



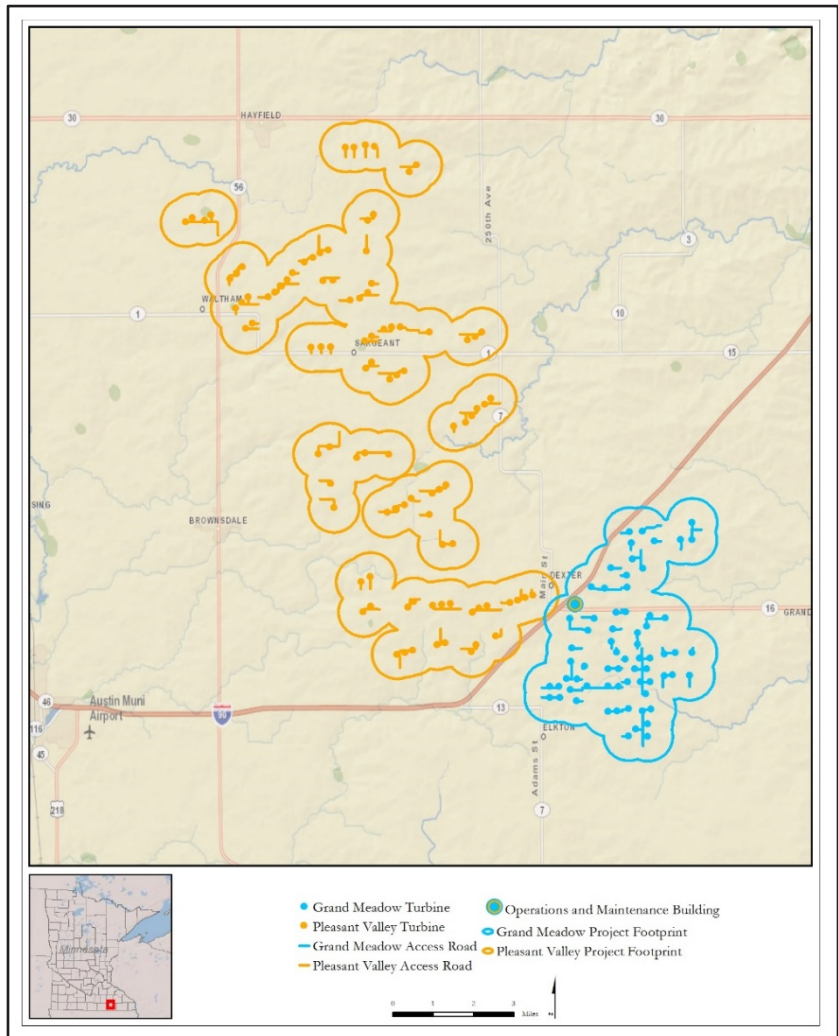
## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

### Grand Meadow and Pleasant Valley Wind Farms

#### Project Description

Northern States Power Company – Minnesota (NSPM), doing business as Xcel Energy (Xcel), currently owns and operates the 100.5-megawatt (MW) Grand Meadow Wind Farm (GMWF) and the 200-MW Pleasant Valley Wind Farm (PVWF) located approximately 10 miles east and northeast, respectively, of Austin in Dodge and Mower Counties, Minnesota.

The GMWF consists of 67 turbines within a project footprint of approximately 13,080 acres of land in central Mower County. The PVWF consists of 100 turbines within a project footprint of approximately 31,176 acres of land in Dodge and Mount Counties. The wind farms interconnect to the Great River Energy Pleasant Valley 161/345 kilovolt (kV) substation located approximately 6 miles north of Dexter, Minnesota. GMWF and PVWF connect via approximately 6-mile long and 5-mile long overhead transmission lines and transmit power into the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) grid. GMWF began commercial operation in 2008 and PVWF began commercial operation in 2015.



#### Potential Eagle Impacts

There may be bald eagle mortality/injury due to the operation of the GMWF and PVWF. Take, including killing of eagles, is prohibited by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. However, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has been delegated the authority to issue eagle take permits, where the take is determined to be compatible with the preservation of eagles. The Service will issue programmatic permits for such take only after an applicant has committed to undertake all practical measures to avoid and minimize such take and mitigate anticipated take to the maximum extent achievable. We received an application for a five year programmatic eagle take permit

from Xcel Energy for the combined GMWF and PVWF Project. The project applicant has provided an Eagle Conservation Plan (ECP) that summarizes project design, construction, and operational measures taken to avoid and minimize impacts to eagles. The ECP identifies a predicted level of take of up to six bald eagles within the five year permit period which the applicant has requested as part of their permit application.

#### Project Review

The Service has an independent statutory responsibility under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to evaluate its own actions related to the GMWF/PVWF Project, namely the possible issuance of an eagle

take permit. A Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared to analyze the impacts associated with the proposed action. The ECP and EA are being posted on-line to allow for public comment on this process and can be found at <https://www.fws.gov/midwest/eagle/permits/ea.html>.

Should additional information be needed, please contact us at:

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