Lessard – Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

The State of Minnesota

Centennial Office Building, First Floor
658 Cedar St
St. Paul, MN 55155

November 2, 2026

Sen. Foung Hawj
Minnesota Senate
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3231
St. Paul, MN 55155

Sen. Jennifer A. McEwen
Minnesota Senate
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3217
St. Paul, MN 55155

Sen. Steve Green
Minnesota Senate
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 2319
St. Paul, MN 55155

Sen. John Marty
Minnesota Senate
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3235
St. Paul, MN 55155

Sen. Nick A. Frentz
Minnesota Senate
95 University Avenue W.
Building, Room 3109
St. Paul, MN 55155

Sen. Eric R. Pratt
Minnesota Senate
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 2217
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Joe McDonald
Minnesota House of Representatives
658 Cedar Street
2nd Floor, Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Roger Skraba
Minnesota House of Representatives
658 Cedar Street
2nd Floor, Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Samantha Vang
Minnesota House of Representatives
658 Cedar Street
5th Floor, Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Samakab Hussein
Minnesota House of Representatives
658 Cedar Street
5th Floor, Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Paul Torkelson
Minnesota House of Representatives
658 Cedar Street Minnesota Senate
2nd Floor, Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Kristin Robbins
Minnesota House of Representatives
658 Cedar Street
2nd Floor, Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Cedrick Frazier
Minnesota House of Representatives
658 Cedar Street
5th Floor, Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Esther Agbaje
Minnesota House of Representatives
658 Cedar Street
5th Floor, Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Outdoor Heritage Fund Conversion/Conveyance Request: BWSR – Renville County, MN – Xcel Energy Transmission Line – Easement #65-02-19-01

Dear Chairs and Ranking Minority Members of the Legislative Committees and Divisions with Jurisdiction Over the Outdoor Heritage Fund,

Pursuant to M.S. 97A.056, Subdivision 15, this letter notifies you that the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council has received and approved a request from the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to allow the conversion of 1.32 acres of an Outdoor Heritage Fund acquired RIM easement (#65-02-19-01) for the construction of a new transmission line located in Renville County, MN. A total of $17,683.10 will be returned to the Outdoor Heritage Fund. The attached materials from BWSR provide further information on the proposed request.

The state interest in the land was originally purchased by BWSR with Outdoor Heritage Funds (ML 2015, First Sp. Session, Ch. 2, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 2(f) – MN Buffers for Wildlife, Phase 5). The final report for this program can be found at the following website:
https://www.lsohc.mn.gov/FY2016/accomp_plan/2f.pdf .

Pursuant to statute and the council's approved operating procedures, and in the absence of disapproval by leadership by November 24, 2026, I will approve the conveyance and forward notification to BWSR. Please contact me if you have questions regarding this matter. I will withhold final notification until November 25, 2026, to hear from you, if you have concerns.

Sincerely,

Kristina Smitten
Executive Director, Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

cc: Members of the LSOHC
Sharon Doucette, BWSR

Attachments: Supporting materials from BWSR

BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES

EASEMENT ALTERATION REQUEST
PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT
State Agency or PUC-Approved Project Request

7/30/2026

This form should be completed by BWSR Conservation Easement Specialist for easement alteration requests submitted by other State Agencies or Utilities that have been permitted by the MN Public Utilities Commission.

Easement Number 65-02-19-01

Request Information

SWCD Renville

Entity Requesting Alteration Xcel Energy

Entity Contact Name Andrew Welch Phone Email andrew.welch@xcelener

Project Type (check one)

- ○ Public road
- ◉ Utility/transmission line
- ○ Public drinking water well
- ○ Other public infrastructure – specify

Acres proposed for release: 6.17 3.54 Donated Acres

Land enrolled at the Cropland rate: 1.72 acres Land enrolled at the Non-Cropland rate: 0.91 acres

Does the proposing entity hold a fee title or easement interest in the property at the time of this request?

- ○ Yes – fee title interest (submit deed)
- ◉ Yes – easement interest (submit easement)
- ○ No – land is owned by private landowner (submit letter of landowner permission)

Submission Checklist

This request includes the following:

- ☑ Easement alteration request letter from proposing entity to BWSR that includes:
  - ☑ Easement number
  - ☑ Acres of land proposed for release from the consevration easement
  - ☑ Description of project and impacts to conservation easement area
  - ☑ Public need/public benefit of altering conservation easement
  - ☑ Why there is no reasonable alternative to impacting conservation easement
  - ☑ How impacts to conservation easement area have been minimized
- ☑ Map that includes conservation easement boundary and proposed release area
- ☑ Deed, easement, or landowner letter documenting proposing entity's property interest
- ☐ Letter from SWCD recommending approval or denial of request **N/A**
- ☑ For utility projects: Public Utilities Commission (PUC) route permit and certifificate of need
- ☐ For Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) easements: Letter of recommendation from Camp Ripley
- ☐ Proposing entity mailed the $1,000 application fee to BWSR

BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES

EASEMENT ALTERATION REQUEST
PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT
State Agency or PUC-Approved Project Request

7/30/2026

Easement Number 65-02-19-01

Acknowledgement

BWSR has confirmed with the proposing entity that if the alteration request is approved, upon approval, the entity will compensate the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) for the released conservation easement acres in the amount of: **$35,366.20**

Does Conservation Easement Specialist recommend approval of this alteration request? (•) Yes ( ) No

Conservation Easement Specialist Signature & Date

BWSR USE ONLY

Application fee received date

Easement funding source approp ID CB15/L15B

Outside approval required? (•) Yes ( ) No *If yes, specify:* LSOHC

This request meets all conditions of the easement alteration policy.

BWSR Easement Section Signature & Date

This request is hereby: ( ) Approved ( ) Denied

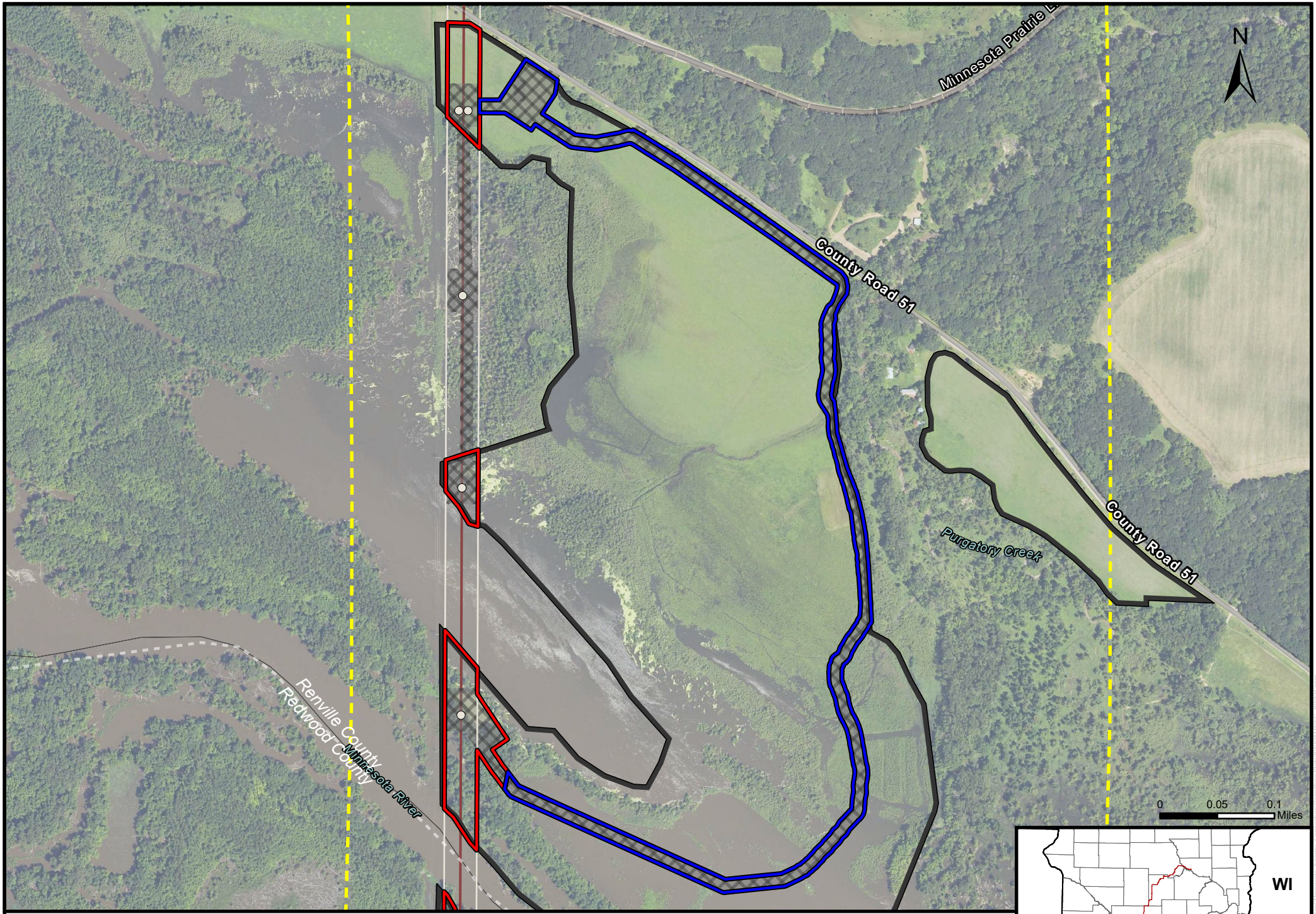
Additional Comments:

_____ _____

BWSR Executive Director Signature Date

Invoice sent date

Payment received for release date



Minnesota Energy Connection

BWSR Easement Review

Xcel Energy®

DISCLAIMER: This information is believed to be correct but is subject to change and is not warranted.

Easement Num: 65-02-19-01- -
Release Acreage: 6.17
Special Use Authorization Acreage: 9.28
Segment 2A-2

- Structures
- Route
- ROW
- Workspace & Travel Lane
- Route Width
- Release Area
- Special Use Authorization Area
- BWSR Easement

Date: 8/3/2026

Calculations for Easement Alteration – 65-02-19-01 – Xcel MNEC – Renville County

Administrative fee due at time of request: $1000

A. Compensation for Acres Released: 65-02-19-01

Total Release area:
Cropland acres: 1.72
Non-cropland acres: 0.91
Donated acres: 3.54
Township: Birch Cooley

a. Current Cropland rate (2026): $9719/ac

   2x Cropland Rate: $19,438 /ac x 1.72 ac = $33,433.36

b. Current Non-cropland Rate (2026): $1062/ac

   2x Non-Cropland Rate: $2124/ac x 0.91ac = $1932.84

c. Donated Acres: $0/ac x 3.54ac = $0

Total compensation to release 6.17 acres = $35,366.20

B. Conservation Practice Reimbursement for Easement 65-02-19-01

a. No State funds were spent on conservation practices on release area = $0

Total Cons Practice Payments for release area = **$0.00**

Total Due upon BWSR Approval (A + B) = $35,366.20

From: Doucette, Sharon (BWSR)
To: Joe Pavelko
Subject: XCel release math
Date: Monday, November 2, 2026 10:42:45 AM

Caution: This is an external email. Use caution with links and attachments. If you are in doubt please contact the IT Department.

Release acres (total)	6.17
Release acres (donated)	3.54
Release acres (paid)	2.63
Current cropland rate for release acres	$ 9,719.00
Current noncrop rate for release acres	$ 1,062.00
Cropland value (1.72 acres)	$ 16,716.68
Noncrop value (.91 acres)	$ 966.42
Total current value	$ 17,683.10
2X current value for release *	$ 35,366.20
LSOHC acres (split funded w/CWF)	1.32
1/2 of payment for LSOHC acres	$ 17,683.10

*charge 2X current rate per BWSR policy for non-governmental public projects

Sharon Doucette | Easement Section Manager
Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)
520 Lafayette Road N
St. Paul, MN 55155
O: 651-539-2567
C: 651-358-4127



414 Nicollet Mall
Minneapolis, MN 55401

1-800-895-4999
Xcelenergy.com

August 7, 2026

Karli Swenson
Conservation Easement Specialist
Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources
520 Lafayette Road North
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Minnesota Energy Connection Project
Easement Release Request – Easement Number 65-02-19-01

Dear Ms. Swenson:

Northern States Power Company, a Minnesota corporation, doing business as Xcel Energy has recently started construction on the Minnesota Energy Connection Project (MNEC or Project). The Project includes the construction and operation of approximately 177 miles of new 345-kilovolt double-circuit high-voltage transmission line and associated facilities in Sherburne, Stearns, Kandiyohi, Meeker, Renville, Redwood, and Lyon counties in Minnesota, including modifications to existing substations and construction of a terminal substation (Garvin Substation) and a voltage support substation (Sunflower Substation).

With this letter, Xcel Energy respectfully requests that the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) release a portion of Easement Number 65-02-19-01 in Renville County, Minnesota. The release would apply to the following areas:

- The Project's 150-foot-wide right-of-way (ROW) within the BWSR easement where transmission line structures will be installed and where vegetation will be permanently maintained in an herbaceous state; and
- Additional workspace areas required for construction of the transmission line structures, as well as for potential future maintenance access, where tree clearing adjacent to the permanently maintained ROW will be required.

The total acreage proposed for release within the Easement Number 65-02-19-01 is 6.17 acres and is shown on the attached Figure 1.

Fulfillment of a Public Need

In its 2020-2034 Upper Midwest Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) filing (MPUC Docket No. E002/RP-19-368), Xcel Energy proposed to construct two 345 kV transmission lines (gen-ties) between Lyon County and the existing Sherco Substation and also to reuse Xcel Energy's existing and valuable interconnection rights at the Sherco Substation resulting from the retirement of the three Sherco coal-fired generators. The Project will complement the Long Range Transmission Planning (LRTP) projects portfolio MISO approved in July 2022. The Project will enable Xcel Energy to meet the demand for energy economically because it will re-use Xcel Energy's existing interconnection rights and will provide economic benefits in the form of property tax revenue and

jobs. It will increase transfer capability and improve the reliability and resiliency of the regional transmission system.

On May 18, 2023, Xcel Energy filed a revised certificate of need application. On August 10, 2023, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC), recognizing that separate and overlapping application review processes for the same project may create administrative inefficiencies and confusion for the public, issued an order suspending review of the certificate of need application pending receipt of a route permit application and directed joint proceedings to be held on the two applications. On October 30, 2023, Xcel Energy filed a route permit application for the MNEC Project. On October 8, 2024, the Minnesota Energy Environmental Review and Analysis (EERA) filed the Draft EIS. In June 2025 the MPUC published the written order modifying and adopting the Administrative Law Judge Report, Granting Certificate of Need, and Issuing a Route Permit for the Project (Attachment A).

No Reasonable Alternative

The Project end points, the existing Sherco Substation and the new Garvin Substation, require the Project to cross the Minnesota River. Xcel Energy focused routing efforts to identify crossing opportunities on challenging areas such as the Minnesota River where natural and cultural resources, and conservation easements are prevalent. Xcel Energy developed routes for numerous Minnesota River crossing locations; for each crossing, known natural resource features, constructability concerns, and conservation easements were inventoried. Crossing locations were removed from consideration for reasons such as challenging terrain and limited availability for a new ROW; length; greenfield crossings (i.e., no existing corridor); and greater impact on natural resources such as Sites of Biodiversity Significance, Native Plant Communities, and calcareous fens. The crossing location approved by the MPUC in the Project's Route Permit parallels an existing transmission line corridor and is deemed to be the least overall impactful route. Based on this routing analysis and the constraints associated with other Minnesota River crossing locations, Xcel Energy was not able to identify a reasonable alternative that would avoid the requested easement release.

Impact Minimization

Prior to the start of any land disturbing activity, temporary sediment and erosion control best management practices (BMPs) will be installed. Following the installation of sediment and erosion control measures and vegetation clearing, construction matting will be installed in wetlands along access, stringing, and structure foundation work areas, as needed per site conditions. Generally, if site conditions allow, such as during dry, stable, or frozen ground conditions, tracked or low ground pressure equipment will be utilized instead of matting to minimize wetland impact from vehicle and equipment access. When soil mixing and/or rutting is a potential in wetlands, construction equipment will work from mats.

Wetlands will be restored to pre-construction conditions, including elevations, hydrology patterns, and will be revegetated, as appropriate. In areas where grading occurred, topsoil will be segregated and replaced on top of subsoil and within the same wetland.

In areas where wetland plant communities are dominated by native species with rhizomatous root systems that will likely recolonize areas of limited disturbance rapidly, bare soils may be broadcast-seeded with the seasonally appropriate temporary cover crop. If bare, exposed ground

is observed upon mat removal, wetlands will be seeded with a cover crop to stabilize and help prevent invasive species infestation while allowing the natural seedbank to establish perennial vegetation and achieve revegetation standards. If mat removal occurs during the non-growing season, but prior to snow cover, a dormant seed will be used for quick growth in the following spring.

Wetland revegetation will be monitored after construction until revegetation is successful. Revegetation will be considered successful when 70 percent uniform perennial vegetation cover is present, and revegetation efforts will continue until this standard is achieved.

If you have questions regarding this request and would like additional information, please contact me at Andrew.Welch@xcelenergy.com or (612) 216-8286.

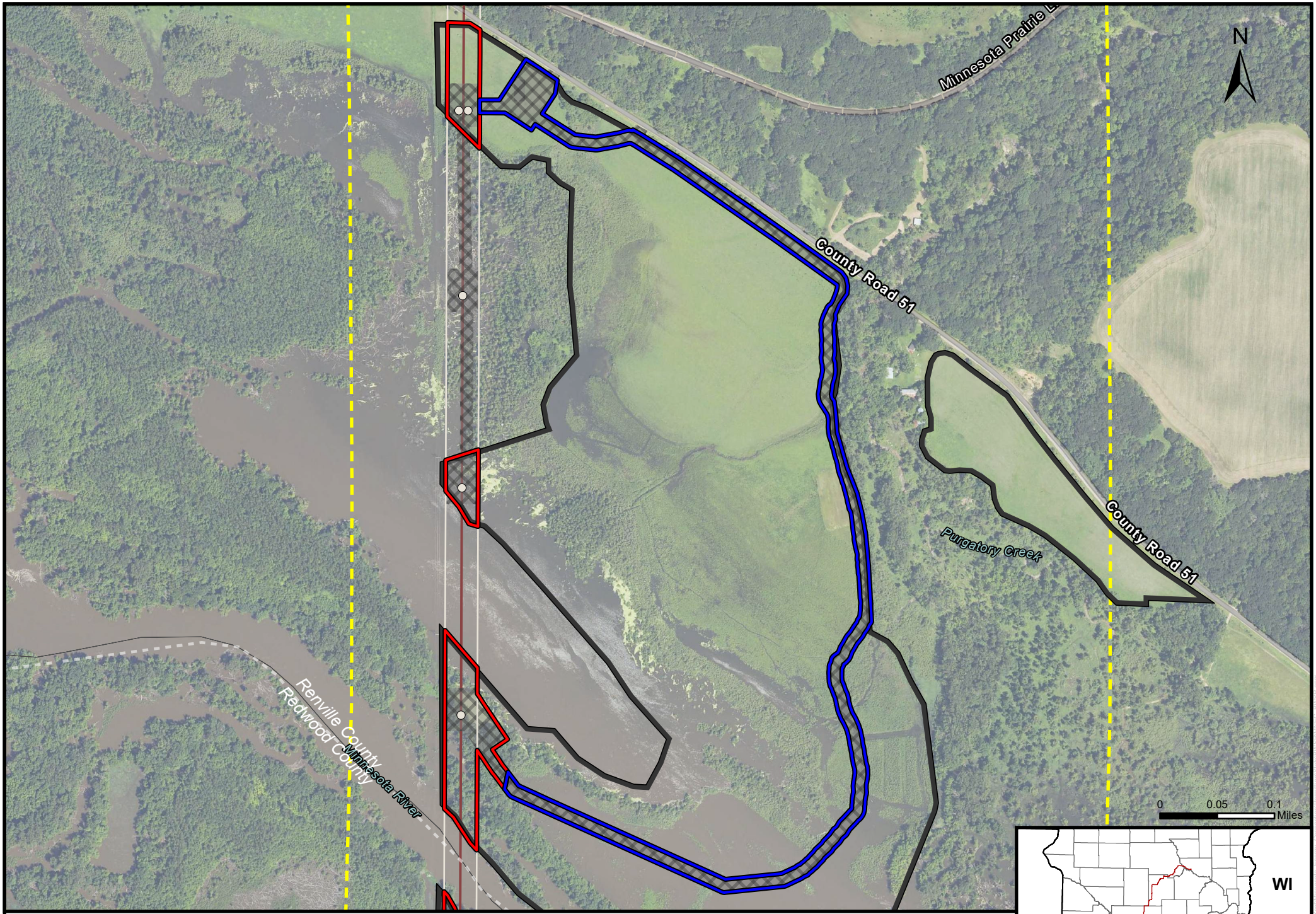
Sincerely,



Andrew Welch
Senior Siting and Land Rights Agent

Enclosures: Figure 1
Attachment A – Route Permit and Certificate of Need

cc: Naomi Christenson, Merjent



Minnesota Energy Connection

BWSR Easement Review

Xcel Energy®

DISCLAIMER: This information is believed to be correct but is subject to change and is not warranted.

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Date: 8/3/2026