

Xcel Energy Pigs Eye Lake Rebuild Project

Why is the project needed?

The existing 115 kV transmission network near Pigs Eye Lake Regional Park was built in the 1960s and has reached the end of its expected operational life. Xcel Energy plans to rebuild the infrastructure to meet continued electric reliability in the region.

The project will modernize and enhance the performance of the transmission lines, ultimately improving reliability and minimizing the risk of outages. The project will entail separating the existing two circuit transmission lines onto their own structures to ensure redundancy and reliability for customers in the area. Additionally, in recent years, national electric codes have been updated, and infrastructure that was built in previous decades may not meet current requirements. New and rebuilt lines will be upgraded to meet these new code requirements.

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Where is the location of the project?

The project is near Pigs Eye Lake, a Mississippi River backwater area located a few miles downstream of St. Paul, Minnesota. The site is situated within western portion of St. Paul's Battle Creek neighborhood. The project location is defined by the area by Hwy 10 and Pigs Eye Park in St. Paul.

What does the project entail?

Overall, the project aims to modernize and enhance the performance of the transmission lines, ultimately improving reliability and minimizing the risk of outages.

What is the project schedule?

Construction is slated to begin in August 2025 with a targeted completion date set for March 2026. Due to the nature and location of the transmission lines near Pigs Eye Lake, Xcel Energy will rebuild the infrastructure in the winter when access is easier due to the frozen conditions. Additionally, construction during the winter months does not impact seasonal bird migration.

What is the difference between the existing poles and the poles to be installed?

This project will replace the existing double circuit wood h-frame structures with single circuit single-pole steel structures. The structures will have similar footprints and fit within the boundaries of the current easements.

What will happen to the existing poles?

After the installation of the new structures and relocation of the lines, the existing wooden utility poles will be cut below the water level. The poles will be trimmed to a height low enough to ensure unimpeded boat navigation on the lake. Leaving the bottom portion of the poles in the lakebed is a deliberate measure aimed at minimizing disturbance to the potentially contaminated soil located beneath the lakebed.

What is being done to protect historical and cultural sites within the project area?

Pigs Eye Lake is situated within an area that once served as a seasonal Mdewakanton Dakota village, overseen today by the U.S. National Park Service's Mississippi National River &

Recreation Area. The historic Mdewakanton Village of Kaposia occupied the northern end of Pigs Eye Lake until 1837, when it was relocated across the Mississippi River to what is now South St. Paul. While none of the previously identified historic sites are situated along the lake's shoreline or within the project area, Xcel Energy is actively engaged in close collaboration with state and tribal authorities to meticulously identify and protect any cultural sites within the vicinity.

Will the construction impact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project?

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, in collaboration with Ramsey County, Minnesota, is undertaking a project aimed at enhancing and restoring environmental habitat within Pigs Eye Lake. The project is scheduled for completion in 2024, prior to the commencement of Xcel Energy's construction, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' project is an independent endeavor. Xcel Energy is actively consulting with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers throughout the planning process to ensure that the construction activities do not adversely impact the newly developed habitat features.

What precautions are being taken to protect to protect wetland and wildlife habitat?

To safeguard the species in the area, Xcel Energy is implementing several precautions to protect species in the area. By implementing these measures, the project aims to minimize its impact on the local ecosystem and protect the species inhabiting the area.

1. Environmental Impact Assessment: Working with state agencies, Xcel Energy is conducting thorough environmental impact assessments to identify vulnerable species and habitats in the project area.
2. Habitat Preservation: Measures will be implemented to protect critical habitats and nesting areas of endangered or threatened species. Of note is the osprey nest in the southwest corner of the lake.
3. Seasonal Restrictions: Construction activities will be conducted in the late fall and winter. This timing will enable easier access to the project during frozen conditions and minimize disruption during sensitive periods such as breeding seasons or migration periods for birds and other wildlife.
4. Pollution Control: Xcel Energy will implement strict erosion control protocols to prevent contamination of water bodies and habitats.
5. Habitat Restoration: Xcel Energy will replant the areas where trees are removed with native plants to help protect the lake and park area.
6. Monitoring and Compliance: Regular monitoring of construction activities to ensure compliance with environmental regulations and to promptly address any issues that arise.

What precautions are being taken to protect nesting birds?

The project area is directly adjacent to one of the largest nesting sites for colonial water birds within the state. Several species of herons, egrets, and cormorants' nest in the rookery as well as identified osprey nests. Xcel Energy's construction schedule is planned to occur when the birds have migrated limiting danger to the birds. Tree removal will be limited to areas within the project's right-of-way near the structures and not in the vicinity of the rookery.

What precautions are being taken to identify endangered or threatened wildlife species?

To identify federally- and state-listed protected species, Xcel Energy is collaborating closely with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Three federally listed species have been identified in the area: the endangered rusty patched bumble bee (*Bombus affinis*), the threatened prairie bush clover (*Lespedeza leptostachya*), and the threatened Northern long-

eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*). Notably, none of these species are expected to be present in the area during winter construction activities.

Furthermore, at the state level, a 2018 survey indicated that all documented occurrences of the nine state-listed species (that could potentially be present) are situated outside of the Pigs Eye Lake area.

What precautions are being taken to limit exposure to contaminated soil?

Following decades of unpermitted dumping on the site has resulted in soil contamination; PFAS-contaminated soils and sediments are present at the site. Contaminants from these wastes continue to leach into soil and groundwater. Xcel Energy is working with the Minnesota Pollution Control, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the City of St. Paul to monitor soil contamination and implement a construction plan that minimizes the disturbance of contaminated soil.

Will trees be cut or removed as part of this project?

Construction will occur along the same lines as the previous wooden structures and will not impact trees outside of the right-of-way necessary for transmission line installation. However, trees will be removed if they are located within the right-of-way. Xcel Energy will replant the areas where trees are removed with native plants to help protect the lake and park area.

How will Xcel Energy access the site?

Xcel Energy will access the site via the right of way. Matting will be employed in wet areas, and construction during winter months will leverage frozen conditions. Additionally, barge transportation may be utilized to access wetland areas, contingent upon weather conditions. Helicopters may be used to transport material and equipment as needed. Due to the proximity of the St. Paul Downtown Airport and the Minneapolis–Saint Paul International Airport, Xcel Energy will coordinate with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) if helicopters are used.

What government agencies are involved in the process?

For this project, Xcel Energy is collaborating with agencies at the federal, state and local levels. These agencies include, but not limited to, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Federal Aviation Administration, Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, Minnesota Department of Natural Resource, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation and the City of St. Paul.