



Driftless Area Land Conservancy

The Land Trust for Southwest Wisconsin

Concerned Public and Wisconsin Policymakers:

Construction of a huge, expensive new high capacity transmission powerline is being planned by the American Transmission Co. (ATC). This line would damage a 125 mile swath of the unique driftless area of Southwest Wisconsin, commit rate-payers to higher monthly bills for years to come and negatively impact land values, local economies and our precious way of life. Our organization is committed to opposing the construction and operation of this line and we think you should be too.

Here's why:

The proposed corridors lie completely within the Driftless Area, the Midwest's most unique eco-region and special scenic landscape.

This area is recognized internationally and by the Departments of Natural Resources in four states as a region of critical conservation opportunity and concern. It contains multiple rare habitats and is the largest contiguous area of fish and wildlife habitat in the Upper Mississippi River basin area. It was recognized by the Nature Conservancy as a corridor of land that is most resistant to climate change. In short, an environmental gem hidden here in Southwest Wisconsin.



The mission of the Driftless Area Land Conservancy (DALC) is to maintain and enhance the health, diversity and beauty of Southwest Wisconsin's natural and agricultural landscape. **This proposed new high capacity powerline severely threatens the heart of the Driftless Area** negatively impacting the three qualities DALC is mandated to preserve. We must oppose this line.



Powerline Proposal Details

- Cardinal-Hickory Creek (CHC) would be a high-voltage 345kV transmission line supported by 17-story tall towers.
- It would run 125 miles from Dubuque, IA through many vital natural resources conservation areas to supply the substation in Middleton, WI.
- It's estimated to cost at least \$500 million plus financing costs with a mandated 10.2% (\$50 million or more) annual rate of return for the developers. These costs would be shouldered by the ratepayers over the anticipated 30-40 yr. lifetime of the line.
- ATC profits solely on the construction and maintenance of power lines whether they are needed or not. They have every incentive to simply build new infrastructure regardless of need.

Rationale for Opposition

Not Needed - Supply exceeds demand in the Wisconsin electrical power market. Madison Gas & Electric's electrical sales have declined over the past decade and Wisconsin Power & Light's sales have remained **essentially flat** over the same time period even though both utilities have each gained about 11,000 net additional customers. Wisconsin and the Midwest have excess power supply as Ellen Nowak, former Chair of Wisconsin's Public Service Commission explained: "Right now, there's not a need for a lot [of] new generation of any source in Wisconsin." (*Wisconsin Public Radio*, January 19, 2017, www.wpr.org)



Better Alternatives - Even *if* there were any need for more electricity supply, **there are better, more cost-effective alternatives** than building this costly new high-voltage transmission line. Wisconsin law requires that energy demands first be met with the most cost-effective options including energy efficiencies and conservation. This proposed line does not meet those criteria. Peak-demand energy needs can be better met through increased energy efficiencies, distributed energy demand response, and solar energy.



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Proposed Routes Conflict with Wisconsin Siting Standards - ATC has proposed multiple corridor options for the CHC transmission line, many of which are inconsistent with Wisconsin transmission siting laws. State law clearly intends that transmission avoid unnecessary impacts to the environment including natural and cultural resources and that new routes be created only as a *last resort*. The proposed line routes conflict with this intent. The unique features of the Driftless Area make trying to find corridors that comply with applicable statutes akin to trying to fit a square peg into a round hole, concepts that are inherently mismatched.

Damage to Vital Conservation Land, Natural Resource Areas and Public Land – The state Departments of Natural Resources in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin have identified the Driftless Area as the most important ecological region in the Midwest. **The proposed corridors plow through environmentally**

sensitive areas, those specifically designated to be avoided under Wisconsin law. The proposed massive infrastructure of towers and lines would damage these historical and natural resources and disrupt the scenic landscapes that are part of our heritage and draw others to our area as well. ATC's



proposed huge high-voltage transmission line and 17-story towers would run 125 miles through the unique and scenic Driftless Area, the Upper Mississippi River Fish and Wildlife Refuge, Black Earth Creek Watershed Area, Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area and several state parklands and recreation areas. The towers would encroach the viewshed of hundred of miles of class I trout stream, public and private hunting lands and areas of ecological significance that also support regional economies.

Decreases Property Value and Hurts the Local Economy – The proposed transmission line reduces property values, drives investors away from small towns and stalls rural economic development. High-voltage transmission lines have a significant negative impact on residential and agricultural property values. Additionally, ATC's decision to delay the in-service date of the CHC line until 2023 exacerbates this problem. Land owners and buyers are reluctant to make commitments to potential land sales, property improvements and conservation projects because of uncertainties about future property values. Farmers may feel the greatest impact as land values decline.



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DALC's Response

The DALC Board of Directors has retained the services of the **Environmental Law & Policy Center**, a highly reputable Midwest non-profit environment and natural heritage law firm. The ELPC will guide and assist DALC in developing and carrying out a strategy to inform the public and Wisconsin policy makers of the negative impacts inherent in this proposed project. The DALC is in effect becoming a central organizer in the broader regional effort to oppose this line.

DALC has also hired two community organizers to coordinate its efforts to prevent the construction of the Cardinal-Hickory Creek transmission line.

How You Can Help

This massive, hugely expensive and unneeded transmission project is NOT a done-deal. **Now is the time to voice your opposition**, both in the press and to office holders. Please act now! ProtectTheDriftless.com is a great place to start. Scroll down to the *Letter Writing Packet* to find sample letters, talking points and addresses for area newspapers and elected officials. Donate to the DALC, join us for events, learn about the details of this proposed line and all that we are doing locally and regionally to oppose it. Thank you!

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