AGRICULTURAL IMPACT STATEMENT


DATCP File Photo

DATCP #4630

Dodge County Distribution Interconnection Project
Columbia and Dodge Counties
PSC Docket ID 137-CE-210

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

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WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Randy Romanski
Secretary
Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP)

Tim Anderson
Administrator
Division of Agricultural Resource Management (DATCP)

Author

Kirsten Biefeld
Agricultural Impact Statement Program Manager
Bureau of Land and Water Resources (DATCP)

Contributing Authors

Tim Jackson
Bureau of Land and Water Resources (DATCP)

Alex Elias
Bureau of Land and Water Resources (DATCP)

Katy Smith
Bureau of Land and Water Resources (DATCP)

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MISSION STATEMENT

Dear Reader,

Through the Agricultural Impact Statement ("AIS") program, agricultural operations have the opportunity to provide feedback, document impacts, and suggest alternative solutions when their agricultural lands are affected by an entity with the potential powers of eminent domain. The AIS program also provides affected agricultural landowners time to gather information to make well-informed decisions before a study begins. Lastly, the AIS program makes suggestions and recommendations to study initiators to promote study alternatives and management practices that would reduce potential impacts to agricultural lands and operations.

The AIS program also serves the needs of the study initiator by conducting the AIS analysis and publishing the statement within a timely manner as required by Wis. Stat. § 32.035. In addition, the AIS program provides a continuing presence throughout study development and oversight processes in order to support agricultural operations and the statewide priority to preserve prime farmland.

The Agricultural Impact Statement program and the WI Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection are honored to provide this essential state service to the agricultural landowners and operators of the state.

Thank you,

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ACRONYMS

AEA	Agricultural Enterprise Area
AIN	Agricultural Impact Notification
AIS	Agricultural Impact Statement
CPCN	Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity
CREP	Conservation Reserve and Enhancement Program
CRP	Conservation Reserve Program
DATCP	Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FP	Farmland Preservation Program
FSA	Farm Service Agency
IAM	Independent Agricultural Monitor
IEM	Independent Environmental Monitor
kV	Kilovolt
MFL	Managed Forest Law
NEV	Neutral to Earth Voltage
PSC	Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
ROW	Right-of-Way
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
WisDNR	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

TERMS

CIRCUIT	A continuous electrical path along which electricity can flow from a source, like a power plant, to where it is used, like a home. A typical transmission circuit consists of three phases, with each phase on a separate set of conductors.
CONDUCTOR	A wire composed of multiple aluminum strands wrapped around a steel core that together carry electricity. A transmission line is constructed with three conductors, one for each phase of the circuit generated by a power plant.
DOUBLE-CIRCUIT	Electric lines with two sets of three conductors, totaling six conductors on one structure. These two circuits are independent of one another.
KILOVOLT (kV)	A unit of electricity equal to 1,000 volts.
LAYDOWN YARD	Temporary equipment staging and storage areas.
SINGLE-CIRCUIT	Electric lines with one set of three conductors.
TRANSMISSION LINE	An interconnected group of lines and equipment for transporting electric energy on a high voltage power line between power plants and substations.

SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (the Department) has prepared Agricultural Impact Statement (AIS) #4630 for the Dodge County Distribution Interconnection Project in the Village of Randolph and the towns of Randolph and Columbus in Columbia County, and the towns of Fox Lake, Trenton, Westford, and the cities of Fox Lake and Beaver Dam in Dodge County, WI ("the Project") by American Transmission Company LLC and its corporate manager ATC Management, Inc (Collectively, "ATC").

The Project involves the expansion of the existing 138 Kilovolt (kV) North Randolph Substation in the town of Randolph and the construction of a new 138 kV substation (Manhattan Substation) near the city of Beaver Dam. In addition to building a new substation and expanding an existing substation, the project includes rebuilding an existing power line, constructing a new double circuit power line, making minor upgrades to four substations, and rerouting an existing power line around another substation. ATC hosts a website for the Project, which can be found here: https://www.atcllc.com/project/dodge-county-distribution-interconnection/.

ATC has proposed two route alternatives for the Project, the Proposed Route (which they refer to as the "Preferred Route") and the Alternate Route (See Figure 1). The Proposed Route has both the new 138 kV double-circuit and an existing line, the X-47 line, that for the majority is following a shared corridor that is approximately 15 miles in length. The Alternate Route includes a new double-circuit line and the existing X-47 line that for the most part, do not overlap in ROW. The double-circuit is approximately 15.5 miles, and the rebuild of X-47 is approximately 14 miles in length. Depending on the selected alternative and route components such as staging areas and substations, the projects proposes to impact between 297.3 and 311.7 acres of agricultural lands and impact up to approximately 94 agricultural landowners.

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) has authority over the Project and ATC must obtain a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) to obtain the right to proceed with the Project. Through the issuance of a CPCN, the PSC would select the project route and other project criteria ATC shall follow. On November 15, 2024, ATC submitted a CPCN application (REF # 524255) for the Project to the PSC under PSC Docket ID: 137-CE-210 and the application was determined to be complete by the PSC on December 13, 2024. At the time of this analysis, the CPCN application is awaiting a ruling from the PSC. The Department will provide the PSC with AIS #4630 as evidence to aid in determining the outcome of the project initiators' CPCN application.

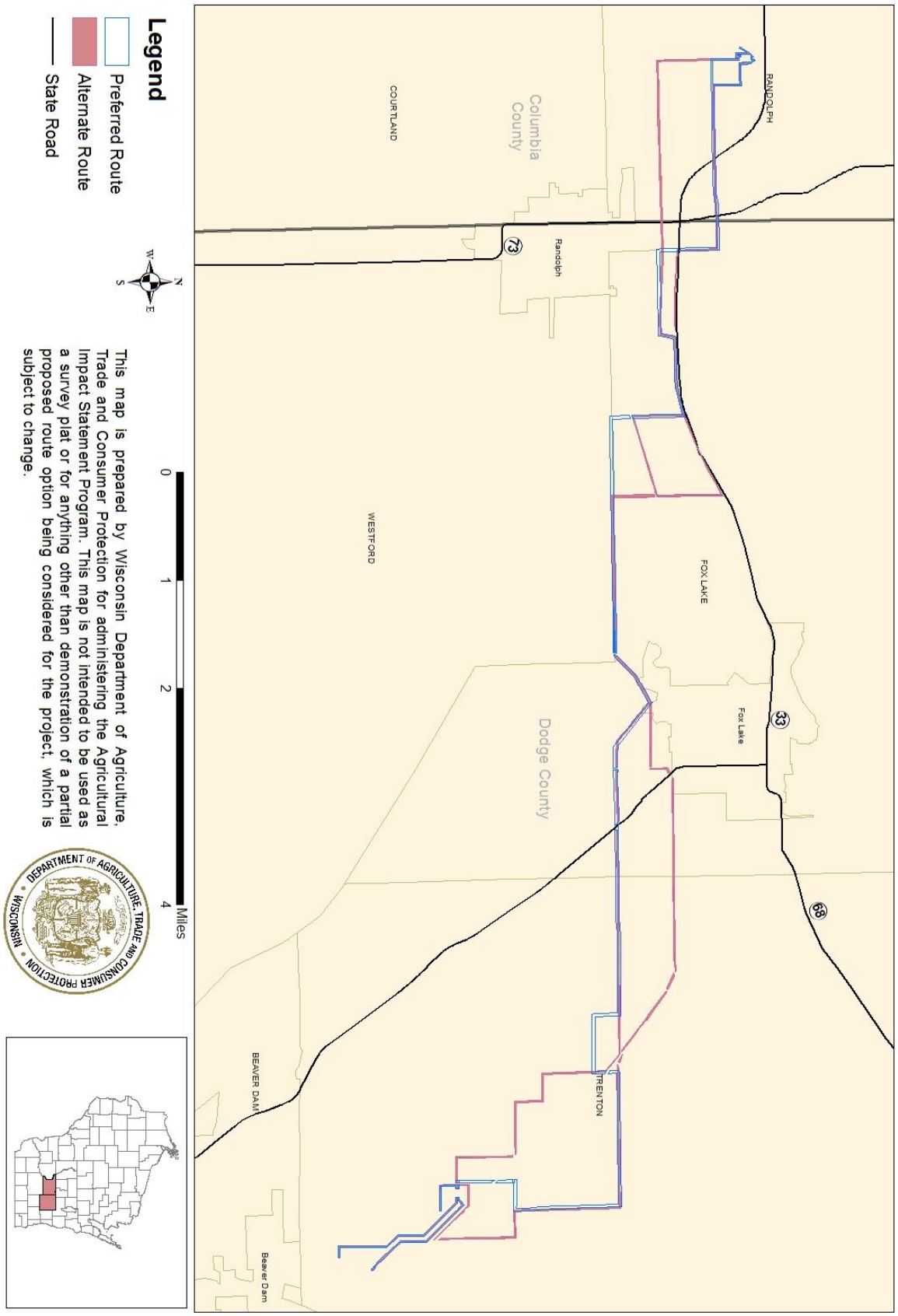
In accordance with Wis. Stat. §32.035(3), ATC has provided the Department with the necessary information and materials to conduct an AIS. The Department has also contacted the agricultural property owners and operators impacted by the alternative routes. In accordance with Wis. Stat. §32.035(4)(b), the Department has reviewed and analyzed ATC's materials and the comments obtained by the Department from the affected agricultural property owners and operators to assess

the agricultural impacts of the proposed project. Through the AIS analysis, the Department offers a set of recommendations and conclusions to the PSC, ATC and the agricultural landowners and operators to help mitigate current and future impacts on agricultural lands and agricultural operations along the selected route.

The set of recommendations are located within the AIS Recommendation Section beginning on page 8. The AIS analysis begins on page 13 with information on the project located in Section 0. Information and conclusions on the agricultural setting of Columbia and Dodge Counties and impacted areas can be found in Section 3. The agricultural impacts of the project on the impacted land, landowners and operators can be found in Section 4. Appendices for AIS #4630 contain the following information: additional project figures and tables (Appendix A), information on the appraisal and compensation process (Appendix B), a complete record of comments submitted to the Department from agricultural landowners & operators (Appendix C), a copy of Wisconsin's agricultural impact statement statute (Appendix C), various additional sources of related information for agricultural landowners and operators (Appendix D) and a copy of the Department's agricultural monitoring form for transmission line projects (Appendix E).

If ATC deviates from the proposed route segments, alternatives or the selected sites, ATC shall re-notify the Department. The Department shall review the re-notification for new potential impacts to agricultural lands and may generate an addendum to this AIS, if warranted.

Figure 1: Overview Map of the proposed Dodge County Distribution Interconnection Project, DATCP.



AGRICULTURAL IMPACT STATEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (the Department) has reviewed and analyzed the materials provided by ATC and comments from the affected agricultural property owners and operators regarding the proposed Dodge County Distribution Interconnect Project. Should the PSC approve the Project, the Department provides the following recommendations, in accordance with Wis. Stat. §32.035(4)(b), to the PSC, ATC and agricultural landowners and operators to help mitigate impacts on agricultural lands and agricultural operations.

Recommendations to the Public Service Commission

1) The Department suggests PSC consider adjusting certain sections of the Proposed Route to limit agricultural impacts to the degree possible while utilizing existing ROW to the degree possible. The Department provides a route alternative that would limit impacts to approximately 19.4 acres of agriculture respectively by requesting that instead of Proposed Route segments A10 and A11, that PSC approve the Proposed Route to continue from A9 to C28A and C28B to A12, or continue from A9 to C28A, then utilizing an existing utility ROW that crosses County Road A and Redwood Road to connect to segment A13 and continue the Proposed Route as proposed by ATC thereafter. The Department recommends that the PSC consider both of these route alterations and select one. See Section 4.3.1, "Distinct Landowner Concerns and Conclusions" for further discussion and maps related this recommendation.
2) To mitigate the potential for wasteland creation, the Department recommends that the PSC review specific landowner concerns regarding transmission structure siting in Section 4.3.1 "Distinct Landowner Concerns and Conclusions" and adjust routes accordingly to the edge of fields or existing ROW to the degree possible to minimize farmland conversion. Specifically, DATCP recommends particular moving transmission structures to the edge of parcel and/or farmland to the degree possible in particular for parcels with state ID 02404612130511000, 02701813133334001 and 02704612130422000. See Section 4.4.3 "Wastelands" for a discussion on wastelands created by transmission structures.

Recommendations to ATC

1) The Department recommends ATC follow all the additional recommended mitigation efforts described in Section 5.5.1 through Section 5.5.15 to mitigate Project impacts to or regarding: topsoil mixing, soil compaction, drainage, de-watering, irrigation, erosion, temporary access roads, fencing, weed control, aerial application, construction debris, crop rotation & dairy operations, biosecurity, construction noise, and stray voltage.

2) ATC should continue to monitor the Project ROW for soil erosion and maintain erosion control practices until there is sufficient vegetative growth in the ROW to mitigate soil erosion.

3) ATC should provide agricultural landowners and operators advanced notice of acquisition and construction schedules so agricultural activities can be adjusted accordingly.

4) ATC should provide landowners with direct phone numbers and email addresses to the Agricultural Specialist that ATC hires and to project contractors that are able to respond to a range of topics including but not limited to: environmental & agricultural impacts, land acquisition & ROW, project schedule, access limitations, compensation for release of lands from conservation programming and project complaints.

5) If there is adequate growing season for a crop to mature and be harvested after ATC has an interest in the impacted lands, but before construction along the Project corridor begins, ATC should allow the current agricultural operators to harvest a crop for that season to the extent possible or the ATC shall compensate the agricultural operators for crop damages.

6) ATC should consult with the affected agricultural landowners and operators to ensure any relocated, temporary or newly established agricultural land access points are located in areas that provide safe and efficient access to remnant agricultural properties.

7) ATC should provide appropriate compensation to all landowners with land enrolled in a conservation easement or farm program if the landowner must reimburse the administering agency for the land's removal or alteration. These conservation or farm programs could include, but are not limited to, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Reserve and Enhancement Program (CREP), Farmland Preservation Program (FP), or MFL.

8) ATC should consult the Department as soon as a route is selected affording as much time as possible prior to construction regarding the status of effective agreements within the project corridor and for information regarding required releases of land and repayment of funds for any CREP or FP agreements within the chosen project corridor.

9) ATC should provide the Dodge County Land and Water Conservation Department with selected route information affecting the Town of Westford and Trenton Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs) when available.

10) ATC is advised to consult the Columbia County Land and Water Conservation Department and the Dodge County Land and Water Conservation Department on the existence of installed SWRM conservation practices within the Project area.

11) ATC should implement training for all construction supervisors, inspectors, and crews to ensure that they understand the steps needed to protect the integrity of agricultural lands and operations during project construction and restoration.

12) To mitigate the potential for wasteland creation, the Department recommends that design practices be applied that prioritize edge of field siting for transmission structures in agricultural areas to minimize farmland conversion. See Section 4.4.3 "Wastelands" for a discussion on wastelands created by transmission structures and Section 4.3.1 "Distinct Landowner Concerns and Conclusions" for specific landowner concerns regarding transmission line siting.

Recommendations to Agricultural Landowners and Operators

1) Agricultural landowners and operators should review Wis. Stat. §182.017 (i.e. the Landowner Bill of Rights) seen in Appendix C (V) to understand their rights prior to the start of easement negotiations.

2) Landowners should review the recommended mitigation efforts described in Section 5.5.1 through Section 5.5.15 to mitigate Project impacts to or regarding: topsoil mixing, soil compaction, drainage, de-watering, irrigation, erosion, temporary access roads, fencing, weed control, aerial application, construction debris, crop rotation & dairy operations, biosecurity, construction noise, and stray voltage.

3) The Department recommends that the landowners or farm operators with a CREP or CRP agreement consult with their local FSA contact and discuss the impacts of the proposed project to determine what information is necessary to share with the project initiator in order to maintain compliance with CREP or CRP agreements, as well as to receive any necessary FSA authorizations or approvals.

4) The Department recommends that agricultural landowners work with ATC discuss agricultural practices that may be impacted by the project and provide a list of and contact information for land operators, renters or tenants that ATC may reach out to for a complete understanding of these practices.

5) Landowners with organic certification or other certifications should inform ATC of their certifications, provide documentation of certification and inform ATC of prohibited and/or limited activities and the range and type of substances that are and are not permitted according to their certifications.

6) The construction of a new transmission line is a non-conforming land use on lands subject to an effective farmland preservation agreement according to Wis. Stat. § 91.62(1)(c). Agricultural lands covered by an effective FP agreement, where a non-conforming land use is planned, are required to release the affected lands prior to the initiation of the non-conforming land use. Landowners, who own farmland subject to an effective farmland preservation agreement that is impacted by the selected project route, should contact the Department to release affected agricultural lands from an FP agreement.

7) If there are landowners with MFL agreements impacted by the project that have not been identified by ATC or the Department, these landowners should reach out to their local DNR Tax Law Forestry Specialist and discuss the implication of the route to their MFL enrolled lands and inform ATC of potential impacts.

8) Agricultural landowners have the authority under Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(d)) to allow or deny herbicide applications within the ROW they own and agricultural landowners should provide written consent or written lack of consent to ATC regarding herbicide applications.

9) Landowners with conservation easements within the ROW should consult with the conservation program provider to determine if any effects will occur due to the land's alteration or removal from the contract. If the landowner is charged a fee for removing or altering the land within the conservation easement, the landowners should contact the ATC staff member, as designated by ATC, responsible for handling compensation for release of lands from conservation programs.

10) Landowners who are aware of any SWRM cost-shared practices on their farm within the proposed Project area should consult with their County Land Conservation Department to determine 1) the compatibility of the proposed ROW easement with the existing conservation practice and 2) if any effects will occur due to alteration of a practice during construction activities.

11) Landowners concerned about potential impacts to their agricultural land should keep records of the conditions of the ROW before, during, and after construction, including field moisture conditions, historic presence/absence of ponded water prior to the start of construction for post-construction comparisons, crop yield records and photographs taken every season.

12) Landowners should inform ATC about the existence and location of drainage systems or planned drainage systems that could be affected by the Project.

13) If there are Landowners with organic certification or other certifications, they should contact ATC prior to any construction or site disturbance activities and report the range and type of substances or seed mixes and seeding rates that are and are not permitted according to their certifications, as well as any other provisions that may be impacted by Project activities.

14) Agricultural landowners and beekeepers should consider using the free online DriftWatch™ and BeeCheck™ registries, operated by FieldWatch™ to communicate areas containing specialty crops or beehives with pesticide applicators, in order to minimize the risk of accidental exposure. For more information on DriftWatch, please visit the DATCP DriftWatch website at the provided link or at https://wi.driftwatch.org/.

15) Landowners who wish to farm within the deforested area should discuss tree stump removal with ATC during the easement negotiation process.

16) Landowners should inform ATC if they use aerial planting or aerial spraying.

17) Livestock owners & operators within the Project ROW who are concerned about the noise potential for the Project should inform ATC or their representatives during the easement negotiation process.

18) Confined animal feeding operations or any operation with livestock facilities within ½-mile of the selected Project ROW should request pre- and post-transmission line energization NEV testing from their utility provider, which ATC can assist in coordinating.

19) Landowners should fully describe and discuss property improvements and agricultural operations with appraisers so the appropriate value of the affected property is established.

20) Prior to the start of construction, landowners should identify for ATC where construction activities may interfere with farm operations, farm building/facilities or farming infrastructure including but not limited to drain tiles, wells, watering systems, drainage ditches, drainage tile, culverts, fencing, farm access roads, or grain bins.

21) Affected farmland owners should inform the tenant agricultural operators if an easement has or will be obtained by the Project Initiators on the land the rent, regardless if by judicial offer or voluntary negotiation.

22) After construction is complete, landowners and ATC should monitor for drainage problems. If problems are observed that can be attributed to construction, the landowner and ATC should work together to develop a mutually agreeable solution.

AGRICULTURAL IMPACT STATEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (the Department) has prepared Agricultural Impact Statement (AIS) #4630 in accordance with Wis. Stat. §32.035 for the proposed construction of a new 345-kV electric transmission line in Columbia and Dodge Counties by American Transmission Company LLC and its corporate manager ATC Management, Inc (Collectively, "ATC").

According to Wis. Stat. §32.035, the AIS is designed to be an informational and advisory document that describes and analyzes the potential effects of a proposed project on agricultural operations and agricultural resources, but it cannot stop a project. This analysis is limited to routes submitted by the project initiator within the AIN. The Department is required to prepare an AIS when the actual or potential exercise of eminent domain powers involves an acquisition of any interest in more than five acres of land from any agricultural operation. The term agricultural operation includes all owned and rented parcels of land, buildings, equipment, livestock, and personnel used by an individual, partnership, or corporation under single management to produce agricultural commodities.

The AIS reflects the general objectives of the Department in its recognition of the importance of conserving vital agricultural resources and maintaining a healthy rural economy. The Department is not involved in determining whether or not eminent domain powers will be used or the amount of compensation to be paid for the acquisition of any property.

ATC has submitted a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) to the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) (REF # 524255) to obtain approval to construct the Project (ATC, 2024a). The PSC has assigned the Project PSC Docket ID: 137-CE-210, which can be followed within the PSC Electronic Records Filing System. The PSC will analyze the need for the project and the potential environmental and community impacts in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). In addition, the PSC will receive testimony and hold hearings to further assess the impacts of this project. Afterwards, the PSC will approve, modify, or deny ATC's proposed project. Construction on the project cannot begin before ATC receives a CPCN from the PSC, as well as permits and approvals from other regulatory entities.

As established under Wis. Stat. §32.035(4)(d), if ATC intends to actualize its powers of condemnation at any point during the project through a jurisdictional offer(s), ATC may not negotiate with an owner or make a jurisdictional offer until 30 days after the AIS has been published. If ATC deviates from the selected alternative or the selected sites, ATC shall re-notify the Department. The Department shall review the re-notification for new potential impacts to agricultural lands and may determine to generate an addendum to this AIS.

The full text of Wis. Stat. §32.035 is included in Appendix C. Additional references to statutes that govern eminent domain and condemnation processes and other sources of information are also included in Appendices B, D, and E.

1.1 Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC)

The PSC is an independent regulatory agency that regulates public electric, natural gas, water and sewer utilities in Wisconsin. Through PSC regulations, public utilities must obtain PSC approval before setting new utility rates and undertaking major construction projects, such as electric transmission lines or substations. Prior to gaining approval, PSC staff review the utilities application and prepare either an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the need, alternatives, cost, and environmental and social impacts of the proposed project.

Approval from the PSC is obtained by the issuance of a CPCN or a Certificate of Authority (CA), both of which grant the utility the right to proceed with the project as described within the CPCN or CA. Issuance of a CPCN or CA is determined by a three-member PSC Commission. PSC Commissioners are full-time staff, appointed by the Governor, tasked with reviewing the project case file (documents, reports, testimony) and ultimately deciding whether to approve, modify, or deny a project. If the PSC determines that the project is needed and feasible, the utility must adhere to the PSC ruling and project alternatives/route selected by the Commission. PSC approval is not constrained by the utilities' "preferred" or "alternate" route designations mentioned within this AIS and the Commission may choose any combination of route segments described in the application.

ATC submitted an application for a CPCN for the Project to the PSC on November 15, 2024 under PSC Docket ID: 137-CE-210 (ATC, 2024). DATCP expects the PSC to utilize the information contained within this AIS, the EA, the CPCN application, and testimony from the public to determine the degree of impacts each route alternative will have on the agricultural landscape and economy, prior to issuing a ruling.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1. Project Summary

The applicant is proposing to construct the Dodge County Distribution Interconnection Project ("the Project"). ATC has provided the Department with an agricultural impact notification (AIN) and requested spatial materials for analysis for the proposed project (DATCP, 2024a). The AIN, requested materials from ATC, and ATC's CPCN application to the PSC, serve as the main reference

documents for the Project. The proposed project route alternatives presented here do not represent the final project route, which requires PSC approval.

As the acquisition of agricultural lands or property rights are a pre-requirement to conduct an AIS, this analysis will only analyze and evaluate the aspects of the Project that acquire ROW's from agricultural lands. The proposed Project, depending on the selected route, will impact approximately between 297.3 and 311.7 acres of agricultural lands amongst all potential agricultural impacts from permanent and temporary easements, such as transmission line easements that are proposed to be retired, used for transmission line ROW, work areas, laydown yards, substations, off-ROW access roads and more. In regards to permanent easements only, ATC has determined that there is a total of 291.62 acres of impacts to the Primary Route and 277.79 acres to the alternate route (David Hastings, Atwell on behalf of ATC, Personal Communications, May 2025). A full list of the impacted acres for each agricultural landowner is provided Appendix A Table 1, and a list of landowners with an existing transmission easement that is proposed to be retired is provided in Appendix A, Table 2.

2.2. Project Design and Purpose

According to the CPCN (REF # 524255), ATC has offered the PSC two different route alternatives (Proposed and Alternate) (See Figure 1 and Appendix A, Figure 1). The Proposed Route (referred to by ATC as the "Preferred Route") has both the new 138 kV double-circuit and X-47 following a shared corridor for the majority of the length that is approximately 15 miles. The Alternate Route has the double-circuit and X-47 following different corridors for the most part. The double-circuit is approximately 15.5 miles, and the rebuild of X-47 is approximately 14 miles in length.

The Project involves the expansion of the existing 138 Kilovolt (kV) North Randolph Substation in the town of Randolph and the construction of a new 138 kV substation near the city of Beaver Dam, which will be known as the Manhattan Substation (DATCP, 2024a; ATC, 2024). A new double-circuit 138 kV line will be constructed from North Randolph Substation to Manhattan Substation. The existing 138 kV line (X-47) will be rebuilt from North Randolph Substation to the new Manhattan Substation, where X-47 will be segmented to North Beaver Dam Substation. The Project also includes rerouting of the existing transmission lines around the North Randolph substation and minor modifications at the substation remote ends at the North Beaver Dam, Green Lake, Staff and Academy substations. In addition, two new 138 kV double-circuit lines will be constructed from Manhattan Substation to two substations belonging to a customer of ATC. One of these double-circuit lines is 1.4 miles while the other is 1.2 miles in length (DATCP, 2024a; ATC, 2024).

2.2.1. Project Location

The Project involves the expansion of the existing 138 Kilovolt (kV) North Randolph Substation, located in the town of Randolph, Columbia County, and the construction of a new 138 kV Manhattan Substation, located in the town of Trenton, just northwest of the city of Beaver Dam, Dodge County, Wisconsin. New double-circuit 138 kV transmission lines will connect the substations and the existing 138 kV transmission line (X-47) from the North Randolph Substation to the new Manhattan Substation will be updated.

The endpoints for both proposed routes are the North Randolph and Manhattan Substations and both options route through the town of Randolph and the village of Randolph in Columbia County, and the towns of Fox Lake, Trenton, and Westford, the City of Fox Lake and the Village of Randolph in Dodge County. See Table 1 below for a list of municipalities and counties impacted by the Project.

Table 1: The municipalities impacted by the Dodge County Distribution Interconnection Project.

County	Municipality
Columbia	Town of Randolph
	Village of Randolph
	Town of Columbus
Dodge	Town of Fox Lake
	Town of Trenton
	Town of Westford
	City of Fox Lake
	City of Beaver Dam

2.2.2. Preferred Project System with Proposed Route Description

According to the AIN submitted to the Department (DATCP, 2024a) and the CPCN (REF#: 524255) submitted to the PSC under Docket ID 137-CE-210 (ATC, 2024), the Proposed Route will be constructed with both single-circuit and double-circuit 138 kV weathering steel poles, primarily following the existing X-47 alignment.

- The lines will begin at the North Randolph Substation and run south for 0.6 miles to the end of Hutchinson Road.
- Then turn east for 1.5 miles, crossing Highway 33 and Highway 73.

- Then turn south for 0.5 miles, crossing Highway 33.
- Then turn east for 1.8 miles, paralleling Highway 33.
- Then turn south for 0.7 miles, crossing County Road P.
- Then turn east for 2.2 miles, crossing County Road C, paralleling West Fox Road.
- Then jog around the north end of Beaver Dam Lake for 1.0 mile.
- Then turn east for 2.5 miles, crossing Spring Road, replacing connection into Fox Lake Substation, crossing Highway 33, paralleling Ireland Road, crossing Yew Road, until hitting a quarry.
- Then jog for 1 mile around the south side of the quarry, crossing County Road A.
- Then turn east for 1.3 miles, crossing County Road A, and paralleling Redwood Rd.
- Then turn south, then west, then south for 1.8 miles crossing Breezy Point Road and County Road A until the intersection of Kohlhoff Road and County Road W.
- Then turn east 0.1 miles, crossing County Road W, and entering the new Manhattan Substation.

The Proposed Route utilizes mostly common ROW between the North Randolph and Manhattan Substations, with significant portions of the new double-circuit line being in an adjacent or shared ROW with the existing X-47 circuit (ATC, 2024). ATC anticipates building the new double-circuit first, so that the greater Beaver Dam area and the new load addition can be served by two new sources while the existing X-47 is being rebuilt (ATC, 2024).

The Alternate Route involves rebuilding the existing single-circuit X-47 as a double-circuit line. ATC cites that the new single-circuit 138 kV line from Academy is to be constructed first, as the long construction-related outage of X-47 would be deemed unacceptable by ATC otherwise as it would be serving the greater Beaver Dam area and the new load addition from a single 138kV line from the Academy substation (ATC, 2024). Additionally, ATC notes that the Alternate Route will require more ROW and more public and environmental impacts, which are all additional risks to achieve the targeted in-service date.

2.2.3. Alternative Route Description

According to the AIN submitted to the Department (DATCP, 2024a) and the CPCN (REF#: 524255) submitted to the PSC under Docket ID 137-CE-210 (ATC, 2024), the Alternate Route will be constructed with both single-circuit and double-circuit kV weathering steel poles.

- The single-circuit line begins at the North Randolph Substation and runs south, then east, then south for 0.6 miles, crossing Friesland Road and paralleling Hutchinson Road.

- Then turn east for 1.5 miles, crossing Highway 33 and Highway 73.
- Then turn south for 0.4 miles, crossing Highway 33.
- Then turn east for 2.4 miles, paralleling Highway 33.
- Then turn south for 1.0 mile, crossing County Road P.
- Then turn east for 1.5 miles, crossing County Road C, paralleling West Fox Road.
- Then route around the north end of Beaver Dam Lake for 1.0 mile.
- Then turn east for 2.9 miles, crossing Spring Road, replacing connection into Fox Lake Substation, crossing Highway 33, paralleling Ireland Road, crossing Yew Road, until hitting County Road A.
- Then turn south, then east, then south for 1.3 miles.
- Then turn east for 0.5 miles, paralleling Breezy Point Road.
- Then turn south for 0.6 miles, crossing over Breezy Point Road and Kohlhoff Road.
- Then turn east 0.3 miles, crossing County Road W, and entering the new Manhattan Substation.
- The double-circuit line begins at the North Randolph Substation and runs south for 0.9 miles, crossing Friesland Road.
- Then turn east for 3.4 miles, crossing Highway 73, crossing Pleasant Road, and paralleling Highway 33.
- Then turn south for 0.5 miles.
- Then turn east for 0.8 miles, paralleling County Road P.
- Then turn south for 0.4 miles, crossing County Road P.
- Then turn east for 1.5 miles, crossing County Road C, paralleling West Fox Road.
- Then turn northeast, then east for 1.2 miles, crossing Spring Road.
- Then turn north for 0.2 miles, paralleling Spring Road.
- Then turn east for 1.9 miles, crossing Highway 33, and paralleling Point Road.
- Then turn southeast for 0.9 miles, crossing Point Road and Yew Road.
- Then turn east for 1.5 miles, crossing County Road A and Redwood Road, then paralleling Redwood Road.

- Then turn south for 1.0 mile. Then turn east for 0.3 miles, paralleling Breezy Point Road, and crossing Jersey Road.
- Then turn south for 0.7 miles, crossing Breezy Point Road, paralleling Jersey Road, and crossing County Road A.
- Then turn northwest for 0.4 miles, paralleling County Road A.
- Then turn east, then south, then east 0.3 miles, paralleling County Road W, and entering the new Manhattan Substation.

2.2.4. Off-ROW Access Roads

According to the AIN and the CPCN application, preliminary off-ROW access routes have been identified in a number of locations. There are six off-ROW routes identified for the Proposed Route and seven for the Alternate Route. Preliminary routes have been identified based on a review of existing mapping and aerial photography data. A list of proposed access roads can be found in the PSC ERF docket as a series named Appendix A: Figures 4A (Proposed Route) and 4B (Alternate Route) (Docket ID: 137-CE-210).

2.2.5. Staging Areas

Laydown yards will be required throughout construction for the setup of job trailers as well as storage and staging of construction equipment and material. Preliminary locations for six laydown yards have been identified based on the construction requirements for the Project, proximity to work areas, and environmental and landowner impacts. The laydown yards were selected to minimize the amount of disturbance and preparation required to provide suitable surfaces for temporary storage and staging of construction equipment and material. For example, sites that are paved and/or have been previously graded and cleared of vegetation such as gravel pits, substations and fields are ideal locations for laydown yards. These potential yards may change, or additional sites may be identified later based on negotiations with landowners and the updated construction needs of the Project. The potential laydown yards are shown on Appendix A, Figures 4A (Proposed Route) and 4B (Alternate Route) (Docket ID: 137-CE-210).

In addition to the laydown yards, during construction temporary workspace for wire pulling/handling areas will be required along the route. These temporary workspaces are matted and are generally close to 32 feet x 300 feet in size each. There are 41 off-ROW wire pulling/stringing setups along the Proposed Route and 42 off-ROW wire pulling/stringing setups along the Alternate Route. In addition, temporary work pads are needed around each structure installation location. In some cases, portions of these work pads need to be shifted outside the ROW due to site constraints (e.g., waterways, roadways). There are ten off-ROW work pads along

the Proposed Route and 11 off-ROW work pads along the Alternate Route. There is also one area outside of the ROW for both the Preferred and Alternate Routes where grading is required. The potential laydown yards and preliminary workspaces/grading areas are shown on site maps included in Appendix A, Figures 4A (Proposed Route) and 4B (Alternate Route) (Docket ID: 137-CE-210).

2.2.6. Project Need

According to ATC's CPCN, WPL notified ATC of a new load interconnection via the Load Interconnection Request Form (LIRF) #40938-2, most recently updated on October 9, 2024. The new end-use customer facilities are to be located in the new Beaver Dam Commerce Park that is on the north side of the city of Beaver Dam. Due to the magnitude of the requested load, WPL stated in the LIRF that their distribution system is not capable of supporting the new load addition. ATC therefore studied two transmission alternatives that will add significant load serving capacity to the customer's facilities.

The size of this proposed load addition is substantial and ATC reported it will would be by far the largest load addition on the ATC transmission system outside of the proposed data center development in southeast Wisconsin (DATCP, 2024a; ATC, 2024). ATC describes that the proposed load addition will overwhelm the existing transmission facilities in the Beaver Dam area and will require additional 138 kV transmission sources to reliably serve this load. Additionally, ATC shared in the CPCN application that the end-use customer has requested to be served with a dedicated transmission interconnection substation constructed on their property within the Beaver Dam Commerce Park. The end-use customer will also build and own two load serving substations (DATCP, 2024a; ATC, 2024).

2.2.7. Existing Transmission Lines

The Proposed Route utilizes mostly common ROW between the North Randolph and Manhattan Substations, with significant portions of the new double-circuit line being in an adjacent or shared ROW with the existing X-47 circuit. The Alternate Route proposes constructing a new double-circuit 138 kV transmission line approximately 15.5 miles in length and rebuilding the existing X-47 line, which is approximately 14 miles in length (ATC, 2024).

2.2.8. Project Routing and Siting

According to ATC's CPCN, in advance of filing the Application, meetings were held with members of the boards for the towns of Fox Lake, Randolph, Trenton, and Westford and the village of Randolph and the city of Fox Lake to discuss the need for the transmission lines and the new Manhattan Substation, the Project's timeline, the routing and siting process generally, and copies of the outreach mailing were provided (ATC, 2024). ATC identified and evaluated the routes proposed

using a multi-stage routing and siting review. Once ATC defined the study area, a resource database was compiled to identify the magnitude of sensitive resources that could be impacted by the Project. ATC obtained resource data using publicly available data, aerial imagery, and data from the ATC database for various impact categories including transportation, utilities, land use and zoning, natural resources, and jurisdiction (ATC, 2024).

Within their CPCN application, ATC stated they applied the criteria set forth in Wis. Stats. § 1.12(6) Siting of Electric Transmission Facilities contained within the State Energy Policy in its route development process (ATC, 2024). The following corridors should be utilized in the following order of priority:

1) Existing utility corridors
2) Highway and railroad corridors
3) Recreational trails for underground facilities
4) New corridors

Additional information on route alternatives and ATC's analysis can be found in Section 5.1 "Routing and Siting Factors" within the Project application for a CPCN to PSC, under PSC Docket ID: 137-CE-210 (ATC, 2024).

2.2.9. Project Schedule

According to the AIN and the CPCN application, pending approval by the PSC and obtaining all state agency permits, the estimated construction for this project is approximately 18 months. Construction is expected to begin in Q1 2026 and be in-service by Q2 2027, pending agency permits and authorizations.

Table 2: The anticipated project timeline for the proposed Project, pending approval by the PSC and obtaining all state permits (DATCP, 2024a; ATC, 2024).

Project Activity	Preliminary Date
PSCW CPCN Approval and Order	12/2025
Start Land Acquisitions	12/2025
Start Construction	1/2026
Project In-Service	7/2027

2.3. Project Right-of-Way (ROW)

For the Proposed Route, the proposed transmission lines will be built on both new and existing ROW. The 15-mile single-circuit rebuild and new double-circuit lines parallel each other and predominantly require a maximum ROW width of 150 feet (DATCP, 2024a; ATC, 2024). The single-circuit rebuild will predominately run along the existing ROW, with the double-circuit requiring new ROW, overlapping slightly with the existing ROW. Where the line is adjacent to public WisDOT ROW, a portion of the 150-foot easement will overlap with public WisDOT ROW.

For the Alternate Route, the proposed transmission lines will be built on both new and existing ROW. The 14-mile single-circuit rebuild and new 15.5-mile double-circuit lines parallel each other in three locations and require a maximum ROW width of 150 feet (ATC, 2024). The single-circuit rebuild will predominantly run along the existing ROW and require an 80-foot ROW. The proposed double-circuit will require new ROW and require an 80-foot ROW. Where the line is adjacent to public WisDOT ROW, a portion of the easement will overlap with public WisDOT ROW (ATC, 2024).

Both routes will have two new 138 kV double-circuit transmission lines being built on new ROW on the customer property from the Manhattan Substation to two new customer substations. The two double-circuit lines are approximately 1.2 and 1.4 miles in length (ATC, 2024).

3. AGRICULTURAL SETTING

3.1. Farmland Preservation

Wisconsin's farmland preservation (FP) program provides local governments and landowners with tools to aid in protecting agricultural land for continued agricultural use and to promote activities that support the larger agricultural economy. Lands that are planned for farmland preservation by the county and included in a certified zoning district or located within an Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) are afforded land use protections intended to support agriculture, and are eligible for the farmland preservation tax credit.

3.1.1. Farmland Preservation Planning

Columbia County

The Department certified Columbia County's current FP plan in 2013 for a ten-year period ending in 2023 (DATCP, 2013). A two-year extension has been granted to extend the plan's expiration to the end of 2025. The criteria for land planned for FP in Columbia County includes land that is

designated as agricultural and other open space and not planned for non-agricultural development within the next 15 years in the county's comprehensive plan; areas with concentrations of prime farmland; lands currently farmed; agricultural infrastructure; uses compatible with agriculture; lands with residential density no more than one home per 35 acres; lands outside of incorporated areas except for the Village of Doylestown and lands outside of panned urban transition and infill areas (DATCP, 2013). All towns in Columbia County have lands that are planned for FP as part of the county's FP Plan.

Approximately 47 acres planned for farmland preservation in the county's FP plan are affected by the Project's Proposed Route. Approximately 54 acres planned for farmland preservation in the county's FP plan are affected by the Project's alternate route.

Dodge County

The Department certified Dodge County's current FP plan in 2021 for a ten-year period ending in 2031 (DATCP, 2021b). The criteria for land planned for FP in Dodge County includes areas identified as agriculture or conservancy in the county's comprehensive plan, and excepts many public and residential land uses in those areas (DATCP, 2021b). All towns in Dodge County have lands that are planned for FP as part of the county's FP Plan.

Approximately 308 acres planned for farmland preservation in the county's FP plan are affected by the Project's Proposed Route. Approximately 304 acres planned for farmland preservation in the county's FP plan are affected by the Project's alternate route.

3.1.2. Farmland Preservation Zoning

Establishing FP zoning strengthens farmland protections beyond what an FP plan affords. ATC has applied for a CPCN under Wis. Stat. § 196.491 from the PSC. If such certificate is issued, the project will be a permitted use in the FP zoned area under Wis. Stat. § 91.44(f). If a CPCN is not issued, the project will be subject to conditional use regulations in the FP zoned area under Wis. Stat. § 91.46(4) and must meet the requirements listed under Wis. Stat. § 91.46(4)(a)-(4)(e).

Dodge County

The towns of Fox Lake and Trenton have adopted Dodge County zoning, which includes a certified FP zoning district. The certified FP zoning district for Dodge County is the A-1 Prime Agricultural zoning district (Dodge County, 2021b). This zoning district restricts covered lands to agricultural uses and uses compatible with agriculture and is certified to be consistent with the state's FP Law, Chapter 91. Impacted agricultural parcels zoned A-1 by Dodge County would require a conditional use permit under Wis. Stat. § 91.46(4) for a transportation, communications, pipeline, electric transmission, utility or drainage use, to remain in the district.

The project initiator should consult with all applicable local zoning authorities to identify if additional restrictions apply and to ensure compliance with local zoning regulations.

The proposed routes are not anticipated to impact certified FP Zoning in Columbia County.

3.1.3. Agricultural Enterprise Areas and Farmland Preservation Agreements

AEAs are community-led efforts to establish designated areas important to Wisconsin's agricultural future. This designation highlights the importance of the area for local agriculture and further supports local farmland preservation and agricultural development goals. Designation as an AEA also enables eligible landowners to enter into FP agreements. Through an FP agreement, a landowner agrees to voluntarily restrict the use of his/her land to agriculture for a minimum of ten years (or fifteen years if signed before December 8, 2023) in exchange for eligibility for the farmland preservation tax credit. It is possible that new agreements could be enrolled between the time of this analysis and potential construction of finalized designs related to the project corridor. The Department recommends ATC consult the Department in the year preceding construction regarding the status of effective agreements within the project corridor and for information regarding required releases of land from effective farmland preservation agreements.

A review of the Project's proposed routes identified one county – Dodge County – that contains two designated AEAs which overlap with both the Project's proposed routes (DATCP 2024a; DATCP 2024b). The Town of Westford AEA has approximately 26 acres within the project's proposed routes. The Trenton AEA has approximately 131 acres within the project's proposed routes.

The construction of a new transmission line is a non-conforming land use on lands subject to an effective farmland preservation agreement within an AEA, according to Wis. Stat. § 91.62(1)(c). Agricultural lands covered by an effective FP agreement, where a non-conforming land use is planned, are required to release the affected lands prior to the initiation of the non-conforming land use. Landowners should contact the Department to release affected agricultural lands from an FP agreement. As part of the release, the Department is required to collect a conversion fee, according to Wis. Stat. § 91.66, to release lands from an FP agreement.

The Project's Proposed Route encroaches upon approximately 3.5 acres of land enrolled in an effective FP agreement, contract number 00831 recorded on July 26, 2021 as document #1312197 in the Dodge County Register of Deeds and expiring in 2036. The Project's alternate route encroaches upon approximately 4.7 acres of land enrolled in an effective FP agreement, contract number 00138 recorded as document #1179135 on May 16, 2012 in the Dodge County Register of Deeds and expiring in 2027. The Department recommends that ATC provides the Dodge County Land and Water Conservation Department with selected route information affecting the Town of Westford and Trenton Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs) when available.

Prior to 2009, owners of eligible farmland could sign 10 to 25-year FP agreements outside of AEA boundaries. There are no effective pre-2009 FP agreements located in the Project's proposed area.

3.1.4. Managed Forest Law

The MFL program is a voluntary sustainable forestry program administered by WisDNR under subch. III of ch. NR 46. In exchange for reduced property taxes, eligible landowners commit to a 25-50 year sustainable forest management plan on their privately owned woodlands. Sustainable forestry practices such as harvesting mature timber according to sound forest management practices, reforestation and afforestation of the land, are required in enrolled landowner's management plans. Potential enrollees must also show their parcel complies with size and density requirements under Wis. Stat. § 77.82(1)(a)2, which states that at least 80% of the parcel must be producing or capable of producing a minimum of 20 cubic feet of merchantable timber per acre per year. Land with buildings or improvements associated with buildings are not eligible for MFL. Exceptions such as utility ROWs are permitted such that the project and its ROW will not interfere with future or current MFL eligibility (WisDNR, 2017).

In order to analyze project impacts on MFL enrollments, the Department conducted a spatial analysis to determine total acres impacted on parcels enrolled in MFL as compared to their sizes, and therefore their MFL eligibility. This analysis indicated that no MFL enrolled land will be affected by the Project's proposed routes.

The Department recommends that all landowners review potential implication of the proposed routes to their MFL enrolled lands. Impacted landowners should visit the WisDNR Forestry Assistance Locator website www.dnr.wi.gov/fal/ to find their local DNR Tax Law Forestry Specialist and discuss the implication of the routes to their MFL enrolled lands.

3.1.5. Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement Programs (PACE)

The 2009 - 2011 State of Wisconsin budget authorized the state Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) Program under Wis. Stats. § 93.73, which is intended to provide matching funds to assist local governments and non-profits with the purchase of permanent agricultural conservation easements. The intent of the PACE program is to preserve agricultural land of significance at risk of development and to provide an additional layer of permanent protection to certified FP planned areas and designated AEAs. Post PACE acquisition, the partnering local entity and the Department co-hold the agricultural conservation easement voluntarily purchased from landowners. At the time of this analysis, the state's PACE Program is not currently funded or accepting new applications. However, the state holds 17 PACE easements.

A review of the Department's PACE Program shows the Project would not impact any state held PACE easements.

Counties and private non-governmental organization such as land trusts may also hold agricultural conservation easements. Based on a review of the National Conservation Easement Database, the

Department found no publicly held easements that would be impacted by the Project (NCED), but there may be other conservation programs impacted within the project area. The Department recommends that landowners share information with the Project Initiator about any potential conservation easements that may be impacted by the project, as well as form the conservation program involved.

3.2. Drainage Districts

Drainage districts are local governmental entities governed under Wis. Stat. Ch. 88 and organized under a county drainage board for the primary purpose of draining of lands for agricultural use (DATCP, 2021a). Landowners who benefit from drainage pay assessments to cover the cost to construct, maintain, and repairing the district's drains. According to the Department, approximately 190 active districts exist within 27 of Wisconsin's 72 counties.

A review of the Department's Drainage Program database indicates that no drainage districts will be directly impacted by the Project.

3.3. Conservation Programs

Voluntary conservation programs such as the USDA Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) are financial incentive programs to help agricultural landowners meet their conservation goals. The USDA and the Department jointly administer the CREP program in Wisconsin.

3.3.1. Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

CREP pays eligible agricultural landowners enrolled within the program to install filter strips along waterways or to return continually flooded fields to wetlands while leaving the remainder of the adjacent land in agricultural production. To be eligible for CREP payments, a recipient must have agricultural lands in crop production that are within 150 ft of a stream or water body or 1,000 ft from a grassland project area (DATCP, 2019).

CREP pays eligible agricultural landowners enrolled within the program to install filter strips along waterways or to return continually flooded fields to wetlands while leaving the remainder of the adjacent land in agricultural production. To be eligible for CREP payments, a recipient must have agricultural lands in crop production that are within 150 ft of a stream or water body or 1,000 ft from a grassland project area (DATCP, 2019).

Columbia County

A review of the Department's CREP records indicate that as of October 2024, the Project's alternate route will encroach upon one effective CREP agreement in Columbia County. Specifically, a temporary easement for stringing setup is located within a CREP site.

Dodge County

No existing CREP sites in Dodge County are affected by proposed routes for the Project.

CREP enrollment information is privileged to the USDA, Cooperators, such as the Department and the Chippewa County Land Conservation and Forest Management Department, and program participants. Construction activities for the Project may directly or indirectly increase the occurrence of storm water runoff, erosion and sedimentation on lands in the project corridor. The effective status of CREP agreements and new enrollment is subject to change between the time of this analysis and any proposed construction activity.

It is the responsibility of the landowner to maintain their CREP or CRP agreements, and they can work with the project initiator to maintain this compliance. The Department recommends that the landowners or farm operators with a CREP or CRP agreement consult with their local FSA contact and discuss the impacts of the proposed project to determine what information is necessary to share with the project initiator in order to maintain compliance with CREP or CRP agreements.

The Department advises ATC to:

- Work with landowners to identify effective CREP agreements prior to any construction or site disturbance activities.
- Coordinate with the appropriate Wisconsin CRP contact regarding effective CRP contracts within the project area and coordinate with FSA regarding impact mitigation to CREP enrolled lands and/or potential contract (CRP-1) releases within 12 months of expected construction or site disturbance activities.
- To limit situations of CRP-1 contract termination, limit site disturbance of CRP/CREP to times outside of the Primary Nesting Season (May 15th to August 1st) to the extent practicable and necessary in coordination with FSA to ensure compliance with these contracts.
- Consult with the Department as soon as a route is selected, affording as much time as possible prior to any construction or site disturbance activities, to determine the impact of the selected route on any CREP easements consult with the Department on impacts to any state agreements that may require termination and repayment of funds. If any portion of the CRP-1 contract is terminated by USDA-FSA, the corresponding area under the state CREP agreement must also be terminated. Termination of any part of a CREP agreement requires repayment of any funds issued to the landowner under the terms of the agreement.

3.3.2. Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

CRP is a land conservation program administered by the Farm Service Agency of the USDA. In exchange for a yearly rental payment, eligible agricultural landowners enrolled in the program agree to remove highly erodible land from agricultural production and plant resource-conserving

plant species such as grasses or trees that will improve environmental health and quality (USDA, 2019). Eligible agricultural landowners must possess lands with the potential for long-term improvements to water quality, prevent soil erosion or establish beneficial wildlife habitats according to the USDA Environmental Benefits Index (USDA, 2019). CRP enrollment information is privileged to the USDA and CRP program participants. The Department is therefore unable to determine if any of the impacted agricultural parcels are enrolled within the CRP program, unless landowners voluntarily share this information with the Department.

Of the twenty-seven responses to the Department's pre-construction questionnaire, two of the landowners impacted by the project included that part of their land is enrolled within CRP.

The Department advises ATC to:

- Work with landowners to identify effective CRP agreements prior to any construction or site disturbance activities.
- Coordinate with the appropriate Wisconsin CRP contact regarding effective CRP contracts within the project area and coordinate with FSA regarding impact mitigation to CREP enrolled lands and/or potential contract (CRP-1) releases within 12 months of expected construction or site disturbance activities.

3.3.3 Soil and Water Resource Management Grant Program (SWRM)

The state has a SWRM program with goals including: enhancing surface and groundwater protections, providing financial and technical assistance for locally led conservation and addressing soil and water resource concerns. Through the SWRM Program, the Department allocates funds to County Conservation Departments to facilitate landowner cost-share for installation of conservation practices. When a cost-share contract is issued under Wis. Stat. §92.14, a landowner and or grant recipient agrees to install and maintain the conservation practice according to an operation and maintenance plan.

Landowners who are aware of any SWRM cost-shared practices on their farm within the proposed Project area should consult with the County Land Conservation Department to determine 1) the compatibility of the proposed ROW easement with the existing conservation practice and 2) if any effects will occur due to alteration of a practice during construction activities.

ATC is advised to consult the applicable County Land Conservation Department on the existence of installed SWRM conservation practices within the Project area. Practices that are not maintained in accordance with the terms of the contract operation and maintenance plan may be subject to repayment of cost-shared funds. If a landowner is required to repay any cost-share funds because a construction impact resulted in a violation of the SWRM contract, the landowners should contact the ATC staff member, as designated by ATC, responsible for handling compensation for release of lands from conservation programs. The landowner should be compensated for any termination of SWRM grant contract resulting from a construction impact.

4. AGRICULTURAL IMPACTS

In addition to being a key component of Wis. Stat. §32.035, documenting the agricultural impacts of a project provides the project initiator and the agricultural landowner the opportunity to better understand the project in its own right as well as learn how the project will impact agriculture. Furthermore, the documentation of agricultural impacts by agricultural landowners and operators creates the opportunity for discussion of alternatives that may reduce impacts to agricultural lands.

In order to promote the opportunity for alternatives, the Department has used information provided by ATC for this AIS and information gathered by the Department to analyze the potential agricultural impacts of the Project in Columbia and Dodge Counties, WI. The analysis of the agricultural impacts and conclusions drawn from the analysis form the basis of the Department's recommendations within the AIS Recommendation Section above.

Agricultural operations and future productivity may be affected during construction of the Project. Impacts to agricultural lands may include but are not limited to:

- Interference with farm operation access in the ROW and adjacent areas
- Alteration of surface and subsurface drainage systems
- Impacts to grazing areas, row crops or existing fencing
- Use of prohibited substances on farms that follow organic or other sustainable management practices

Following construction, some impacts may affect agricultural operations for years. These long term impacts may include but are not limited to:

- Yield reduction due to erosion, topsoil mixing and/or compaction
- Ponding from altered surface and subsurface drainage profiles
- Inadequate restoration resulting in alteration to original land contours

ATC has cited agricultural mitigation practices that can be found in section 7.4.4 of ATC's CPCN application (REF # 524255). Pending Project approval, ATC will coordinate and consult with each agricultural landowner to obtain detailed information about each agricultural operation including but not limited to: locations of farm infrastructure, livestock and crops, locations of drainage tiles, and landowner concerns. ATC will use agricultural landowner feedback to identify potential project impacts to each agricultural operation along the Project route and to the extent practicable, implement measures to mitigate impacts (ATC, 2024). Subsequent discussion includes agricultural acquisitions and recommended additional agricultural mitigation practices beyond what ATC cites within their CPCN.

4.1. Landowner Rights

Wisconsin Statute § 182.017, also referred to as the "Landowner Bill of Rights", describes the rights of landowners and the requirements the utility must adhere to, when a transmission line will be constructed on private property. The transmission line applicant and contractor operating on the applicants behalf must comply with all aspects of this statute, which covers the range of topics described below:

- Compensation
- Infrastructure Repair
- Soil Conservation & Erosion
- Debris Removal
- Consent for Weed & Brush Control
- Landowner and Utility Liabilities
- Tree Harvesting and Tree Ownership
- Interference with television & radio reception
- Right-of-way Restriction

The applicant may request landowners to waive some rights during the negotiation process, but landowners are not required to do so. The Landowner Bill of Rights is still applicable to condemned land. The Department recommends that each affected landowner review the Landowners Bill of Rights (see Appendix D Section V) in its entirety prior to the start of easement negotiations.

4.2. Agricultural Land Acquisitions

In order to implement the proposed Project, ATC and ATC will affect approximately 297.3-311.7 acres of agricultural lands depending on the selected route, staging areas, substations and off ROW access roads. Proposed staging areas and laydown yards are described in Section 2.3.5. *Staging Areas*. ATC has determined the existing easements are insufficient to accommodate the proposed Project for reasons outlined in Section 2.3 above. Therefore, ATC plans to use a combination of temporary and permanent easements to obtain the necessary rights to construct the Project across all agricultural lands, regardless of a lands' current easement status (ATC, 2024). The Department analyzed impacts to agricultural land within the proposed new easements.

The Department attempted to contact 94 agricultural landowners impacted by the Project alternative routes (Appendix A, Table 1). The following section relays the feedback and comments received from stakeholders and agricultural landowners through the Department's efforts. The information obtained from these responses helped form the basis of the Department's analysis of agricultural impacts to specific agricultural landowners and agricultural landowners in general.

Agricultural tenant operators impacted by the Project may be eligible for a farm replacement payment from ATC in accordance with Wis. Stat. §32.19(4m)(b) if ATC exercises the powers of eminent domain through a jurisdictional offer to the agricultural property owner. A voluntary sale

between ATC and an agricultural property owner, after a jurisdictional offer has been made, would not negate the potential for a farm replacement payment.

4.3. Summary of Landowner Concerns

In order to gather additional information about the project's impact to agricultural lands and farm operations, the Department mailed surveys, referred to as "pre-construction questionnaires", to agricultural landowners within the Project ROW routes. In total, the Department mailed 94 surveys. Agricultural landowners were given the opportunity to respond by mail or call the AIS program manager to give a verbal response. A total of 31 individual agricultural operations responded, resulting in a response rate of 33%.

The Department requested agricultural landowners report the current land use within the proposed Project ROW as shown in Figure 2. The most common (67% of respondents) land use reported within the Project ROW was cropland. Crop Production is defined as an "agricultural use" under Wis. Stat. § 91.01(2) if it's conducted for the purpose of producing an income or livelihood. The next most common choice (with 17%) was Homes and Farm Buildings, with the remaining responses shown in Figure 2.

Thirteen respondents (42%) also indicated their agricultural operations possessed livestock and farm animals, including dairy cattle, replacement dairy cattle, beef cattle, steers, pigs, sheep/goats, poultry, fish and horses.

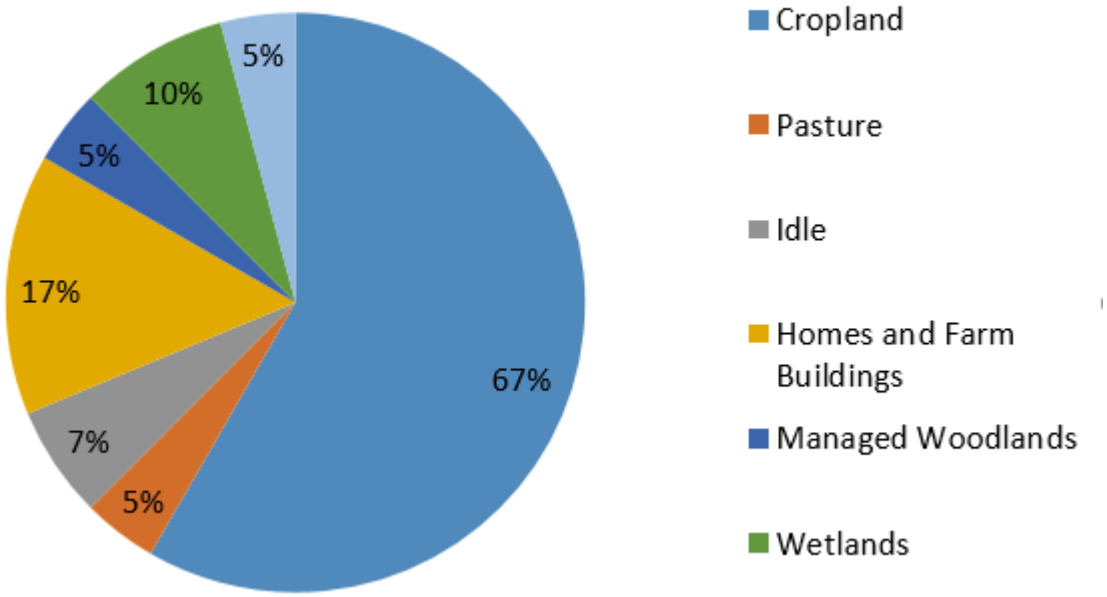


Figure 2: Land use of impacted agricultural parcels within Project ROW as reported by pre-construction questionnaire respondents.

When asked to select any of the concerns shown in Figure 3 about the Project, the primary concern identified by respondents was crop yield (71% or 22 respondents). Many respondents were also concerned about impacts related to soil productivity and health, as well as aerial spray and seeding, and erosion control (Figure 3). Other areas of concern reported by the respondents are shown in Figure 3.

Agricultural landowners were also asked to indicate if they participated in any conservation or agricultural programming including FP agreements, FP zoning, CREP, CRP and MFL. Eight respondents indicated that they have land enrolled in FP agreements and/or FP zoning, four respondents reported being enrolled in a CREP agreement, and two respondents indicated they participate in the CRP program. Respondents did not report participation in MFL or any other conservation or agricultural program.

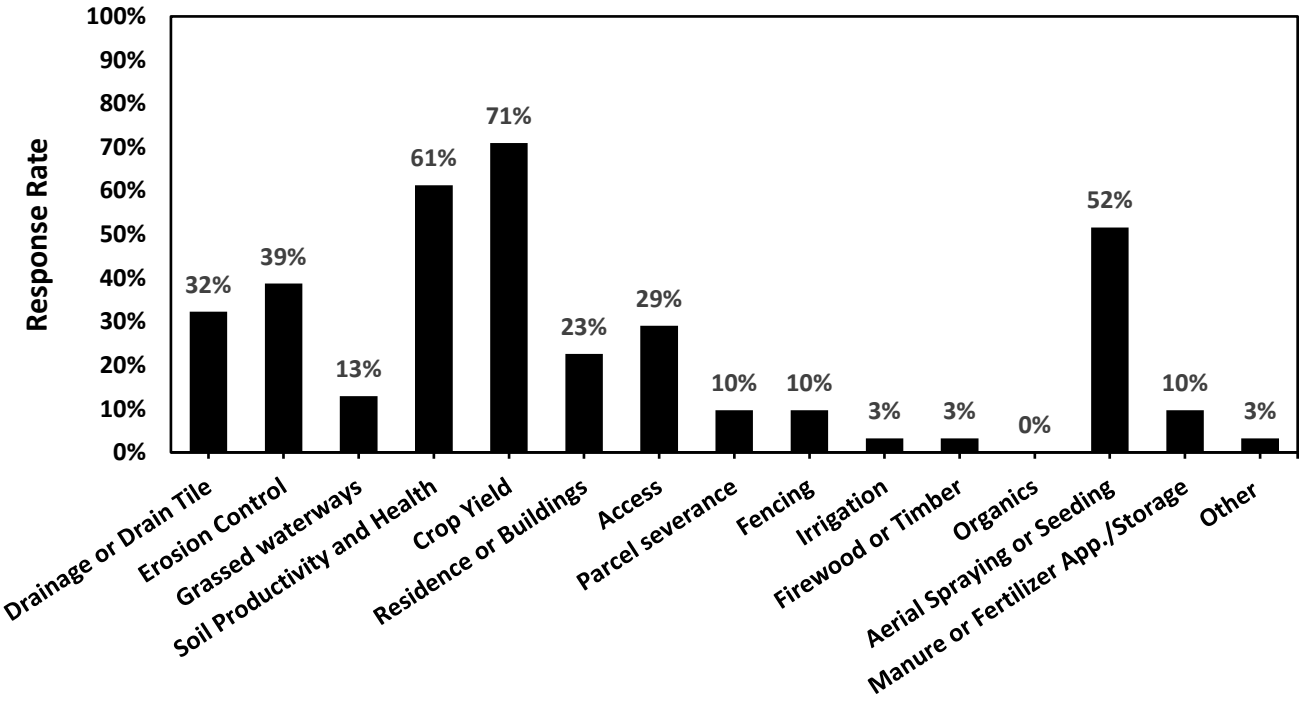


Figure 3: Landowner concerns resulting from the proposed Project.

4.3.1. Distinct Landowner Concerns and Conclusions

After review and analysis of the agricultural landowner responses obtained from the Department's pre-construction questionnaire surveys, the Department has identified the following priority areas of agricultural landowner concerns: crop yield, soil productivity and health, and transmission line structures impacting aerial spraying or seeding (Figure 3). Other concerns not noted within Figure 3 include concerns that construction would introduce new weeds or inhibit weed control on

agricultural land (brought up by two landowners) and concerns that the transmission line would be too close to residences/agricultural buildings (brought up by four landowners).

Seventy-one percent respondents (twenty-two landowners) were concerned about the Project impacting crop yield and sixty-one percent of respondents (nineteen landowners) were concerned about the Project impacting soil productivity and health. Transmission line projects can harm soil quality through top soil mixing and promote soil erosion on agricultural land by disturbing soil, removing vegetation, and increasing runoff. These disturbances often lead to greater soil erosion, reduced soil fertility, and potential sedimentation in waterways. Please refer to Section 5.5.1. "Topsoil Mixing", Section 5.5.2 "Soil Compaction" and Section 5.5.6 "Erosion and Conservation Practices" for additional information about related mitigation practices.

The third most prominent concern was for aerial spray and seeding (fifty-two percent or sixteen respondents). The ability to spray and seed fields through airplanes or drones afford farmers the ability to evenly apply applications to fields. Transmission line structures can potentially lead to an increase in weed growth and pest infestations, as well as presenting a greater danger to agricultural pilots as they must maneuver around them. See Section 5.5.10 "Aerial Application of Seeds and Sprays" for additional information about related mitigation practices.

Please refer to Section 4.6 "Drainage and Soil Health" for a comparative analysis of route impacts to agricultural soils. The Department also recommends additional mitigation efforts to reduce as much potential impact as possible, beyond what ATC cites for their standard practices. Please refer to Section 5.5 *Recommended Mitigation Efforts* for additional agricultural mitigation practices.

Over the course of the survey, the following *agricultural operations* brought forward unique concerns warranting further evaluation by the Department. While other *agricultural operations* may also have similar or different unique concerns, they were not disclosed to the Department during the survey. The Department also received responses from individuals not documented below, as they discussed general concerns already addressed in the overview in the previous section.

Claudine Lehman, Laura Morrill

Laura Morrill, acting as Power of Attorney for Claudine Lehman, describes the Lehman property as over 92 acres of cropland. Beyond general concerns of soil productivity and health, crop yield, access, and parcel severance, Morrill shares the unique concern that the Proposed Route Segment A7 would divide the two continuous parcels that Lehman owns (state ID 02701813133244001 and 02404612130511000) and may make some of the prime farmland not rentable, particularly for parcel state ID 02404612130511000 (see Figure 4).

Morrill additionally cites concern that the powerline may be too close to home and farm buildings, and request for the powerline to be rerouted to the ditches or land that is not in production. The

Department recommends that these concerns and siting suggestions are discussed with ATC during potential negotiations. The Department also recommends that ATC and the PSC site the transmission line to the edges of parcels and fields to the degree possible, in this case siting the transmission line structures to the southern edge of parcel state ID 02404612130511000 where the land is not in production.

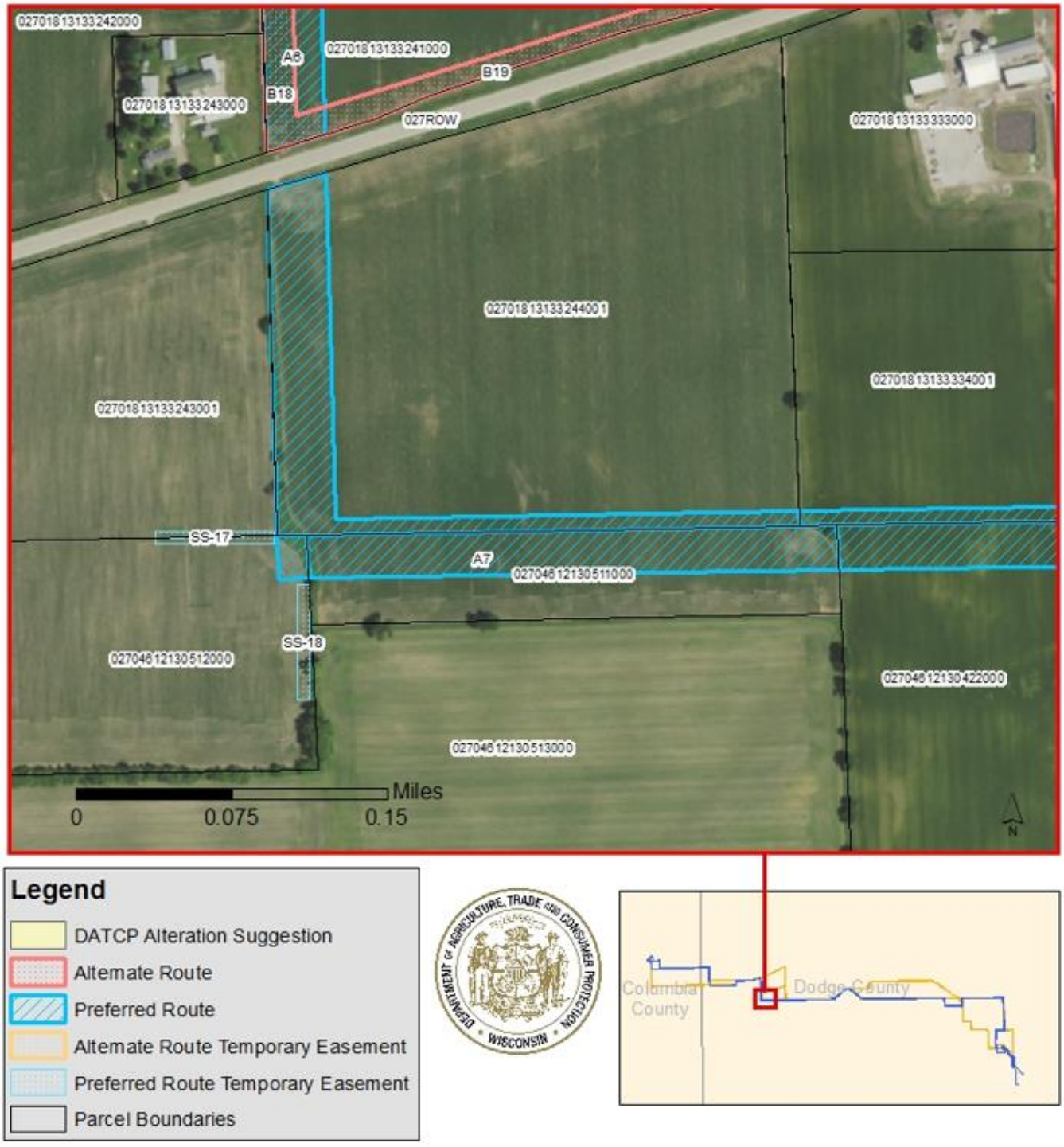


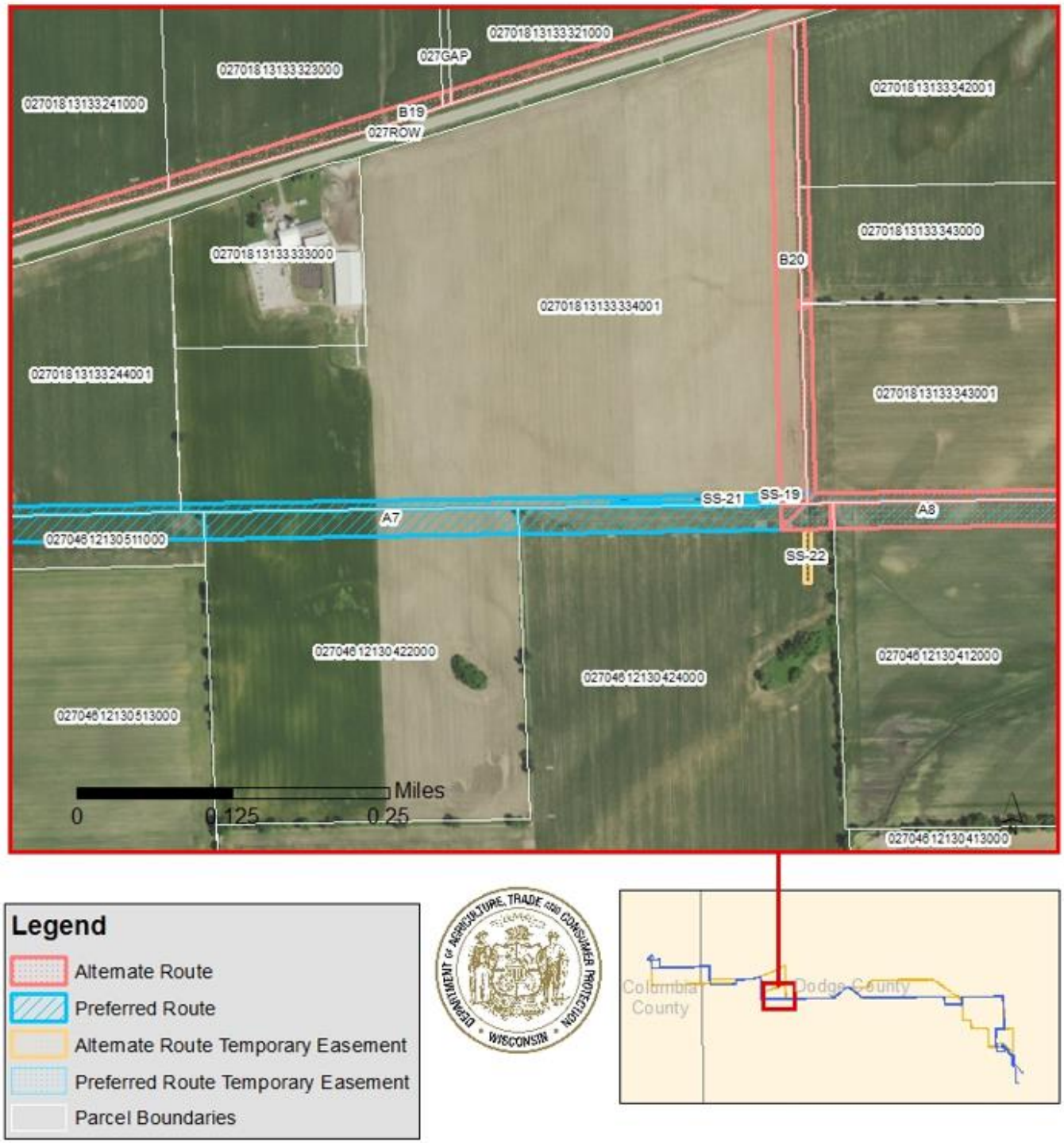
Figure 4: Map showing the Proposed Route intersecting the Lehman property, DATCP.

DeBoer Farm Inc., W11273 County Road P

The DeBoer Farm Inc. owns 350 acres of cropland, with another five acres containing home and farm buildings.

The landowner is concerned that the Proposed Route, segment A7, will sever a field and impact access to that field, as well as significantly disrupting the farming operation by: creating hazards while operating equipment that uses auto steer, impact aerial spraying manure and commercial fertilizers, and impact the use of harvesting equipment. The field in question is continuous between parcels with state ID 02701813133334001 and 02704612130422000 (see Figure 5 below). The Department recommends that ATC and the PSC site the route and transmission structures to the edges of parcels and fields to the degree possible to mitigate the potential for farmland conversion.

The landowner is additionally concerned that construction will compact prime farming soil and lead to weed proliferation on the land. The landowner also remarked that the productivity of the land will be impacted for years to come, as well as the project impacting property value. The Department recommends that the landowner review Section 4.1 or Appendix C (V) for a discussion of landowner rights related to Wisconsin State Statute 182.017(7)(d), known as the "Landowner Bill of Rights" regarding transmission lines.



This map is prepared by Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection for administering the Agricultural Impact Statement Program. This map is not intended to be used as a survey plat or for anything other than demonstration of a partial proposed route option being considered for the project, which is subject to change.

Figure 5: Map showing the Proposed Route intersecting the DeBoer Farm Inc. property, DATCP.

Dennis Shoup, N10020 State Road 73

Dennis Shoup owns 9.5 acres of cropland, 2.5 acres with homes and farmland on it, and 31 acres of wetland. Mr. Shoup notes that the proposed project would impair their ability to aerially spray their lands with pesticides or to apply cover crops aerially.

Additionally, Mr. Shoup shared that he sells trees, which he described are currently planted within the project ROW for the proposed route, impacting their revenue greatly as the project would force removal of these trees.

Additionally, Mr. Shoup has concerns that the ROW would not allow fencing to be put in, which would limit what livestock they could raise on their property.

Gerald and Karen Meeka, W11953 Hwy 33

Gerald and Karen Meeka's property consists of 2.16 acres of hay fields and pasture for their two horses, as well as a little over an acre of land for homes and farm buildings on parcel state ID 02701813133124001. The Meekas share a unique concern that construction and the permanent easement of the Project's Alternate Route, segment C25D, will reduce their pasture and hayland, as well as the transmission line structures coming very close to their house and horse barn. Specifically, the alternate route is projected to cross over top of their house and horse barn. The hayland is used to feed their horses, and loss of it would increase their feed costs. Additionally, they note that the project may impact their septic system and water drainage around their house in general. Overall, they are concerned about the destruction of land, pasture and fencing.

WILLIAM GAASTRA, W1260 COUNTY ROAD P

William Gaastra owns 80 acres of land, with 77 acres consisting of cropland. The Project's Alternate Route segment B16B and staging area SS-5 and SS6 propose to impact land on Gaastra's parcel state ID 0212245556.While being concerned about the Project potentially causing issues with drainage, erosion control, soil productivity and health, crop yield and aerial spray/seeding, his specific concern is with the potential destruction of drainage tiles within a drainage ditch just north of the proposed project area on his land being impacted by construction activities. Gaastra requests that ATC use the land across the ditch on parcel 0212280563 where the land is not actively being used for agriculture.

ZIMMERMAN LIVING TRUST DATED FEBRUARY 22 2021

Six members of the Zimmerman Living Trust reached out with concerns regarding the Project. The Zimmerman Living Trust denotes that they operate a total of 5050 acres of cropland, owning a majority of the land and renting an additional 280 acres. The Zimmerman Living Trust's primary concerns regarding the Project is its potential to negatively impact soil health of highly productive fields, erosion control, drainage structures, and aerial spraying.

Members of the trust stated that that there is already a high potential for erosion due to the soil conditions and hills in the area. Additionally, Michael Zimmerman shared in the pre-construction questionnaire that their fields already receive a lot of water runoff from neighboring fields, and any impacts to drainage structures could lead to flooded fields. Mr. Zimmerman highlighted current drainage structures and practices in place to mitigate these drainage and erosion concerns, which may be impacted by the proposed transmission line structures. In particular the landowner called out that the property has drainage tiles and a grassed strip in the proposed Project area that crosses Zimmerman Living Trust lands. The Zimmerman Living Trust additionally has future plans to incorporate irrigation systems in their fields, which may be limited by the location of transmission line structures.

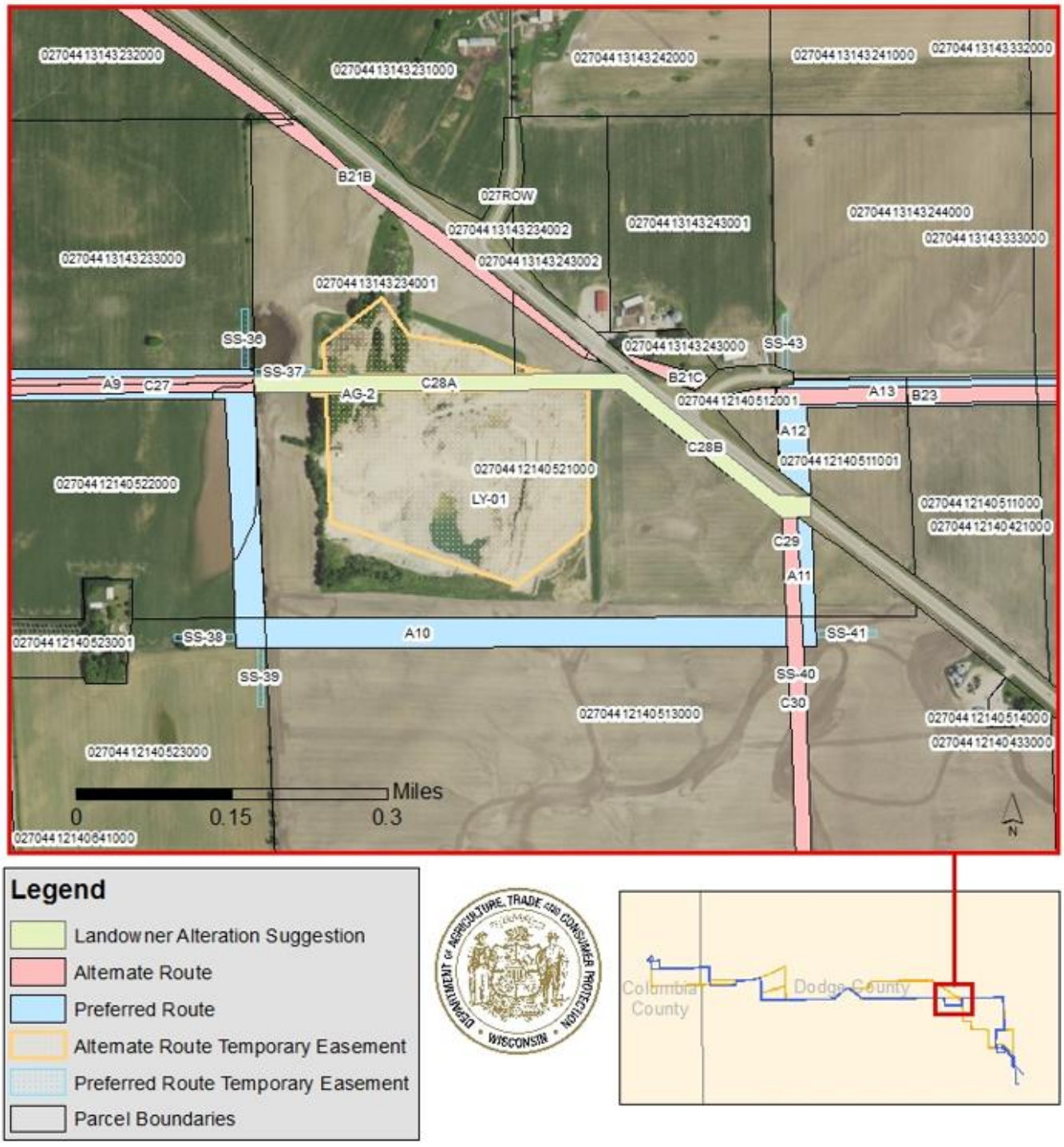
The Zimmerman Living Trust provided feedback about the routes, and due to the potential impacts to their farm operation, cited that they either preferred the Alternate Route or an alteration to the Proposed Route. Their proposed alteration would change the Proposed Route to follow Alternate route segments C28A and C28B instead of Proposed Route segments A10 and A11 along parcel 4412140513000 (see Figure 6). This route change would eliminate the need to impact approximately 16 acres of agricultural easement ROW currently proposed by segments A10 and A11 and reduce areas of potential wasteland around new transmission line poles of land in agricultural fields (see Section 4.4.3.1, "Wastelands"). In comparison, running the transmission line across segments C28A and C28B impacts approximately 2 acres of agricultural land along segment C28B as it parallels County Road A. The Department supports Zimmerman Living Trust's suggestion for a route alteration. The Department additionally recommends to the PSC a route alteration that includes part of an existing utility ROW that is not proposed within segments of either route alternative proposed by ATC.

The route alteration the Department recommends, with consideration of the Zimmerman Living Trust's suggestion, would have the Proposed Route continue from segment A9 to segments C28A of the Alternate route, then follow an existing utility ROW to connect to segment A12 and continue as originally proposed. This existing ROW corridor is one that crosses County Road A and Redwood Road, and one that ATC otherwise plans to retire. Keeping this section of the current utility ROW would eliminate the need to impact approximately 3.4 acres of agricultural land if segments C28B and A12 were utilized instead per the Zimmerman Living Trust route alteration suggestion, and overall reducing the amount of agricultural land impacted by 19.4 acres from the Proposed Route if segments A10, A11, and A12 were selected as proposed. Additionally, this route alteration would not impact a new landowner as this route alteration follows an existing utility easement. See Figure 7 for a map describing this suggested route change.

The Department reached out to ATC to determine if there were potential issues with the Department's route alteration suggestion. A representative for ATC shared the following feedback:

> *The current transmission line is running through an active quarry. It is preferred to avoid quarries whenever possible when routing a transmission line due to maintenance and operational complexities. However, ATC also has an existing easement for the single circuit line across the quarry and while not preferred, it is a permittable and constructable route option for the single circuit rebuild and does not impact a new landowner.* (Personal Communications, David Hastings, ATWELL, LLC, March 17, 2025).

ATC has provided further comment regarding siting the double circuit and X-47 line through the quarry within their feedback form which can be found in Appendix F: Project Initiator Feedback Form. The Department recommends that the PSC review and approve the Department's route alteration recommendation to reduce agricultural and environmental impacts by following existing utility ROW to the degree possible.



This map is prepared by Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection for administering the Agricultural Impact Statement Program. This map is not intended to be used as a survey plat or for anything other than demonstration of a partial proposed route option being considered for the project, which is subject to change.

Figure 6: Zimmerman Family Trust Route Alteration Suggestion for the Proposed Route.

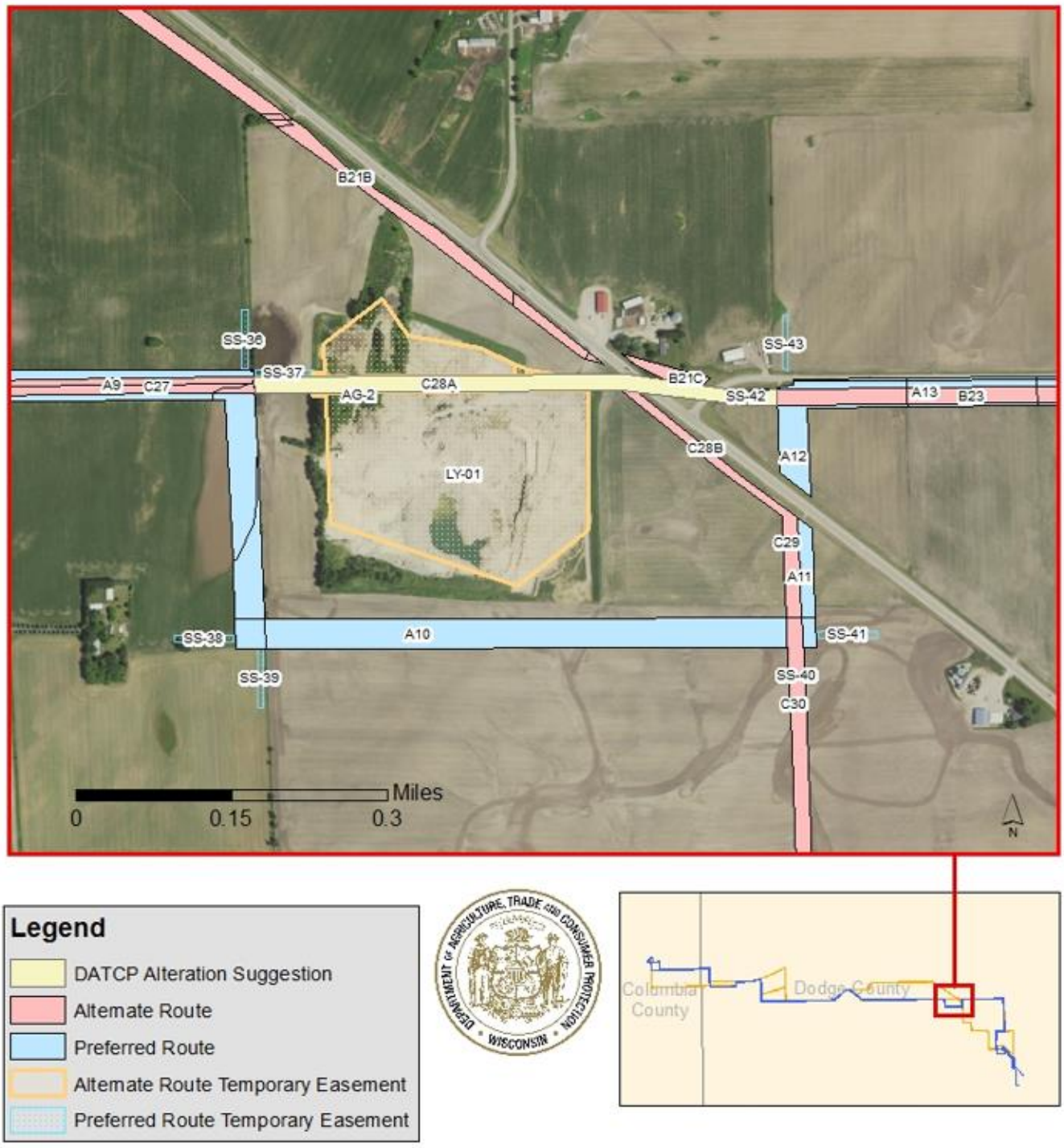


Figure 7: The Department's Alteration Suggestion for the Proposed Route.

4.4. Severance, Access and Wasteland

The temporary and permanent easements of agricultural property required to implement any of the proposed Project alternative routes could result in agricultural parcel severance, removal of existing field access points and potentially the creation of wastelands and uneconomic remnant parcels. The circumstances (i.e. loss of access, severance, wasteland etc.) surrounding the impacts to each impacted remnant agricultural parcel are unique, thus some agricultural parcels may remain economically viable, while others may not. The following analysis will document the potential for severance, loss of access and potential creation of wastelands and uneconomic remnant parcels for the agricultural parcels impacted by the proposed alternatives for the proposed Project in Columbia and Dodge Counties, WI.

4.4.1. Severance

As proposed, the Preferred and Alternate routes will temporarily and/or permanently sever agricultural parcels to accommodate the construction of the transmission line. Severance may be a physical barrier such as a temporary access road or a non-physical barrier such as permanent land use restrictions. Imposing land use restrictions as part of a transmission line easement ROW may still allow an agricultural landowner to access lands. However, barring the growth of trees or other woody plants as part of an easement may prevent the continuation of an existing agricultural land use, such as managed forestlands. Regardless of the means, severing an agricultural parcel effectively splits the existing parcel into two or more smaller parcels. Severing an agricultural parcel may also remove existing access points, create agricultural wastelands or uneconomic remnant parcels, and even divide the operation of a farm. Under Wisconsin's Eminent Domain Statute, compensation for damages resulting from severance is described in Wis. Stat. § 32.09(6).

ATC's Proposed Route consists of 26 segments, is 18.7 miles in length and comprises 307.1 acres of ROW; the Alternate route consists of 35 segments, is 29.6 miles in length and comprises 314.1 acres of ROW. The preferred and alternate routes share 12 segments. In total, 32.7% of the Proposed Route ROW area in acres is shared with existing utility and transportation corridor ROW. In total 38.6% of the alternate route ROW area in acres is shared with existing utility and transportation corridor ROW (ATC, 2024). Both the proposed preferred and alternative Project routes hold the potential to sever agricultural parcels.

Landowners are encouraged to review *Mitigation of Construction Impacts- Agricultural Lands* within Section 7.4.4 of the project CPCN application for specific details regarding mitigating or minimizing construction impacts in and around agricultural lands prior to easement negotiation and construction.

4.4.2. Access

As proposed, the Project has the potential to temporarily limit agricultural field access and limit access to agricultural operations during construction. When agricultural lands and operations lose access, even temporarily, agricultural productivity may be impacted if crops, livestock or other agricultural products cannot be tended too. Lost access may also directly result in lost income if a field cannot be planted or harvested, or if an agricultural operation as a whole is hindered.

Site-specific access limitations will be specific to temporary and permanent easements utilized for laydown yards, staging areas, off-ROW access roads and the transmission line ROW. Construction mitigation efforts for each farm will vary according to land use activities of the farm operator, type of farm operation, soil conditions, extent of construction activities on the parcel or farm operation, and feasibility to avoid areas of concern. Landowners and farm operators with concerns related to access on their farm operation should discuss them with the project initiator during easement negotiations and in subsequent communications.

4.4.3. Wasteland

Acquisitions and easements that impact farmland frequently create small remnant fields that may be difficult to access, are irregularly shaped, or are no longer able to produce the pre-existing agricultural crop (e.g timber). These small irregularly shaped remnant fields may also contain numerous obstacles, such as transmission line poles, that can make it difficult for agricultural equipment to navigate and reduce the amount of tillable acres. This in turn reduces agricultural productivity, decreases the economic viability of the land and increases the likelihood of creating undeveloped land (Wis. Stat. § 70.32(2)(a)(5)) or what is commonly referred to as wasteland as shown in Figure 8 A and B. Compensation for the reduction in the value of parcels that are small and/or irregularly shaped and the potential creation of uneconomic remnant parcels according to Wis. Stat. 32.06(3m) should be addressed in the appraisal of each affected parcel.

4.4.3.1. Wasteland

By the nature of transmission line projects, both the Preferred and Alternate routes proposed for the Project have the potential to permanently create small amounts of agricultural wastelands in the immediate area surrounding each transmission line pole (Figure 8 A and B). Five agricultural landowners and tenants (16% of respondents) reported to the Department concerns about driving farming equipment or having aerial spraying or seeding operations around transmission towers and the lost productivity and revenue that would result from altering planting and fertilizing patterns around the towers (see Section 4.3, "Summary of Landowner Concerns") which elevates the cause for concern around the creation of tower-induced wastelands. To mitigate the impacts of wasteland creation, the Department recommends that design practices be applied that prioritize edge of field siting for transmission structures in agricultural areas to minimize farmland conversion.

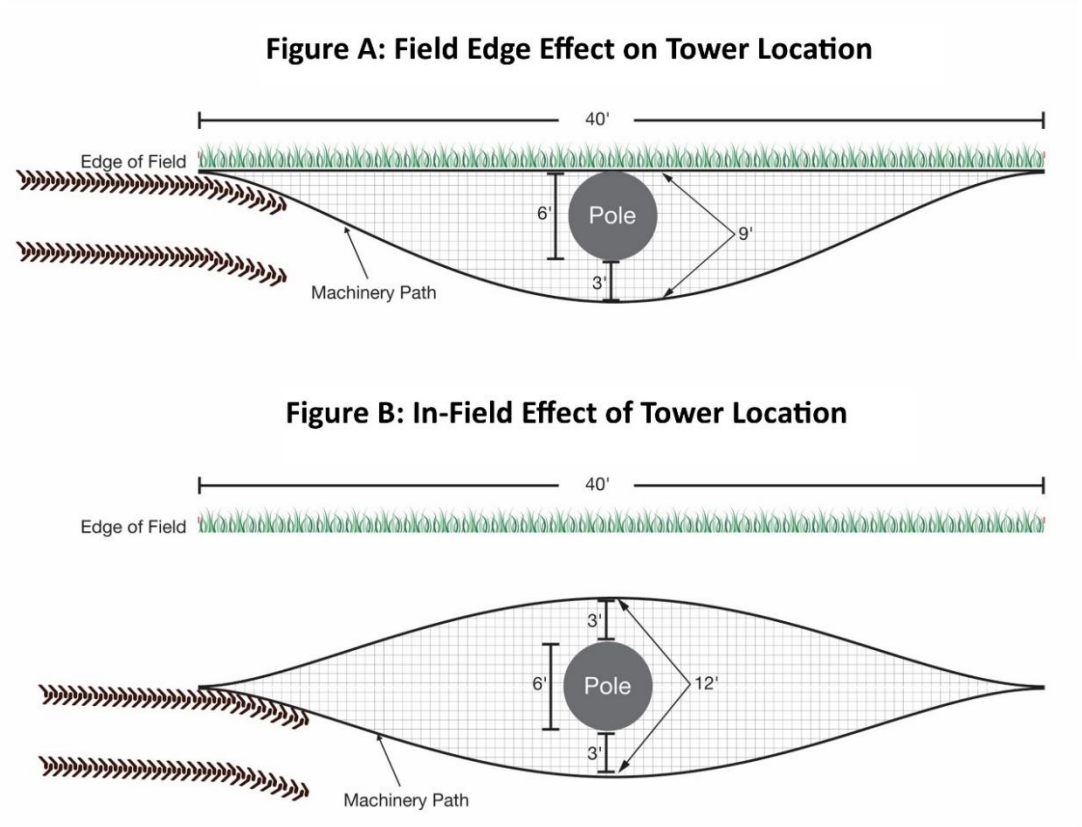


Figure 8: A and B: Examples of agricultural wastelands created by altering the pathway of agricultural machinery to navigate around transmission line towers along a field edge (Figure A) and within a field (Figure B).

4.4.3.2. Uneconomic Remnant Fields

Uneconomic remnant is defined in Wis. Stat. § 32.06(3m)(a) to mean "the property remaining after a partial taking of property, if the property remaining is of such size, shape, or condition as to be of little value or of substantially impaired economic viability. Under this provision, if the acquisition of only part of a property for the benefit of the project would leave the landowner with an uneconomic remnant, a condemnor shall offer to acquire the remnant concurrently.

Landowners or operators who are concerned about the creation of a physical or financial remnant that is negligible in value as a result of acquisition of any permanent easement affecting their farm operation should share information regarding impaired use or lost income or value in consultations or easement negotiations with the project initiator.

4.5. Prime Farmland and Soils

In spatial data provided in the AIN, the Department identified that the Project overall proposes impacts between 297.3 and 311.95 acres of agricultural lands and agricultural soils depending on the selected route. For the purposes of this analysis, impacts to prime farmland and soils measured in this analysis reflect the Project's cumulative impact and does not necessarily differentiate

between permanent or temporary impacts to an agricultural operation. The acreage identified additionally includes existing easements that the Project proposes to retire (see Appendix A, Table 2 for a table of landowners with existing transmission easements that are proposed to be retired by the project. Once any route is retired, ATC will remove the easements, poles and equipment, restoring the land to pre-existing conditions to the degree possible. In the attempt to document all potential impacts, this soils analysis will be revaluating all potential agricultural lands associated with the project and can include lands proposed to be used for transmission line ROW, work areas, laydown yards, substations, off-ROW access roads and more.

The soils impacted by the proposed Project were cataloged and analyzed by farmland classification, for each route alternative, using the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service prime farmland soils GIS layer. Farmland soil classifications impacted by the Project include prime farmland, prime farmland if drained, farmland of statewide importance or farmland of local importance (Table 3). Prime farmland is designated by the USDA according to section 622.3 of the National Soil Survey Handbook (USDA, 2017b) and is based on the ability of the land and soil to produce crops. Definitions of prime farmland, prime farmland if drained and farmlands of statewide/local importance are provided under Table 3. The soil texture of agricultural soils impacted by the Project was analyzed, in general terms, across the project ROW.

If selected, the Proposed Route transmission line ROW, work areas, laydown yards, substations, and off ROW access roads will impact up to 311.7 acres of agricultural soils. Across impacted parcels in the Proposed Route, 98.4% hold some level of Federal or State priority designation, with 1.4% classed as not prime farmland. An estimated 72.03 acres of agricultural lands within the Proposed Route ROW, work areas, laydown yards, substations, and off ROW access roads are known to be hydric or contain hydric inclusions. See Section 4.6.1 for *Drainage and Soil Health Impacts* for additional discussion of hydric soils.

If selected, the Alternate route transmission line ROW, work areas, laydown yards, substations, and off-ROW access roads will impact up to 297.3 acres of agricultural soils. Across impacted parcels in the South route, 98.4% hold some level of Federal or State priority designation, while 1.6% are classed as not prime farmland. An estimated 59.5 acres of agricultural lands within the Alternate Route ROW, transmission line ROW, work areas, laydown yards, substations, and off ROW access roads are known to be hydric or contain hydric inclusions.

Across the impacted agricultural parcels in both routes, the soils primarily consist of silt loam textured soils of various soil series. Loam and silt loam soils are medium-textured soils (Cornell, 2017) with good soil structure, possess an ideal ability to hold onto water without becoming excessively wet and are usually well suited for crop production (UW-Extension, 2005).

This soils analysis shows that both the Preferred and Alternate Routes will impact or remove prime farmland and high quality soils. Comparatively, the acreage of potential impacts to prime farmland

posed by the Preferred and Alternate Routes, as well as cumulative impacts to all farmlands with some designation of Federal and State importance across all routes are similar in nature.

Table 3: Agricultural soils, shown by Project route and farmland classification, impacted by the proposed Project in Columbia and Dodge Counties, WI.

Soil Texture	**Prime Farmland*** (acre)	**Prime Farmland if Drained**[◊] (acre)	**Farmland of Statewide Importance**[Ŧ] (acre)	**Not Prime Farmland**[ϕ] (acre)	**Total** (acre)
Preferred Route					
Complex	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.9
Loam	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Loamy Sand	9.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	9.0
Muck	0.0	0.0	13.0	0.0	13.0
Sandy Loam	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0
Silt Loam	231.2	10.9	33.0	2.0	277.0
Silty Clay Loam	0.0	10.6	0.0	0.0	10.6
				Preferred Route	311.7
Alternate Route					
Complex	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.9
Loam	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Loamy Sand	16.2	0.0	0.0	0.6	16.8
Muck	0.0	0.0	13.3	0.0	13.3
Sandy Loam	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.8	1.3
Silt Loam	213.3	9.5	28.3	2.2	253.4
Silty Clay	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Silty Clay Loam	0.0	11.6	0.0	0.0	11.6
				Alternate Route	297.3

*__Prime farmland__ is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, and may be utilized for cropland, pastureland, rangeland, forest land, or other lands excluding urban built-up land or water. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce economically sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods, including water management.

[◊]__Prime farmland if drained__, indicates that if farmland is drained it would meet prime farmland criteria.

[Ŧ]__Farmlands of statewide importance__ are set by state agency(s). Generally, these farmlands are nearly prime farmland and economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Some may produce yields high as prime farmlands under proper conditions.

[ϕ]__Not Prime farmland__, indicates farmland is neither prime farmland nor of designated importance.

4.6. Drainage and Soil Health

Maintaining proper field drainage and preserving soil health is vital to the success of an agricultural operation. If drainage is impaired, water can settle in fields and cause substantial damage, such as reducing soil health, harming or killing crops and other vegetation, concentrating mineral salts, flooding farm buildings, or causing hoof rot and other diseases that affect livestock. Soil structure, texture, organic matter and microorganisms are all important factors that influence soil health (Wolkowski and Lowery, 2008).

4.6.1. Drainage and Soil Health Impacts

Project construction activities have the potential to disrupt and/or mix soil profiles within the Project ROW as well as the surrounding area. Construction activities may affect the existing surface and subsurface (i.e. drain tile) drainage patterns of agricultural fields if drainage tile lines are broken or if the topography of grassed waterways, known water flowlines or erosion control structures are altered. Agricultural landowner feedback gathered by the Department indicates that several impacted agricultural parcels contain drainage tile that could be affected by the Project (see Section 4.3, "Summary of Landowner Concerns"). Some of agricultural soils impacted by the proposed Project are also known to be hydric or contain hydric inclusions. Hydric soils are commonly saturated, flooded or ponded for an extended period during the growing season, causing anaerobic conditions within the upper soil layer and may be associated with wetlands. It is common practice for agricultural operations to install drainage systems to mitigate the impacts of hydric soils, however drainage is most common in eastern and southern areas of the state where soils and topography preclude adequate drainage (Olson, 2020).

Prior to the start of construction, landowners should identify for the project initiator where construction activities may interfere with farm operations, farm building/facilities or farming infrastructure including but not limited to drain tiles, wells, watering systems, drainage ditches, drainage tile, culverts, amongst others.

The movement of heavy equipment through the Project ROW may also compact soil and impede drainage. UW-Extension report A3367 states that heavy equipment with axle loads that exceed 10 tons increase the risk of soil compaction into subsoil layers that cannot be removed by conventional tillage (Wolkowski and Lowery, 2008). In addition, research has also shown that construction activities can negatively impact soil properties, soil health and crop yields for up to a decade within the ROW depending on the type and severity of construction impacts (e.g equipment axle weight, use of excavation, intermixing of soil layer etc.) (Culley and DOW 1988; Shi et al., 2014).

The project initiator has discussed construction impacts related to soils and their applicable management practices in Section 5.5 of its CPCN Application (REF#: 524255) including practices

like use of composite, timber or laminated construction matting and clean up and restoration. Specific practices to minimize or mitigate construction impacts in and around agricultural lands are discussed in Section 7.4.4 of the CPCN Application (REF#: 524255). The Department recommends ATC take several mitigation efforts related to topsoil mixing, soil compaction, drainage, de-watering, and erosion control as seen in Section 5.5 "Recommended Mitigation Efforts" to mitigate impacts to drainage and soil health on agricultural lands and preserve prime farmland & soils.

5. AGRICULTURAL IMPACT MITIGATION

ATC has indicated within their CPCN application and AIN, pending Project approval, they will coordinate and consult with each agricultural landowner to obtain detailed information about each agricultural operation including but not limited to: locations of farm infrastructure, animals and crops, current farm biological security practices, locations of drainage tiles, use of off-ROW access roads, and landowner concerns. ATC will use agricultural landowner feedback to identify potential project impacts to each agricultural operation along the Project route and to the extent practicable, implement measures to mitigate impacts (DATCP, 2024a; ATC, 2024).

The Department recommends that landowners whom are concerned about potential impacts to their agricultural land should keep records of the conditions of the ROW before, during, and after construction. Records could include keeping crop yield records, beginning once the ROW is known, and photographs taken every season. These measures can help a landowner negotiate for compensation, should damages caused by Project occur.

5.1. Independent Environmental Monitor (IEM)

For large-scale utility projects, the requirement for project initiators (i.e. utilities) to hire an IEM has become a standard part of a PSC approval order. When hired, an IEM works on behalf of the PSC, WisDNR, the Department or other state regulatory agency as opposed to the utility. IEMs monitor project construction activities and report on a wide range of environmental issues such as construction impacts to wetlands, waterways, protected species, archaeological sites, state and federal properties, and erosion control. The IEM is also responsible for reporting incidents and has the power to stop project work if construction activities would violate permits, approvals, PSC order conditions, or agreement with a state regulatory agency.

While there is a significant difference in length of the two proposed routes, the routes have comparable environmental and construction impacts and have the potential to co-locate approximately 33-39% of Project ROW on existing ROW. There is the potential for potential for a range of environmental impacts to soil, wetlands, woodlands, wildlife, archeological sites, stream crossings and surface water quality. However, the Department believes the potential magnitude of

environmental impacts do not constitute the need for an IEM. The PSC does not recommend an IEM within the EA either (Adam Ingwell, Personal Communication, April 2025).

5.2. Independent Agricultural Monitor (IAM)

When a project affects a significant amount of agricultural land an IAM may also need to be hired. IAMs monitor project construction activities and report on a wide range of agricultural issues including but not limited to construction impacts to soil health, soil erosion, crop damage, agricultural operations, irrigation and impacts to surface and subsurface drainage. Similar to an IEM, an IAM works on behalf of the PSC, WisDNR, the Department or other state regulatory agency as opposed to the utility. IAMs should also verify the project initiator is complying with any agricultural best management practices and agricultural conditions in the PSC order and any environmentally relevant construction documents approved by the PSC. While the duties of an IAM and IEM may sound similar, the IAM specializes in agricultural impacts and the IAM does not hold the power to stop the project.

The proposed Project offers two route alternatives comparable amounts of potential agricultural impacts. Agricultural impacts from the Project may include but are not limited to crop damage, soil compaction, mixing of topsoil, soil erosion, impacts to surface and subsurface drainage, impacts to irrigation systems and stray voltage. ATC plans to hire an experienced Agricultural Specialist to work with farmers in the near future and through negotiations, construct ruction and restoration. Absent an IAM, the Agricultural Specialist hired or selected by the Company will have the ability to assist impacted agricultural landowners and help mitigate the potential agricultural impacts from the Project.

Should the PSC require an IAM for the Project, the Department recommends the IAM complete the Department's standard Agricultural Monitoring Form for Transmission Line Projects (ARM-LWR-543) seen in Appendix F or equivalent. For the Department to maintain timely review of Project activities occurring on agricultural lands, the IAM should document daily observations of construction activities on agricultural land only. The IAM should send the Department an updated form weekly.

5.3. Agricultural Mitigation Measures

ATC proposes mitigation and best management practices in agricultural areas in Section 7.4 of their CPCN application narrative (REF# 5242552). Overall, ATC cites within the CPCN that they minimize agricultural impacts through their consideration during the routing and siting process, and using methods such as work pads to distribute vehicle loads to minimize compaction issues (ATC, 2024; DATCP, 2024a). ATC will work with landowners through the design process and following construction to restore agricultural lands to pre-existing conditions to the degree possible. ATC will de-compact soil, repair drain tile as necessary, and provide compensation for any loss in

productivity. ATC will also hire an Agricultural Specialist to work with farmers throughout negotiations, construction and restoration (ATC, 2024; DATCP, 2024a).

At the time of developing this AIS, ATC does not have an Agricultural Impact Mitigation plan for this Project. This Department offers the following section for best management practices and mitigation efforts that go beyond what was listed within ATC's CPCN application. The Department also recommends that ATC create an Agricultural Mitigation Plan for project-specific activities.

Prior to construction, ATC also proposes to consult with each agricultural landowner to understand their farm specific agricultural operation, including but not limited to: current agricultural practices, equipment, locations of farm infrastructure, animals and crops, current farm biological security practices, locations of drainage and irrigation structures, use of off-ROW access roads, and landowner concerns.

Subsequent discussion includes agricultural acquisitions and recommended additional agricultural mitigation practices beyond what ATC has proposed within their CPCN application narrative.

5.4. Cleanup and Restoration

In accordance with Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(c), following the completion of construction activities, ATC will restore the area to preconstruction conditions. In general, cleanup and restoration activities include the removal of construction mats, temporary clear span bridges, and any other material or debris (including stones and rocks) from the ROW. Stockpiled topsoils and subsoils removed during construction are returned, in the proper order, and graded to match the existing topography and slopes. All ruts and depressions are restored and new topsoil may be brought in where topsoil has been lost or seriously mixed with subsoils. Agricultural soils are also monitored for compaction and when required undergo decompaction efforts to return the soil structure to its original condition. In areas where crops are not present--such as roadsides, pastures, old fields or upland woods--native seed mixes (or other appropriate seed mixes approved by the landowner) may be sown.

Under Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(c), if drainage tiles, fencing or other agricultural features are damaged during construction, ATC is responsible to repair and/or replace the damage feature. ATC is also responsible to pay for any crop damages caused by construction or maintenance of the transmission line. ATC will work with landowners to compensate for crop damages, compaction, and potential future crop loss caused by Project work. Yield losses would be identified and agreed to in a Damage Report supplied by the landowner once construction commences (DATCP, 2024a).

ATC plans to use the USDA Custom Rate Guide as a guideline for crop damage payments and confirm yields via the National Agricultural Statistics Service web site. ATC plans to measure crop damages and impacted areas with the contractor using GPS measurements on impacted land. ATC

notes that settling compaction claims will depend on if the farmer repairs compaction or if ATC's construction crew repairs the compaction. The ATC Agricultural Specialist will assist and coordinate with agricultural landowners to settle damage claims (DATCP, 2024a).

The Department recommends that ATC continue to monitor the ROW for soil erosion and maintain erosion control practices until there is sufficient vegetative growth in the ROW to mitigate soil erosion. Only after restoration activities are complete and vegetation has re-established within the ROW, should temporary restoration erosion control devices, not designed to be left in place, be removed.

5.5. Recommended Mitigation Efforts

5.5.1. Topsoil Mixing

Agricultural topsoil is an invaluable resource that should be preserved. Excavation activities required to create the structural foundations for electric transmission line poles have the potential to mix highly productive topsoil with underlying less productive and potentially rocky subsoils. Deep rutting also has the potential to intermix topsoil. If intermixing of topsoil occurs, the resulting soils are generally known to be less productive and in-turn reduce the agricultural productivity of the impacted area. When excavation is needed, ATC is required by Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(c) to segregate and stockpile topsoil from subsoil. As stated within their CPCN, ATC will store the topsoil and subsoil separately and provide topsoil replacement as appropriate (ATC 2024).

The Department recommends that ATC take the following additional steps to prevent the mixing of topsoil with subsoil layers within the Project ROW:

1) Do not spread mixed soils or segregated subsoils over cropland, pastures or other agricultural fields.
2) Prevent and monitor for erosion to keep topsoil segregated and within the ROW.
3) The Project Initiators should apply the mitigation techniques outlined in Section 5.5.2 "Soil Compaction".
4) If rutting occurs, allow sufficient time for the soil to dry before repairing the ruts.
5) If topsoil mixing occurs, remove the intermixed soil and replace with new topsoil.

5.5.2. Soil Compaction

Equipment used to construct electric transmission lines has the potential to compact soil and reduce soil productivity on the farmland traversed during construction. Soil compaction is widely known to have a range a potential negative impacts to the productivity of soil, including reduced crop productivity, reduced crop uptake of water and nutrients, restriction of plant rooting depth, decreased water infiltration and increased surface runoff.

Several factors influence whether soil becomes compacted. An important influence is soil moisture: the wetter the soil, the more likely it is to be compacted from traffic. The potential for compaction also depends on the soil texture. Coarser textured soils, like sand or sandy loam, are less likely to become compacted than are clay or silty clay loams. Finally, the axle weight of the construction equipment affects compaction. UW-Extension report A3367 states that heavy equipment with axle loads that exceed 10 tons increase the risk of soil compaction into subsoil layers that cannot be removed by conventional tillage (Wolkowski and Lowery, 2008). The expected compaction depth increases as the axle load and soil moisture content increases.

As stated within the Project's CPCN, ATC plans to address compaction depending on the characteristics of the site (ATC, 2024).

The Department recommends taking the following additional steps to prevent soil compaction and rutting wherever possible. Measures to prevent soil compaction within the Project ROW include:

1) Using low-ground pressure and/or wide tracked equipment to reduce axel weight applied to soils.
2) The use of construction matting in wet areas, areas prone to rutting, or wetlands to spread out ground pressure.
3) When possible, conducting construction work during winter months when the ground is frozen.
4) Avoiding work in areas with recently saturated soils, unless using work mats to mitigate the potential for soil compaction.
5) If rutting occurs, allowing sufficient time for the soil to dry before repairing the ruts.

After construction is complete, the ROW will be compacted to some degree. Due to the large scale of the project, the Department recommends measuring for soil compaction post-construction when it is suspected or when a landowner has filed an inquiry with ATC's land agents, and/or if hired, the IEM/IAM. If soil measurements within the Project ROW are comparatively higher, this is an indication that compaction has occurred. In areas where soil compaction occurred, the Department recommends ATC take steps to decompact the soils by conducting a sufficient amount of deep tillage (V-ripper, chisel plow, para plow or other depth appropriate tillage implement) within the ROW to help restore the soil structure to pre-construction productivity. Following decompaction, the soil should be measured again for signs of compaction to ensure proper decompaction has occurred throughout the topsoil and subsoil profile. The Department also recommends ATC monitor soil moisture conditions post-construction throughout the Project ROW for signs of standing water. Areas with standing water may also have experienced soil compaction and should be measure for compaction.

5.5.3. Drainage

Proper field drainage is vital to a successful farm operation. Construction of an electric transmission line can disrupt improvements such as drainage tiles, grassed waterways, and drainage ditches, which regulate the flow of water on farm fields. If drainage is impaired, water can settle in fields and cause substantial damage, such as killing crops and other vegetation, concentrating mineral salts, flooding farm buildings, or causing hoof rot and other diseases that affect livestock. Construction-caused soil compaction or damaged drain tiles can lead to ponded water where none existed prior to construction. If drain tiles are damaged, ATC is required by Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(c) to repair or replace the damage drain tile.

Within their CPCN application, ATC states that once they are made aware of the existence of specific agricultural practices such as drainage tiles, they will work with the landowner to avoid or minimize impacts to these practices or provide monetary compensation as appropriate. (ATC, 2024).

To help mitigate the potential for drainage impacts, the Department recommends the following:

1) Agricultural landowners should inform ATC about the existence and location of drainage systems or planned drainage systems that could be affected by the Project.

2) Agricultural landowners should document field moisture conditions and the historic presence/absence of ponded water prior to the start of construction for post-construction comparisons.

3) ATC should consider using the techniques outlined in Section 5.5.2 "Soil Compaction" when crossing a known drain tile.

4) Where construction activities have created new wet areas, ATC should work with the landowner to determine the best means to return the agricultural land to pre-construction function.

5.5.4. De-watering

During excavation/auguring of the structure foundation for a transmission line pole, de-watering may be necessary. Improper de-watering can result in soil erosion, sedimentation and deposition of gravel, sand, or silt onto adjacent agricultural lands, and the inundation of crops. The discharge of these construction waters must be in compliance with current drainage laws, local ordinances, WisDNR permit conditions, and the provisions of the Clean Water Act. ATC is required by Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(c) to compensate the landowner for any damage to agricultural fields caused by construction de-watering activities.

In section 5.5.5 of ATC's CPCN application, they describe dewatering methods proposed to be used for excavation activities (ATC, 2024).

The Department recommends the following additional practices to mitigate the impacts of construction water discharge on agricultural lands:

1) ATC should identify prior to construction 1) excavation sites with low areas and/or hydric soils where de-watering is likely and 2) suitable upland areas for discharge.

2) Discharge locations should be well-vegetated areas with topography that will prevent the water from returning to the ROW, resist soil erosion, and allow for infiltration and settling of gravel and other unwanted sediments prior to entering a field, pasture, or waterbody.

3) ATC should consider using pre-filter bags or other filter devices, prior to discharge, in order to capture sediments, gravel and rocks.

4) Cropland, pasturelands and other agricultural areas selected for discharge should not be inundated for more than 24 hours, as longer durations could result in crop damage.

5) ATC should not directly discharge or allow construction waters from non-organic farms to enter an organic farming operation.

5.5.5. Irrigation

Electric transmission line construction activities and the placement of transmission line poles can interfere with the operation of linear or center pivot irrigation systems used to irrigate crops. Soil compaction from construction equipment may also impact or damage underground piping that supplies irrigation systems. Any interruption to irrigation systems cause by the Project can deprive crops from needed water and nutrients resulting in decrease crop yields.

Within their CPCN application, ATC states that once they are made aware of the existence of specific agricultural practices such as irrigation systems, they will work with the landowner to avoid or minimize impacts to these practices or provide monetary compensation as appropriate. (ATC, 2024).

The Department recommends the following additional practices to mitigate the impacts to irrigation systems:

1) Prior to construction, agricultural operations that use irrigation within or adjacent to the Project ROW should inform ATC of their irrigation system, how the Project may impact the system, irrigation schedules frequency of irrigation and weather conditions that may change the irrigation schedule.

2) ATC should consider using the techniques outlined in Section 5.5.2 "Soil Compaction" when crossing a known irrigation pipeline.

3) If the Project plans to disrupt an irrigation system, ATC should notify the landowner beforehand and establish a mutually acceptable amount of time that the system will be taken out-of-service.

4) If any part of an irrigation system is damage as a result of construction activities, ATC should pay for and repaired reported damages as soon as possible.

5) If an irrigation system needs to be reconfigured as a result of the Project, ATC should work with the irrigation operators to reconfigure the irrigation equipment where necessary and to compensate them for any portion of cropland where the irrigation system no longer operates.

5.5.6. Erosion and Conservation Practices

Electric transmission line construction activities and the placement of transmission line poles can destabilize existing erosion control practices such as diversion terraces, grassed or lined waterways, outlet ditches, water and sediment control basins, vegetated filter strips, etc. The destabilization of these erosion control practices have the potential to cause soil erosion within the ROW, but also from upland fields. During wet conditions the risk of soil erosion is increased, as exposed soils, especially areas with increased slope, may more easily erode and move downslope. Wind erosion may also be of concern if existing windbreaks are removed from the ROW, especially when soils are dry. If left unchecked, significant erosion can have an adverse effect on the long-term productivity of agricultural lands. ATC is required by Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(c) to restore existing erosion control practices such as diversion terraces, grassed or lined waterways, outlet ditches, water and sediment control basins, vegetated filter strips, etc. that are damaged by construction activities to pre-construction condition and function.

Within their CPCN application, ATC states that erosion control BMPs will be installed along the boundaries of the construction workspace and sensitive resources will be installed immediately after the disturbance occurs (ATC 2024). The Department recommends the following additional practices to mitigate soil erosion within the Project ROW:

1) Once construction is complete, pending soil decompaction, impacted agricultural lands within the ROW should be returned to cropland or seeded with the appropriate seed mix.

2) ATC should inspect all temporary erosion controls structures on at least a weekly basis and after significant rain events throughout construction and restoration phases and undertake erosion control structure maintenance as required to prevent soil erosion within the ROW.

3) ATC should avoid impacting any existing permanent erosion control structure (e.g diversion terraces, grassed or lined waterways, outlet ditches, water and sediment control basins, vegetated filter strips, etc.) that's intended to prevent soil erosion from an upland agricultural area.

4) Should ATC disrupt an existing permanent erosion control structure, a temporary structure should be installed until the permanent erosion control is restored.

5.5.7. Temporary Access Roads

ATC has proposed to install temporary access roads as part of the Project, when an alternative access road does not exist, to allow personnel and construction equipment to access the Project corridor. When a temporary access road is constructed there is a range of potential negative effects to agricultural lands including the mixing of topsoil with subsoil & rocks, soil compaction, soil erosion, and interference with existing drainage & irrigation. New temporary access roads also have the potential to impact agricultural operations by severing cropland or pastures, limiting field access or limiting access to agricultural infrastructure & buildings. Any of these impacts can result in lost agricultural productivity whether from lost soil productivity, crop losses or the direct loss of agricultural revenue when access to agricultural infrastructure is limited. When the Project has completed, ATC is required by Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(c) to restore the land to its original condition, clear all debris and remove all stones and rocks associated with the access roads. However, if desired by the landowner and in consultation with ATC, temporary access roads may be left in place after construction.

The Department recommends the following to mitigate the impacts of access roads when they cross agricultural lands within the Project ROW:

1) ATC should consult with agricultural landowners before siting any temporary access roads.
2) ATC should strip and stockpile the topsoil for later re-use during restoration.
3) Access roads should also be designed to allow proper drainage and minimize soil erosion.
4) ATC should consider using the techniques outlined in Section 5.5.3 "Drainage" when siting an access road over drain tiles.

5.5.8. Fencing

The construction process may require fences that cross the Project ROW to be severed. According to Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(c), if ATC is required to cut or sever a fence they are required to install a temporary gate and repair all damages to fencing. Changes to existing fence lines can interfere with grazing activities, particularly for rotational grazing operations that depend on precise, scheduled grazing in particular areas.

To mitigate the impacts to fencing, the Department recommends the following additional recommendations:

1) Prior to construction, ATC should consult with agricultural landowners with grazing operations in and adjacent to the Project ROW and modify construction activities and timing to mitigate impacts to livestock.
2) ATC and agricultural landowners should agree on the appropriate measures to prevent livestock from entering the Project ROW.

3) ATC should develop a plan for livestock to access pastures adjacent to the Project ROW or otherwise compensate the landowner for the costs related to restricted grazing.

5.5.9. Weed Control

The Project may introduce noxious weeds or other invasive plants species into the Project ROW that compete with agricultural crops. Noxious weeds may also spread from parcel to parcel by construction equipment and project activities. Once weeds establish, they can interfere with agricultural harvesting equipment, attract unwanted insects, and require physical removal or chemical applications to remove.

Post construction and restoration, agricultural operations may resume normal agricultural cropping activities within the ROW so long as the crop or agricultural equipment do not interfere with transmission line facilities. After construction and during the operation of the line, ATC is required by Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(d) to control weeds and brush around the transmission line facilities. However, ATC shall not use herbicide for weed and brush control without the express written consent of the landowner (Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(d)).

The Department recommends the following to control for and manage the spread of noxious weeds within the project ROW:

1) Agricultural landowners should state in writing whether they do or do not give ATC their consent for herbicide to be applied within the ROW they own.

2) ATC should clean construction equipment and materials prior to entering an area of certification.

3) ATC should clean all roadways (private, county, state etc.) of construction debris, dirt and rocks.

4) ATC should use tracking pads at frequently used access points.

5) Agricultural landowners and beekeepers should consider using the free online DriftWatch™ and BeeCheck™ registries, operated by FieldWatch™ to communicate areas containing specialty crops or beehives with pesticide applicators, in order to minimize the risk of accidental exposure. For more information on DriftWatch, please visit the DATCP DriftWatch website at the provided link or at https://wi.driftwatch.org/.

6) ATC and its contractors that are applying herbicide or pesticides should utilize the Department's Driftwatch™ online mapping tool to locate agricultural lands and operations that are susceptible to herbicide or pesticides. If the online mapping tool locates an agricultural operation on or near areas that will receive herbicide or pesticide applications, ATC should contact the operation to discuss the appropriate methods required to minimize the risk of accidental exposure.

5.5.10. Aerial Application of Seeds and Sprays

The location of an electric transmission line on cropland can restrict the aerial application of seeds and chemicals and can increase the danger of making aerial applications. In turn, agricultural pilots have to maneuver to avoid transmission lines, which may result in uneven, imprecise or missed aerial applications. When aerial applications are restricted or prevented agricultural produces may experience 1) increased weed growth and pest infestations that reduce crop yields, 2) increased cost and labor from land based application of seeds and chemical in non-applied areas.

To mitigate the potential for impacts to aerial application, the Department recommends the following:

1) Agricultural landowners inform ATC if they use aerial applications.

2) ATC and the impacted agricultural landowners work to determine the most effective techniques to minimize the impact to their aerial applications.

3) ATC install colored wire shielding near fields that utilize aerial applications. ATC reviewed this recommendation and within the project initiator feedback form in Appendix F, stated that "ATC will install marker balls on the shield wire if needed rather than using colored wire shielding".

5.5.11. Construction Debris

After construction is complete, there may be construction debris remaining on the field. If large pieces of debris or rocks are left in the field, agricultural machinery may be damaged when the landowner first works the land. ATC is required by Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(c) to clear all debris and remove all stones and rocks resulting from construction activity upon completion of construction. To that end, ATC shall also clear the ROW of signage, construction mat debris, litter, and spoil piles etc.

To mitigate the potential impact of construction debris, the Department recommends the following:

1) Should a landowner find construction debris remaining in the field after ATC has cleared the field, the landowner should contact the IEM or IAM, or equivalent contact, to report the debris prior to operating agricultural equipment in the field.

2) Should ATC remove an existing power line pole from within or immediately adjacent to cropland, ATC should remove the old structure at a minimum of four feet below the ground surface.

3) Should the ATC create a hole within croplands during the removal of any part of the existing transmission structure, the Department recommends that ATC would preserve each layer and then backfill in soil sequence to keep it to the original soil to the degree possible, dressing with topsoil as needed. If backfilling with gravel is determined to be necessary and if it is within or immediately adjacent to cropland, then the Department suggests backfilling with gravel to a minimum of four feet from the ground surface to ensure tillage equipment would not be impacted or spread gravel throughout the soil horizons, or the Project Initiators should the agricultural operator for an appropriate depth depending on how deep their tillage equipment runs

5.5.12. Crop Rotation and Dairy Operations

The construction of an electric transmission line may disrupt a planned crop or crop rotation. Impacts to alfalfa fields and planned alfalfa seeding are especially disruptive to dairy operations as they need to maintain a proper supply of alfalfa to feed dairy cows. Any delays, yield reductions or damages to an alfalfa crop may require the dairy operation to buy haylage or hay, obtain more corn silage, and/or provide protein supplements such as soybean oil meal to make up for the lost alfalfa. With advanced notice of the Project's construction schedule, a dairy operator would be better able to adjust forage requirements and plan for any increased associated costs.

If the Project is approved, the Department recommends that ATC provide any impacted dairy operations with advanced notice of the construction schedule across their operations and compensate the landowner for any increased costs associated with construction impacts to forage requirements.

5.5.13. Biosecurity

Farm biosecurity is the implementation of measures designed to protect a farm operation from the entry and spread of diseases and pests. Construction activities can spread weeds, diseases, chemicals and genetically modified organisms (GMO's) that impact an agricultural operation. Certified organic farms and farms with other certifications such as pesticide-free are susceptible to the widest range of biosecurity impacts and may suffer greater negative impacts if their agricultural operation is exposed to a biosecurity threat. For more information on basic biosecurity protocols, please visit the Department's Basic Biosecurity website at the provided link or at https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/BasicBiosecurity.aspx.

The Department recommends the following to mitigate biosecurity risks within the Project ROW:

1) If a landowner or farm operator has a biosecurity plan or have required biosecurity protocols, this information should be shared with ATC for use during Project construction and restoration.

2) ATC and their contractors should avoid contact with livestock and manure throughout the Project.

3) If livestock need to be moved, ATC should work with the livestock owner to move the livestock.

5.5.14. Stray Voltage

Electric distribution systems are grounded to the earth to ensure safety and reliability. At the site of the grounding, electrical current enters the earth where voltage can be detected. This is generally known Neutral to Earth Voltage (NEV). When a person, animal or object is near an NEV, the voltage may pass to them resulting in electrical contact (i.e. shock); this is generally known as stray voltage. Stray voltage often goes unnoticed by humans, but stray voltage from NEV may affect animals on farms. Animals may encounter stray voltage any time the animal makes contact with an electrified point such as a fencing, feeder, the earth or stalls. Animals affected by stray voltage may show changes in behavior or milk production.

The PSC administers Wisconsin's Stray Voltage program under Wis. Stat. § 196.857 in cooperation with the Department. The PSC established the Phase II Stray Voltage Testing Protocol to fulfill its duty to create a standard stray voltage NEV testing protocol as required by Wis. Stat. § 196.857(b). Under the Phase II testing protocol, a utility is mandated to take corrective action to resolve any electrical contact at or above 0.5 volts (Reines and Cook, 1999). The Stray Voltage program is able to review voltage testing data generated by the utility and the conclusions the utility has reached. For more information on the PSC Stray Voltage program, impacts to agricultural operations and mitigation steps, visit https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/StrayVoltageHomePage.aspx.

Should additional concerns for the health of a herd arise from stray voltage testing, the Department's Herd-Based Diagnostic Program may be able to assist. The program provides a licensed veterinarian, free of charge, to help producers investigate concerns with milk production, milk quality, herd health, and more. For more information on the Herd-Based Diagnostic Program visit https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Herd-basedDiagnostics.aspx.

To mitigate the impacts of stray voltage, ATC stated within section 7.4.7.3 of their CPCN application that they will offer stray voltage tests before and after the construction of the Project for all CAFOS if established proximity criteria are met (ATC, 2024).

The Department recommends the following to mitigate the impact of stray voltage within the project ROW:

1) Confined animal feeding operations or any operation with livestock facilities within ½-mile of the proposed power line should request Phase II Stray Voltage Testing pre- and post-transmission line energization testing from their utility provider.

2) ATC should inform each landowner with livestock facilities within ½-mile of the Project ROW of their ability to request Phase II Stray Voltage Testing from their local utility provider. ATC should be responsible for costs associated with Phase II Stray Voltage Testing within ½-mile of the Project corridor.

3) As required by PSC guidance set forth under Wis. Stat. § 196.857, ATC shall take action to resolve electrical contacts at livestock feeding operations detected at or above 0.5 volts that are a result of the Project.

5.5.15. Construction Noise and Dust

During each phase of the Project, noise and dust is likely to be generated. Landowners near the Project ROW may experience noises and dust associated with construction techniques, movement of heavy equipment, and helicopters. This noise and dust may cause dairy, beef cattle and other grazing livestock to stampede, break through fences, and escape from the farm property. Fur animals, poultry and other confined livestock may also be impacted by these sounds.

ATC was provided an opportunity to review the recommended BMPs below and provided in their feedback form (Appendix F: Project Initiator Feedback Form) that they requested the following be added: once construction activities are completed and mats have been removed, ATC will work with farm operators to develop a plan for dust and erosion control through cover crops or tillage practices that provide a compatible segway into the next cropping operation.

To mitigate impacts of noise and dust, the Department recommends the following:

1) Livestock owners & operators within the Project ROW whom are concerned about the noise potential for the Project should inform ATC or their representatives during the easement negotiation process.

2) Livestock owners & operators near the Project ROW who are concerned about the noise potential for the Project should inform ATC of their concerns prior to the project construction.

3) ATC should identify agricultural livestock operations with sensitive animals within and adjacent to the Project ROW and provide them appropriate advance warning of construction activities, including the use of helicopters, so they may take steps to safe guard their animals.

4) ATC should avoid loud and dusty construction activities in the early morning (before 7am) or evening (after 6pm) to the extent possible. If construction activities must occur outside of this time window, inform the agricultural operator ahead of time so they may take steps to safeguard their animals.

5) ATC should clean all roadways (private, county, state etc.) of debris, dirt and rocks caused by construction activities for the Project.

6) ATC should use tracking pads at frequently used access points.

7) When construction activities have the potential to generate substantial amounts of dust that could impact livestock or an agricultural operation, ATC should apply water over the dust generating areas to reduce dust output.

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Interest Groups, Entities and Individuals

ATC, Atwell and Husch Blackwell

David Hastings	Chase Pelletier
Mike Dunakey	Tim LeMere
Michael Cummings	Aaron Hartman
Carolyn Tanchester	Alyssa LeRoy

Agricultural Landowners

A & J Pickhardt LLC	Cory Faymoville	Dale Macheel	Dennis Zimmerman
Denis Homan	William Gaastra	Gerald and Karen Meekma	Devin and Jensen Zimmerman
Jeff Ipsen	Calvin Geertsma	Dorothy Nehring	Kevin Eilbes (Zimmerman Living Trust)
Gerald Jonas	Brian Hughes	Dale Paul	Robert Zimmerman
Werld Farms Inc.	Ed Igl	Steve and Kris Pickhardt	DeBoer Farm Inc.
Larry Bahr	Greg Jones	John and Barbara Rechek	Kurtis Mersch
Jim Behling	Kathleen Krahn	Daniel Zimmerman	John and Jean Mersch
Dykstra Farm Inc.	Laura Morrill (On behalf of Claudine Lehman)	Dean Zimmerman	Dennis Shoup

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DIVISION OF

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Agricultural Impact Program
P.O. Box 8911
Madison, WI 53708-8911
608-224-4650

agimpact.wi.gov