From: Collins, Melissa (DNR) <Melissa.Collins@state.mn.us>
Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 2026 9:55 AM
To: Froberg, Todd (DNR) <todd.froberg@state.mn.us>; Bump, Samantha (DNR) <Samantha.Bump@state.mn.us>
Cc: Tebo, Ryan (DNR) <ryan.tebo@state.mn.us>; Plank, Catherine (DNR) <Catherine.Plank@state.mn.us>
Subject: Re: Gopher to Badger Link - Potential comment

Hi Todd,
Thank you so much for passing this along. We knew a project was coming, but since they had not filed official documents yet we were not aware of a comment period on route alternatives. Given the quick deadline, I'm probably going to send some broader comments but request further coordination with DNR. I will definitely call out the WMAs. If you have additional thoughts or info about flight paths/bird impacts that we should include, please send them my way. They are also passing in close proximity to several calcareous fens, which will require extensive coordination.

Thanks,
Melissa

From: Froberg, Todd (DNR) <todd.froberg@state.mn.us>
Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 2026 9:19 AM
To: Collins, Melissa (DNR) <Melissa.Collins@state.mn.us>
Cc: Tebo, Ryan (DNR) <ryan.tebo@state.mn.us>
Subject: Gopher to Badger Link - Potential comment

Hi Melissa,

I was told by Brandon Schad and Gretchen Miller that I should get in contact with you about the potential for agency review and comment on a proposed industrial power line that goes through the Rochester work area, and specifically along a portion of a boundary on one of our WMAs.

I have received several calls and emails from members of the public and neighboring properties to this particular WMA; I have shared some of those concerns below. The neighbors are expecting us to provide comment. I'm not sure how this process works for official DNR comment so hoping you can provide some guidance.

Here is the link for more information. Looks like the comment period is open until Feb. 16, so a short window.

Home - Gopher to Badger Link

Thanks,

Todd

Dear Public Land Manager,

As we prepare for another season of wildlife management and habitat work a new concern is threatening the Driftless area. The largest transmission line ever to be built in the upper midwest is being proposed (and will be built unless there is serious intervention). A 765kv line, originating in Rochester MN and ending north of Madison Wisconsin will cut through Olmstead, Mower, Fillmore and Houston Counties- crossing the Upper Mississippi Wildlife Refuge near critical migratory bird habitat at Genoa, and continuing through Vernon and Crawford into Dane county Wisconsin.

This massive transmission line will require more than doubling the Right of Way and will have 200+ foot tall towers (more than twice the current pole height). On these poles, 20-25x the amount of power will be placed making this the largest transmission line ever to be built in Minnesota or Wisconsin.

There are many reasons to oppose such a project, but a few are as follows-

1. *This is a passthrough project. Power does not benefit the local area*
2. *ROW expansion and eminent domain will tear apart farms*

3. Constant noise will disturb wildlife, livestock and people- at levels recognized by the World Health Organization to cause chronic disease

4. Electromagnetic Radiation Fields will extend beyond the right of way, bisecting wildlife corridors

5. Crossing at the Mississippi River will greatly impact the refuge

6. The overall character of the driftless region as a sanctuary of high biodiversity will be marred, and the door opened for further development along this proposed industrial energy corridor

This project is called the Maribell transmission line, and is part of a larger portfolio proposed by MISO (the grid operator for the central US).

While it seems daunting, this is not a done deal and this project can altered. As of 2/7/2026, Dairyland Power and Xcel Energy have jointly filed for a Certificate of Need with the Public Utilities Commission. During this time, there will be opportunity for public comment and "Scoping" meetings will occur to determine what will be addressed during environmental impact statements.

I greatly encourage public land managers to participate in this process- early participation has the best chance of minimizing harm. There are options that can solve the potentially destructive outcomes of this project, but public pressure will be needed

Please don't hesitate to get in touch. I can answer questions about this project and attempt to direct you how to make comments. The Public Utility Commission needs to hear from land managers who are stewards of this ecosystem.

Sincerely,

Kyle Johnson

Brownsville MN

[redacted]

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www.DiversityLandworks.com

[redacted]

Hello Ryan,

I am emailing in hopes you can help in a conservation matter I am working on.

As you may be aware, Dairyland and Excel Energy are proposing a new GIANT transmission line called Gopher to Badger Link. They have 2 routes proposed and one directly involves DNR land and Silver Creek Reservoir. The process is currently in the planning stages and community comments are being accepted. A summary of the project proposal can be found here.

https://www.gophertobadgerlink.com/process/routing-process.html#interactive-map

The L segment traverses both the Haverhill Wildlife Management Area and the Rochester State Game Refuge. It would also traverse land that is clearly wetlands. Additionally, we know that this area has had confirmed and successful eagle nesting and is a significant regional bird migration route.

Finally, the WMA has native prairie restoration areas that may fall directly under the lines - critical habitat for butterflies, pollinators and native fauna, not to mention there would likely be some 200-300 hundred year old oak trees that would be cut down in the old growth forest area.

We believe that the Bald Eagle Protection Act, the MN Wetland Act, the Migratory Bird Act, and the MN Environmental Protection Act would all fully apply in stopping this route selection for the project.

We also understand that a DNR license would be required for a permit to allow the transmission line to run here. We believe that the DNR would be highly motivated to join us in a letter opposing the selection of the L segment as the designated route. We ask that you would let us know if you or someone from the DNR would join us in submitting an official letter of opposition. Again we believe this falls squarely in the DNR mandate to preserve and protect critical habits.

I would be happy to talk this over further by phone [redacted], in person, or email! Please connect with me however is convenient to you Ryan. Thank you so much for your time!

Jill Danielsen

Todd Froberg

Rochester Area Wildlife Supervisor

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