

PC 12-1163

November 15, 2013

Burl Haar, Executive Secretary
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Place East Suite 350
St. Paul Minnesota 55101-2147



Re: Great Northern Transmission Line
Docket #12-1163
PUBLIC COMMENT

Dear Commissioners:

I am a retired Minnesota State Park manager residing on the shores of Balm Lake, Beltrami County, and between the two southern alternative power line corridors for the GNTL that have been proposed.

As a state park manager, it was my job and my duty to protect, preserve and if possible, to repair and restore the unique resources of Lake Bemidji State Park. I was also the resident manager living in the midst of a very diverse park environment. So when it came time to look for a post retirement home, my wife and I looked for a state park quality setting in a nearly pristine environment - on a spring fed lake with "boundary waters" scenic quality.

We found that home in 1994 and have been doing our best to preserve and protect not only our own property but also fighting along with our lake association neighbors to prevent degradation of water quality and overdevelopment. By working with the DNR and the Legacy Amendment to purchase and protect over a mile of shoreline and 160 contiguous inland acres, we thought we had successfully ensured scenic quality, water quality and the quality of the fishery well into the future by establishing the Dann Siems Aquatic Management Area. That is until Allete and the Great Northern Transmission Line planners put Balm Lake squarely between their two southern alternative routes.

So it's not only the possible health risk and aesthetic insult of 150 ft., 500 kv. transmission towers looming overhead, it's also the unknown effect of such a line on Balm Lake water quality through potential runoff of herbicides needed to maintain the right-of-way corridor; the risk of death or injury to our nesting loons, eagles and ospreys, flocks of ducks, geese, swans and pelicans as well as the impact of habitat fragmentation on our animal populations through corridor clearing.

We also are very concerned that the construction of this transmission line will very negatively affect our property values. Who is going to want to purchase a lake home or a farm with a wonderful view of 150 ft. towers? I expect valuations to drop significantly. For most of us, our homes represent our most valuable asset which if devalued, reduces our net worth and our future options.

The northern routes have the advantage of partially utilizing existing corridors, have fewer impacts on humans because of much reduced populations, fewer impacts on plant and animal species because of less plant diversity and lower animal populations - especially through the peat lands.

We strongly urge the MPUC to reject the southern alternatives and designate a northern route where it will do the least harm.

Sincerely,

Paul & Pamela Mork
29377 Delta Dr NW
Pinewood MN 56676
(218) 243-2990
pinewood@paulbunyan.net

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The top signature is "Paul Mork" and the bottom signature is "Pamela Mork".

Rice, Robin (PUC)

From: Paul Mork <pinewood@paulbunyan.net>
Sent: Monday, November 18, 2013 11:18 AM
To: #PUC_Public Comments
Subject: Public Comment on GNTL - Docket 12-1163
Attachments: Comment Letter to the PUC - Final.pdf

This comment letter was also sent by US mail last Friday, 11/15/13, but I wanted to ensure it arrived on time.

Paul Mork
29377 Delta Dr NW
Pinewood MN 56676
(218) 243-2990

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Sincerely,

Paul & Pamela Mork
29377 Delta Dr NW
Pinewood MN 56676
(218) 243-2990
pinewood@paulbunyan.net

Rice, Robin (PUC)

From: Bailey Law Office, Ltd. <baileylo@paulbunyan.net>
Sent: Monday, November 18, 2013 10:54 AM
To: #PUC_Public Comments
Subject: John P. Bailey
Attachments: elexltr111813.docx

Burl Haar, Executive Secretary
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Minnesota 55101-2147

RE: Great Northern Transmission Line
Docket #12-1163

I have spoken at length to many people in the Balm Lake area just south of the Red Lake Reservation. This area is part of a large area running from Clearbrook east for miles that is occupied by beautiful forests, farms, resorts and residences. The beauty of this property is what gives it its value. Unsightly, unnatural, and prominent structures like the power line proposed by Minnesota Power as the Great Northern Transmission Line destroys much of the value of this property. The devaluation of this property will be extremely costly to the counties affected such as Beltrami and Clearwater and counties further east.

I can assure you on behalf of myself and the many people that I have spoken with that attempted construction of this line anywhere other than north of Red Lake along already existing corridors over property that has already been devalued by existing power lines will be vigorously resisted in court. The only appropriate location for this line being proposed for the profit and benefit of Minnesota Power and its stockholders and the Canadian interests with no benefits accruing in any direct or indirect way to property owners in this area would be the route north of Red Lake. Following that right-of-way will affect property that has already been devalued. No further damage would accrue to that property of any consequence compared to the damage that would accrue to property in this area. I am certain that common sense judges and juries in Beltrami and Clearwater counties would agree. Furthermore, Beltrami and Clearwater Counties would also agree that lost tax revenue would be minimal along the Northern Route above Red Lake compared to devaluing thousands and thousands of acres along the routes south of Red Lake.

I would hope that the common sense of the public utilities commission and its members would prevail. If not, the common sense of local juries and judges will. Let's not inflict unnecessary damage on Clearwater and Beltrami County residents and the tax revenue of those counties by making foolish decisions about where to locate this transmission line that will benefit Canada and distant stockholders of Minnesota Power. Minnesota Power and its other investors cannot and will not run over the lawful property and personal interests of hundreds of people and multiple counties just to make this project more profitable over the long term of its life. If they can't live with reasonable profits that do not unreasonably damage the rights of the counties and people affected, than the project should be abandoned. There are many ways to generate power that are environmentally responsible. Those alternatives do not require the devaluation of thousands of acres of property in one of the most beautiful areas of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

John P. Bailey
Bailey Law Offices Ltd.
Bemidj, MN
And affected property owner

Rice, Robin (PUC)

From: Relsnermn@aol.com
Sent: Wednesday, November 20, 2013 10:41 AM
To: #PUC_Public Comments
Cc: relsnermn@hotmail.com
Subject: Balm Lake power line proposals

re: Great Northern Transmission Line

I too side with others on and around Balm Lake, and especially with Elsner family members, who have written to disapprove of any proposed power line construction on our beautiful, beloved Balm Lake. Our precious acres have been in our family since the 30s, and just to go to THE CABIN and enjoy absolute peace and quiet in such a beautiful place is such a gift. Over all these years it has been our greatest place to gather.

We ask that another route for this proposal be made, especially since our treasured legacy is off the grid...and all plans are to keep it that way.

I hope this plea will be added to the others, even though a day late. If a more northern route is chosen, it would be most gratefully appreciated!

Thank you,

Regina Elsner

relsnermn@hotmail.com

Rice, Robin (PUC)

From: mark@selmecki.com
Sent: Tuesday, November 19, 2013 3:41 PM
To: #PUC_Public Comments
Subject: RE: Great Northern Transmission Line

11/19/13

RE: Great Northern Transmission Line
Docket Number: 12-1163

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to urge the Public Utilities Commission to avoid the proposed route around the south side of the Red Lake Reservation. These southern routes would undeniably destroy precious pines, wildlife habitats, and the purity of the lakes that have yielded great fishing, swimming, and enjoyment for which the residents and tourists treasure.

My family has owned 30 acres of property on the north side of Balm Lake (Beltrami County) for nearly a century. This is a sacred and cherished place for our family, where we have gathered together for four generations. My grandfather built the first log cabin in the 1920s and to this day it remains off the grid, and intentionally so.

I have been enjoying the beauty and tranquil escape from modernization for over 30 years. I have two young children that even at their young age, adore the cabin. I can only hope that they will be able to bring their children to the same peaceful, off the grid place that I have enjoyed for so many years. To have these massive power lines destroy the view and beauty of our cabin would be appalling.

This land is classified by the State of Minnesota and Beltrami County as a sensitive natural environment and must remain protected. I strongly urge the Commission to think about the long-term environmental impact of this project and consider all northern routes that avoid the Balm Lake area.

Sincerely,

Mark Selmecki, ChE, PMP

Rice, Robin (PUC)

From: Chad Selmecki <cselmecki@visi.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 19, 2013 2:05 PM
To: #PUC_Public Comments
Subject: RE: Great Northern Transmission Line Docket Number: 12-1163

RE: Great Northern Transmission Line
Docket Number: 12-1163

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the Great Northern Transmission line proposed by Minnesota Power. In particular, I am very opposed to the proposed route around the south side of the Red Lake Reservation. The southern route would undeniably disrupt miles of fragile forests, untouched wildlife habitats, and precious clean lakes that residents and visitors so treasure for their purity.

I am fortunate to have a grandfather who fell in love with the beauty of Balm Lake and purchased his family's modest nature escape there over 90 years ago. In all those years, the family has had minimal impact on the 30+ acres by planting native trees and maintaining only two small rustic cabins. The absurd irony of an off-the-grid log cabin built in 1930 being overshadowed by one of the largest transmission lines in Minnesota is something I do not wish my young daughter to witness. I hope someday her own children can enjoy the beauty of Balm Lake like I have - one where the only buzzing in the night sky comes from the northern lights and mosquitoes.

I question whether a transmission line of this size is even needed in northern Minnesota. While I applaud Minnesota Power's commitment to using more renewal energy sources, the enormous size of this proposed transmission line seems well above the energy needs of their consumers. How much environmental gain is achieved by purchasing hydro power when thousands of acres of pristine forest are destroyed to deliver it? How much of this line's capacity is to meet the needs of Minnesota customers and how much is purely for resale?

If this plan goes through, the damage done to this relatively untouched part of our beautiful state could never be reversed. I urge you to protect the area south of Red Lake by denying the proposed transmission line.

Thank you,
Chad Selmecki

Rice, Robin (PUC)

From: Anna Selmecki <selme003@umn.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, November 19, 2013 9:48 AM
To: #PUC_Public Comments
Subject: CN-12-1163

11/18/13

Docket 12-1163

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to urge the Public Utilities Commission to avoid the proposed Balm Lake power line routes.

My family has owned 30 acres of property on the north side of Balm Lake (Beltrami County) for nearly a century. This is a sacred and cherished place for our family, where we have gathered together for four generations. My grandfather built the first log cabin in the 1920s and to this day it remains off the grid, and intentionally so.

The massive power lines that you propose would not benefit those around Balm Lake that have to live with them forever. These routes will jeopardize everything that we value about our cabin and lake, especially the stunning views, the abundant wildlife, and clean water. I became a scientist because of the many hours I spent exploring and studying these northern woods and miles of lakeshore. I did my very first science fair project on the beavers that occupy Balm Lake, and for multiple seasons my family and I tracked the beaver families that are at the heart of the Balm Lake Aquatic Management Area. This land is classified by the State of Minnesota and Beltrami County as a sensitive natural environment and must remain protected.

I do not want Balm Lake to be degraded by massive power lines and by the construction and maintenance that they require. Furthermore, the proposed lines would create a large open corridor that will only encourage further disruption of this protected natural area by snowmobile and 4-wheel traffic.

I strongly urge the Commission to think about the long-term environmental impact of this project and consider all northern routes that avoid the Balm Lake area.

Sincerely,

Anna Selmecki, Ph.D.

Rice, Robin (PUC)

From: Mark and Audrey Hanson <maud69@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, November 18, 2013 10:28 PM
To: #PUC_Public Comments

Our family has owned property on Balm Lake since 2005. This lake was named correctly. We have had many comments made by those visiting us about the peacefulness of coming to this lake. People especially enjoy the quietness, seeing an eagle flying overhead, the cleanness of the lake, the enjoyment of fishing, the sight and sound of the loons, the experience of seeing a loon protecting her young in the nest, just the sense of a place that has not been ruined by **unnecessary acts of man**. We also enjoy experiencing the sights, sounds and smells of the seasons along the trails and roads as we hike, 4-wheel, and snowmobile. We all know that once the ability to have a place like this is destroyed, the chance of it ever coming back, especially to this degree, on this earth, is close to nil.

We feel that to have the Great Northern Transmission Line placed as proposed would be very detrimental to all the fine things that Balm Lake and the surrounding area represents to and are enjoyed by so many. We would like to see this transmission line placed in an area that is not highly populated and where it's not a habitat of the amount of wildlife as here.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our opinion of this matter.



Mark and Audrey Hanson