

E-mail text sent 4/7/2016 to Brian M. Hunker with HDR, Inc.

Brian,

Thank you for following up with us regarding these MBS sites. We also appreciate your patience for our response due to change in staff. Please note that the DNR provided an early coordination letter dated August 8, 2014 that included a discussion on MBS sites within the project area. The DNR stated that impacts to lands of high conservation value lands should be avoided. MBS Sites of Moderate Biodiversity Significance means that the site contains rare species, moderately disturbed native plant communities, and/or landscapes that have strong potential for recovery of native plant communities and characteristic ecological processes (http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/mcbs/biodiversity_guidelines.html). Because of this, the DNR does not encourage activities that may result in negative impacts to these communities. Activities that include ROW clearing and ground disturbance have a high potential for the introduction or spread of invasive species. They also can disrupt local wildlife interactions or affect local population dynamics. Alternative options which go towards avoidance of or minimizing impacts to these or their surrounding communities (which can provide a buffer from impacts in some cases) are highly encouraged.

This letter does bring attention to the MBS site located in T106-R14-S17 + 18. This particular site is the one located north of the moderate site in the pdf you provided (high ranked section is visible at the top of the figure). As this "moderate" site is part of a larger biodiversity complex, any impacts that could affect the "moderate" – rated site could impact adjacent sites as well. Salem 25, Rochester 31, Rochester 22, and Rochester 16,21 sites also contain forest types with conservation status ranks of S2 (imperiled) and S3 (vulnerable). You mentioned that you have access to NHIS records. For any rare feature identified, a one-mile radius for potential impacts should be considered.

It is important to note that surveys for these locations were completed in 1994. Field notes are difficult to locate as our recording process has changed since then. Our site knowledge and MBS site rankings are based off of observations made during that time and under those survey protocols and stand as our current rankings

In considering impacts from the alt. routes under consideration. The DNR recommends that you also look at routes that minimize tree clearing – particularly if that clearing creates a break in a contiguous habitat track routes that utilize existing corridors and avoid "cross country" routing or greenfield routes and routes that avoid/minimize water or wetland crossings.

The DNR is currently reviewing the PUC application for a route permit and will be providing comment through that process. We will carry these, and additional comments, into that review process. Any alternative that is brought forward for further evaluation should include a discussion on potential impacts to natural resources and measure that would be taken to avoid or minimize those impacts.

Lastly, please contact Jamie Schrenzel for future assistance on this project.

Thank you,

Becky

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