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Conservation Groups Sue Federal Agencies for Approving Huge High-Voltage Transmission Line to Run Through and Across Protected Upper Mississippi River Wildlife and Fish Refuge

“We should not set a precedent that a simple land swap is all it takes to plow through a national treasure”

Madison, WI – Today, three state and national conservation groups filed a [lawsuit](#) in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Rural Utilities Service, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for violating federal laws by approving a land exchange that will allow Transmission Companies to bulldoze and construct a high-voltage transmission line to run through and across the protected Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. The Environmental Law & Policy Center, pro bono public interest attorneys, are representing the Driftless Area Land Conservancy, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, and National Wildlife Refuge Association in this lawsuit. The Cardinal-Hickory Creek transmission line’s proposed route would cut across the protected Refuge near Cassville, Wisconsin.

The lawsuit challenges the Federal Defendant agencies’ violations of National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, and the Administrative Procedure Act. If built in the planned location, the east-west transmission line would cut across a major north-south migratory bird flyway used by hundreds of thousands of birds annually, including migratory waterfowl, such as cranes. Eagles use that important flyway as well.

Driftless Area Land Conservancy Executive Director Jennifer Filipiak said:

“The Driftless Area Land Conservancy has consistently maintained that it is inappropriate to cross a National Wildlife and Fish Refuge with this massive transmission line. The transmission companies did not evaluate alternative crossings outside of the Refuge in their environmental impact statement, and we should not set a precedent that a simple land swap is all it takes to plow through a national treasure. U.S. District Judge (William M.) Conley agreed with us in the previous lawsuit, and we will again seek a ruling on this issue.”

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation President Kevyn Quamme said:

“The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge is a treasured part of the Refuge system that makes the Driftless Area the very special place that people have come to love. A massive transmission line crossing through this area will be harmful to the important habitats for fish and wildlife in the Refuge and to the millions of migrating birds that pass through on the Mississippi Flyway each year. Building a transmission line through the Refuge also will serve as a deterrent to locals and tourists alike who visit the refuge and contribute to the local economy.”