

**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA

ACTION: Notice of Availability of an Environmental Assessment

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Rural Utilities Service (RUS), as required by the National Environmental Policy Act, is issuing an environmental assessment (EA) in connection with possible impacts related to a project (**Maple River to Buffalo River TL**) proposed by Minnkota Power Cooperative Inc. (Minnkota). The proposal is for replacement of aging transmission line structures along approximately 25.5 total miles of an existing 69 kilovolt (kV) transmission line. Minnkota also plans to provide partial funding support to Red River Valley Electric Cooperative to bury approximately 8 miles of an existing distribution line that is currently strung below the existing Minnkota 69 kV line. The project is located in Cass County, North Dakota and Clay County, Minnesota. Minnkota has submitted an application to the RUS for funding of the proposal.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Minnkota proposes to update aging electrical transmission infrastructure in order to meet current safety standards and provide a reliable, uninterrupted supply of affordable electric power to Minnkota's service area. The existing 69 kV transmission line was originally constructed in the 1940s and built with treated wood poles; these wood poles have reached the end of their useful life. Replacing the poles would provide greater strength and additional height to support a heavier conductor and the addition of an overhead ground wire to protect and reduce blink outages that are typical with the existing infrastructure.

Barr Engineering Co., retained by the applicant (Minnkota), has prepared an EA for RUS that describes the project, assesses the project's environmental impacts, and summarizes, as applicable, any mitigation measures used to minimize environmental effects. RUS has conducted an independent evaluation of the EA and believes that it accurately assesses the impacts of the project. No significant impacts are expected as a result of the construction of the project.

Written questions and comments should be emailed to RUS at:

RUSPublicComments@usda.gov

RUS will accept questions and comments on the EA for 14 days from the first date of publication of this notice. All comments must be provided electronically with no hard copy comments being accepted at this time.

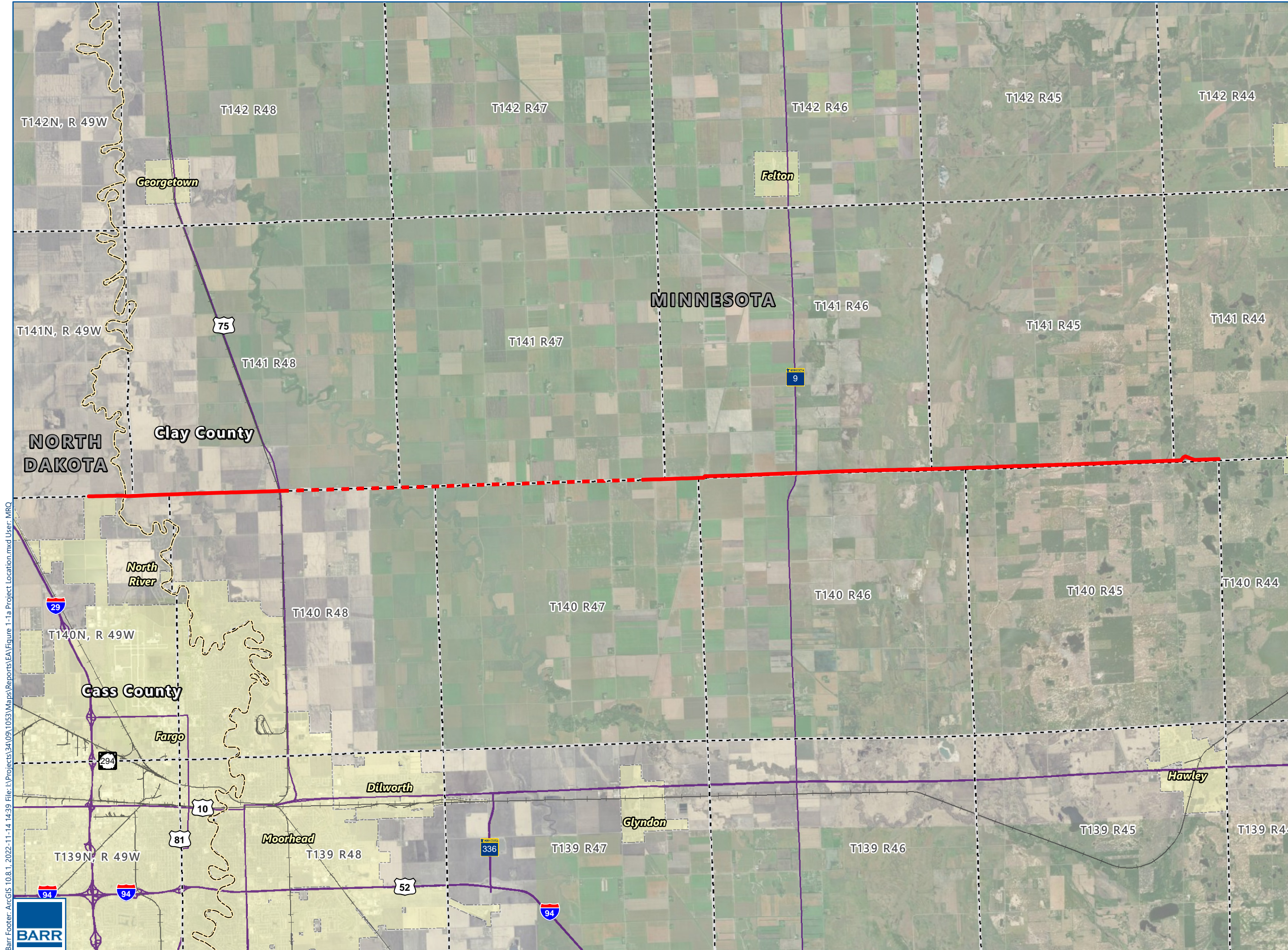
Copies of the Environmental Assessment and supporting documentation will be available for public review at:

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/resources/environmental-studies/assessments>

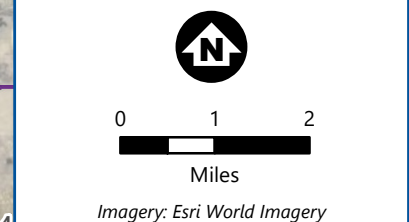
Any final action by RUS related to the proposed project will be subject to, and contingent upon, compliance with all relevant Federal environmental laws and regulations and completion of environmental review procedures as prescribed by 7 CFR Part 1970, Environmental Policies and Procedures.

A general location map of the project is shown below.

Dated: November 02, 2023



- County Boundary
- Municipality
- Public Land Survey Township
- Major Highway
- Railroad
- Proposed Project Features**
- Proposed Above Ground Transmission Alignment
- Proposed Buried Underbuild Transmission Alignment



PROJECT LOCATION
 Maple River (ND) – Buffalo River (MN) Switch 69 kV Line Rebuild
 Cass County, ND and Clay County, MN

FIGURE 1

Barr Footer: ArcGIS 10.8.1, 2022-11-14 14:39 File: I:\Projects\34\09\1053\Maps\Reports\EA\Figure 1-1a Project Location.mxd User: MRQ

