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June 23, 2010

VIA EMAIL and US MAIL

Tony Sullins
Field Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Twin Cities Ecological Services Office
4101 American Boulevard East
Bloomington, MN 55425-1665

Re: In the Matter of the Route Permit Application by Great River Energy and Xcel Energy for a 345 kV Transmission Line from Brookings County, South Dakota to Hampton, Minnesota
MPUC Docket No.: ET-2/TL-08-1474
OAH Docket No.: 7-2500-20283-2

Dear Tony:

On behalf of the Great River Energy and Xcel Energy, I want to thank the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (“USFWS”) for providing a prompt and specific response to our letter of May 13, 2010. Your letter provided helpful clarification on important issues associated with the Brookings County – Hampton 345 kV Project (“Project”).

As we understand, the USFWS has concluded that an overhead crossing of the Lower Minnesota River at Belle Plaine would avoid and minimize impacts to bald eagles and that an eagle take permit may be required under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (“BGEPA”). The USFWS has further concluded that at the Le Sueur crossing, a permit would be needed but could not be issued because of the existence of the Belle Plaine crossing alternative.

While we continue to believe that an eagle take permit is not required for the Project because eagle disturbance is not likely, we are committed to working closely with the USFWS to further evaluate the research on eagle interaction with transmission and distribution lines. We also are committed to developing a plan for the Lower Minnesota River crossing area to minimize the risk of avian collision during construction and operation of the Project. We anticipate that such a plan would include a pre-construction survey and transmission line design modifications. We also agree that the Belle Plaine crossing, which has an existing transmission line crossing, is a reasonable crossing location and that the overhead transmission line could be designed and constructed in a manner to minimize impacts to birds, including bald eagles. We also believe the Le Sueur crossing remains a feasible route option for the river crossing. However, we find both crossing locations to be workable and constructible.

We look forward to developing a plan for minimizing avian impacts at the crossing of the Lower Minnesota River with the USFWS after the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission issues a Route Permit and appreciate the USFWS's input in this proceeding.

/s/ Dan Lesher
Routing Lead, Brookings Project

/s/ Kevin Lennon
Project Manager, Brookings Project

cc: Gerry Shimek, USFWS
Margaret Rheude, USFWS
Deb Pile, OES