

**CENTER TO GRAND FORKS
345 KV TRANSMISSION LINE
PROJECT**

SCOPING REPORT

March 2010



U.S. Department of Agriculture
Rural Utilities Service

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List of Acronyms

Abbreviation	Definition
AC	Alternating Current
ACSR	Aluminum conductor steel reinforced
ACSS	Aluminum conductor steel supported
AES	Alternatives Evaluation Study
CFR	Code of federal regulations
CRP	Conservation Reserve Program
EA	Environmental Assessment with scoping
EMF	Electric and Magnetic Fields
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
HVDC	High Voltage Direct-Current
kV	Kilovolt
MCM	Thousand Circular Mills
MCS	Macro-Corridor Study
Minnkota	Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc.
MW	Megawatt
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NOI	Notice of Intent
OPGW	Optical Ground Wire
PA	Programmatic Agreement
PPA	Power Purchase Agreements
Project	Center to Grand Forks Transmission Line Project
PSA	Public Service Announcement
PSC	Public Service Commission
ROW	Right-of-Way
RUS	Rural Utilities Service
STATSGO	State Soil Geographic Database
SSURGO	Soil Survey Geographic Database
SVC	Static VAR Compensator
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
TW	Trapezoidal Wire
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service

1.0 Introduction

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is considering a request for funding for a proposal by Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc. (Minnkota). The proposal is for the planned Center to Grand Forks Transmission Line Project (Project), an approximately 260-mile-long 345 kilovolt (kV) transmission line in North Dakota. As specified in RUS's Environmental Policies and Procedures, as codified in 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1794, the proposed Project requires the preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) with scoping (7 CFR 1794.24[b][1]). Accordingly, scoping meetings with the public, federal, state, and local agencies, and tribal governments were held between November 16 and November 19, 2009. This scoping report identifies and summarizes comments received during the scoping period from November 20 to December 18, 2009 and identifies what will be evaluated in the EA.

This report describes the proposed Project, outlines the agency and public scoping meetings and materials, and provides a summary of the comments received at those meetings, which were held between November 16 and November 19, 2009. In addition, this document includes ten appendices containing supplementary information.

2.0 Project Description

Minnkota is proposing to construct an approximately 260-mile-long 345 kilovolt (kV) transmission line in North Dakota between the Center 345 kV Substation (located northeast of the Milton R. Young Generation Station, near Center, North Dakota) and the Prairie Substation (located west of Grand Forks, North Dakota) (Figure 2-1, page 5). The proposed Center to Grand Forks 345 kV Transmission Line Project (Project) is needed to replace the capability of transmitting the output of Milton R Young Station Unit 2 over an existing high voltage direct-current (HVDC) transmission line, and to improve regional electrical system reliability. The proposed Project could also support wind generation development in North Dakota.

The proposed Project would consist of the following six major components.

- **345 kV High Voltage Transmission Line** – The proposed Project consists of approximately 260 miles (based on the average length of typical routes within the Macro-Corridors) of new, high voltage alternating current transmission line to run from the Center 345 kV Substation at the Milton R. Young Generation Station near Center, North Dakota, to the Prairie Substation near Grand Forks, North Dakota. A crossing of the Missouri River in central North Dakota would be required. The proposed Project would deliver existing baseload generation to Minnkota's cooperative members. While final engineering and design has not been completed, the line would likely be constructed with single-pole steel structures (Table 2-1). Typical structures would be approximately 150-feet-high and placed approximately 1,000-feet apart. The typical right-of-way (ROW) for a single pole 345 kV line would be approximately 150-feet-wide. It is anticipated that the proposed Project would use 795 MCM (thousand circular mills - conductor diameter) or 954 MCM aluminum conductor steel reinforced (ACSR) or aluminum conductor steel supported (ACSS) conductors (bundled) to minimize corona. The conductor size may need to be modified once the preferred route is selected and additional electrical optimization studies are completed. In addition, a fiber-optic cable would be part of the static line for the entire 260 mile transmission line length.
- **Center 345 kV Substation Upgrades** – Most upgrades would occur within the existing substation's fenced boundary (ownership shared with Otter Tail Power Company). This would involve installing new 345 kV circuit breakers, 345 kV dead-end structures, a new 345/230 kV transformer and associated bus work, new 345 kV switches and associated foundations, steel structures, and control panels. A line reactor for open line voltage control may also be required. If the reactor is required a 22,500 square foot addition to the north end of the substation would be needed.
- **Additional 230 kV Tie Line** – This approximately 1,500-foot-long 230 kV tie line would parallel the existing tie line on Minnkota-owned property. It would be needed to complete a transmission-to-transmission interconnection with the Square Butte 230 kV Substation.
- **Square Butte 230 kV Substation Upgrades** – Existing 230 kV circuit breakers and line terminal equipment would be re-allocated from the existing HVDC tie line to the new 345 kV interconnect as part of the agreement with Minnesota Power.

- **Prairie Substation Upgrades** – All upgrades would occur within the existing Minnkota-operated substation’s fenced boundary. This would involve installing new 345 kV circuit breakers, 345 kV dead-end structures, two new 345/230 kV transformers and associated bus work, new 345 kV switches and associated foundations, steel structures, and control panels. New 230 kV circuit breakers would be added to accommodate interconnecting with the existing 230 kV ring bus. Existing transmission line termination would need to be moved to convert the ring bus into a breaker-and-a-half bus arrangement.
- **Fiber Optic Regeneration Stations** – Two or more fiber optic regeneration stations would be required along the transmission line route to re-amplify the protection and control signals carried in the optical ground wire (OPGW). Each station would require a 50 foot by 50 foot fenced area and small control building to house the electronic equipment.

Table 2-1. Typical Characteristics of 345 kV Transmission Line Structures

345 kV Transmission Line	Details
Voltage (kV)	345 kV
ROW width (feet)	150
Span (feet)	1,000
Range of structure heights (feet)	120 - 150 (single circuit) 120 - 175 (double circuit)
Number of structures per mile	5 – 7
Minimum ground clearance beneath conductor (feet)	35 - 40
Depth of concrete footings for the poles (feet)	20 – 40
Diameter of concrete footings for the poles (feet)	7 – 10

The cost of constructing the proposed 345 kV line is estimated to be in the range of \$1.1 to \$1.8 million per mile in 2009 dollars (including ROW, permitting, and other ancillary costs) with a total estimated cost for line construction of approximately \$286 million. An additional estimated \$37 million would be required to modify the terminus substations near Center and Grand Forks, North Dakota, for a total estimated Project construction cost of \$323 million for a 260 mile line. Minnkota has a target completion date for the proposed Project of January 1, 2013.

Studies are underway to address third party impacts to neighboring transmission systems as well as to address the needs of potential interconnection customers who have requests listed on Minnkota’s interconnection queue¹. Figure 2-2 (Page 5) identifies areas of potential project upgrades due to interconnect requests. The results of these studies may indicate a need to increase the overall scope of this proposed Project. Such scope changes could include the addition of one or more of the following eight project components. The cost of these proposed Project additions would be borne by the beneficiaries of the additions.

¹ Current requests are for wind energy development projects.

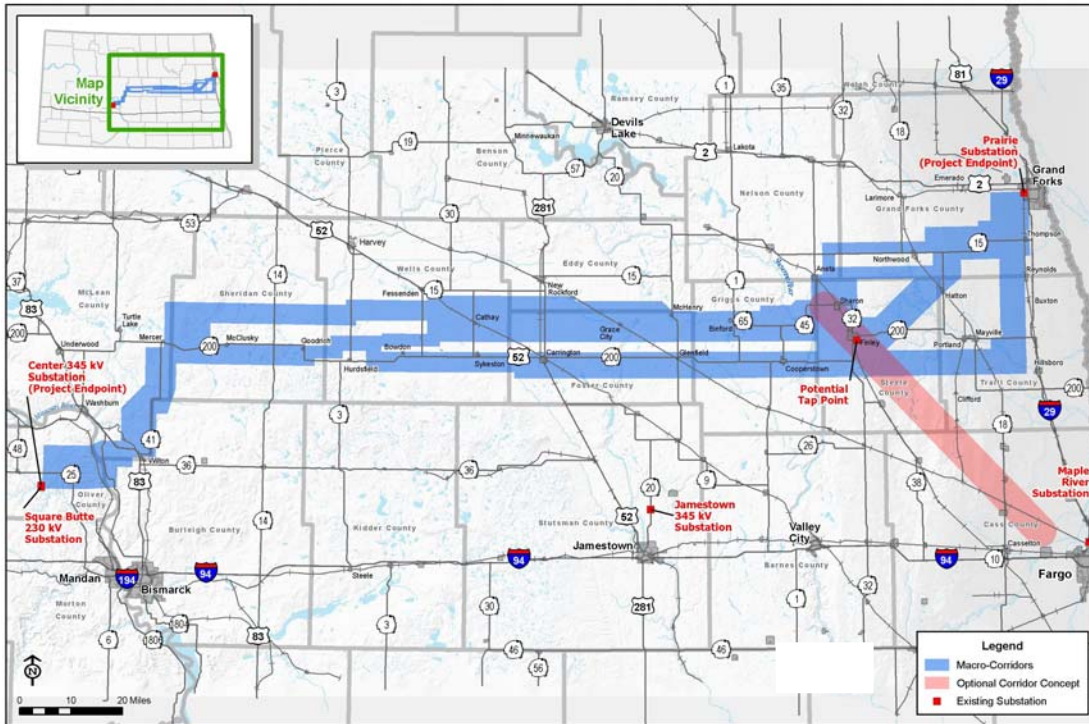
- Tap the proposed Project in the area of Finley, North Dakota, and develop a 345 kV transmission line section between Finley and Fargo. Develop a new 345 kV substation near Finley.
- Increase conductor size or type on the base Project between Center and Finley. The use of ACSS or ACSS/TW (aluminum conductor steel supported/trapezoidal wire) can raise the thermal capability without increasing conductor diameter.
- Insert a series compensation station at the tap point near Finley to lower the effective impedance of the line and increase transfer capability.
- Convert all structures between Center and Finley to double-circuit-ready structures to accommodate a future second 345 kV circuit.
- Add a second 345 kV circuit between Center and Finley.
- Add phase shifting transformers to the Square Butte 230 kV Substation to decrease flows into the 230 kV system at Center.
- Add shunt capacitors to the Jamestown 345 kV Substation to increase transfer capability.
- Add an SVC (Static VAR compensator) to the Maple River Substation to increase transfer capability.

RUS environmental review of the proposed Project was initiated by submittal of an Alternative Evaluation Study (AES) and a Macro-Corridor Study (MCS) from Minnkota (www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/ea.htm#Minnkota_Power_Cooperative,_Inc._). These studies were approved by RUS on October 22, 2009 and made available for the public and agencies to review and provide comment. The AES was developed to define the proposed Project need and summarize the studies and transmission alternatives that were used to develop the Project need. The purpose of the MCS was to identify and define potential transmission line corridors and show end points. The transmission line corridors were developed based upon environmental, engineering, economics, and permitting opportunities and constraints. These documents outlined the need for the proposed Project and determined potential corridors.

Figure 2-1. Project Area and Macro-Corridors



Figure 2-2. Potential Project Upgrade Areas due to Interconnection Requests



2.1 Summary of the Alternative Evaluation Study

The AES assesses different technological alternatives such as no action, load management, conservation, baseload generation, intermediate generation, peaking generation, and several transmission alternatives. The outcome of the AES stated that the solution for meeting the energy demand and voltage stability needs of the Red River Valley region was to construct a new 345 kV transmission line between Center and Grand Forks, North Dakota.

The Milton R. Young Generation Station has two generating units, Young 1 and Young 2. Currently, Young 2 output is carried over a dedicated HVDC transmission line from central North Dakota to eastern Minnesota. Over the next few years, two main actions will take place through amendments of the power purchase agreements (PPA) between Square Butte Electric Cooperative, Minnkota, and Minnesota Power, as follows:

- Rights to the existing HVDC transmission line from the Milton R. Young Generation Station to Duluth, Minnesota, have been transferred to Minnesota Power. Beginning in 2013 it will no longer be available to carry the full generation output of Young 2.
- Rights to the total output (455 MW) of Young 2 will be transferred to Minnkota over time.

With the reassignment of the HVDC system, Young 2 power will need to be moved over the alternating current transmission system to Minnkota's service territory. As discussed in the AES, system studies have shown that the transfer capacity on the alternating current system needs to be increased between Young 2 and Minnkota's service territory, and that a new 345 kV transmission line from Young 2 to the Prairie Substation would be the best solution. A new line between these endpoints would also improve voltage stability and load serving capability to the northern Red River Valley. This would not be new generation, but a change in how the power is delivered to the users.

2.2 Summary of Macro-Corridor Study

The MCS was developed to identify macro-corridors within which the transmission line could be built. Upon consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, including the public, local, state, and federal agencies, and tribal governments with an interest in the Project area, Minnkota identified potential macro-corridors, which could be assessed during RUS's scoping process. The macro-corridors were established with the intention that multiple route options could be developed that pass a limited number of residences, minimize environmental impacts, cross rivers near existing linear infrastructure, and avoid conflicting land uses. Figure 2-1 illustrates the macro-corridors presented in the AES and MCS and reviewed during the scoping process.

The AES and MCS were released for public review and comment on October 22, 2009. The public was able to access the documents on both the RUS and Minnkota's Project websites. Hard copies of the documents were available for review at the scoping meetings and distributed to the following libraries:

- Aneta Public Library, 11995 19th St, Aneta, ND 58212-0088
- Bismarck's Veterans Memorial Library, 515 N. 5th St, Bismarck, ND 58501-4057
- Oliver County Auditor, 115 West Main, Center, ND 58530
- City of Carrington Library, 55 9th Ave, Carrington, ND 58421-2017
- Griggs County Library, 902 Burrel Ave, Cooperstown, ND 58425-0546
- Goodrich Public Library, 122 McKinley Ave, Goodrich, ND 58444-0175
- Grand Forks Library, 2110 Library Circle, Grand Forks, ND 58201-6324
- Harvey Public Library, 119 10th St, Harvey, ND 58341-1531
- Mayville Library, 52 Center Ave, Mayville, ND 58257-1299
- Sheridan County Auditor, 215 East 2nd St, McClusky, ND 58356-1510
- New Rockford Public Library, 811 1st Ave N, New Rockford, ND 58356-1510
- Turtle Lake Public Library, 107 Eggert Street, Turtle Lake, ND 58575-0540
- Washburn Public Library, 705 Main Ave, Washburn, ND 58577-0637
- Northwood Public Schools and City Library, 300 35th St, Northwood, ND 58267

3.0 Minnkota's Pre-Scoping Process

Beginning in March 2009, Minnkota launched a pre-scoping public involvement campaign for the proposed Project. This was an effort to inform and gather data from the public, agencies, and tribal governments on the proposed Project. Minnkota held five public open house meetings in May 2009, presented the proposed Project at thirteen county commissioner meetings, met with a variety of state and federal agencies at a North Dakota Inter-Agency meeting, sent letters to tribal representatives, and held an additional open house meeting in August 2009.

The objective of this outreach was to educate interested stakeholders on the purpose and description of the proposed Project and gather information to develop potential corridors for the MCS. To achieve this objective, Minnkota publicized the proposed Project and public meetings through press releases, local advertisements, informational postcards to the public, and letters to county commissioners, agencies, townships, and tribes. A toll-free Project information hotline and website were established to offer resources and to collect input.

Table 3-1 provides a list of comments received by topic during the pre-scoping phase of the proposed Project. All pre-scoping comments received are located in Appendix A.

Table 3-1. Pre-Scoping Comments by Topic

Comment Topic	Number of Comments
Mailing List Request	57
Routing	34
General Public Involvement	25
ROW	5
Employment	4
Wind Development	2
EMF	1
Management Areas	1

4.0 RUS's Agency & Tribal Government Scoping Process

4.1 Federal, State, and Local Agencies

RUS held an agency scoping meeting for interested federal, state, and local agencies in a presentation meeting format. The agency scoping meeting was held on November 19, 2009 at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) office at 3425 Miriam Avenue, Bismarck, North Dakota.

4.1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the scoping meeting was to provide the agencies with information regarding the proposed Project and to discuss the following items:

- Project permitting concerns
- Scoping of environmental issues to be analyzed in the RUS environmental review and documentation of the Project (RUS Bulletin 1794A-603)
- Roles and expectations of the lead and cooperating agencies
- Schedule

4.1.2 Notification

RUS notified federal and state agencies of the proposed Project by mailing letters on November 2, 2009, that detailed the role of the RUS in the proposed Project, invited recipients to the agency scoping meeting, outlined the availability of the MCS and AES, specified the dates and locations of the public and agency scoping meetings, provided contact information for the RUS representative assigned to the proposed Project, and detailed the process for submitting comments (Appendix B).

4.1.3 Agency Attendance

A total of nine participants representing the following agencies signed in at the agency scoping meeting (Appendix B):

- Bureau of Reclamation
- North Dakota Parks and Recreation
- North Dakota State Water Commission
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- North Dakota State Historic Preservation Office
- Federal Highway Administration

4.2 Tribal Governments

The MCS and AES discussed in Sections 2.1 and 2.2 of this report were submitted to all tribal chairs and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices for review.

4.2.1 Purpose

RUS is required under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. §§ 470f, and its implementing regulations, 36 C.F.R. §§ 800.3-800.7, require federal

agency consultation with Indian Tribes that may be affected by the proposed Project. RUS is coordinating consultation with the tribal governments.

4.2.2 Invitation to Consult

RUS invited the following tribal governments to participate in government-to-government and Section 106 consultation for the proposed Project. The tribal governments were also invited to field meetings in September 2009 at the Missouri and Sheyenne rivers due to a higher potential for cultural resources, and are being consulted during the preparation of a Programmatic Agreement. The two letters sent to the tribes are included in Appendix C.

- Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation
- Bois Forte Ojibwe
- Crow Creek Sioux
- Flandreau Santee Sioux
- Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe
- Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
- Lower Brule Sioux
- Lower Sioux Community
- Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
- Minnesota Chippewa Tribe
- Northern Cheyenne nations
- Oglala Sioux
- Red Lake Band of Chippewa
- Rosebud Sioux
- Santee Sioux
- Cheyenne River Sioux
- Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate
- Spirit Lake Tribe
- Standing Rock Sioux
- Three Affiliated Tribes
- Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa
- Upper Sioux Community
- White Earth Band of Ojibwe

No tribal government participated in the scoping meetings or attended the September 2009 field meetings. Following these meetings, the Applicant contacted each tribe directly to determine its interest in the Project. This effort identified other tribes that may have an interest in consulting. These additional tribes were contacted and are included in the list in Table 4.1. RUS received letters and oral communication from several tribal governments that have expressed interest to participate in the Section 106 process for this project. RUS will continue to consult with the tribal governments as indicated in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1. Tribal Government Consultation List

Tribe	Consultation Status
Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation	Consulting party
Bois Forte Ojibwe	Declined invitation
Crow Creek Sioux	No response to date
Crow Tribe of Indians	No response to date
Flandreau Santee Sioux	Declined invitation
Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa	No response to date
Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe	No response to date
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe	Declined invitation
Lower Brule Sioux	No response to date
Lower Sioux Community	No response to date
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe	Consulting party
Northern Cheyenne Nations	Consulting party
Oglala Sioux	No response to date
Prairie Island Indian Community	No response to date
Red Lake Band of Chippewa	Declined invitation
Rosebud Sioux	Undecided
Santee Sioux	Consulting party
Cheyenne River Sioux	Undecided
Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate	Consulting party
Spirit Lake Tribe	No response to date
Standing Rock Sioux	No response to date
Three Affiliated Tribes	Undecided
Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa	Consulting party
Upper Sioux Community	No response to date
White Earth Band of Ojibwe	Consulting party

4.3 Agency and Tribal Government Comments

The following federal, state, and local agencies and tribes provided written scoping comments that were mailed to RUS or Minnkota:

- Bois Forte Band of Ojibwe
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- North Dakota Department of Health – Environmental Health Section
- North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department
- U.S. Department of Interior – National Park Service
- U.S. Department of Transportation – Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

The comments discussed environmental topics including but not limited to cultural resources, management areas, recreation, routing concerns and suggestions, and general environmental impacts (Table 4-2). All agency and tribal government comments submitted during the scoping period are provided in Appendix D.

Table 4-2. Agency and Tribal Government Comments

Comment Topic	Number of Comments
Cultural Resources	3
Cumulative Impacts	1
EA vs. EIS	1
Environmental Impacts	3
General	1
Management Areas	3
Recreation	2
Routing	2
Visual Resources	1

5.0 Public Scoping Process

RUS held six public scoping meetings, as listed in Table 5-1 below, using an open house format. Four of the public scoping meetings—Grand Forks, Carrington, Wilton, and Center—were held between 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. The Cooperstown and McClusky meetings were held between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

Table 5-1. Public Scoping Meeting Dates, Times and Locations

Monday November 16, 2009	Tuesday November 17, 2009	Wednesday November 18, 2009	Thursday November 19, 2009
Grand Forks, N.D. Alerus Center Eagle Room 10 1200 S 42nd St 5 - 8 pm	Cooperstown, N.D. Cooperstown City Hall 611 9th St 10 am - 1 pm	McClusky, N.D. McClusky Community Hall 117 Ave B North 10 am - 1 pm	Center, N.D. Center Civic Center Building 312 N Lincoln Ave 5 - 8 pm
	Carrington, N.D. The Chieftain Conference Center, Tee Pee Room 60 4th Ave South, Highway 281 5 - 8 pm	Wilton, N.D. City of Wilton Memorial Hall 105 Dakota Ave 5 - 8 pm	

5.1 Purpose

The purpose of the public scoping meetings was to provide the public with information regarding the proposed Project, answer questions relating to the proposed Project and environmental review process, identify concerns regarding the potential environmental impacts that may result from construction and operation of the proposed Project, and gather information from the public to determine the scope of issues to be addressed in the RUS environmental review and documentation of the proposed Project (in accordance with RUS Bulletin 1794A-603). The notification process, public scoping meeting, and process for collecting public comments are described in the following sections.

5.2 Scoping Meetings Notices

Several methods were used to notify the public of the scoping process and meetings, including a *Federal Register* notice, legal notices in newspapers, paid advertisement in newspapers, meeting invitation post cards mailed first class, public service announcements (PSAs) on radio and television, Minnkota's toll-free project information line, and the Project website used by Minnkota to provide additional outreach to the public and stakeholders in the proposed Project area.

The Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EA and hold scoping meetings was published in the *Federal Register* on October 30, 2009. The NOI included a summary of the proposed Project, public scoping meeting information, 30-day public comment period start and end dates, and RUS contact information.

In addition to the NOI, a legal notice was published in the legal section and a paid advertisement was published in the news section of 14 newspapers within the Project area. A press release was distributed to the publications. Table 5-2 lists the names of the publications and dates of the advertisements and legal notices.

Table 5-2. List of Newspapers

Newspaper	County	Publish Date
Center Republican	Oliver	4-Nov-09
McLean County Independent	McLean	4-Nov-09
The Bismarck Tribune	Burleigh	7-Nov-09
Foster County Independent	Foster	4-Nov-09
Grand Forks Herald	Grand Forks	7-Nov-09
Griggs County Courier	Griggs	6-Nov-09
The Herald-Press	Wells	7-Nov-09
Lakota American	Nelson	4-Nov-09
McClusky Gazette	Sheridan	4-Nov-09
New Rockford Transcript	Eddy	2-Nov-09
Steele County Press	Steele	6-Nov-09
Steele Ozone and Kidder County Press	Kidder	4-Nov-09
Traill County Tribune	Traill	6-Nov-09
The Fargo Forum	Cass	7-Nov-09

The NOI is included in Appendix E. The newspaper notices, press release, and PSA are included in Appendix F. The public postcard is included in Appendix G. The Project website is <www.minnkota.com> and the toll free information line is 800.473.5679. The website address and toll-free information line number were provided on all published materials.

5.3 Public Scoping Meetings

An open house format was used to encourage discussion and information sharing and to ensure that the public had opportunities to speak directly with RUS and Minnkota representatives. Stations were set up around the room and staffed with representatives from RUS, Minnkota, or Project consultants. Information stations included:

- Sign-in and Welcome Table
 - Welcome Board
 - Sign-in Sheets
 - RUS Meeting Handout
 - RUS Comment Form
 - Project Fact Sheet

- A series of Project information boards including
 - RUS Overview
 - NEPA Requirements
 - Environmental Assessment Process
 - Project Overview
 - Map of Macro-Corridors
 - Typical Transmission Line Construction
 - Public Participation Information
- Large aerial maps displaying the Project macro-corridors were available for the public to review and mark with comments
- Resources Table
 - Project Frequently Asked Questions
 - Factsheets – Electric and Magnetic Fields, Wind Developers, Stray Voltage
 - Project Business Cards
 - AES and MCS

Sign-in Sheets (Appendix H) and comment forms (Appendix I) were made available to all scoping meeting attendees. Appendix I contains copies of the materials used at the Public scoping meetings including the information boards, large aerial maps, and handouts.

5.4 Public and Non-Government Organization Comments

A total of 27 public and non-government organization comments (excluding map comments) were received during the scoping comment period beginning on November 20, 2009 and ending December 18, 2009. RUS requires a 30-day scoping comment period following the public scoping meetings. Comments collected during the public and agency scoping meetings were included in the scoping comment period. The comments received after the deadline were not included in this report, but will continue to be collected and considered by the RUS. Public comments were submitted using comment forms, letters, e-mails, telephone, online comment submission, and the toll-free Project information line. All comments received by Minnkota were submitted to the RUS for review. A summary of the public and non-government organization comments (excluding map comments) received are organized by topic and provided below in Table 5-3. Eleven topics were discussed within the comments. Note that many of the public comments received discuss more than one topic, explaining why the total comment count in Table 5-3 equals more than the number of comments received during the scoping period.

Each comment was listed as a separate topic and entered into the comment management database. Each comment is only entered into the database once, but is listed under all topics discussed within that comment. The comments received during the scoping period were separated into two main categories; public and non-government organization scoping comments, and agency and tribal government scoping comments. Agency and tribal government scoping comments are discussed in Section 3.5 and Appendix D. All

public and non-government organization scoping comments (excluding map comments) received are located in Appendix J.

Table 5-3. Public and Non-Government Organization Scoping Comments by Topic

Comment Topic	Number of Comments
Agricultural Impacts	3
Cost	2
Cultural Resources	1
Endangered Species	1
Environmental Impacts	3
General Public Involvement	1
Mailing List Request	3
Management Areas	2
Routing	14
Right-of-Way	5
Safety	3

Following is a discussion by topic of the specific resources addressed within each comment.

5.4.1 Agriculture

Three (3) comments were received regarding various aspects of agriculture. The commenters expressed concerns about potential impacts to agricultural lands and livestock, difficulty with farming around pole structures, and potential interference with GPS navigation systems on equipment and other farm communication tools. A common theme from the public was to avoid farmland that is in production and instead use pasture or non-cultivated land for routing. Potential impacts to irrigation systems were an additional concern.

5.4.2 Cost

Two (2) comments were received regarding cost, including the need for annual payments and concerns of land value depreciation of property with poles.

5.4.3 Cultural Resources

One (1) comment was received regarding cultural resources. This was a map that identified cultural resource sites on private property within the macro-corridors.

5.4.4 Endangered Species

One (1) comment was received regarding endangered species. A landowner expressed concerns regarding the whooping crane migration corridors that are located within the macro-corridors.

5.4.5 Environmental Impacts

Three (3) comments were received regarding environmental impacts. Comments identified private conservation areas that have used conservation practices to enhance

wildlife habitat and discussed concerns regarding the affect of the proposed Project on these areas. Additional comments were made regarding old growth tree areas and wetland features within the Project area.

5.4.6 General Public Involvement

One (1) comment was received regarding general public involvement. It was a name correction for future public mailings.

5.4.7 Mailing List Request

Three (3) mailing list requests were received. The toll-free Project information line and website allowed visitors to provide their contact information to be added to the Project mailing list.

5.4.8 Management Areas

Two (2) comments were received regarding the correction of a wildlife management area boundary within the Project area.

5.4.9 Routing

Fourteen (14) comments were received regarding routing concerns and routing options for the proposed Project. Comments included a recommendation to review future land use plans, protection of shelter belts, and to increase the distance of structures from residences. General comments requested that the Project not be routed near the commenter's property. Additional suggestions included the possibility of undergrounding the transmission line, following section lines, and avoiding routing cross country.

5.4.10 Right-of-Way

Five (5) comments were received regarding right-of-way. Notification of surveys as common courtesy prior to survey completion was requested. General comments requested proper clearance area between structures and fencing for farm equipment to maneuver around structures. One commenter requested that Minnkota purchase their entire property.

5.4.11 Safety

Three (3) comments were received regarding safety concerns for people working under the transmission lines and noted that accidents can occur when there are obstacles in the fields.

5.4.12 Mapping Comments

Comments were written directly on the large aerial sheet maps of the macro-corridors that were made available at the public open house meetings. The majority of comments concerned boundaries of landowner's property. Other comments included:

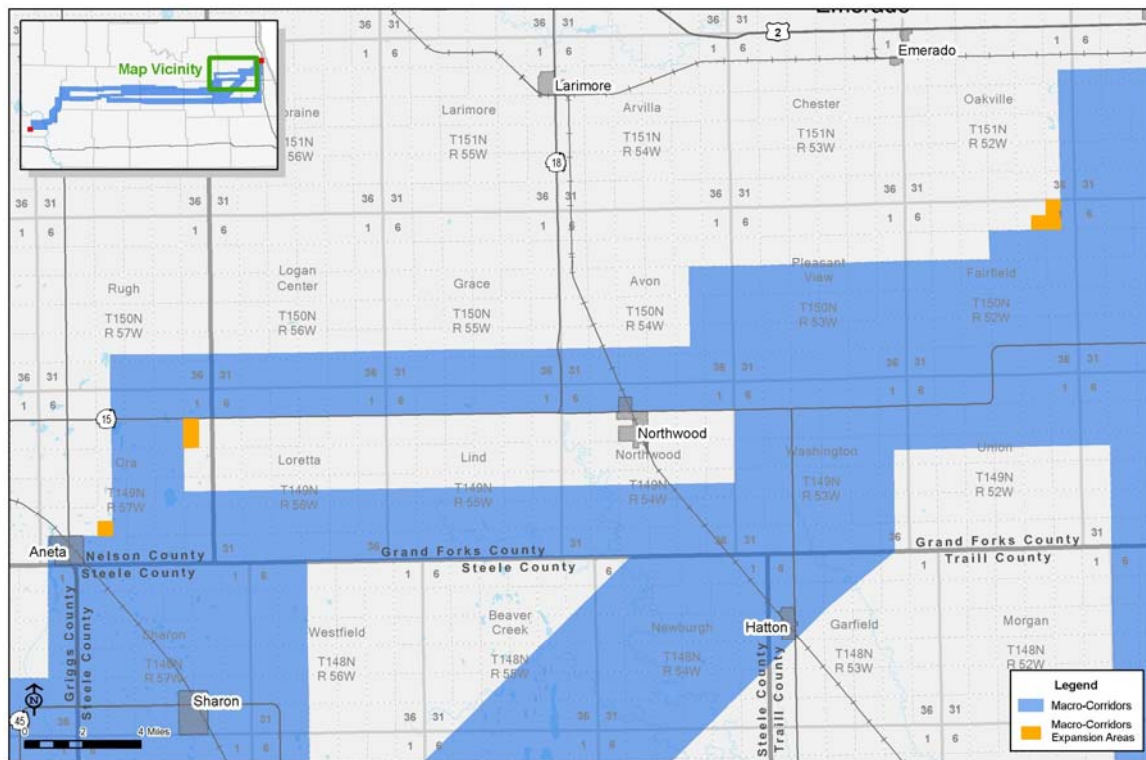
- Locations of center-pivot irrigation systems
- Locations of cultural resources
- Private businesses
- Mining operations
- Land management areas
- Areas of strong Project opposition

6.0 Macro-Corridors Expansion Areas

Through the scoping process, three areas beyond the macro-corridors as presented in the MCS were identified as expansion areas. The three expansion areas are shown in Figure 6-1 and provide additional routing options for the Project. All landowners within the expansion areas have been notified of the Project. The legal land descriptions of the three expansion areas are:

- SW ¼ of section 28 of T149N R57W – Ora Township in Nelson County
- W ½ of section 7 of T149N R57W – Ora Township in Nelson County
- W ½ of section 1 and SE ¼ of section 2 of T150N R52W – Fairfield Township in Grand Forks County

Figure 6-1. Macro-Corridors Expansion Areas



7.0 Project Status

Based on the initial scoping process and additional comments received, RUS has decided to continue in its preparation of an EA and anticipates that distribution of the Draft EA should occur in early summer 2010. A public review and comment period on the Draft EA would occur in the same timeframe. In addition, RUS would engage in necessary agency consultation and coordination regarding potential affects to resources, pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. RUS would continue to review and respond to substantive comments. An agency (RUS) decision regarding the outcome of the NEPA process should be reached in 2010.

8.0 Tentative Environmental Assessment Schedule

The current schedule for developing the EA and the anticipated completion is provided in Table 8-1. This schedule is subject to change as the Project proceeds.

Table 8-1. Tentative EA Schedule

Federal EA Milestones	Date
Submit Alternative Evaluation Study and Macro-Corridor Study to RUS	October 2009
Hold Public Scoping Meetings for EA	November 2009
Publication of RUS Scoping Report	March 2010
Route Public Meetings (held by Minnkota)	April 2010
Publish Draft EA	May - June 2010
Comment Period on Draft EA	June 2010
Publish Final EA and issue agency (RUS) decision	July - August 2010

9.0 Additional Environmental Review Requirements

Minnkota would be required to obtain approvals from a variety of federal, state, and local agencies prior to constructing the proposed Project. During development of the MCS, permitting and regulatory requirements were reviewed to identify jurisdictional authorities.

Agencies with primary approval/permitting authority include RUS and North Dakota PSC. Table 9-1 identifies permits, approvals, and other project coordination that may be needed by federal agencies, tribal governments, the state of North Dakota, counties, and townships. This preliminary listing of regulatory requirements is subject to change as the proposed Project proceeds.

Table 9-1. Required Permits, Approvals, and Coordination

Agency	Permit, Regulatory Compliance, or Coordination
Federal	
Rural Utilities Service	NEPA Compliance and Approval of Financial Assistance, Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act coordination, and Native American Consultation
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, and Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1972
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Sections 401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899
Federal Aviation Administration	Form 7460-1, Notice of Proposed Construction or Alteration, and FAA Form 7460-2, Notice of Actual Construction or Alteration
Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service	Farmland Conversion Form - Form AD-1006
State	
Public Service Commission	Certificate of Site Compatibility, Certificated of Public Convenience and Necessity, and Route Permit
Game and Fish	Protection of Wildlife, Fish and Recreation Areas
Parks and Recreation	Natural Heritage Inventory
State Historical Society	Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act coordination
Department of Transportation	Road Approach/Access Permit, and Utility Permit/Risk Management Documents
Counties	Conditional Use Permits
Townships	Conditional Use Permits

10.0 Conclusion

The intent of the information within this Scoping Report is to identify potential Project affects and concerns that would be addressed in the EA document. All comments within this Scoping Report will be considered while developing the EA.