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April 2018

R-Project 345,000-Volt



# Transmission Line PROJECT

## Slow and steady Work progresses on the R-Project Transmission Line

While it may seem that there is not much activity on the R-Project Transmission Line Project, that is simply not the case. Right-of-way agents continue to work with landowners on signing easements and addressing individual concerns. To date, 74 percent of landowners have signed easements across the 225-mile line route.

"Landowners who already signed easements may be wondering about the time line and status of events as most have probably not heard much from us lately," said Senior Project Manager **Jedd Fischer**. "But work is certainly progressing with easement acquisition, continued environmental surveys, finalizing the construction contract, and more."

Several draft documents—Environmental Impact Statement, Habitat Conservation Plan, Migratory Bird Conservation Plan, and Restoration Management Plan—were all made available for public comment in May of 2017. The comment period has closed, and as part of the process, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and NPPD are working together to address the comments. The USFWS and NPPD are also updating the draft documents to address concerns received from the public. After all revisions and comments are incorporated into the documents, the final versions of the four documents will again be published in the Federal Register, which is currently scheduled for the September time frame.

### Environmental Surveys

NPPD will again complete necessary environmental surveys in 2018. As noted in previous project newsletters, NPPD has conducted various environmental surveys for this project for several years. Specifically, NPPD has surveyed eagle nests, American Burying Beetle, Western Prairie Fringed Orchids, Small White Lady Slippers (another orchid), wetlands and cultural resources. Survey information has been used as part of the permitting process, as well as to assist with identifying options that may help minimize impacts of the project on specific resources.

Eagle nest surveys were the first environmental surveys completed in 2018 and were finished the week of March 12. The other surveys scheduled for 2018 will be completed during the June through September time frame.

Surveys are either completed on public lands such as on or along road right-of-way areas or on private lands where NPPD has been granted access by the landowner. Right-of-Way Agents will contact landowners prior to survey activities on their property.

### Website gets a fresh, new look

NPPD's R-Project website was recently updated and is chock-full of pertinent information. Check it out and stay abreast of project happenings. Go to NPPD's website, [www.nppd.com](http://www.nppd.com), and look for **R-Project** on the far right side of the blue bar at the top of the page, or go directly to [rproject.nppd.com](http://rproject.nppd.com).

# Project team members make site visit to Minnesota



The helical pier foundation shown above is for a 500 kV self-supporting structure and is therefore larger than what is expected for a typical R-Project foundation.

In late February, R-Project team members conducted a site visit to Minnesota Power, near Big Falls, Minnesota, to view the helical pier installation on the Great Northern 500 kV Transmission line.

"The project has several similarities to the R-Project, yet several differences," explained Engineer **Dennis Schroeder**. "Much of the land is a wet bog so they are working in the winter when the ground is frozen. In addition, because of their remote area, type of soil and environmental conditions, the need for the helical pier foundations is similar to ours."

The team reported that most of the structures for the Minnesota project are guyed rather than self-

supporting structures so the majority of the foundations are not as large as what the foundations on the R-Project will be. Therefore, the size of the equipment used on the Minnesota project may also be somewhat smaller.

"We saw construction techniques first-hand and learned about the type of matting and the environmental conditions the contractors were dealing with," said Schroeder. "All of this will be of great value as we prepare to send out the bid package and select a contractor."



## R-Project questions? Call the Thedford field office

When not on the road meeting with landowners, NPPD's Right-of-Way Agents can be found in the Thedford office. If you have questions regarding the R-Project, call the office or your respective Right-of-Way Agent. Since the office is not staffed at all times, it is always best to call first. The office is located at **39315 Highway 2** and the phone number is **308.645.2318**.

Please note that since easement acquisition is 66 percent complete, Eric and Jennie Wright, Bob Mackintosh and Marlene Nulph, have been assigned to other projects. Richard Bunkers and Sunny Vandegriff are the remaining Right-of-Way contacts for the R-Project.

**The R-Project 345 kV Transmission Line Newsletter** is published by NPPD's transmission project team. It is intended to provide a project overview and communicate project developments.

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## R-PROJECT TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT MILESTONES

### — January 2015 —

FINAL LINE ROUTE ANNOUNCEMENT

### — December 2015 —

BEGAN EASEMENT ACQUISITION

### — December 2018\* —

BEGIN CONSTRUCTION

### — In-Service —

APPROXIMATELY TWO YEARS AFTER CONSTRUCTION STARTS

\* No sooner than receiving record of decision from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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