

# WORKING DRAFT – February 13, 2014

## CHAPTER 7850

### PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

#### SITE OR ROUTE PERMIT; POWER PLANT OR LINE

- 7850.1000 DEFINITIONS.
- 7850.1100 PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY.
- 7850.1200 APPLICABILITY.
- 7850.1300 PERMIT REQUIREMENT.
- 7850.1400 SMALL PROJECTS.
- 7850.1500 EXCEPTIONS TO PERMITTING REQUIREMENT FOR CERTAIN EXISTING FACILITIES.
- 7850.1600 ~~JOINT PROCEEDING STANDARDS AND CRITERIA.~~
- 7850.1650 FACTORS EXCLUDED.
- 7850.1700 ~~PERMIT APPLICATION UNDER FULL PERMITTING PROCESS FILING REQUIREMENTS.~~
- 7850.1760 APPLICATION NOTICE
- 7850.1800 PERMIT FEES.
- 7850.1900 APPLICATION CONTENTS.
- 7850.2000 ~~APPLICATION REVIEW~~ JOINT PROCEEDINGS.
- 7850.2100 PROJECT NOTICE.
- 7850.2200 PUBLIC ADVISOR.
- 7850.2300 PUBLIC MEETING.
- 7850.2400 CITIZEN ADVISORY TASK FORCE.
- 7850.2500 EIS PREPARATION.
- 7850.2550 DRAFT EIS
- 7850.2560 FINAL EIS
- 7850.2600 ~~CONTESTED CASE~~ PUBLIC HEARING AND CONTESTED CASE PROCEEDINGS.
- 7850.2700 FINAL DECISION.
- 7850.2800 ELIGIBLE PROJECTS.
- 7850.2900 ~~PERMIT APPLICATION UNDER ALTERNATIVE PROCESS.~~
- 7850.3000 ~~PERMIT FEES.~~
- 7850.3100 ~~CONTENTS OF APPLICATION.~~
- 7850.3200 ~~APPLICATION REVIEW.~~
- 7850.3300 ~~PROJECT NOTICE.~~
- 7850.3400 ~~PUBLIC ADVISOR.~~
- 7850.3500 ~~PUBLIC MEETING.~~
- 7850.3600 ~~CITIZEN ADVISORY TASK FORCE.~~
- 7850.3700 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PREPARATION.
- 7850.3800 PUBLIC HEARING AND PROCEDURES FOR ALTERNATIVE REVIEW.
- 7850.3900 FINAL DECISION.
- 7850.4000 ~~STANDARDS AND CRITERIA.~~
- 7850.4100 ~~FACTORS CONSIDERED.~~
- 7850.4200 ~~FACTORS EXCLUDED.~~
- 7850.4300 PROHIBITED ROUTES.
- 7850.4400 PROHIBITED SITES.
- 7850.4500 PERMIT APPLICATION REJECTION.
- 7850.4600 PERMIT CONDITIONS.
- 7850.4700 DELAY IN ROUTE OR SITE CONSTRUCTION.
- 7850.4800 MINOR ALTERATION IN GENERATING PLANT OR TRANSMISSION LINE.

7850.4900 AMENDMENT OF PERMIT CONDITIONS.  
7850.4925 COMPLAINT PROCEDURES.  
7850.4950 COMPLIANCE FILING.  
7850.5000 PERMIT TRANSFER.  
7850.5100 PERMIT REVOCATION OR SUSPENSION.  
7850.5200 EMERGENCY PERMIT.  
7850.5300 LOCAL REVIEW OF PROPOSED FACILITIES.  
7850.5400 ANNUAL PUBLIC HEARING.  
7850.5500 ANNUAL ASSESSMENT ON UTILITIES.  
7850.5600 PROGRAM ADVISORY TASK FORCE.

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**7850.1000 DEFINITIONS.**

Subpart 1. **Scope.** As used in parts 7850.1000 to 7850.5600, the following terms have the meanings given them.

Subp. 2. **Act.** "Act" means the Power Plant Siting Act of 1973, as amended, Minnesota Statutes,

chapter 216E.

Subp. 3. **Associated facilities.** "Associated facilities" means buildings, equipment, and other physical structures that are necessary to the operation of a large electric power generating plant or a high voltage transmission line, including other transmission lines directly associated with the plant that are necessary to interconnect the plant to the transmission system.

Subp. 4. **Commission.** "Commission" means the Public Utilities Commission.

Subp. 5. **Certified HVTL list.** "Certified HVTL list" means the transmission projects certified by the Public Utilities Commission as priority projects under Minnesota Statutes, section 216B.2425.

Subp. 6. **Developed portion of the plant site.** "Developed portion of the plant site" means the portion of the LEPGP site that is required for the physical plant and associated facilities.

Subp. 7. **Environmental assessment.** "Environmental assessment" means a written document that describes the human and environmental impacts of a proposed large electric power generating plant or high voltage transmission line and alternative routes or sites and methods to mitigate such impacts.

Subp. 8. **Environmental impact statement or EIS.** "Environmental impact statement" or "EIS" means a detailed written statement that describes proposed high voltage transmission lines and large electric power generating plants and satisfies the requirements of Minnesota Statutes, section 116D.04.

Subp. 9. **High voltage transmission line or HVTL.** "High voltage transmission line" or "HVTL" means a conductor of electric energy and associated facilities designed for and capable of operating at a nominal voltage of 100 kilovolts or more and is greater than 1,500 feet in length, either immediately or without significant modification. Associated facilities shall include, but not be limited to, insulators, towers, substations, and terminals.

~~Subp. 10. **Large electric power facilities.** "Large electric power facilities" means high voltage transmission lines and large electric power generating plants.~~

Subp. 11. **Large electric power generating plant or LEPGP.** "Large electric power generating plant" or "LEPGP" means electric power generating equipment and associated facilities designed for or capable of operation at a capacity of 50,000 kilowatts or more. Associated facilities include, but are not limited to, coal piles, cooling towers, ash containment, fuel tanks, water and wastewater treatment systems, and roads.

Subp. 12. **Mail.** "Mail" means either the United States mail or electronic mail by e-mail, unless another law requires a specific form of mailing.

Subp. 13. **Person.** "Person" means any individual, partnership, joint venture, private or public corporation, association, firm, public service company, cooperative, political subdivision, municipal corporation, government agency, public utility district, or any other entity, public or private, however organized.

~~Subp. 14. **PUC.** "PUC" means the entire Public Utilities Commission, including the commission and staff.~~

Subp. 15. **Right-of-way.** "Right-of-way" means the land interest required within a route for the

construction, maintenance, and operation of a high voltage transmission line.

Subp. 16. **Route.** "Route" means the location of a high voltage transmission line between two end points. A route may have a variable width of up to 1.25 miles within which a right-of-way for a high voltage transmission line can be located.

~~Subp. 17. **Route segment.** "Route segment" means a portion of a route.~~

Subp. 18. **Site.** "Site" means an area of land required for the construction, maintenance, and operation of a large electric power generating plant.

Subp. 19. **Utility.** "Utility" means any entity engaged or intending to engage in this state in the generation, transmission, or distribution of electric energy including, but not limited to, a private investor owned utility, a cooperatively owned utility, a public or municipally owned utility, a limited liability company, or a private corporation.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *15 SR 1598; 27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

#### **7850.1100 PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY.**

Parts 7850.1000 to 7850.5600 are prescribed by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission pursuant to the authority granted to the commission in the Power Plant Siting Act, as amended, Minnesota Statutes, chapter 216E, to give effect to the purposes of the act.

It is the purpose of the act and the policy of the state to locate large electric power generating plants and high voltage transmission lines in an orderly manner compatible with environmental preservation and the efficient use of resources. In accordance with this policy, the commission shall choose locations that minimize adverse human and environmental impact while ensuring continuing electric power system reliability and integrity and ensuring that electric energy needs are met and fulfilled in an orderly and timely fashion. The commission shall provide for broad spectrum citizen participation as a principle of operation. To ensure effective citizen participation, the commission shall maintain a public education program on, but not limited to, the considerations identified in Minnesota Statutes, section 216E.03, subdivision 7.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *15 SR 1598; 27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

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#### **7850.1200 APPLICABILITY.**

Parts 7850.1000 to 7850.5600 establish the requirements for the processing of permit applications by the Public Utilities Commission for large electric power generating plants and high voltage transmission lines. Requirements for environmental review of such projects before the commission are established in the applicable requirements of chapter ~~4410 and parts 7849.1000 to 7849.2100~~ 7850.2500 and 7850.3700.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *October 13, 2009*

### **7850.1300 PERMIT REQUIREMENT.**

Subpart 1. **Site permit.** No person may construct a large electric power generating plant without a site permit from the commission. A large electric power generating plant may be constructed only on a site approved by the commission.

Subp. 2. **Route permit.** No person may construct a high voltage transmission line without a route permit from the commission. A high voltage transmission line may be constructed only ~~within~~ along a route approved by the commission.

#### **Subp. 3. Expansion of existing facility.**

A. No person shall increase the voltage of a high voltage transmission line without a route permit or other approval from the ~~PUC~~ Commission.

B. No person shall increase the voltage of a transmission line under 100 kilovolts to over 100 kilovolts without a route permit from the ~~PUC~~ Commission.

C. Except as provided in part 7850.1500 or 7850.4800, no person shall increase the generating capacity or output of an existing large electric power generating plant without a permit from the commission.

D. No person shall increase the generating capacity or output of an electric power plant from under 50 megawatts to more than 50 megawatts without a site permit from the ~~PUC~~ the Commission.

Subp. 4. **Local authority.** A site permit from the commission is not required for a large electric power generating plant that is permitted by local units of government under Minnesota Statutes, section 216E.05. A route permit from the commission is not required for a high voltage transmission line that is permitted by local governmental authorities under Minnesota Statutes, section 216E.05.

Subp. 5. **Commence construction.** No person may commence construction of a large electric power generating plant or a high voltage transmission line until a permit has been issued by the commission or by the appropriate local units of government if local review is sought. "Commence construction" means to begin or cause to begin as part of a continuous program the placement, assembly, or installation of facilities or equipment, or to conduct significant physical site preparation or right-of-way preparation work for installation of facilities or equipment. Conducting survey work or collecting geological data or contacting landowners to discuss possible construction of a power plant or transmission line is not commencement of construction.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

### **7850.1400 SMALL PROJECTS.**

Subpart 1. **No ~~PUC~~ Commission permit required.** A permit from the ~~PUC~~ Commission is not required to construct a power plant of less than 50 megawatts or a transmission line of less than 100 kilovolts. Proposers of such projects must obtain whatever approvals may be required by local, state, or federal units of government with jurisdiction over the project.

Subp. 2. **Environmental review.** Proposers of power plants of less than 50 megawatts or transmission lines of less than 100 kilovolts must comply with the environmental review requirements of ~~chapter 4410, parts 7849.1000 to 7849.2100~~ parts 7850.2500 and 7850.3700 and Minnesota Statutes,

chapter ~~116D~~ 216E.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

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## **7850.1500 EXCEPTIONS TO PERMITTING REQUIREMENT FOR CERTAIN EXISTING FACILITIES.**

Subpart 1. **No permit required.** The following projects are not considered construction of a large electric power generating plant or high voltage transmission line and may be constructed without a permit from the commission:

A. equipment additions at an existing substation that do not require expansion of the land needed for the substation and do not involve an increase in the voltage or changes in the location of existing transmission lines, except that up to the first five transmission line structures outside the substation may be moved to accommodate the equipment additions provided the structures are not moved more than 500 feet from the existing right-of-way;

B. high voltage transmission lines:

(1) maintenance or repair of a high voltage transmission line within an existing right-of-way;

(2) reconductoring or reconstruction of a high voltage transmission line with no change in voltage and no change in right-of-way, provided that any new structures that are installed are not designed for and capable of operation at higher voltage; or

(3) relocation of a high voltage transmission line that is required by a local or state agency as part of road, street, or highway construction; or

C. large electric power generating plants:

(1) maintenance or repair of a large electric power generating plant;

(2) modification of a large electric power generating plant to increase efficiency as long as the capacity of the plant is not increased more than ten percent or more than 100 megawatts, whichever is greater, and the modification does not require expansion of the plant beyond the developed portion of the plant site. If a subsequent modification results in a total of more than 100 megawatts of additional capacity, this provision does not apply. An increase in efficiency is a reduction in the amount of BTUs (British Thermal Units) required to produce a kilowatt hour of electricity at the facility;

(3) refurbishment of a large electric power generating plant that does not expand the capacity of the plant or expand the plant beyond the developed portion of the plant site and the refurbishment does not require a certificate of need from the public utilities commission;

(4) conversion of the fuel source of a large electric power generating plant to natural gas, as long as the plant is not expanded beyond the developed portion of the plant site; or

(5) start-up of an existing large electric power generating plant that has been closed for any period of time at no more than its previous capacity rating and in a manner that does not involve a change in the fuel or an expansion of the developed portion of the plant site.

Subp. 2. **Minor alteration.** In the event a modification or other change in an existing substation,

high voltage transmission line, or large electric power generating plant does not qualify for an exception under this part, the modification or change may qualify for a minor alteration under part 7850.4800.

Subp. 3. **Notice.** Any person proposing to move transmission line structures under subpart 1, item A, or to reconductor or reconstruct a high voltage transmission line under subpart 1, item B, subitem (2), or to implement changes to a large electric power generating plant under subpart 1, item C, subitem (2), (3), (4), or (5), must notify the commission in writing at least 30 days before commencing construction on the modification or change.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

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### **7850.1600 JOINT PROCEEDING STANDARDS AND CRITERIA.**

~~The proposer of a large electric power generating plant that will also require a high voltage transmission line may elect to apply for both a site permit for the large electric power generating plant and a route permit for the high voltage transmission line in one application and in one process. The PUC on its own volition may elect to combine two pending applications if it is appropriate to consider both projects as part of one proceeding. An applicant may also combine an application for a pipeline routing permit if a natural gas or petroleum pipeline to a new large electric power generating facility will be required.~~

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

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**Subp 1. Factors.** In determining whether to issue a permit for a large electric power generating plant or a high voltage transmission line, the Commission shall consider the factors contained in Minnesota Statutes, section 216E.03, subd. 7, as well as the following:

A. effects on human settlement, including, but not limited to, displacement, noise, aesthetics, cultural values, recreation, and public services;

B. effects on public health and safety;

C. effects on land-based economies, including, but not limited to, agriculture, forestry, tourism, and mining;

D. effects on archaeological and historic resources;

E. effects on the natural environment, including effects on air and water quality resources and flora and fauna;

F. effects on rare and unique natural resources;

G. application of design options that maximize energy efficiencies, mitigate adverse environmental effects, and could accommodate expansion of transmission or generating capacity;

H. use or paralleling of existing rights-of-way, survey lines, natural division lines, and agricultural field boundaries;

I. use of existing large electric power generating plant sites;

J. use of existing transportation, pipeline, and electrical transmission systems or rights-of-way;

K. electrical system reliability;

L. costs of constructing, operating, and maintaining the facility which are dependent on design and route;

M. adverse human and natural environmental effects which cannot be avoided; and

N. irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources.

**Subp. 2. Other Factors.** The commission shall issue a permit for a proposed facility when the commission finds, in keeping with the requirements of the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act, Minnesota Statutes, chapter 116D, and the Minnesota Environmental Rights Act, Minnesota Statutes, chapter 116B, that the facility is consistent with state goals to conserve resources, minimize environmental impacts, and minimize human settlement and other land use conflicts and ensures the state's electric energy security through efficient, cost-effective power supply and electric transmission infrastructure.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

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### **7850.1650 FACTORS EXCLUDED.**

When the Commission has issued a Certificate of Need for a large electric power generating plant or a high voltage transmission line or placed a high voltage transmission line on the certified HVTL list maintained by the commission, questions of need, including size, type, and timing, questions of alternative system configurations, and questions of voltage shall not be factors considered by the commission in deciding whether to issue a permit for a proposed facility.

### **7850.1700 PERMIT APPLICATION UNDER FULL PERMITTING PROCESS FILING REQUIREMENTS.**

Subpart 1. Filing of application for permit. A person seeking a site permit or route permit for a high-voltage transmission line, a large electric power generating plant, or for large electric power generating facilities must file three copies of the application for the permit with the PUC Commission. Upon acceptance of the application, the commission will advise the applicant of how many copies of the application must be submitted to the PUC. An applicant subject to the electronic filing requirements contained in Minn. Stat. § 216.17, subd. 3, must follow those filing procedures. An applicant who does not file an application electronically must file ~~The~~ the original and ~~13~~ three copies of the application ~~must be filed~~ with the commission. The applicant shall serve copies of the filing on the department and the Office of the Attorney General and provide copies of the application to other state agencies with regulatory responsibilities in connection with the proposed



facility and to other interested persons who request copies.

~~Subp. 2. **Electronic copy.** A person filing an application for a site permit or route permit shall provide the PUC With an electronic version of the application suitable for posting on the PUC's Web page.~~

**Subp. 2. Cover letter and summary.** An application for a site or route permit must be accompanied by a cover letter signed by an authorized officer or agent of the application. The cover letter must specify the type of facility for which a permit is requested. The application must also include, on a separate page, a brief summary of the filing, sufficient to apprise potentially interested parties of the nature of the application and its general content.

**Subp. 3. Complete applications.** Within ten days of receipt of an application for a site or a route permit, the commission shall determine whether the application is complete. The commission shall notify the applicant in writing of the acceptance or rejection of the application. The Commission delegates to its staff the authority to make the initial determination of completeness and to notify the applicant in writing of the decision. If the application is not complete, staff shall set the matter for the earliest possible Commission agenda meeting for further review. If the matter is subsequently resolved between the applicant and Commission staff, the item must be pulled from the agenda upon request of the applicant.

**Subp. 4. Reasons for rejection.** The commission shall not reject an application if the information that is missing can be obtained from the applicant within 30 days from the date of the application and the lack of the information will not interfere with the public's ability to review the proposed project.

**Subp. 5 Joint proceedings.** The application must state whether the applicant requests that joint proceedings be held on both a certificate of need and site or route permit application or on some other combination of permit applications. The application must clearly state whether the applicant requests that joint proceedings be held under this Chapter on both applications.

**Subp. 6. Publication in State Register.** The commission shall publish notice of the site or route permit filing in the State Register.

**Subp. 7. Petition to intervene.** The Commission shall entertain a petition to intervene until the matter is referred to the Office of Administrative Hearings for either contested case proceedings or alternative review proceedings. Once a filing is referred to the Office of Administrative Hearings, the rules of the Office of Administrative Hearings shall control intervention rights.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

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#### **7850.1750. INITIAL COMMENTS ON APPLICATION AND POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES.**

The commission shall request initial comments on the application, including possible alternatives to the proposed project, and procedural treatment of the filing. Initial comments must be filed within 30 days of the commission's determination that the application is complete, Reply comments must be filed within 14 days of the expiration of the initial comment period.

**7850.1760. APPLICATION NOTICE.**

**Subp. 1. Notification to commission.** An applicant must notify the commission of its intent to file an application under this Chapter at least thirty days before filing its application.

**Subp. 2. Notice after filing.** Within 15 days after submission of an application, the applicant shall send notice of the submission to the following people:

A. those persons whose names are on the general list maintained by the PUC Commission for this purpose;

B. each regional development commission, county, incorporated municipality, and township in which any part of the site or route or any alternative is proposed to be located;

C. the department;

D. the Office of the Attorney General;

E. all persons on the "General List of Persons Interested in Power Plants and Transmission Lines" maintained under part 7850.2100, subpart 1, items A;

F. the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers;

G. the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;

H. other state agencies, including the following:

(1) the Department of Natural Resources;

(2) the Pollution Control Agency;

(3) the Department of Transportation;

(4) the Department of Agriculture;

(5) the Department of Health;

(6) the Office of Pipeline Safety;

(7) Board of Water and Soil Resources;

(8) the Minnesota Historical Society; and

(9) the Environmental Quality Board.

**7850.1800 PERMIT FEES.**

Subpart 1. **Requirement.** An applicant for a site permit or route permit shall pay a fee in accordance

with Minnesota Statutes, section 216E.18. The estimated fee for processing the permit application must be determined in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, section 216E.18.

Subp. 2. **Initial payment.** The applicant shall submit with the application 25 percent of the total estimated fee, or up to 50 percent of the total estimated fee if the commission determines that the additional percentage is reasonably necessary to complete the site evaluation and design process. The commission shall not process a permit application until the first portion of the fee is submitted. The PUC Commission shall deposit all money received from the applicant for permit fees in a special account.

Subp. 3. **Additional payments.** The applicant shall pay an additional 25 percent of the fee within 90 days after the application has been accepted by the commission. Additional payments must be made within 30 days of notification by the commission that additional fees are necessary for completion of the permitting process. The commission shall not make a final decision on a permit application if any assessed fees have not been paid.

Subp. 4. **Final accounting.** At the end of the permitting process, including any judicial review of the commission's final decision, the PUC Commission shall provide a final accounting to the applicant of the total cost of processing the permit application. The applicant may review all actual costs associated with processing an application and present objections to the commission. The application fees paid by the applicant shall include the necessary and reasonable expenses incurred in processing the application, including, but not limited to, staff time, expenses for public notice and meetings and hearings, environmental review, administrative overhead, and legal expenses. The applicant shall make the final payment within 30 days of notification or the PUC Commission shall refund any excess payments with 30 days of the final accounting.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

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## **7850.1900 APPLICATION CONTENTS.**

Subpart 1. **Site permit for LEPPG.** An application for a site permit for a large electric power generating plant must contain the following information:

A. a statement of proposed ownership of the facility as of the day of filing and after commercial operation;

B. the precise name of any person or organization to be initially named as permittee or permittees and the name of any other person to whom the permit may be transferred if transfer of the permit is contemplated;

C. at least two proposed sites for the proposed large electric power generating plant and identification of the applicant's preferred site and the reasons for preferring the site, and the sites considered and rejected and the reasons for rejecting them; if, however, the proposed project is an eligible project under part 7850.2800 and therefore subject to alternative review proceedings, the applicant is not required to propose a second site but must clearly identify any sites rejected and provide a thorough description of its reasons for rejecting them.

D. a description of the proposed large electric power generating plant and all associated facilities, including the size and type of the facility;

E. the environmental information required under subpart 3;

- F. the names of the owners of the property for each proposed site;
- G. the engineering and operational design for the large electric power generating plant at each of the proposed sites;
- H. a detailed cost analysis of the large electric power generating plant at each proposed site, including the costs of constructing and operating the facility that are dependent on design and site;
- I. an engineering analysis of each of the proposed sites, including how each site could accommodate expansion of generating capacity in the future;
- J. identification of transportation, pipeline, and electrical transmission systems that will be required to construct, maintain, and operate the facility;
- K. a listing and brief description of federal, state, and local permits ~~that may be~~ required for the project at each proposed site; ~~and~~
- L. ~~a copy of the Certificate of Need for the project from the Public Utilities Commission or documentation that an application for a Certificate of Need has been submitted or is not required.~~ the locations of each library where the application will be available to the public; and
- M. the commission's mailing address, telephone number, and website, and a brief explanation of how to get on the mailing list for the commission's proceeding.

Subp. 2. **Route permit for HVTL.** An application for a route permit for a high voltage transmission line shall contain the following information:

- A. a statement of proposed ownership of the facility at the time of filing the application and after commercial operation;
- B. the precise name of any person or organization to be initially named as permittee or permittees and the name of any other person to whom the permit may be transferred if transfer of the permit is contemplated;
- C. at least two proposed routes for the proposed high voltage transmission line and identification of the applicant's preferred route and the reasons for the preference, and the routes considered and rejected and the reasons for rejecting them; if, however, the proposed project is an eligible project under part 7850.2800 and therefore subject to alternative review proceedings, the applicant is not required to propose a second route but must clearly identify any routes rejected and provide a thorough description of its reasons for rejecting them.
- D. a description of the proposed high voltage transmission line and all associated facilities including the size and type of the high voltage transmission line;
- E. the environmental information required under subpart 3;
- F. identification of land uses and environmental conditions along the proposed routes;
- G. the names of each owner whose property is within any of the proposed routes for the high voltage transmission line;
- H. United States Geological Survey topographical maps or other maps acceptable to the commission showing the entire length of the high voltage transmission line on all proposed routes;
- I. identification of existing utility and public rights-of-way along or parallel to the proposed routes that have the potential to share the right-of-way with the proposed line;

J. the engineering and operational design concepts for the proposed high voltage transmission line, including information on the electric and magnetic fields of the transmission line;

K. cost analysis of each route, including the costs of constructing, operating, and maintaining the high voltage transmission line that are dependent on design and route;

L. a description of possible design options to accommodate expansion of the high voltage transmission line in the future;

M. the procedures and practices proposed for the acquisition and restoration of the right-of-way, construction, and maintenance of the high voltage transmission line;

N. a listing and brief description of federal, state, and local permits ~~that may be~~ required for the proposed high voltage transmission line; ~~and~~

O. ~~a copy of the Certificate of Need or the certified HVTL list containing the proposed high voltage transmission line or documentation that an application for a Certificate of Need has been submitted or is not required.~~ the locations of each library where the application will be available to the public; and

P. the commission's mailing address, telephone number, and website, and a brief explanation of how to get on the mailing list for the commission's proceeding.

Subp. 3. **Environmental information.** An applicant for a site permit or a route permit shall include in the application the following environmental information for each proposed site or route to aid in the preparation of an environmental impact statement:

A. a description of the environmental setting for each site or route;

B. a description of the effects of construction and operation of the facility on human settlement, including, but not limited to, public health and safety, displacement, noise, aesthetics, socioeconomic impacts, cultural values, recreation, and public services;

C. a description of the effects of the facility on land-based economies, including, but not limited to, agriculture, forestry, tourism, and mining;

D. a description of the effects of the facility on archaeological and historic resources;

E. a description of the effects of the facility on the natural environment, including effects on air and water quality resources and flora and fauna;

F. a description of the effects of the facility on rare and unique natural resources;

G. identification of human and natural environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the facility is approved at a specific site or route; and

H. a description of measures that might be implemented to mitigate the potential human and environmental impacts identified in items A to G and the estimated costs of such mitigative measures.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

## **7850.2000 APPLICATION REVIEW JOINT PROCEEDINGS.**

**Subpart 1. Review by commission.** ~~Within ten working days of receipt of an application for a site permit or a route permit, the commission shall determine whether the application is complete and notify the~~

~~applicant in writing of the acceptance or rejection of the application. If the commission rejects an application, the commission shall advise the applicant of the deficiencies in the application.~~

If the commission receives an application under part 7850.1700, subp. 5, requesting that joint proceedings be held, the commission must determine the following:

- A. whether to hold joint public meetings;
- B. whether to hold joint public hearings; and
- C. whether to hold joint proceedings to develop the record.

~~Subp. 2. **Resubmission of rejected application.** If the commission should reject an application, an applicant may decide to address the deficiencies identified by the commission and resubmit the application with additional information. In this event, the commission shall again review the application within ten days and determine whether the application is complete and advise the applicant of the commission's determination.~~

~~Subp. 3. **Reasons for rejection.** The commission shall not reject an application if the information that is missing can be obtained from the applicant within 60 days from the date of the application and the lack of the information will not interfere with the public's ability to review the proposed project.~~

~~Subp. 4. **Schedule.** The date of the commission's determination that an application is complete marks the start of the schedule for the commission to make a final decision on a permit application.~~

~~**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*~~

~~**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*~~

~~**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*~~

## **7850.2100 PROJECT NOTICE.**

Subpart 1. **Notification lists.** The PUC Commission shall maintain the notification lists described in items A and B.

A. The PUC Commission shall maintain a list of persons who want to be notified of the acceptance of applications for site permits or route permits. Any person may request to have that person's name or an organization's name included on the list. The PUC Commission may from time to time request that persons whose names are on the list advise the PUC Commission whether they want to remain on the list. The Commission's request must include a statement that the person's name will be removed from the list if a request to remain on the list is not received within 30 days, and the PUC may delete any names for which an affirmative response is not received within a reasonable time. A person whose name has been removed may request to have the name added back on the list. The PUC Commission shall provide an applicant with the general list upon acceptance of an application at any time upon request and at the time the application is filed.

B. ~~The PUC~~ Once the commission determines which routes will go forward to hearing, the commission shall maintain a project contact landowner list for each project for which an application for a permit has been accepted and for each alternative selected. The project contact list must contain the names of persons who want to receive notices regarding the project. Any person may request to have that person's name or an organization's name included on a project contact list. The PUC Commission may add a person's name to the list if the PUC Commission believes the person would like to receive notices about

the particular project. The PUC Commission shall provide an applicant with the project contact list upon request.

Subp. 2. **Notification to persons on general list, to local officials, and to property owners.** ~~Within 15 days after submission of an application, the applicant shall mail written notice of the submission to the following people:~~ After the Commission has determined the routes to go forward to hearing the Applicant will send notice to the following:

- A. those persons whose names are on the general list maintained by the PUC Commission for this purpose;
- B. each regional development commission, county, incorporated municipality, and township in which any part of the site or route or any alternative is proposed to be located; and
- C. each owner whose property is adjacent to any of the proposed sites for a large electric power generating plant or within any of the proposed routes for a high voltage transmission line.
- D. the department;
- E. the Office of the Attorney General;
- F. all persons on the "General List of Persons Interested in Power Plants and Transmission Lines" maintained under part 7850.2100, subpart 1, items A;
- G. the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers;
- H. the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
- I. other state agencies, including the following:
  - (1) the Department of Natural Resources;
  - (2) the Pollution Control Agency;
  - (3) the Department of Transportation;
  - (4) the Department of Agriculture;
  - (5) the Department of Health;
  - (6) the Office of Pipeline Safety;
  - (7) Board of Water and Soil Resources;
  - (8) the Minnesota Historical Society; and
  - (9) the Environmental Quality Board.

For purposes of giving notice under this item, owners are those persons shown on the records of the county auditor or, in any county where tax statements are mailed by the county treasurer, on the records of the county treasurer, or any other list of owners approved by the commission.

Subp. 3. **Content of notice.** The notice mailed under subpart 2 shall contain the following information:

A. a description of the proposed project, including a map showing the general area of the proposed site or proposed route and each alternative;

B. a statement that a permit application has been submitted to the PUC Commission, the name of the permit applicant, and information regarding how a copy of the application may be obtained;

C. a statement that the permit application will be considered by the PUC Commission under the provisions of parts 7850.1000 to 7850.5600 and the Power Plant Siting Act and describing the time periods for the PUC to act;

D. a statement that the PUC Commission will hold a public meeting within 60 days of the date the application is filed. ~~and~~ The statement must notify the recipient of the date and location of the meeting, if known;

E. the manner in which the PUC Commission will conduct environmental review of the proposed project, including the holding of a scoping meeting at which additional alternatives to the project may be proposed;

F. the name of the PUC Commission staff member who has been appointed by the commission to serve as the public advisor, if known, or otherwise, a general contact at the PUC Commission;

G. the manner in which persons may register their names with the PUC Commission on the project contact list;

H. a statement that a public hearing will be conducted after the EIS or EA is prepared;

I. a statement indicating whether a certificate of need or other authorization from the Public Utilities Commission is required for the project and the status of the matter if such authorization is required;

J. a statement indicating whether the applicant may exercise the power of eminent domain to acquire the land necessary for the project and the basis for such authority; and

~~K. any other information requested by the commission to be included in the notice.~~

Subp. 4. **Publication of notice.** Within 15 days after submission of an application, the applicant shall publish the notice in a legal newspaper of general circulation in each county in which a site, route, or any alternative is proposed to be located that an application has been submitted and a description of the proposed project. The notice must also state where a copy of the application may be reviewed.

Subp. 5. **Confirmation of notice.** Within 30 days after providing the requisite notice, the applicant shall submit to the PUC Commission documentation that all notices required under this part have been given. The applicant shall document the giving of the notice by providing the PUC Commission with affidavits of publication or mailing and copies of the notice provided.

**Subp. 6. Supplementary notice.** The commission shall require supplementary notice to persons reasonably likely to be affected by alternatives developed in the course of siting and routing proceedings if it appears that those alternatives are as likely to be permitted as the proposed site or route.

Subp. ~~6~~ 7. **Failure to give notice.** The failure of the applicant to give the requisite notice does not invalidate any ongoing permit proceedings provided the applicant has made a bona fide attempt to comply, although the commission may extend the time for the public to participate if the failure has interfered with the public's right to be informed about the project.



**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

#### **7850.2200 PUBLIC ADVISOR.**

Upon acceptance of an application for a site or route permit, the commission shall designate a staff person to act as the public advisor on the project. The public advisor must be available to answer questions from the public about the permitting process, including information about participation, comment periods and intervention opportunities. The public advisor shall not give legal advice or other advice that may affect the legal rights of the person being advised, and the public advisor shall not act as an advocate on behalf of any person.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

#### **7850.2300 PUBLIC MEETING.**

Subpart 1. **Scheduling public meeting.** Upon acceptance of ~~an~~ each site or route permit application for a site or route permit filed under this chapter, the commission shall schedule a public meeting to provide information to the public about the proposed project ~~and to answer questions and to scope the environmental impact statement~~. The public meeting must be held ~~no later than 60 days after acceptance of the application~~ as soon as practicable after the application is filed. The public meeting must be held in a location that is convenient for persons who live near the proposed project.

Subp. 2. **Notice of public meeting.** For purposes of giving notice under this part, owner means: those persons shown on the records of the county auditor; those persons shown on the records of the county treasurer in any county where tax statements are mailed by the county treasurer; or any other list of owners approved by the commission. ~~The PUC shall give a~~ At least ten fifteen days' prior to the public meeting, the commission ~~notice of the public meeting by mailing~~ shall send notice of the meeting to persons whose names are on the project contact list maintained pursuant to part 7850.2100, subpart 1, item B, and the following:

A. each regional development commission, county, incorporated municipality, and township in which any part of the site or route or any alternative is proposed to be located;

B. each owner whose property is adjacent to any of the proposed sites for a large electric power generating plant or within any of the proposed routes for a high voltage transmission line.

C. the department;

D. the Office of the Attorney General;

E. the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers;

F. the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;

G. other state agencies, including the following:

(1) the Department of Natural Resources;

(2) the Pollution Control Agency;

(3) the Department of Transportation;

(4) the Department of Agriculture;

(5) the Department of Health;

(6) the Office of Pipeline Safety;

(7) Board of Water and Soil Resources;

(8) the Minnesota Historical Society; and

(9) the Environmental Quality Board.

**Subp 3. Newspaper notice.** The PUC commission shall also publish notice of the public meeting in a legal newspaper of general circulation in the area where the project is proposed to be located. If appropriate, the PUC Commission may request the applicant to include notice of the public meeting in the notice to be provided by the applicant pursuant to part 7850.2100.

Subp. ~~34~~. **Conduct of public meeting.** The commission shall appoint a ~~person, who may be a~~ PUC commission staff person, to conduct the public meeting. The public meeting must be conducted in an informal manner designed to encourage public participation. The public must be afforded an opportunity to present comments and ask questions. ~~The PUC shall make available at the public meeting a copy of the application and other pertinent documents in the PUC files regarding the application.~~ The staff shall explain the permitting process to the persons in attendance. A transcript of the meeting need not be maintained, although the PUC commission may elect to keep an audio recording of the meeting.

Subp. ~~4 5~~. **Applicant role.** The applicant shall provide representatives at the public meeting who are capable of answering general questions about the proposed project.

Subp. ~~5 6~~. **EIS scoping Combined meetings.** ~~At the public meeting, the public must be provided an opportunity to comment on the scope of the environmental impact statement in accordance with part 7850.2500. Meetings held under this provision, if combined with a meeting held under part 7850.2500 or part 7850.3700, must include a statement in the meeting notice that the meetings will be combined.~~

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

#### **7850.2400 CITIZEN ADVISORY TASK FORCE.**

Subpart 1. **Authority.** The commission has the authority to appoint a citizen advisory task force. The

commission shall determine whether to appoint such a task force as early in the process as possible. The commission shall establish the size of the task force and appoint its members in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, section 216E.08. ~~The commission shall advise of the appointment of the task force at the next monthly commission meeting.~~ The task force must include at least two members of the general public.

Subp. 2. **Commission decision.** If the commission decides not to appoint a citizen advisory task force and a person would like such a task force appointed, the person may request that the commission create a citizen advisory task force and appoint its members. Upon receipt of such a request, the commission shall place the matter on the agenda for the next regular monthly commission meeting.

Subp. 3. **Task force responsibilities.** Upon appointment of a citizen advisory task force, the commission shall specify in writing the charge to the task force. The charge shall include the identification of additional sites or routes or particular impacts to be evaluated in the environmental impact statement. The commission may establish additional charges, including a request that the task force express a preference for a specific site or route if it has one.

Subp. 4. **Termination of task force.** The task force expires upon completion of its charge, designation by the commission of alternative sites or routes to be included in the environmental impact statement, or the specific date identified by the commission in the charge, whichever occurs first.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

## **7850.2500 EIS PREPARATION.**

Subpart 1. **EIS required.** The commissioner ~~of the Department of Commerce~~ shall prepare an environmental impact statement on each proposed large electric power generating plant and high voltage transmission line for which a permit application has been accepted by the ~~commissioner~~ commission.

Subp. 2. ~~Scoping process.~~ **Scoping meeting.** The commissioner ~~of the Department of Commerce~~ shall provide the public with an opportunity to participate in the development of the scope of the environmental impact statement by holding a public scoping meeting and by soliciting public comments. The commissioner shall provide notice of the meeting to persons whose names are on the project contact list maintained under part 7850.2100, subp. 1 and to landowners who own property near the proposed sites and along the route alternatives. The commissioner must also publish newspaper notice of the meeting in the area of the proposed facilities. The public meeting required under part 7850.2300 satisfies the requirement to hold a scoping meeting. The commissioner shall determine the scope of the environmental impact statement as soon after holding the public meeting as possible. Within five days after the decision, the commissioner shall mail notice of the scoping decision to those persons whose names are on either the general list or the project contact list. Once the commissioner has determined the scope of the environmental impact statement, the scope must not be changed except upon or a decision by the commissioner that substantial changes have been made in the project or substantial new information has arisen significantly affecting the potential environmental effects of the project or the availability of reasonable alternatives. At the meeting, members of the public must be provided the opportunity to comment on the scope of the EIS, including environmental factors, and to submit supporting documentation. The applicant must be provided an opportunity to respond to public input.

**Subp. 3. Scoping decision.** The commissioner must determine the scope of the EIS within 20 days after the close of the scoping meeting and must file the scoping decision with the commission. The

scoping decision must include the following:

A. the issues to be addressed in the EIS; and

B. the schedule for completion of the EIS.

**Subp. 4. Notice of decision.** Within five days after filing the scoping decision with the commission, the commissioner shall provide notice of the scoping decision to those persons whose names are on the project contact list.

~~Subp. 3. **Alternative sites or routes.** During the scoping process, a person may suggest alternative sites or routes to evaluate in the environmental impact statement. A person desiring that a particular site or route be evaluated shall submit to the commissioner of the Department of Commerce, during the scoping process, an explanation of why the site or route should be included in the environmental impact statement and any other supporting information the person wants the commissioner to consider. The commissioner shall provide the applicant with an opportunity to respond to each request that an alternative be included in the environmental impact statement. The commissioner shall include the suggested site or route in the scope of the environmental impact statement only if the commissioner determines that evaluation of the proposed site or route will assist in the commissioner's decision on the permit application.~~

~~Subp. 4. **Scope of EIS.** The scoping process must be used to reduce the scope and bulk of an environmental impact statement by identifying the potentially significant issues and alternatives requiring analysis and establishing the detail into which the issues will be analyzed. The scoping decision by the commissioner of the Department of Commerce shall at least address the following:~~

~~A. the issues to be addressed in the environmental impact statement;~~

~~B. the alternative sites and routes to be addressed in the environmental impact statement; and~~

~~C. the schedule for completion of the environmental impact statement.~~

**Subp. 5. Evaluation of alternatives.** The Commission must determine whether site or route alternatives other than those proposed by the Applicant must be evaluated in the EIS. In preparing the EIS, the Department must include an evaluation of any site or route proposed by the applicant and any site or route identified by the commission.

#### **7850.2550. DRAFT EIS.**

Subp. 5 1. **Matters excluded.** When the ~~Public Utilities C~~ commission has issued a Certificate of Need for a large electric power generating plant or high voltage transmission line or placed a high voltage transmission line on the certified HVTL list maintained by the commission, the environmental impact statement shall not address questions of need, including size, type, and timing; questions of alternative system configurations; or questions of voltage.

Subp. 6 2. **Draft EIS.** The draft environmental impact statement must be written in plain and objective language. The draft environmental impact statement shall follow the standard format for an environmental impact statement prescribed in part 4410.2300 to the extent the requirements of that rule are appropriate.

Subp. 7 3. **Public review.** Upon completion of the draft environmental impact statement, the commissioner of the ~~Department of Commerce~~ shall file the EIS with the commission and make the document available for public review by placing a copy of the document in a public library or other

governmental office in each county where the proposed project may be located. The commissioner shall send notice of the availability of the draft environmental impact statement to each person and each landowner, and the project contact list maintained under part 7850.2100, subpart 1. The commissioner shall also place a notice in the EQB Monitor of the availability of the draft environmental impact statement. The commissioner shall post the environmental impact statement on the agency's Web page if possible.

Subp. ~~8~~ 4. ~~Informational~~ **Environmental review meeting.** The commissioner of the Department of Commerce shall schedule an ~~informational~~ environmental review meeting to provide an opportunity for the public to comment on the draft environmental impact statement. The meeting must not be held sooner than ~~20~~ 15 days after the draft environmental impact statement becomes available. The meeting must be held in a location convenient to persons who live near the proposed project. The commissioner shall send notice of the ~~informational~~ environmental review meeting to each landowner near a proposed site or within a proposed route and each person on the project contact list maintained under part 7850.2100, subpart 1. The commissioner shall also place notice in the EQB Monitor and publish the notice on the department's website. The ~~informational~~ environmental review meeting may be held just prior to the holding of a contested case hearing on the permit application. The commissioner shall hold the record on the environmental impact statement open for receipt of written comments for ~~not less than ten~~ twenty days after the close of the ~~informational~~ environmental review meeting.

#### **7850.2560. FINAL EIS.**

Subp. ~~9~~ 1. **Final EIS Contents.** The commissioner of the Department of Commerce shall respond to the timely substantive comments received on the draft environmental impact statement consistent with the scoping decision and prepare the final environmental impact statement. The commissioner may attach to the draft environmental impact statement the comments received and its response to comments without preparing a separate document. The commissioner shall file a copy of the final EIS with the Commission; publish notice of the availability of the final environmental impact statement in the EQB Monitor; and shall supply a press release to at least one newspaper of general circulation in the areas where the proposed sites or routes are located.

Subp. ~~10~~ 2. **Adequacy determination.** The ~~Public Utilities~~ Commission shall determine the adequacy of the final environmental impact statement. The commission shall not decide the adequacy for at least ten days after the availability of the final environmental impact statement is filed with the Commission and announced in the EQB Monitor. The final environmental impact statement is adequate if it:

- A. addresses the issues raised in scoping and the alternatives raised in scoping identified by the applicant and the commission to a reasonable extent considering the availability of information and the time limitations for considering the permit application;
- B. provides responses to the timely substantive comments received during the draft environmental impact statement review process; and
- C. was prepared in compliance with the procedures in parts 7850.1000 to 7850.5600.

If the commission finds that the environmental impact statement is not adequate, the commission shall direct the ~~staff~~ Commissioner to respond to the deficiencies and resubmit the revised environmental impact statement to

the commission as soon as possible.

Subp. ~~4~~ 3. **Cost.** The applicant for a site permit or route permit shall pay the reasonable costs of preparing and distributing an environmental impact statement. The costs must not be assessed separately from the assessment under part 7850.1800 unless that assessment is inadequate to cover the commissioner's reasonable costs of ~~considering the permit application~~ developing the environmental document.

Subp. ~~4~~ 4. **Environmental review requirements.** The requirements of chapter 4410 and parts 7849.1000 to 7849.2100 do not apply to the preparation or consideration of an environmental impact statement for a large electric power generating plant or high voltage transmission line except as provided in parts 7850.1000 to 7850.5600.

**Subp. 5. Other agency comments.** Comments filed by a state or federal agency in a proceeding under this Chapter and received by the commission or department must be electronically filed by the commission or the department within two business days after receipt and clearly labeled as “comments on behalf of” the agency that filed them.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 116D.04; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; 28 SR 951; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *October 13, 2009*

#### **7850.2600 CONTESTED CASE PUBLIC HEARING AND CONTESETD CASE PROCEEDINGS.**

Subpart 1. **Hearing.** The ~~PUC~~ commission shall hold a ~~contested case~~ public hearing after the draft environmental impact statement is prepared on all applications for a site permit or a route permit. The hearing must be conducted by an administrative law judge from the Office of Administrative Hearings pursuant to the contested case procedures of Minnesota Statutes, chapter 14. Notice of the hearing must be given in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, section 216E.03, subdivision 6. At least a portion of the hearing must be held in a county where the proposed large electric power generating plant or high voltage transmission line would be located.

**Subp. 2. Case referral.** Site and route permit applications not eligible for alternative review under Minnesota Statutes, section 216E.04, must be referred to the Office of Administrative Hearings for contested case proceedings. At the time the department files a draft EIS, it shall assist in the factual development of the record and include in its initial filing its draft EIS and a technical analysis of the application, including the following:

- (1) the proposed project’s compliance with applicable statutes and rules
- (2) an analysis of the feasibility of each alternative site or route examined with respect to the factors to be considered in designating a site or route;
- (3) a comparison of the human and environmental impacts of the proposed project and the impacts of the alternatives;
- (4) the department’s conclusions regarding relative impacts of all routes or sites studied based on the factors set forth in statute and rule;

(5) any permit conditions, permit modifications, or mitigation measure to eliminate or minimize adverse impacts and to meet required statutory, regulatory, or public-interest requirements.

**Subp. 3. Department analysis.**

The department's analysis of relative impacts or merits, as required above, must examine each alternative in relation to all other alternatives. The department must identify alternatives with fatal flaws and ones with common or similar impacts relative to the factors. Where factors differ among alternatives, the department must group the alternatives by identifying those needing no mitigation, those with negative impacts needing mitigation, and those with unavoidable impacts that cannot be mitigated. The department must update and revise its analysis as necessary and must file the final environmental review document during the comment period established by the administrative law judge.

Subp. 2 4. **Issues.** Once the commission has determined questions of need, including size, type, and timing; questions of system configuration; and questions of voltage, those issues must not be addressed in the contested case hearing.

~~Subp. 3. **Hearing.** If the commission determines that a hearing to consider both permitting and need issues is feasible, more efficient, and may further the public interest, the commission may decide to hold a hearing. The commission may also elect to hold a joint hearing with other states pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 216E.02, subdivision 3.~~

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

**7850.2700 FINAL DECISION.**

Subpart 1. **Timing.** The commission shall make a final decision on a site permit or a route permit application within 60 days after receipt of the report of the administrative law judge. A final decision must be made within one year after the commission's determination that an application is complete. The commission may extend this time limit for up to three months for just cause or upon agreement of the applicant.

Subp. 2. **EIS adequacy.** The commission shall not make a final decision on a permit until the commission has found the environmental impact statement to be adequate.

Subp. 3. **Certificate of need decision.** The PUC Commission shall not make a final decision on a site or route permit application for a project that requires a Certificate of Need from the Public Utilities Commission until the applicant has obtained the necessary approval.

Subp. 4. **Notice.** The PUC Commission shall publish notice of its final permit decision in the State Register within 30 days of the date the commission makes the decision. The PUC Commission shall also publish notice in the EQB Monitor. The PUC Commission shall mail notice of its final permit decision to those persons whose names are on the project contact list. The PUC Commission shall post notice of the final decision on the agency's Web page, if possible.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

## **7850.2800 ELIGIBLE PROJECTS.**

Subpart 1. **Eligible projects.** An applicant for a site permit or a route permit for one of the following projects may elect to follow the procedures of parts 7850.2800 to 7850.3900 instead of the full permitting procedures in parts 7850.1700 to 7850.2700. The alternative review process under parts 7850.3700 through 7850.3900 is available to eligible projects, including the following:

- A. large electric power generating plants with a capacity of less than 80 megawatts;
- B. large electric power generating plants that are fueled by natural gas;
- C. high voltage transmission lines of between 100 and 200 kilovolts;
- D. high voltage transmission lines in excess of 200 kilovolts and less than five miles in length in Minnesota;
- E. high voltage transmission lines in excess of 200 kilovolts if at least 80 percent of the distance of the line in Minnesota will be located along existing high voltage transmission line rights-of-way;
- F. a high voltage transmission line service extension to a single customer between 200 and 300 kilovolts and less than ten miles in length; and
- G. a high voltage transmission line rerouting to serve the demand of a single customer when the rerouted line will be located at least 80 percent on property owned or controlled by the customer or the owner of the transmission line.

Subp. 2. **Notice to PUC Commission.** An applicant for a permit for one of the qualifying projects in subpart 1, who intends to follow the alternative review procedures of parts 7850.2800 to 7850.3700, shall notify the PUC Commission of such intent, in writing, at least ~~ten~~ thirty days before submitting an application for the project.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

## **~~7850.2900 PERMIT APPLICATION UNDER ALTERNATIVE PROCESS.~~**

~~Part 7850.1700, regarding submission of a permit application, applies to projects being considered under the alternative permitting process.~~

~~**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*~~

~~**History:** *27 SR 1295*~~

~~**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*~~

## **~~7850.3000 PERMIT FEES.~~**

~~Part 7850.1800, regarding permit fees, applies to projects being considered under the alternative permitting process.~~

~~**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*~~

~~**History:** *27 SR 1295*~~

~~**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*~~



#### **~~7850.3100 CONTENTS OF APPLICATION.~~**

~~The applicant shall include in the application the same information required in part 7850.1900, except the applicant need not propose any alternative sites or routes to the preferred site or route. If the applicant has rejected alternative sites or routes, the applicant shall include in the application the identity of the rejected sites or routes and an explanation of the reasons for rejecting them.~~

~~**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*~~

~~**History:** *27 SR 1295*~~

~~**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*~~

#### **~~7850.3200 APPLICATION REVIEW.~~**

~~Part 7850.2000 regarding the commission's review of the application, applies to projects being considered under the alternative permitting process.~~

~~**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*~~

~~**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*~~

~~**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*~~

#### **~~7850.3300 PROJECT NOTICE.~~**

~~Part 7850.2100, regarding obligations to give notice of the project, applies to projects being considered under the alternative permitting process.~~

~~**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*~~

~~**History:** *27 SR 1295*~~

~~**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*~~

#### **~~7850.3400 PUBLIC ADVISOR.~~**

~~Part 7850.2200, regarding appointment of a public advisor, applies to projects being considered under the alternative permitting process.~~

~~**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*~~

~~**History:** *27 SR 1295*~~

~~**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*~~

#### **~~7850.3500 PUBLIC MEETING.~~**

~~Subpart 1. **Public meeting.** Part 7850.2300, subparts 1 to 4, apply to projects being considered under the alternative permitting process.~~

~~Subp. 2. **Environmental assessment.** At the public meeting, the public shall be provided an opportunity to comment on the scope of the environmental assessment in accordance with part 7850.3700.~~

~~**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*~~

**History:** ~~27 SR 1295~~

**Posted:** ~~September 18, 2009~~

**~~7850.3600 CITIZEN ADVISORY TASK FORCE.~~**

~~Part 7850.2400, regarding the appointment of a citizen advisory task force, applies to projects being considered under the alternative permitting process.~~

**Statutory Authority:** ~~MS s 116C.66; 216E.16~~

**History:** ~~27 SR 1295~~

**Posted:** ~~September 18, 2009~~

**7850.3700 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PREPARATION.**

Subpart 1. **Environmental assessment required.** ~~The commissioner of the Department of Commerce shall prepare an environmental assessment on each complete application for a proposed large electric power generating plant and each proposed high voltage transmission line being reviewed under subject to the alternative permitting process in parts 7850.2800 to 7850.3900.~~ The environmental assessment must contain information on the human and environmental impacts of the proposed project and of alternative sites or routes identified by the commissioner and shall address mitigating measures for all sites or routes considered.

Subp. 2. **Scoping process Scoping meeting.**

~~A. The commissioner of the Department of Commerce shall provide the public with an opportunity to participate in the development of the scope of the environmental assessment by holding a public scoping meeting and by soliciting public comments. The public meeting required under part 7850.3500 satisfies the requirement to hold a scoping meeting. The commissioner shall mail notice of the meeting to those persons on either the general list or the project contact list at least ten days before the meeting. The commissioner shall provide at least seven twenty days from the day of the public meeting for the public to submit comments regarding the scope of the environmental assessment. At the meeting, members of the public must be provided the opportunity to comment on the scope of the EA, including environmental factors, and to submit supporting documentation. The applicant must be provided an opportunity to respond to public input.~~

**Subp. 3. Scoping decision.** The commissioner shall determine the scope of the EA within 20 days after the close of the scoping meeting and must file the scoping decision with the commission. The scoping decision must include the following:

- A. the issues to be addressed in the EA;
- B. any specific potential impacts to be addressed;
- C. the schedule for completion of the EA; and

**Subp. 4. Notice of decision.** Within five days after filing the scoping decision with the commission, the commissioner shall provide notice of the scoping decision to the following:

- A. those persons whose names are on the general service list for the project;

B. those persons whose names are on the project contact list; and

C. landowners who own property near a proposed site or site alternative, or along a proposed route or route alternative, as identified by the commission.

~~B.—The commissioner shall include in the scope of the environmental assessment any alternative sites or routes proposed by the citizen advisory task force or by any member agency of the Environmental Quality Board prior to the close of the scoping period. During the scoping process, any person may suggest an alternative site or route to evaluate in the environmental assessment. A person desiring that a particular site or route be evaluated shall submit to the commissioner, during the scoping process, an explanation of why the site or route should be included in the environmental assessment and all supporting information the person wants the commissioner to consider. The commissioner shall provide the applicant with an opportunity to respond to each request that an alternative be included in the environmental assessment. The commissioner shall include the suggested site or route in the scope of the environmental assessment only if the commissioner determines that evaluation of the proposed site or route will assist in the commissioner's ultimate decision on the permit application. Any person may also suggest specific human or environmental impacts that should be included in the environmental assessment.~~

**Subp. 5. Evaluation of alternatives.** The Commission must determine whether site or route alternatives other than those proposed by the Applicant must be evaluated in the EA. In preparing the EA, the Department must include an evaluation of any site or route proposed by the applicant and any site or route identified by the commission.

~~Subp. 3 6. **Scoping decision.**—The commissioner of the Department of Commerce shall determine the scope of the environmental assessment within ten days after close of the public comment period and shall mail notice of the scoping decision to those persons on the project contact list within five days after the decision a. Once the commissioner has determined the scope of the environmental assessment, the scope shall not be changed except upon a decision by the commissioner that substantial changes have been made in the project or substantial new information has arisen significantly affecting the potential environmental effects of the project or the availability of reasonable alternatives. The commissioner shall also determine as part of the scoping process a reasonable schedule for completion of the environmental assessment. The scoping decision by the commissioner must identify:~~

- ~~A. the alternative sites or routes, if any, to be addressed in the environmental assessment;~~
- ~~B. any specific potential impacts to be addressed;~~
- ~~C. the schedule for completion of the environmental assessment; and~~
- ~~D. other matters to be included in the environmental assessment.~~

Subp. 46. **Content of environmental assessment.** The environmental assessment must include:

- A. a general description of the proposed facility;
- B. a list of any alternative sites or routes that are addressed;
- C. a discussion of the potential impacts of the proposed project and each alternative site or route on the human and natural environment;
- D. a discussion of mitigative measures that could reasonably be implemented to eliminate or

minimize any adverse impacts identified for the proposed project and each alternative site or route analyzed;

- E. an analysis of the feasibility of each alternative site or route considered;
- F. a list of permits required for the project; and
- G. a discussion of other matters identified in the scoping process.

Subp. ~~5~~ 7. **Time frame for completion of environmental assessment.** The commissioner of ~~the Department of Commerce~~ shall complete the environmental assessment in accordance with the schedule established during the scoping process. In establishing the schedule for completion of the environmental assessment, the commissioner shall take into account any applicable statutory deadlines, the number and complexity of the alternatives and impacts to be addressed, the status of other proceedings affecting the project, and the interests of the public, the applicant, and the commissioner. At the time the department issues an EA, it shall assist in the factual development of the record and include in its initial filing its EA and a technical analysis of the application, including the following:

- (1) the proposed project's compliance with applicable statutes and rules;
- (2) an analysis of the feasibility of each alternative site or route examined with respect to the factors considered in designating a site or route;
- (3) a comparison of the human and environmental impacts of the proposed project and the impacts of the alternatives;
- (4) the department's conclusions regarding relative impacts of all routes or sites studied, based on the factors set forth in statute and rule; and
- (5) any permit conditions, permit modifications, or mitigation measures to eliminate or minimize adverse impacts and to meet requie4rd statutory, regulatory, or public interest requirements.

**Subp. 8. Department analysis.**

The department's analysis of relative impacts or merits, as required above, must examine each alternative in relation to all other alternatives. The department must identify alternatives with fatal flaws and ones with common or similar impacts relative to the factors. Where factors differ among alternatives, the department must group the alternatives by identifying those needing no mitigation, those with negative impacts needing mitigation, and those with unavoidable impacts that cannot be mitigated. The department must update and revise its analysis as necessary and must file the final environmental review document during the comment period established by the administrative law judge.

Subp. ~~6~~ 9. **Notification of availability of environmental assessment.** Upon completion of the environmental assessment, the commissioner shall publish notice in the EQB Monitor of the availability of the environmental assessment and mail notice of the availability of the document to those persons on the project contact list and to each landowner along each of the routes examined. The commissioner shall provide a copy of the environmental assessment to any public agency with authority to permit or approve the proposed project. The commissioner shall post the environmental assessment on the agency's Web page, if possible.

Subp. ~~7~~ 10. **Matters excluded.** When the ~~Public Utilities~~ Commission has issued a Certificate of Need for a large electric power generating plant or high voltage transmission line or placed a high voltage transmission line on the certified HVTL list maintained by the commission, the environmental

assessment shall not address questions of need, including size, type, and timing; questions of alternative system configurations; or questions of voltage.

Subp. ~~9~~ **11. No additional environmental review.** An environmental assessment must be the only state environmental review document required to be prepared by the commissioner ~~of the Department of Commerce~~ on a project qualifying for review under the alternative review process. No environmental assessment worksheet or environmental impact statement shall be required. Environmental review at the certificate of need stage before the ~~Public Utilities~~ Commission must be performed in accordance with parts 7849.1000 to 7849.2100.

Subp. ~~9~~ **12. Cost.** The cost of the preparation of an environmental assessment must be assessed to the applicant as part of the application fee pursuant to part 7850.1800.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 116D.04; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; 28 SR 951; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *October 13, 2009*

### **7850.3800 PUBLIC HEARING AND PROCEDURES FOR ALTERNATIVE REVIEW.**

Subpart 1. **Public hearing.** The PUC Commission shall hold a public hearing once the environmental assessment has been completed. Notice of the hearing shall be given in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, section 216E.03, subdivision 6. At least a portion of the hearing shall be held in a county where the proposed large electric power generating plant or high voltage transmission line would be located.

Subp. 2. **Hearing examiner.** The commission shall appoint a person to act as the hearing examiner at the public hearing. The hearing examiner may be an employee of the PUC Commission. The hearing examiner shall set the date and place for the hearing and provide notice to the public. The hearing examiner may make such rulings as are required to conduct the hearing in a fair, impartial, and expeditious manner, including the authority to maintain decorum at the hearing, to exclude repetitious or irrelevant testimony, to limit the amount of time for oral testimony, and to continue the hearing from time to time as needed. Persons may testify at the hearing without being first sworn under oath. The hearing examiner shall ensure that the record created at the hearing is preserved and transmitted to the commission. An audio recording of the hearing must be made, unless the commission or the administrative law judge determines that a court reporter is appropriate. The hearing examiner shall not prepare a report or make any recommendation to the commission unless the commission requests the hearing examiner to do so.

Subp. 3. **Hearing procedure.** The hearing must be conducted in the following manner, although the hearing examiner may vary the order in which the hearing proceeds:

A. the staff shall make a brief presentation to describe the project, explain the process to be followed, and introduce documents ~~to be included in the record, including the application, the environmental assessment, and various procedural documents;~~

B. the department shall introduce information for developing the record, including the EA;

~~B~~ C. the applicant shall introduce its evidence, ~~by way of including its application, testimony,~~ and exhibits;

~~C~~ D. the public must be afforded an opportunity to make an oral presentation, present documentary evidence, and ask questions of the applicant and agency staffs;

~~D-E.~~ the hearing examiner shall provide a period of not less than ten days for the submission of written comments into the record after the close of the hearing; and

~~E-F.~~ the hearing examiner shall transmit the complete record created at the hearing, including all written comments, to the commission within five days of the close of the record, unless the hearing examiner has been requested by the commission to prepare a report.

Subp. 4. **Issues.** Once the Public Utilities Commission has determined questions of need, including size, type, and timing; questions of system configurations; and questions of voltage, those issues must not be addressed in the public hearing.

Subp. 5. **Environmental assessment.** Interested persons may comment upon the environmental assessment at the public hearing. Comments on the environmental assessment shall become part of the record in the proceeding-but the commission shall not be required to revise or supplement the environmental assessment document.

**Subp. 6. Alternative Review.** Unless the Commission applies its informal review procedures under Chapter 7829 to an application eligible for alternative review under part 7850.2800, an application for an eligible project must be referred to the Office of Administrative Hearings for factual development of the record through informal proceedings conducted by an Administrative Law Judge. The Commission's referral to the Office of Administrative Hearings must detail the request for developing the record.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

#### **7850.3900 FINAL DECISION.**

Subpart 1. **Timing.** The commission shall make a final decision on a site permit or a route permit application within 60 days after receipt of the record from the hearing examiner. A final decision must be made within six months after the commission's determination that an application is complete. The commission may extend this time limit for up to three months for just cause or upon agreement of the applicant.

Subp. 2. **Completeness of environmental assessment.** At the time the commission makes a final decision on the permit application, the commission shall determine whether the environmental assessment and the record ~~created at the public hearing~~ address the issues identified in the scoping decision.

Subp. 3. **Certificate of need decision.** The PUC Commission shall not make a final decision on a site or route permit application for a project that requires a certificate of need from the ~~Public Utilities~~ Public Utilities Commission until the applicant has obtained the necessary approval from the Public Utilities Commission.

Subp. 4. **Notice.** The PUC Commission shall publish notice of its final permit decision in the State Register within 30 days of the day the commission makes the decision. The PUC Commission shall also publish notice in the EQB Monitor. The PUC Commission shall mail notice of its final permit decision to those persons whose names are on the project contact list. The PUC Commission shall post notice of the final decision on the agency's Web page, if possible.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

**~~7850.4000 STANDARDS AND CRITERIA.~~**

~~No site permit or route permit shall be issued in violation of the site selection standards and criteria established in Minnesota Statutes, sections 216E.03 and 216E.04, and in rules adopted by the commission. The commission shall issue a permit for a proposed facility when the commission finds, in keeping with the requirements of the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act, Minnesota Statutes, chapter 116D, and the Minnesota Environmental Rights Act, Minnesota Statutes, chapter 116B, that the facility is consistent with state goals to conserve resources, minimize environmental impacts, and minimize human settlement and other land use conflicts and ensures the state's electric energy security through efficient, cost-effective power supply and electric transmission infrastructure.~~

~~**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*~~

~~**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*~~

~~**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*~~

**~~7850.4100 FACTORS CONSIDERED.~~**

~~In determining whether to issue a permit for a large electric power generating plant or a high voltage transmission line, the commission shall consider the following:~~

~~A. effects on human settlement, including, but not limited to, displacement, noise, aesthetics, cultural values, recreation, and public services;~~

~~B. effects on public health and safety;~~

~~C. effects on land-based economies, including, but not limited to, agriculture, forestry, tourism, and mining;~~

~~D. effects on archaeological and historic resources;~~

~~E. effects on the natural environment, including effects on air and water quality resources and flora and fauna;~~

~~F. effects on rare and unique natural resources;~~

~~G. application of design options that maximize energy efficiencies, mitigate adverse environmental effects, and could accommodate expansion of transmission or generating capacity;~~

~~H. use or paralleling of existing rights of way, survey lines, natural division lines, and agricultural field boundaries;~~

~~I. use of existing large electric power generating plant sites;~~

~~J. use of existing transportation, pipeline, and electrical transmission systems or rights of way;~~

~~K. electrical system reliability;~~

~~L. costs of constructing, operating, and maintaining the facility which are dependent on design and route;~~

~~M. adverse human and natural environmental effects which cannot be avoided; and~~

~~N. irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources.~~

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

#### **7850.4200 FACTORS EXCLUDED.**

~~When the Public Utilities Commission has issued a Certificate of Need for a large electric power generating plant or a high voltage transmission line or placed a high voltage transmission line on the certified HVTL list maintained by the commission, questions of need, including size, type, and timing, questions of alternative system configurations, and questions of voltage shall not be factors considered by the commission in deciding whether to issue a permit for a proposed facility.~~

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

#### **7850.4300 PROHIBITED ROUTES.**

Subpart 1. **Wilderness areas.** No high voltage transmission line may be routed through state or national wilderness areas.

Subp. 2. **Parks and natural areas.** No high voltage transmission line may be routed through state or national parks or state scientific and natural areas unless the transmission line would not materially damage or impair the purpose for which the area was designated and no feasible and prudent alternative exists. Economic considerations alone do not justify use of these areas for a high voltage transmission line.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

#### **7850.4400 PROHIBITED SITES.**

Subpart 1. **Prohibited sites.** No large electric power generating plant may be located in any of the following areas:

- A. national parks;
- B. national historic sites and landmarks;
- C. national historic districts;
- D. national wildlife refuges;
- E. national monuments;
- F. national wild, scenic, and recreational riverways;



- G. state wild, scenic, and recreational rivers and their land use districts;
- H. state parks;
- I. nature conservancy preserves;
- J. state scientific and natural areas; and
- K. state and national wilderness areas.

Subp. 2. **Water use.** The areas identified in subpart 1 must not be permitted as a site for a large electric power generating plant except for use for water intake or discharge facilities. If the commission includes any of these areas within a site for use for water intake or discharge facilities, it may impose appropriate conditions in the site permit to protect these areas for the purposes for which they were designated. The commission shall also consider the adverse effects of proposed sites on these areas which are located wholly outside of the boundaries of these areas.

Subp. 3. **Site exclusions when alternative sites exist.** No large electric power generating plant may be located in any of the following areas unless there is no feasible and prudent alternative. Economic considerations alone do not justify approval of these areas. These areas are:

- A. state registered historic sites;
- B. state historic districts;
- C. state wildlife management areas, except in cases where the plant cooling water is to be used for wildlife management purposes;
- D. county parks;
- E. metropolitan parks;
- F. designated state and federal recreational trails;
- G. designated trout streams; and
- H. the rivers identified in Minnesota Statutes, section 85.32, subdivision 1.

Subp. 4. **Prime farmland exclusion.** No large electric power generating plant site may be permitted where the developed portion of the plant site, excluding water storage reservoirs and cooling ponds, includes more than 0.5 acres of prime farmland per megawatt of net generating capacity, or where makeup water storage reservoir or cooling pond facilities include more than 0.5 acres of prime farmland per megawatt of net generating capacity, unless there is no feasible and prudent alternative. Economic considerations alone do not justify the use of more prime farmland. "Prime farmland" means those soils that meet the specifications of Code of Federal Regulations 1980, title 7, section 657.5, paragraph (a). These provisions do not apply to areas located within home rule charter or statutory cities; areas located within two miles of home rule charter or statutory cities of the first, second, and third class; or areas designated for orderly annexation under Minnesota Statutes, section 414.0325.

Subp. 5. **Sufficient water supply required.** No site may be designated that does not have reasonable access to a proven water supply sufficient for plant operation. No use of groundwater may be permitted where removal of groundwater results in material adverse effects on groundwater, groundwater dependent natural resources, or higher priority users in and adjacent to the area, as determined in each case.

The use of groundwater for high consumption purposes, such as cooling, must be avoided if a feasible and prudent alternative exists.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** 27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19

**Posted:** September 18, 2009

#### **7850.4500 PERMIT APPLICATION REJECTION.**

The commission shall reject a permit application at the time it is submitted if the application is for a facility to be located on a prohibited site or within a prohibited route or if the applicant fails to address in the application why no feasible and prudent alternative exists for sites or routes that may be authorized in such a situation.

**Statutory Authority:** MS s 116C.66; 216E.16

**History:** 27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19

**Posted:** September 18, 2009

#### **7850.4600 PERMIT CONDITIONS.**

Subpart 1. **Generally.** The commission shall impose in any site permit for a large electric power generating plant or route permit for a high voltage transmission line such conditions as the commission deems appropriate and are supported by the record.

Subp. 2. **HVTL permits.** When the commission issues a permit for a route for a high voltage transmission line, the commission shall specify the design, route, right-of-way preparation, and facility construction and operation it deems necessary. The commission may impose a condition in the permit requiring the permittee to construct a high voltage transmission line that is capable of expansion in transmission capacity through multiple circuiting or design modifications.

**Statutory Authority:** MS s 116C.66; 216E.16

**History:** 27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19

**Posted:** September 18, 2009

#### **7850.4700 DELAY IN ROUTE OR SITE CONSTRUCTION.**

If construction and improvement of a route or site have not commenced four years after the permit has been issued by the commission, the ~~commission permit shall be suspended the permit.~~ If at that time, or at a time subsequent, the permittee decides to construct the proposed large electric power generating facility or high voltage transmission line, the permittee shall certify to the commission that there have been no significant

changes in any material aspects of the conditions or circumstances existing when the permit was issued. The commission shall mail notice of receipt of the certification request to those persons ~~on the general list~~ who own property near the approved site or along the approved route at least ~~seven~~ ten days before the commission's consideration of the matter, and the same notice to those persons on the project contact list if such a list exists. If the commission determines that there are no significant changes, it shall reinstate the permit. If the commission determines that there is a significant change, it may order a new hearing and consider the matter further, or it may require the permittee to file a new application.

**Statutory Authority:** MS s 116C.66; 216E.16

**History:** 27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19

**Posted:** September 18, 2009

## **7850.4800 MINOR ALTERATION IN GENERATING PLANT OR TRANSMISSION LINE.**

Subpart 1. **Applicability.** No ~~person~~ permittee may make a minor alteration in a large electric power generating plant or high voltage transmission line without approval from the commission, unless the action is exempt from review under part 7850.1500. A minor alteration is a change in, or location of, a large electric power generating plant or high voltage transmission line that does not result in significant changes in the human or environmental impact of the facility. The requirements of this part apply to those facilities that have been permitted by the PUC Commission and to those facilities that were not permitted by the PUC Commission but meet the definition of a large electric power generating plant or high voltage transmission line under applicable law. For those large electric power generating plants or high voltage transmission lines for which no permit has been issued by the PUC Commission this part applies to minor alterations in the facility as it exists on February 18, 2003.

Subp. 2. **Application.** A ~~person~~ permittee seeking authorization to make a minor alteration in a large electric power generating plant or high voltage transmission line shall apply to the commission. The application shall be in writing and shall describe the alteration in the large electric power generating plant or high voltage transmission line to be made and the explanation why the alteration is minor. The applicant shall file its proposal on all landowners reasonably likely to be impacted by the alteration. The commission shall mail notice of receipt of the application to those persons on the ~~general list provided by the applicant and to those persons on the project contact list if such a list exists.~~ The commission shall provide at least a ten-day period for interested persons to submit comments on the application ~~or to request that the matter be brought to the commission for consideration.~~

Subp. 3. **Commission decision.** The commission shall promptly ~~within ten days~~ after close of the public comment period whether to authorize the minor alteration, ~~bring the matter to the commission for consideration,~~ or determine that the alteration is not minor and requires a full permitting decision. The commission may authorize the minor alteration but impose reasonable conditions on the approval. The commission shall notify the applicant in writing of the commission's decision and send a copy of the decision to any person who requested notification or filed comments on the application.

Subp. 4. **Local review.** For those large electric power generating plants or high voltage transmission lines for which no permit has been issued by the PUC Commission, the owner or operator of such unpermitted facilities may elect to seek approval of a minor alteration from the local unit of government if the facility qualifies for local review under Minnesota Statutes, section 216E.05.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

## **7850.4900 AMENDMENT OF PERMIT CONDITIONS.**

Subpart 1. **Authority.** The commission may amend any of the conditions in a site permit for a large electric power generating plant or in a route permit for a high voltage transmission line issued by the PUC Commission upon its own motion or upon the request of any person.

Subp. 2. **Process.** The person requesting an amendment of a condition in a site permit or a route permit shall submit an application to the commission in writing describing the amendment sought and the reasons for the amendment. The commission shall mail notice of receipt of the application to those persons potentially impacted by the change in permit condition on the general list and to those persons on the project list if such a list exists. The commission shall provide at least a ten-day period for interested persons

to submit comments on the application or to request that the matter be brought to the commission for consideration.

Subp. 3. **Decision.** The commission shall promptly decide ~~within ten days~~ after close of the public comment period whether to approve the amendment request ~~or to bring the matter to the commission for consideration~~. The commission shall notify the applicant in writing of the commission's decision and send a copy of the decision to any person who requested notification or filed comments on the application.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

#### **7850.4925. COMPLAINT PROCEDURES.**

**Subp. 1. Filing.** A person in a dispute with a permittee over permit conditions may file a complaint with the permittee or the Commission. The complaint must include the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address if available. It must include the date of the complaint, the tract or parcel number affected, and the facts giving rise to the dispute, including the permit condition at issue.

**Subp. 2. Permittee complaint handling.** The permittee shall report all complaints filed under subpart 1 to the commission in the following manner:

A. by the following business day, any substantial complaint must be reported to the commission. A substantial complaint is a complaint that, if substantiated, would require a permit amendment.

B. by the 15th of each month, the permittee shall file with the commission a report containing a summary of all complaints received during the preceding month and the status of each complaint. If no complaints were received, the permittee must include a statement to that effect in its monthly report filed with the commission.

C. the permittee shall continue filing monthly reports from the time the permit is issued until twelve months after the Notice of Project Completion. Thereafter, the permittee shall notify the Commission of any complaint within fourteen days of receiving the complaint.

**Subp. 3. Commission complaint handling.** Complaints filed with the commission must be referred to the permittee for response and resolution.

**Subp. 4. Unresolved complaints.** Commission staff shall conduct an evaluation of unresolved complaints that includes notification to the permittee for response. Each party to the dispute must file a written summary describing the party's position of the dispute. The summary must be filed within 15 days of the commission's request for the filing.

#### **7850.4950 COMPLIANCE FILING.**

**Subp. 1. Plan and profile.** Within 60 days of the issuance of a site or a route permit, the applicant must file a preliminary design plan for the project. The plan must include a profile of the project, including details on the location of the project, the location of the right-of-way showing its compliance with the route permit, and schemata and drawings showing the right-of-way preparation, construction, clean-up, and restoration for the project.

**Subp. 2. Comments.** The commission shall request comments on the filing. Initial comments must

be filed within 20 days of the filing. Reply comments must be filed within 10 days of the expiration of the initial comment period.

**Subp. 3. Commission decision.** The commission must promptly notify the permittee of whether the plan and profile is consistent with the permit conditions for the project. The commission delegates to its executive secretary the authority to make the determination and notify the permittee. Any subsequent changes to the plan and profile made by the permittee must be filed with the commission.

#### **7850.5000 PERMIT TRANSFER.**

Subpart 1. **Application.** A permittee holding a large electric power generating plant site permit or a high voltage transmission line route permit may request the PUC Commission to transfer its permit. The permittee shall provide the name of the existing permittee, the name and description of the entity to which the permit is to be transferred, the reasons for the transfer, a description of the facilities affected, and the proposed effective date of the transfer. The person to whom the permit is to be transferred shall provide the PUC Commission with such information as the PUC Commission shall require to determine whether the new permittee can comply with the conditions of the permit. The commission shall mail notice of receipt of the application to those persons on the ~~general~~ project list at least seven days in advance of the commission's consideration of the matter. The commission shall provide the same notice to persons on the project contact list if such a list exists. A permittee must inform the commission of any ownership changes within 10 days of the change.

Subp. 2. **Approval of transfer.** The commission shall approve the transfer if the commission determines that the new permittee will comply with the conditions of the permit. The commission, in approving the transfer of a permit, may impose reasonable additional conditions in the permit as part of the approval. The commission may decide to hold a public meeting to provide the public with an opportunity to comment on the request for the transfer prior to making a decision.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

#### **7850.5100 PERMIT REVOCATION OR SUSPENSION.**

Subpart 1. **Initiation of action to revoke or suspend.** The commission may initiate action to consider revocation or suspension of a permit on its own motion or upon the request of any person who has made a prima facie showing by affidavit and documentation that a violation of the act, parts 7850.1000 to 7850.5600, or the permit has occurred.

Subp. 2. **Hearing.** If the commission initiates action to consider revocation or suspension of a permit, the commission shall provide the permittee with an opportunity ~~for a contested case hearing conducted by an administrative law judge from the Office of Administrative Hearings~~ to provide written comment and to appear at a commission meeting where the matter will be decided.

Subp. 3. **Finding of violation.** If the commission finds that a violation of the act, parts 7850.1000 to 7850.5600, or the permit has occurred, it may revoke or suspend the permit, require the utility to undertake corrective or ameliorative measures as a condition to avoid revocation or suspension, or require corrective measures and suspend the permit. In determining the appropriate sanction, the commission shall consider the following:

- A. whether the violation will result in any significant additional adverse environmental effects;

- B. whether the results of the violation can be corrected or ameliorated; and
- C. whether a suspension or revocation of a permit or certificate will impair the utility's electrical power system reliability.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

#### **7850.5200 EMERGENCY PERMIT.**

Subpart 1. **Application for emergency permit.** Any utility whose electric power system requires the immediate construction of a large electric power generating plant or high voltage transmission line due to a major unforeseen event may apply to the commission for an emergency permit. The application must contain the following information:

- A. a description of the proposed large electric power generating plant or high voltage transmission line;
- B. an explanation of the major unforeseen event causing the emergency situation;
- C. a discussion of the anticipated impacts on the electric system if the proposed facility is not approved within 195 days;
- D. a copy of the written notification to the Public Utilities Commission of the major unforeseen event and the need for immediate construction; and
- E. as much of the information required under part 7850.1900 as the utility has available, except that the applicant is not required to propose alternative sites or routes to its recommended site or route. If the applicant has rejected alternative sites or routes, however, the applicant shall identify in the application the rejected sites or routes and an explanation of the reasons for rejecting them.

Subp. 2. **Public hearing.** The ~~PUC~~ commission shall hold a public hearing on the application for an emergency permit. The hearing must be held within 90 days after the application is submitted. The hearing must be held in accordance with part 7850.3800.

Subp. 3. **Final decision.** The commission shall make a final decision on an emergency permit within 195 days after the commission's acceptance of the application. The ~~board~~ commission shall grant the emergency permit if it finds the following:

- A. a demonstrable emergency exists;
- B. the emergency requires immediate construction;
- C. adherence to the procedures and time schedules specified in Minnesota Statutes, section 216E.03, would jeopardize the utility's electric power system or the utility's ability to meet the electric needs of its customers in an orderly and timely manner;
- D. the utility will implement mitigating measures to minimize the human and environmental impacts of the facility; and
- E. the utility will carry out the project in an expeditious manner consistent with the emergency.

Subp. 4. **Permit conditions.** The commission may impose reasonable conditions in an emergency

permit.

Subp. 5. **Permit fee.** The applicant for an emergency permit shall pay the same fee as would be required for a regular permit for the same project.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

## **7850.5300 LOCAL REVIEW OF PROPOSED FACILITIES.**

Subpart 1. **Local review.** An applicant who seeks a site or route permit for one of the projects identified in subpart 2 has the option of applying to those local units of government that have jurisdiction over the site or route for approval to build the project. If local approval is granted, a site or route permit is not required from the commission. If the applicant files an application with the PUC Commission, the applicant shall be deemed to have waived its right to seek local approval of the project.

Subp. 2. **Eligible projects.** An applicant may seek approval from a local unit of government to construct the following projects:

- A. a large electric power generating plant with a capacity of less than 80 megawatts;
- B. a large electric power generating plant of any size that burns natural gas and is intended to be a peaking plant;
- C. a high voltage transmission line of between 100 and 200 kilovolts;
- D. a substation with a voltage designed for and capable of operation at a nominal voltage of 100 kilovolts or more;
- E. a high voltage transmission line service extension to a single customer between 200 and 300 kilovolts and less than ten miles in length; and
- F. a high voltage transmission line rerouting to serve the demand of a single customer when at least 80 percent of the rerouted line will be located on property owned or controlled by the customer or the owner of the transmission line.

Subp. 3. **Notice to PUC Commission.** Within ten days of submission of an application to a local unit of government for approval of an eligible project, the applicant shall notify the commission in writing that the applicant has elected to seek local approval of the proposed project. ~~Within the same ten-day period, the applicant shall mail notice to those persons on the general notification list that a permit has been applied for from the local unit of government for the project and shall provide a description of the project and the name of a person with the local unit of government to contact for more information.~~

Subp. 4. **Referral to PUC Commission.** A local unit of government with jurisdiction over a project identified in this section to whom applicant has applied for approval to build the project may request the PUC to assume jurisdiction and make a decision on a site or route permit. A local unit of government shall file the request with the commission within 60 days after an application for the project has been filed with any one local unit of government. If one of the local units of government with jurisdiction over the project requests the commission to assume jurisdiction, jurisdiction over the project transfers to the commission and the applicant shall file under the applicable provisions of parts 7850.1000 to 7850.5600 for a permit from the commission.

Subp. 5. **Environmental review.** A local unit of government that maintains jurisdiction over a qualifying project shall prepare an environmental assessment on the project. The local unit of government

shall afford the public an opportunity to participate in the development of the scope of the environmental assessment before it is prepared. Upon completion of the environmental assessment, the local unit of government shall publish notice in the EQB Monitor that the environmental assessment is available for review, how a copy of the document may be reviewed, that the public may comment on the document, and the procedure for submitting comments to the local unit of government. The local unit of government shall provide a copy of the environmental assessment to the PUC Commission upon completion of the document. The local unit of government shall not make a final decision on the permit until at least ten days after the notice appears in the EQB Monitor. If more than one local unit of government has jurisdiction over a project, and the local units of government cannot agree on which unit will prepare the environmental assessment, any local unit of government or the applicant may request the commission to select the appropriate local unit of government to be the responsible governmental unit to conduct an environmental review of the project.

Subp. 6. **No local authority.** In the event a local unit of government that might otherwise have jurisdiction over a proposed large electric power generating plant or high voltage transmission line determines that it has no ordinances or other provisions for reviewing and authorizing the construction of such project or has no capability of preparing an environmental assessment on the project, the local unit of government shall refer the matter to the PUC Commission for review.

Subp. 7. **Matters excluded.** When the ~~Public Utilities~~ Commission has issued a Certificate of Need for a large electric power generating plant or high voltage transmission line or placed a high voltage transmission line on the certified HVTL list maintained by the commission, the local unit of government shall not address questions of need, including size, type, and timing; questions of alternative system configurations; or questions of voltage.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

#### **7850.5400 ANNUAL PUBLIC HEARING.**

Subpart 1. **Annual public hearing.** The commission shall hold an annual public hearing in November or December in St. Paul in order to advise the public of matters relating to the siting of large electric power generating plants and routing of high voltage transmission lines. ~~The meeting must be conducted by the PUC staff.~~ At the meeting, the PUC Commission shall advise the public of the permits issued by the PUC Commission in the past year. The PUC Commission shall invite representatives of other state agencies to attend the meeting and be available to answer questions by the public. An audio recording of the hearing must be maintained unless the commission or the administrative law judge determines that a court reporter is appropriate.

Subp. 2. **Notice.** The PUC Commission shall provide at least ten days but no more than 45 days notice of the annual hearing by mailing notice to those persons who have requested notice and by publication in the EQB Monitor. The notice must be accompanied by a tentative agenda for the hearing.

Subp. 3. **Report.** The staff shall prepare a report of the annual hearing within 60 days after the hearing and submit it to the commission. No action on the report is required.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*



#### **7850.5500 ANNUAL ASSESSMENT ON UTILITIES.**

For purposes of determining the annual assessment on a utility pursuant to the act, each utility shall, on or before July 1 of each year, submit to the commission a report of its retail kilowatt-hour sales in the state and its gross revenue from kilowatt-hour sales in the state for the preceding calendar or utility reporting year. Upon receipt of these reports, the commission shall bill each utility as specified in the act.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

**Posted:** *September 18, 2009*

#### **7850.5600 PROGRAM ADVISORY TASK FORCE.**

The commission may appoint a program advisory task force to provide advice and recommendations concerning development, revision, and enforcement of any rule or program initiated under the act or parts 7850.1000 to 7850.5600. The commission shall provide guidance to the program advisory task force in the form of a charge and through specific requests. The program advisory task force must be composed of as many members as may be designated by the commission and its membership must be solicited on a statewide basis. The program advisory task force and its chair must be appointed for a one-year term.

**Statutory Authority:** *MS s 116C.66; 216E.16*

**History:** *27 SR 1295; L 2005 c 97 art 3 s 19*

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