



December 3, 2020

Steve Kahl
Executive Secretary
North Dakota Public Service Commission
600 East Boulevard; Dept 408
Bismarck, ND 58505-0480

Re: Case No. PU-11-696
Basin Electric Power Cooperative
AVS-Neset 345-kV Transmission Project
Tree/Shrub Mitigation Survival Rates

Dear Mr. Kahl:

The purpose of this letter is to provide, per staff's request, an estimate of survival rates for tree and shrub mitigation efforts for the Basin Electric Power Cooperative (**Basin Electric**) Antelope Valley Station to Neset 345-kV Transmission Line Project (**Project**).

A total of 17,410 trees and shrubs were removed during construction of the project; on a 2:1 basis, 34,820 trees and shrubs were required as replacements. As the North Dakota Public Service Commission (**PSC**) is likely aware, many landowners do not elect to have replacement trees and shrubs planted; the majority of plantings (approximately 71%) occurred on public land or for public entities. Given the level of effort to secure planting locations and significant time and effort for the actual planting process, trees and shrubs were planted in five counties over a four-year period. A total of approximately 37,547 trees and shrubs have been planted on behalf of the Project, which amounts to about 8% more than the minimum of 34,820 required.

Survival rates are typically monitored by the county Soil Conservation District (**SCD**), and the estimates provided below are based on feedback from each SCD. Since tree and shrub planting efforts were spread out over several years and replanting efforts have been ongoing, providing an overall survivability estimate can become fairly complex. For McKenzie County, plantings occurred in 2017, 2018, and 2019, and have an estimated survival rate of approximately 88%. Plantings occurred in Williams County during 2017, 2018, and 2019, with an estimated survival rate of approximately 70%. For Mercer County, plantings occurred in 2016 and 2018, and have an estimated survival rate of approximately 85.5%. The Mountrail County planting occurred in 2017, and has an estimated 72% survival rate. Combined tree and shrub survivability for McKenzie, Williams, Mercer, and Mountrail Counties is approximately 81%, or 17,046 of 21,007 originally planted surviving. As noted in previous correspondence, Basin Electric is planning 1,750 replants to be completed spring 2021 in Williams County, which should increase the combined survivability rate by a few percentage points.

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Plantings in Stark County occurred in 2019. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no inventory was conducted by the SCD in 2020. Accordingly, no survival rate estimate is available for the approximately 16,540 tree and shrub plantings located in Stark County.

Basin Electric is planning to provide the PSC with an overall survival rate, including data from all five counties, in 2021. Please contact me at 701.557.5495 or ksolie@bepc.com if you have any questions, comments or concerns regarding this submittal.

Sincerely,

Kevin L. Solie

Kevin L. Solie, P.E.
Senior Environmental Compliance Administrator

/kls