of this application. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Schroeder, Chair
Environmental Quality Board