



414 Nicollet Mall
Minneapolis, MN 55401

October 28, 2022

Via Email and U.S. Mail

Mr. Steven M. Kahl, Executive Director
North Dakota Public Service Commission
600 East Boulevard, Dept. 408
Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0480

**Re: 230 kV TRANSMISSION LINE (MCHENRY & WARD COUNTIES)
TREE AND SHRUB SURVIVAL INSPECTION
CASE NO. PU-17-102**

Dear Mr. Kahl:

On June 29, 2022, the Commission amended its October 4, 2017 Order in Case No. PU-17-102 to replace the Tree and Shrub Mitigation Specifications adopted in that Order with the Commission's new version of the Tree and Shrub Mitigation Specifications adopted on March 13, 2019. The amended Order requires Northern States Power (NSP) to file a report documenting how its Tree and Shrub Plan achieved sustainable plantings, appropriate for the local soil and growing conditions, that will provide long-term benefits to landowners, farmers, ranchers, the community, wildlife, and the environment, and report the number of surviving replacement trees and shrubs.

In 2019, Xcel Energy contracted with the Ward County Soil Conservation District (SCD) to provide labor and equipment and work with the property owners to 1) prepare sites for planting of trees, 2) furnish and plant trees, 3) furnish and apply fabric around new plantings, 4) provide a three-year monitoring plan, and 5) perform site clean-up of planting areas. The planting was to occur in the spring of 2019. In a report received from SCD, based on discussions with the homeowners, SCD found some of the plantings had died or were missing or were overgrown by weeds. Other areas did very well and produced the outcome that they were intended to serve such as windbreaks, prevent erosion, and help increase crop and pasture fields and benefited wildlife with food, cover and additional habitat.

SCD estimates the survival rate of the plantings range between 74 percent to 96 percent in 2022. SCD will continue to work with the homeowners and provide additional plantings if that is the desire of the homeowner. The drought conditions of 2019 and 2020 were a key factor in the poor survival rate of the newly planted trees

and shrubs. Had the weather conditions been more cooperative, we believe the survival rate would have been much higher.

Please feel free to contact me at alex.j.nisbet@xcelenergy.com or Chris Shaw at christopher.j.shaw@xcelenergy.com should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

/s/

Alex Nisbet
Regulatory Policy Specialist

cc: Victor Schock