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June 2016

R-Project 345,000-Volt



# Transmission Line PROJECT

## Easement Acquisition Continues; Environmental Surveys Resume This Month

Late last year, NPPD began acquiring easements for the R-Project. Across the 225-mile line route, right-of-way agents began on the east end of the route, near the Holt County substation, and are continuing toward Thedford. Additionally, some easements have been acquired on the Gerald Gentleman Station to Thedford portion of the route. Easement acquisition will continue through this year.

During easement acquisition, the right-of-way agent begins the negotiation process which includes communicating the terms and conditions of the easement to be granted. An easement document is presented to the landowner for review and consideration. Some important things to remember about the easement include:

- the landowner maintains ownership of the easement area,
- the easement allows NPPD ingress and egress across the easement area to construct and maintain the transmission line,
- the typical easement for a 345,000 volt line is 200 feet wide.

Although the landowner continues with their current activities across the easement area, the easement does restrict property owners from constructing buildings or structures in the easement area. Trees cannot be planted in the easement area and altering of the grade is not acceptable without written permission from NPPD. This permission is required to ensure the safety of the general public and the operation of the transmission line. Additionally, NPPD will obtain access easements in areas where travel is necessary beyond the transmission line easement area.

NPPD hires an independent appraiser to provide land valuations before determining compensation for the easement. After the land valuations and engineering are complete, NPPD establishes an easement payment amount for each property based on:

- land valuation,
- limited rights obtained by the District,
- impacts of structures on farming, ranching, or other land operations,
- other special considerations.

A payment equivalent to 80 percent of the market value for the land within the boundaries of the right-of-way area is customary, along with an additional payment for each structure located on the property. Compensation may be adjusted for unique or additional impacts.

### Environmental Surveys

Environmental surveys will primarily be conducted from June through September. Some surveys will be ground surveys, while others will be conducted via helicopter.

Plant surveys will be completed for the Blowout Penstemon, the Western Prairie Fringed Orchid and the Small White Lady Slipper (another orchid species). Additional surveys will be completed to more accurately identify wetland areas and potential cultural resource areas.

Surveys for the Blowout Penstemon will be completed using a helicopter and viewing specific blowout areas from the air. The blowouts identified have been determined to potentially

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provide suitable habitat for Blowout Penstemon. Surveys are scheduled to take place during the June flowering period, specifically June 22-24. For this survey, a Blowout Penstemon expert will be on board the helicopter, which will fly a path along the final project line route and around specific blowouts that may contain the flowers.

Geotechnical surveys will occur in mid to late June. The information from these surveys will determine the soil pH, resistivity and corrosiveness for use in the design of the foundations.

NPPD will use a helicopter to videotape the line route during the June 16 to June 22 time frame. The helicopter will fly at approximately 500 feet above ground at 45 miles per hour. The video will be used to review the right-of-way condition and structure locations. The video will also be used during the construction bidding process. Use of helicopters for some of the plant surveys and the video will minimize traffic on, and disturbance to, private property.

## QUESTIONS Q&A ANSWERS

### Q. Why is the R-Project needed?

**A.** NPPD's electric grid is an essential link to ensuring service for our customers. The R-Project will increase the reliability of the transmission system, relieve congestion on the existing system, and provide additional opportunities for development of renewable projects.

### Q. Who will be served by the power from the R-Project transmission line and do I, personally, benefit?

**A.** All Nebraskans will benefit from the R-Project. Even though this line does not connect directly to your house, it is part of the grid that delivers electricity to the wires that connect to your home or business. Increased reliability and reduced congestion of the transmission grid will help keep the lights on. Allowing renewable development adds to the diversification of generation in achieving a reduced carbon generation portfolio.

### Q. Is the line being built solely for wind farm development?

**A.** Studies indicate the area where the transmission line will be located contains quality wind resource potential. This project will provide access to the transmission system for wind projects by utilities if they are determined necessary in the future, as well as access for projects that may be pursued by private developers. At this time, no specific wind projects have been identified for development associated with this transmission line. Even though no wind projects have been identified, this line is still necessary to ensure a reliable system in the future.

### Q. Is the easement permanent?

**A.** Yes, NPPD will acquire a perpetual easement for as long as the line exists.

For other questions, please contact the Thedford Field Office at **308.645.2318**. Find more project information on the website at [www.nppd.com/rproject](http://www.nppd.com/rproject).

**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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