

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AGENCY: USDA-Rural Development/Rural Utilities Service

Notice of Availability of a Draft Supplemental Environmental Assessment: Notice of Availability and Public Review and Comment for Cardinal-Hickory Creek 345-kV Transmission Line Project

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is announcing the availability of the Cardinal-Hickory Creek 345-kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line Project (C-HC Project) Draft Supplemental Environmental Assessment (EA) for public review and comment. RUS has prepared the Draft Supplemental EA in connection with possible impacts related to nine proposed route modifications for the Cardinal-Hickory Creek 345-kV Transmission Line Project, including one proposed land exchange action involving U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)-managed land within the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. The Draft Supplemental EA describes the project, assesses the project's environmental impacts, and summarizes mitigation measures used to minimize the environmental effects. The Supplemental EA tiers to the Final Environmental Impact Statement that was published for the approved C-HC Project in October 2019. On January 16, 2020, the RUS, USFWS, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) approved various components of the C-HC Project and the Record of Decision (ROD) was signed by the three agencies.

RUS is releasing the Draft Supplemental EA to obtain feedback from the public, as part of the federal environmental review process required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and 7 CFR 1970 related to providing financial assistance to Dairyland Power Cooperative (DPC) for its share in the construction of a proposed 345-kV transmission line and associated infrastructure connecting the Hickory Creek Substation in Dubuque County, Iowa, with the Cardinal Substation in the Town of Middleton, Wisconsin (near Madison, Wisconsin). The information collected during the Draft Supplemental EA public review period will be used to prepare the Final EA.

A copy of the Draft Supplemental EA may be viewed online at the following Web site:

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/resources/environmental-studies/impact-statements/cardinal-%E2%80%93-hickory-creek-transmission-line>. A hard copy of the Draft Supplemental EA is available for review at Dairyland Power Cooperative, 3521 East Avenue, South, La Crosse, WI 54602 and 6 local libraries in the project area which are listed below.

- Dodgeville Public Library, 139 S. Iowa St, Dodgeville, WI
- Dubuque County Library, Asbury Branch, 5290 Grand Meadow Drive, Asbury, IA 52002
- Eckstein Memorial Library, 1034 E. Dewey St, Cassville, WI
- Guttenberg Public Library, 603 S 2nd St, Guttenberg, IA
- Middleton Public Library, 7425 Hubbard Ave, Middleton, WI
- Schreiner Memorial Library, 113 W. Elm St, Lancaster, WI

Written comments on the Draft Supplemental EA will be accepted until September 22, 2023. Comments can be emailed to CardinaltoHickoryCreekEIS@usda.gov. No hard copy comments will be accepted. All written comments must be provided electronically. Comments may be submitted via voicemail by leaving a message at (202) 692-1970.