

STATE OF MINNESOTA

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BOARD

In the Matter of Xcel Energy's Application for a High Voltage Transmission Line to connect the Mankato Energy Center plant in Mankato, Minnesota to the Xcel Wilmarth substation, to the transmission grid, and associated facilities in Blue Earth County.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SCOPING DECISION EQB Docket No. 04-86-TR-XCEL

The above-entitled matter came before the Chair of the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (MEQB) for a decision on the scope of the Environmental Assessment (EA) to be prepared on the three proposed, (2 lines at 115 kilovolts and 1 line at 345 kilovolt), high voltage transmission lines (HVTL) to connect the Mankato Energy Center Generating plant to the existing Xcel Wilmarth substation and the transmission grid.

The EQB held a public meeting on September 28, 2004, to discuss the project with the public and to solicit input into the scope of the EA to be prepared. The public was given until October 8, 2004 to submit written comments regarding the scope of the EA.

Having reviewed the comments submitted and consulted with EQB staff, I hereby make the following Scoping Order.

MATTERS TO BE ADDRESSED

The EA on the Xcel Wilmarth HVTL will address the following matters:

- 1.0 INTRODUCTION
 - 1.1 Description
 - 1.2 Purpose and Need
 - 1.3 Sources of Information

- 2.0 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK
 - 2.1 Certificate of Need Requirement
 - 2.2 Route Permit Requirement
 - 2.3 Environmental Assessment
 - 2.4 Public Hearing
 - 2.5 Applicable Codes
 - 2.6 Issues Outside EQB Authority

- 3.0 PROPOSED PROJECT
 - 3.1 Transmission Structure Design
 - 3.2 Substation Design
 - 3.3 Project Cost Estimate
 - 3.4 MISO Interconnection Study

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- 4.0 POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT
 - 4.1 Air Quality
 - 4.2 Biological Resources
 - 4.2.1 Flora
 - 4.2.2 Fauna
 - 4.2.3 Rare & Unique Natural resources
 - 4.3 Aesthetic Impacts
 - 4.4 Water Quality Impacts
 - 5.4.1 Water Resources
 - 5.4.2 Surface Water
 - 5.4.3 Groundwater
 - 5.4.4 Wetlands
 - 5.4.5 Mitigative Measures
 - 4.5 Electric and Magnetic Fields
 - 5.5.1. Interagency White Paper on EMF
 - 5.5.2 Radio and TV Interference
 - 4.6 Land Use
 - 4.7 Noise Impacts
 - 4.8 Transportation Impacts
 - 5.0 REGULATORY PERMITS AND APPROVALS REQUIRED
 - 5.1 Agency Contacts Needed
 - 5.2 List of Permits Required
 - 6.0 LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS
 - 7.0 OTHER ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

ISSUES OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THE EA

The EQB will not, as part of this environmental review, consider whether a different size or different type of transmission line should be built. Nor will the EQB consider the no-build option regarding the HVTL. Nor will the EQB consider any alternative sites for the proposed plant.

IDENTIFICATION OF PERMITS

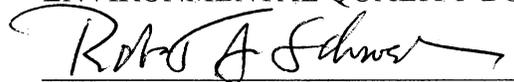
The EA will include a list of permits that will be required for the applicant to construct this project.

SCHEDULE

The EA will be completed by November 10, 2004.

Signed this 11 day of October, 2004

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Robert A. Schroeder, *Chair*