

Appendix E

Desktop State and Federally Protected Species Habitat Assessment



**Big Stone South
to Hankinson to Bison**

Big Stone South to Hankinson to Bison Transmission Line Project

State and Federally Protected Species Habitat Assessment

Otter Tail Power Company
August 10, 2026

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

BSSHB Project	Big Stone South to Hankinson to Bison 345 kV Transmission Line Project
Facility	South Dakota portion of the Big Stone South to Hankinson to Bison 345 kV Transmission Line Project
Commission	Public Utilities Commission of the State of South Dakota
HAPET	Habitat and Population Evaluation Team
IPaC	Information for Planning and Consultation (USFWS)
kV	Kilovolt
OTP	Otter Tail Power Company
SDGFP	South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks
SGCN	Species of Greatest Conservation Need
sq. mile	square mile
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

1.0 Introduction

Otter Tail Power Company (OTP) is submitting an Application to the Public Utilities Commission of the State of South Dakota (Commission) for a Facility Permit for the portion of the Big Stone South to Hankinson to Bison 345 kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line Project (BSSHB Project) that is located within South Dakota (Facility).

The South Dakota portion of the BSSHB Project consists of an approximately 97-mile-long, 345 kV transmission line between the existing Big Stone South Substation located west of Big Stone City, South Dakota, to the Hankinson Substation located north of the City of Hankinson, North Dakota (**Figure 1, Appendix A**). Seventy (70) miles of the transmission line is within South Dakota. Land cover within the Facility is predominately cultivated crops (**Figure 2, Appendix A**).

As part of the early due diligence process for the BSSHB Project, OTP coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks (SDGFP) regarding the potential for protected species and habitats to occur within or near the Facility, and recommended surveys/assessments, and recommendations to minimize impacts to these species or their habitats. This memorandum summarizes communication with the USFWS and SDGFP and results from desktop and field-based evaluations for the BSSHB Project.

2.0 Agency Coordination

OTP coordinated with the USFWS and SDGFP as part of the early due diligence process for the proposed Facility. The summary notes from the meetings are provided in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Summary Meeting Notes

Agency	Attendees	Date	Summary Notes
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	USFWS, OTP, and HDR	May 4, 2026 (Virtual)	• Look for monarchs (<i>Danaus plexippus</i>) and monarch habitat. Recommend restoring and replanting milkweed. • Dakota skipper (<i>Hesperia dacotae</i>) may have habitat in the Lake Traverse area and USFWS Waterfowl Production Areas. • Western regal fritillaries (<i>Argynnis idalia occidentalis</i>) populations are cyclic so they may not be seen every year. • USFWS considers Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee (<i>Bombus suckleyi</i>) extirpated from South Dakota. • No recent records of western prairie fringed orchid (<i>Plantanthera praeclara</i>) in South Dakota. Unlikely to occur unless in a sub-irrigated or fen-like area. Formal surveys are not needed; record and share location data if found incidentally. • Wilson's phalarope (<i>Phalaropus tricolor</i>) is not listed but could be within 4 to 5 years. • Iowa skipper is petitioned and warranted but unlikely to occur in South Dakota.

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Agency	Attendees	Date	Summary Notes
			- Bumble bee species could be listed in the next several years. - A South Dakota State University student is conducting a statewide survey for the northern long-eared bat (<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>). There are records in the northeastern part of the state. - Recommended to review Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET) model. - Recommendation to not disturb native prairie during construction or staging. Mitigation for lost prairie would be to re-establish prairie. - Recommend conservation measures for the monarch and western regal fritillary. - Requested to keep Information for Planning and Consultation (iPaC) report current
South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks (SDGFP)	SDGFP, OTP, and HDR	February 18, 2026 (Virtual)	- Early coordination to evaluate multiple route options before final Facility was selected. - Species of concern: raptors, bald eagles (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>), and osprey (<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>), specific to nest locations. Rare plant species. - Prime habitat for Dakota skipper within initial Study Area¹. - Western regal fritillary occurs in northeastern South Dakota. - The majority of initial Study Area was outside of sharp-tailed grouse (<i>Tympanuchus phasianellus</i>) and greater prairie chicken (<i>Tympanuchus cupido</i>) primary areas but not too far away. - Migratory bird mitigation strategies based on migratory activity due to the overlap with the prairie pothole region. - Avoid unbroken grassland as feasible.
	SDGFP, OTP, and HDR	May 4, 2026 (Virtual)	- Natural Heritage Program Database: northern red-bellied snake (<i>Storeria occipitomaculata</i>), Carmine shiner (<i>Notropis percobromus</i>), and creeper mussel (<i>Strophitus undulatus</i>) records within the Facility. SDGFP had no concerns on red bellied snake. Also had no concerns for the creeper mussel or Carmine shiner since structures will stay outside of streams. - Avoid tree removal during the active season for bats. - Nest deterrents are typically not needed on structures the size proposed for the Facility. - Use bird diverters in areas where bird collisions are a concern. - Avoid fragmentation of native prairies. - Requested to review grouse occupancy model.

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Agency	Attendees	Date	Summary Notes
			HDR shared that there were no raptor nests within 660 feet of the South Dakota portion of the Facility.
	SDGFP, OTP, and HDR	May 13, 2026 (Email)	- Grouse surveys will not be needed since the Facility is outside of the core area. - Requested to continue minimizing the intersection of intact grasslands wherever possible.
	SDGFP, OTP, and HDR	June 12, 2026 (Email) Formal letter response ²	- If work is proposed within streams or if fish passage could be blocked, complete fish surveys and relocate fish from affected areas. - Avoid placing towers within streams or adjacent riparian areas. - Minimize disturbances to riparian and wetland areas. - Replace any removed riparian vegetation with native species. - Power structures within ½ mile to 1 mile of a water body should include perch and nest deterrents and effective insulating covers. Use line markers in areas known for bird migration, especially near wetland or river crossings. - Avoid fragmentation of native prairie and grassland habitat. - Coordinate with USFWS regarding western regal fritillaries. - Develop a sediment and erosion control plan. - Reseed disturbed grassland habitat with native species. - Avoid construction adjacent to known leks from March 25 to April 30 and, if unavoidable, start construction after 10 a.m. - Follow the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee guidance. - Inspect trees scheduled for removal from May 1 to August 1 for active bird nests. - Coordinate with USFWS and SDGFP if raptor nests are found within the 150-foot buffer during future surveys. - Avoid tree removal during the northern long-eared bat's pup-rearing season (June 1 to August 15). - Coordinate with the USFWS if it is believed that northern long-eared bats or tricolored bats are using trees that are scheduled for removal.

¹ = Initial Study Area was significantly larger than the Facility but included the entirety of the Facility.² = Included as **Appendix B**

3.0 State Species and Habitats

To evaluate the potential for Facility-related impacts to state-listed species and sensitive habitats (i.e., unbroken grasslands), the SDGFP Natural Heritage Program database and unbroken grasslands (South Dakota State University undated) were reviewed, a raptor nest survey was completed, and a formal SDGFP letter response was requested and received.

3.1 Natural Heritage Program Database

Based on the SDGFP Natural Heritage Program data, the Facility intersects records of the Carmine shiner (*Notropis percobromus*) an S2 species and species of greatest conservation need (SGCN), northern red-bellied snake (*Storeria occipitomaculata*) an S3 species, and creeper mussel (*Strophitus undulatus*) an S3 species. S2 species are considered imperiled because of rarity; S3 species are very rare and local in its range, has a restricted range, or is vulnerable to extinction due to other factors. The S2 and S3 statuses do not afford the species legal protection.

SDGFP stated that they were not concerned with impacts to northern red-bellied snakes (**Table 1**) during the May 4, 2026, meeting. They also stated that they did not have concerns about the Carmine shiner or creeper mussel if in-stream impacts would be avoided. No further measures are recommended if in-stream impacts are avoided.

3.2 Raptor Nest Survey

Prior to conducting the ground-based survey for raptor nests, HDR reviewed the SDGFP Natural Heritage Program data and eBird (2026) records of raptor nests in the initial preliminary routes and within 660 feet on either side of the preliminary routes. Locations of recorded raptor nests were verified during the ground-based survey effort. A ground-based raptor nest survey was completed from March 24 to 26, 2026, to identify any raptor nests within the preliminary routes and within 660 feet of either side of the preliminary routes. No raptor nests were observed within the South Dakota portion of the Facility that was surveyed. Most of the Facility was surveyed during the ground-based survey. Approximately six miles of the Facility were added after the ground-based survey was completed and should be surveyed prior to construction. It is recommended to complete a second ground-based survey for raptor nests for the Facility and within 660 feet of either side of the Facility prior to construction. Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) nests are discussed in **Section 4.2** below.

3.3 Unbroken Grasslands

Based on a review of the unbroken grasslands spatial data (South Dakota State University undated) and historic and recent aerial imagery, there are 183.5 acres of unbroken grasslands within the Facility (see **Figure 5** or **6, Appendix A**).

It is recommended to field review the areas identified as unbroken grasslands within the Facility to determine if they exhibit any indications that they have been broken (e.g., tilled). Any areas that

do not exhibit indicators of being broken should be considered unbroken. Placing infrastructure within any unbroken areas should be avoided.

4.0 Federally Protected Species

Based on a review of USFWS iPaC System, the federally endangered northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*), federally threatened rufa red knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*), Dakota skipper (*Hesperia dacotae*), and western prairie fringed orchid (*Platanthera praeclara*), proposed endangered Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee (*Bombus suckleyi*), and proposed threatened monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) and western regal fritillary (*Argynnis idalia occidentalis*) may occur within the Facility or the surrounding region (**Appendix C**). There were no USFWS designated critical habitats in or near the Facility.

Based on the discussion with the USFWS (see **Table 1**), the rufa red knot, Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee, and western prairie fringed orchid are unlikely to occur in South Dakota. As such, these species and their habitats were not evaluated in this assessment. The remaining species, bald eagle nests, and results from the Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET) models are discussed below.

4.1 Habitat and Population Evaluation Team Models

4.1.1 Priority Areas

The HAPET breeding duck pairs model (referred to as the Thunderstorm Map) (USFWS 2022) was reviewed to identify priority areas for nesting that intersect the Facility (**Figure 3, Appendix A**). The Thunderstorm Map assigns priority areas ranging from 1 to 7, with 1 attributed to the highest priority areas. The Facility predominately crosses Priority 5 (25 to 40 duck pairs/square mile [sq. mile]) and Priority 6 (10 to 25 duck pairs/sq. mile) areas. There are two Priority 4 (40 to 60 duck pairs/sq. mile) areas that are crossed by the Facility.

Since the Wilson's phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*) may be listed by the USFWS in the foreseeable future (see **Table 1**), the HAPET probability of occurrence model (USFWS 2022) was reviewed to identify high probability areas that intersect the Facility (**Figure 4, Appendix A**). The probability of occurrence model assigns priority ranks to areas ranging from 1 to 4, with 1 attributed to the highest priority areas. Most of the Facility is within the Priority 4 (75 to 100%) area. The Facility overlaps with one Priority 2 (25 to 50%) area and two Priority 3 (50 to 75%) areas.

4.1.2 Potential Impacts and Recommendations

It is recommended that OTP continue to coordinate with the USFWS regarding potential mitigation measures to minimize impacts to waterfowl or Wilson's phalarope (e.g., bird diverters) in higher priority areas. Specifically, the area near Bullhead Lake is a Priority 4 area for duck pairs and a high priority area for Wilson's phalarope (Priority 1 through 3).

4.2 Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

4.2.1 Status

Bald eagles and their nests are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

4.2.2 Habitat Preference and Availability

A bald eagle nest survey was completed from March 24 to 26, 2026, for most of the Facility and a 660-foot buffer on either side of the proposed Facility. Approximately six (6) miles of the Facility were added after the ground-based survey was completed and should be surveyed prior to construction. No bald eagle nests were observed within 660 feet of the portion of the Facility in South Dakota or within 660 feet on either side of the Facility.

4.2.3 Potential Impacts and Recommendations

It is recommended to complete a second ground-based survey for raptor nests for the Facility and within 660 feet of either side of the Facility prior to construction. If a bald eagle nest is observed within 660 feet of the Facility, it is recommended to follow the USFWS's guidance (USFWS undated).

4.3 Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*)

4.3.1 Status

The monarch butterfly was proposed threatened at the federal level on December 12, 2024. The proposed listing also included a corresponding 4(d) rule that would allow for certain types of take.

4.3.2 Habitat Preference and Availability

Monarch butterflies occur in prairies, grasslands, gardens, urban greenspaces, and the borders of cultivated fields (Fallon et al. 2025). This species requires milkweed (*Asclepias* spp.) host plants for larvae and abundant floral resources for adults. Important floral resources include milkweeds, blazing stars (*Liatris* spp.), asters (*Symphyotrichum* spp.), sunflowers (*Helianthus* spp.), and thistles (*Cirsium* spp.).

There are unbroken grassland and herbaceous upland and wetland areas within the Facility. Milkweed species, especially common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) are commonly found in herbaceous upland areas. It is likely that there is suitable monarch habitat throughout the Facility.

4.3.3 Potential Impacts and Recommendations

It is recommended to conduct a field-based monarch habitat assessment in any areas that may be permanently impacted during Project construction or maintenance. The USFWS recommended considering including milkweed species in native seed mixes used for reseeding or restoration purposes.

4.4 Western Regal Fritillary (*Argynnis idalia occidentalis*)

4.4.1 Status

The western regal fritillary was proposed threatened at the federal level on August 6, 2024. The proposed listing also included a corresponding 4(d) rule that would allow for certain types of take.

4.4.2 Habitat Preference and Availability

Western regal fritillaries occur in tall-grass prairies, damp meadows, marshes, and wet fields (Selby 2007). This species requires abundant violet (*Viola* spp.) host plants for larvae, abundant floral resources for adults, and native warm season bunchgrasses for shelter (Swartz et al. 2015). Important floral resources for western regal fritillary include milkweeds, native thistles, goldenrods (*Solidago* spp.), asters, blazing stars, wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*), joe-pye weeds (*Eutrochium* spp.), ironweeds (*Veronia* spp.), and coneflowers (*Echinacea* spp.).

HDR overlaid the potential western regal fritillary range (USFWS 2026) with unbroken grasslands (South Dakota State University undated) and reviewed recent aerial imagery to desktop delineate potential western regal fritillary habitat within the Facility. Based on the desktop delineation, there are 76 acres of potential western regal fritillary habitat within the Facility (**Figure 5, Appendix A**).

4.4.3 Potential Impacts and Recommendations

It is recommended to conduct a field-based western regal fritillary habitat assessment in the areas that were desktop delineated as potential western regal fritillary habitat and that may be temporarily or permanently impacted during Facility construction or maintenance. If suitable western regal fritillary habitat is available and may be impacted, coordination with the USFWS is recommended to discuss potential mitigation strategies.

4.5 Dakota Skipper (*Hesperia dacotae*)

4.5.1 Status

The Dakota skipper is federally threatened.

4.5.2 Habitat Preference and Availability

Dakota skipper occur within two habitat types: low-lying, wet-mesic prairies with low topographic relief or upland prairies that are dry and typically occur along ridges and hillsides (USFWS 2024a). Larval host plants include little bluestem, big bluestem, sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), and prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*). Important floral resources for adult Dakota skippers include blazing stars, black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), prairie clovers (*Dalea* spp.), and leadplant (*Amorpha canescens*) (Royer and Marrone 1992).

HDR overlaid the potential Dakota skipper range (USFWS 2023) with unbroken grasslands (South Dakota State University undated) and reviewed recent aerial imagery to desktop delineate potential Dakota skipper habitat within the Facility. Based on the desktop delineation, there are 103.5 acres of potential Dakota skipper habitat within the Facility (**Figure 6, Appendix A**).

4.5.3 Potential Impacts and Recommendations

It is recommended to conduct a field-based Dakota skipper habitat assessment following the USFWS's (2024a) guidelines in any areas that were desktop delineated as potential Dakota skipper habitat and that may be temporarily or permanently impacted during Facility construction or maintenance. If suitable Dakota skipper habitat is available and may be impacted, coordination with the USFWS is required and presence/probable absence surveys may be necessary.

4.6 Northern Long-Eared Bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*)

4.6.1 Status

The northern long-eared bat is federally endangered.

4.6.2 Habitat Preference and Availability

Suitable summer habitat for northern long-eared bats includes wooded areas that contain potential roost sites and adjacent habitats where they traverse or forage (i.e., wetlands or fields). Northern long-eared bats use suitable summer habitat during their active season (i.e., April 15 to October 31). During their inactive season (i.e., November 1 to April 14, inclusive), northern long-eared bats hibernate in caves or mines. Potential roost sites include live or dead trees three inches in diameter at breast height or greater that have exfoliating bark, cracks, crevices, or cavities (USFWS 2024b). Individual trees with suitable characteristics that are within 1,000 feet of other wooded habitat may be considered potential roost sites.

Based on a desktop delineation of available trees or wooded habitat within the Facility, there are 57.5 acres of potentially suitable northern long-eared bat summer roosting habitat available (**Figure 7, Appendix A**). A field-based tree and shrub inventory will be completed for the Facility and potentially suitable northern long-eared bat tree roosts will be recorded during the inventory.

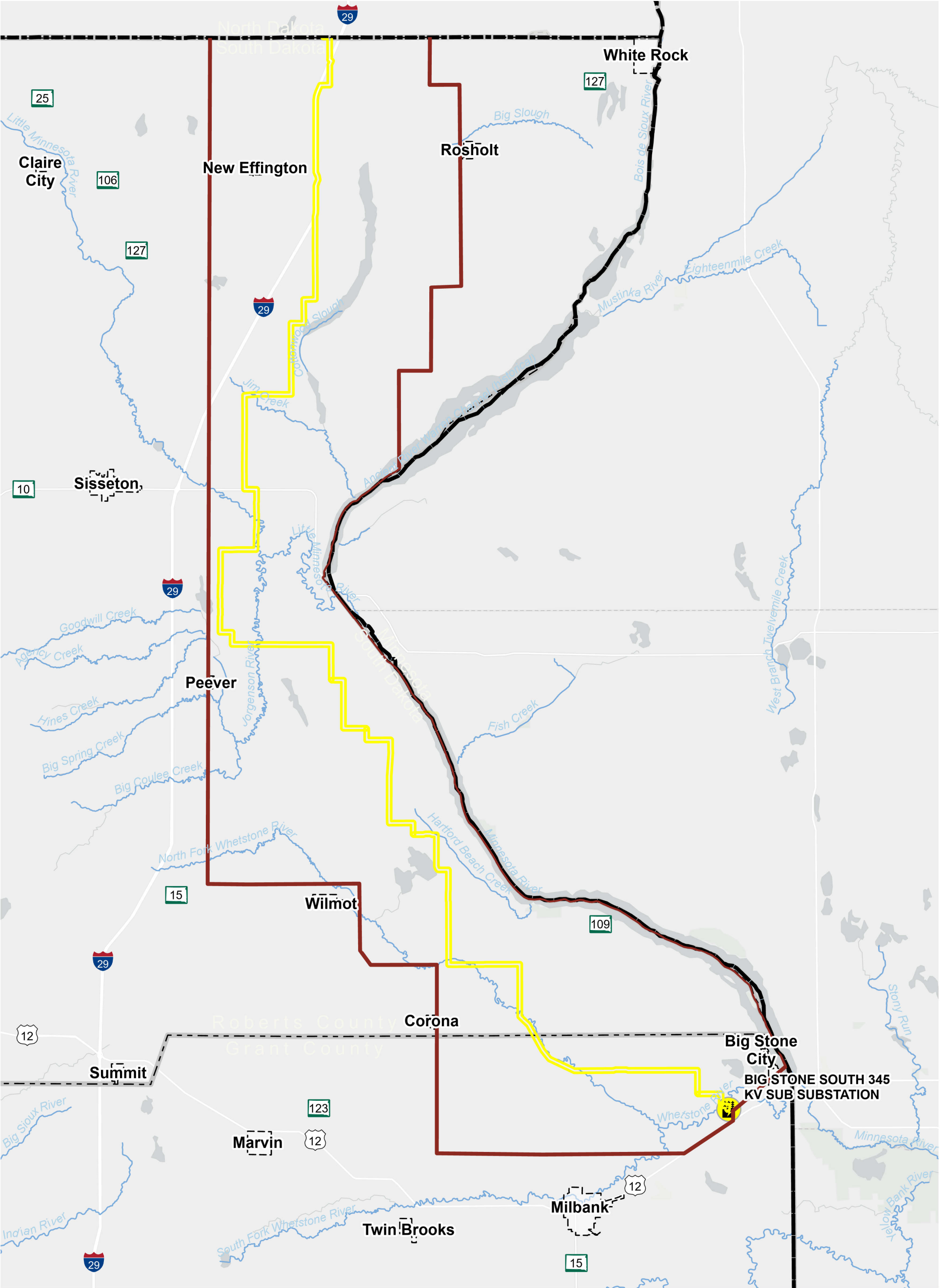
4.6.3 Potential Impacts and Recommendations

It is recommended that the Northern Long-Eared Bat and Tricolored Bat Range-Wide Determination Key be used and coordination with the USFWS occur prior to any tree removal activity. If tree removal is required for the Facility, it is recommended that it occurs from November 1 to April 14, to avoid the northern long-eared bat's active season; or at a minimum it should not occur during the northern long-eared bat pup-rearing season (i.e., June 1 to August 15). If tree removal cannot be avoided during the northern long-eared bat's active season but outside of the pup-rearing season (i.e., April 15 to May 31 and August 16 to October 31), a bat habitat assessment should be completed to determine if the trees scheduled for removal provide suitable roosting habitat. Trees that have potential roost site characteristics will be recorded during the Facility's tree and shrub inventory. If potentially suitable roost trees must be removed during the pup-rearing season, or if northern long-eared bats are suspected to be using trees scheduled for removal, the USFWS should be coordinated with.

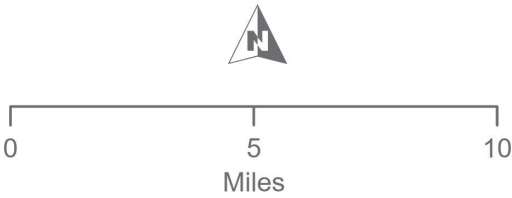
5.0 References

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Appendix A. Figures



- Project Substation
- Rivers and Streams
- City Boundary
- State Boundary
- County Boundary
- Facility
- Study Area



Data Current as of: 8/6/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

Figure 1 - Project Location



**BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT**

Figure 2 - National Land Cover Dataset (NLCD)

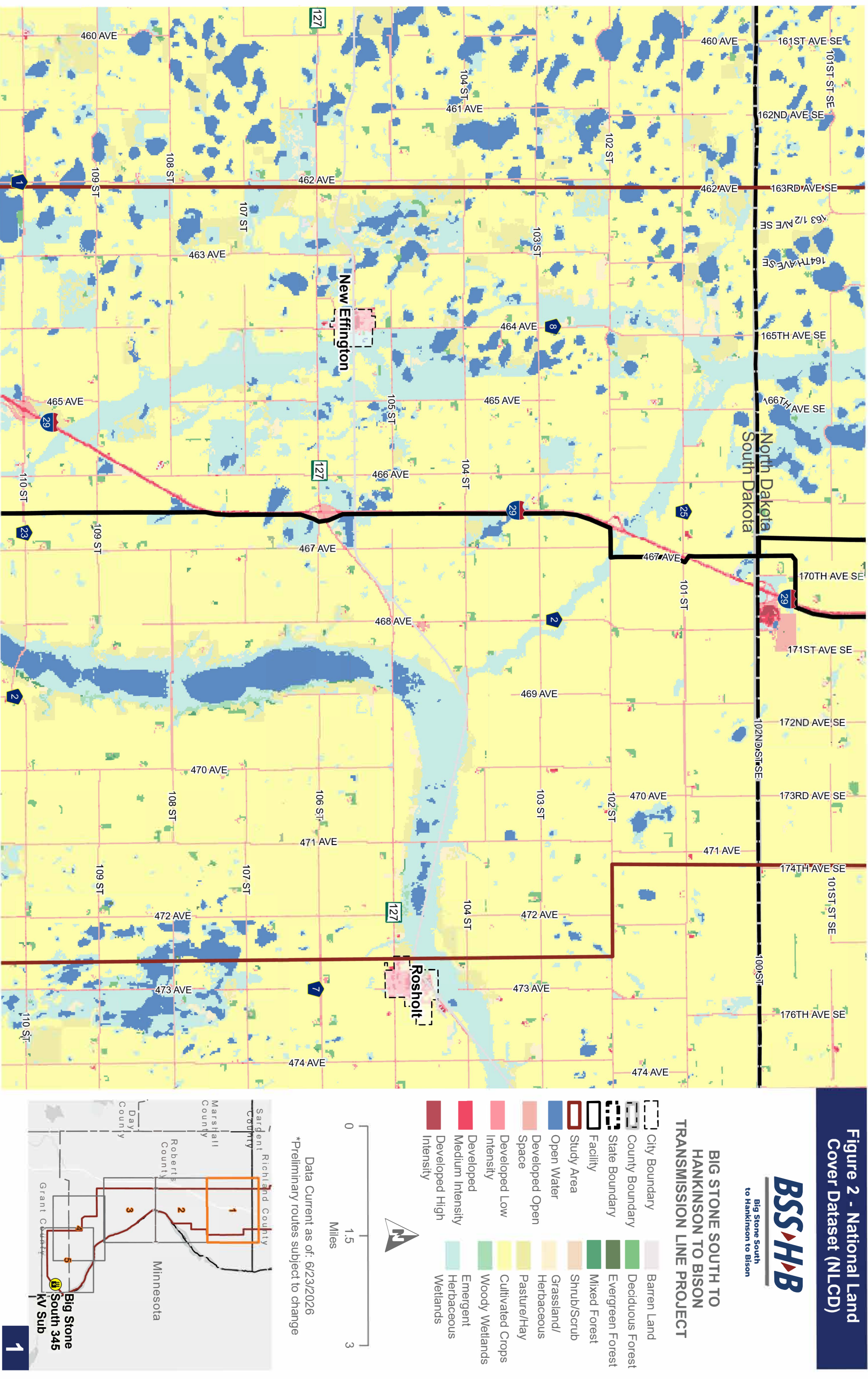


Figure 2 - National Land
Cover Dataset (NLCD)



BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

- County Boundary

State Boundary

Facility

Study Area

Open Water

Developed Open Space

Developed Low Intensity

Developed Medium Intensity

Developed High Intensity
- Barren Land

Deciduous Forest

Evergreen Forest

Mixed Forest

Shrub/Scrub

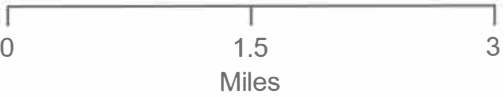
Grassland/Herbaceous

Pasture/Hay

Cultivated Crops

Woody Wetlands

Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands



Data Current as of: 6/23/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

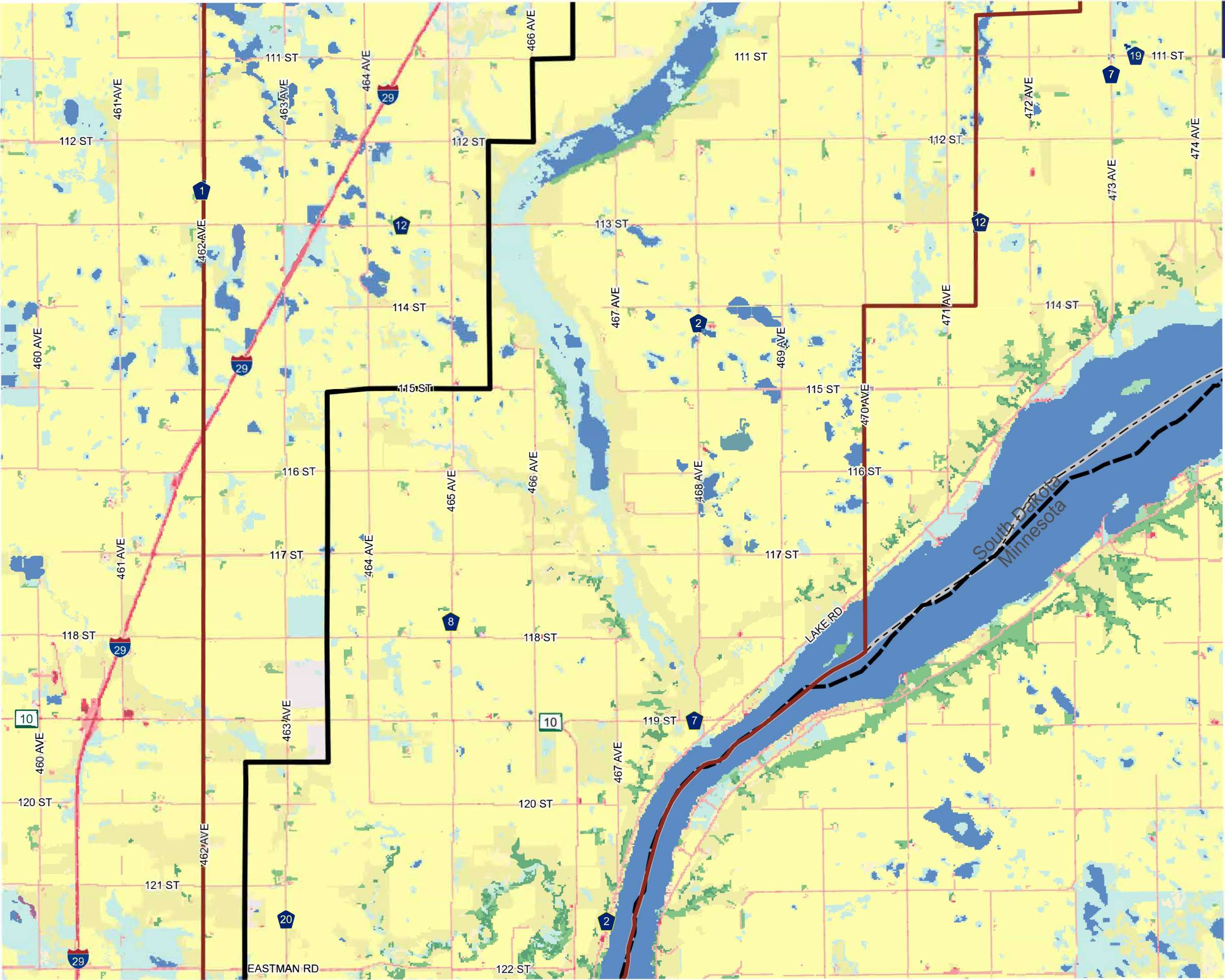
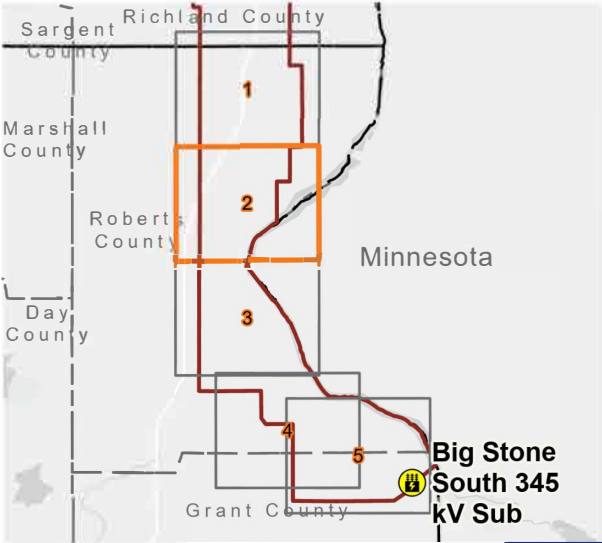


Figure 2 - National Land
Cover Dataset (NLCD)



BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

- City Boundary

County Boundary

State Boundary

Facility

Study Area

Open Water

Developed Open Space

Developed Low Intensity

Developed Medium Intensity

Developed High Intensity
- Barren Land

Deciduous Forest

Evergreen Forest

Mixed Forest

Shrub/Scrub

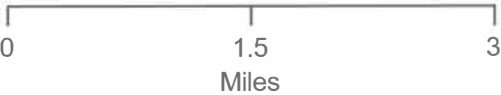
Grassland/
Herbaceous

Pasture/Hay

Cultivated Crops

Woody Wetlands

Emergent
Herbaceous
Wetlands



Data Current as of: 6/23/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

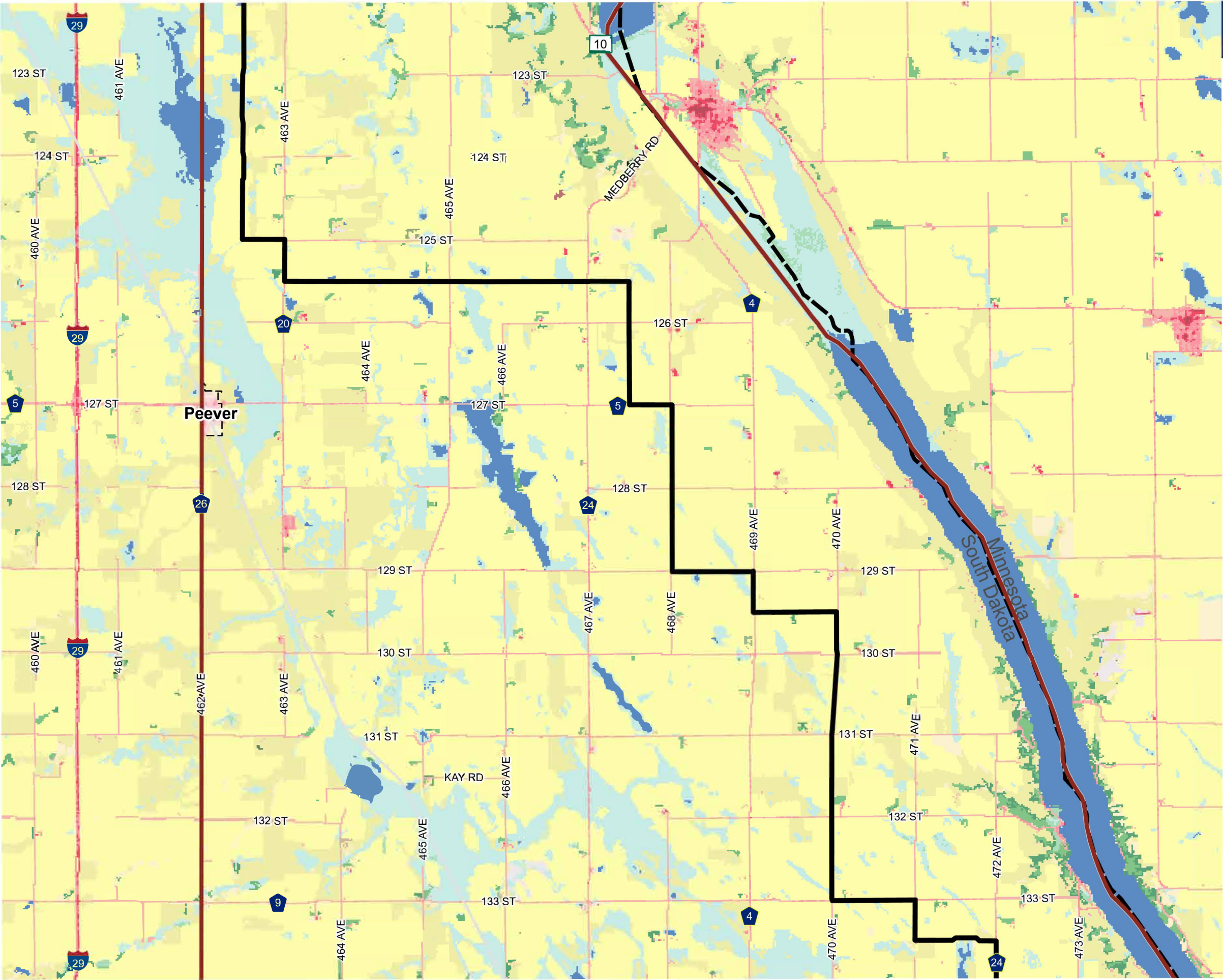
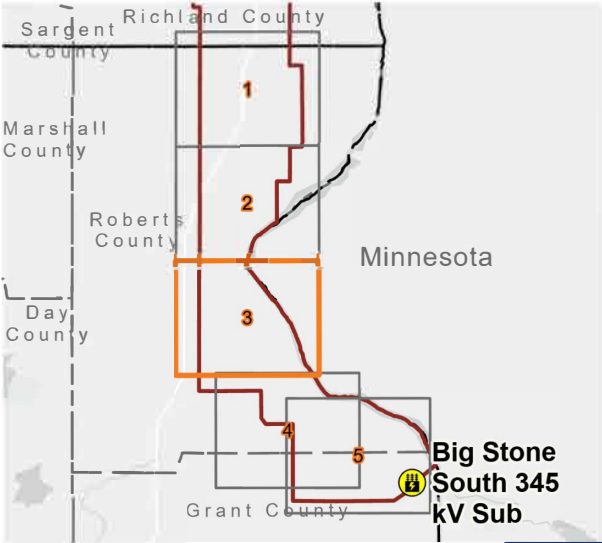
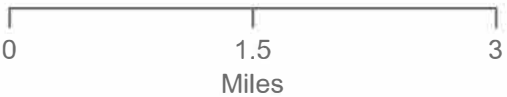


Figure 2 - National Land
Cover Dataset (NLCD)



BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

- | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| | City Boundary | | Barren Land |
| | County Boundary | | Deciduous Forest |
| | State Boundary | | Evergreen Forest |
| | Facility | | Mixed Forest |
| | Study Area | | Shrub/Scrub |
| | Open Water | | Grassland/
Herbaceous |
| | Developed Open
Space | | Pasture/Hay |
| | Developed Low
Intensity | | Cultivated Crops |
| | Developed
Medium Intensity | | Woody Wetlands |
| | Developed High
Intensity | | Emergent
Herbaceous
Wetlands |



Data Current as of: 6/23/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

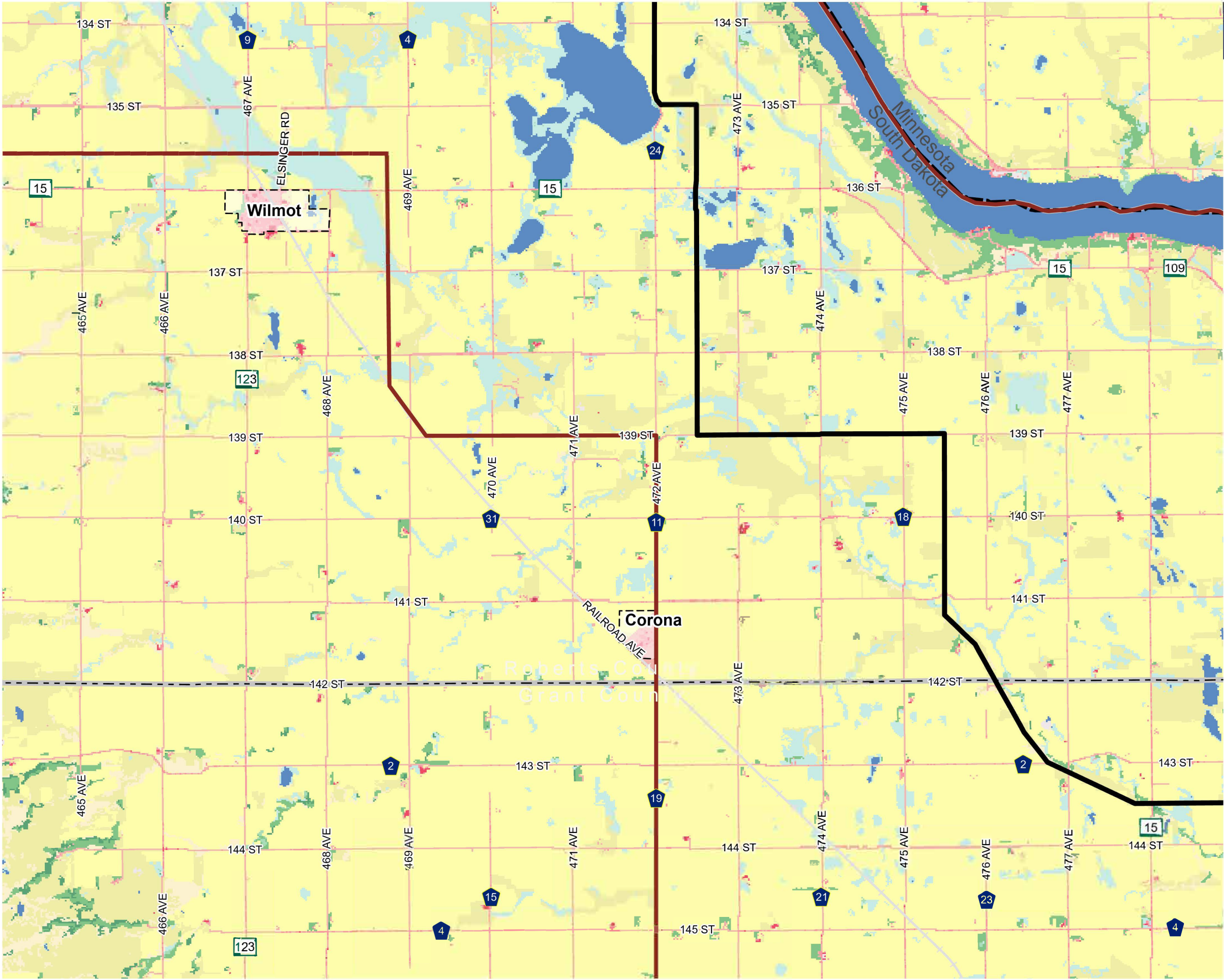
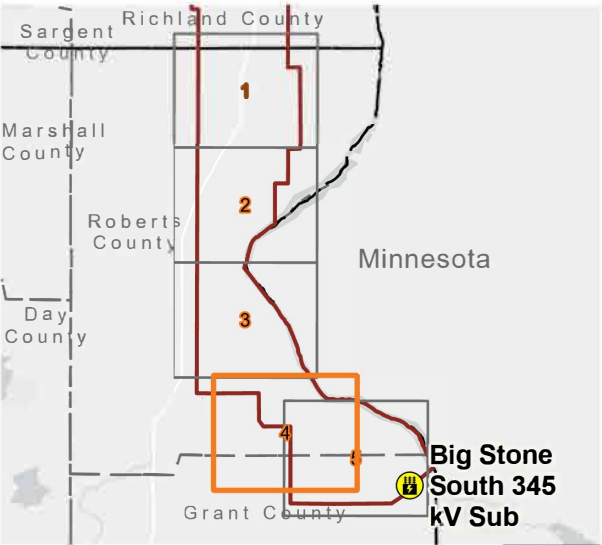
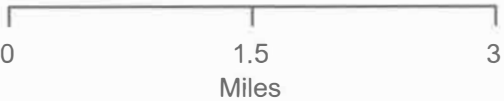


Figure 2 - National Land
Cover Dataset (NLCD)



**BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT**

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Project Substation | Developed High Intensity |
| City Boundary | Barren Land |
| County Boundary | Deciduous Forest |
| State Boundary | Evergreen Forest |
| Facility | Mixed Forest |
| Study Area | Shrub/Scrub |
| Open Water | Grassland/Herbaceous |
| Developed Open Space | Pasture/Hay |
| Developed Low Intensity | Cultivated Crops |
| Developed Medium Intensity | Woody Wetlands |
| | Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands |



Data Current as of: 6/23/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

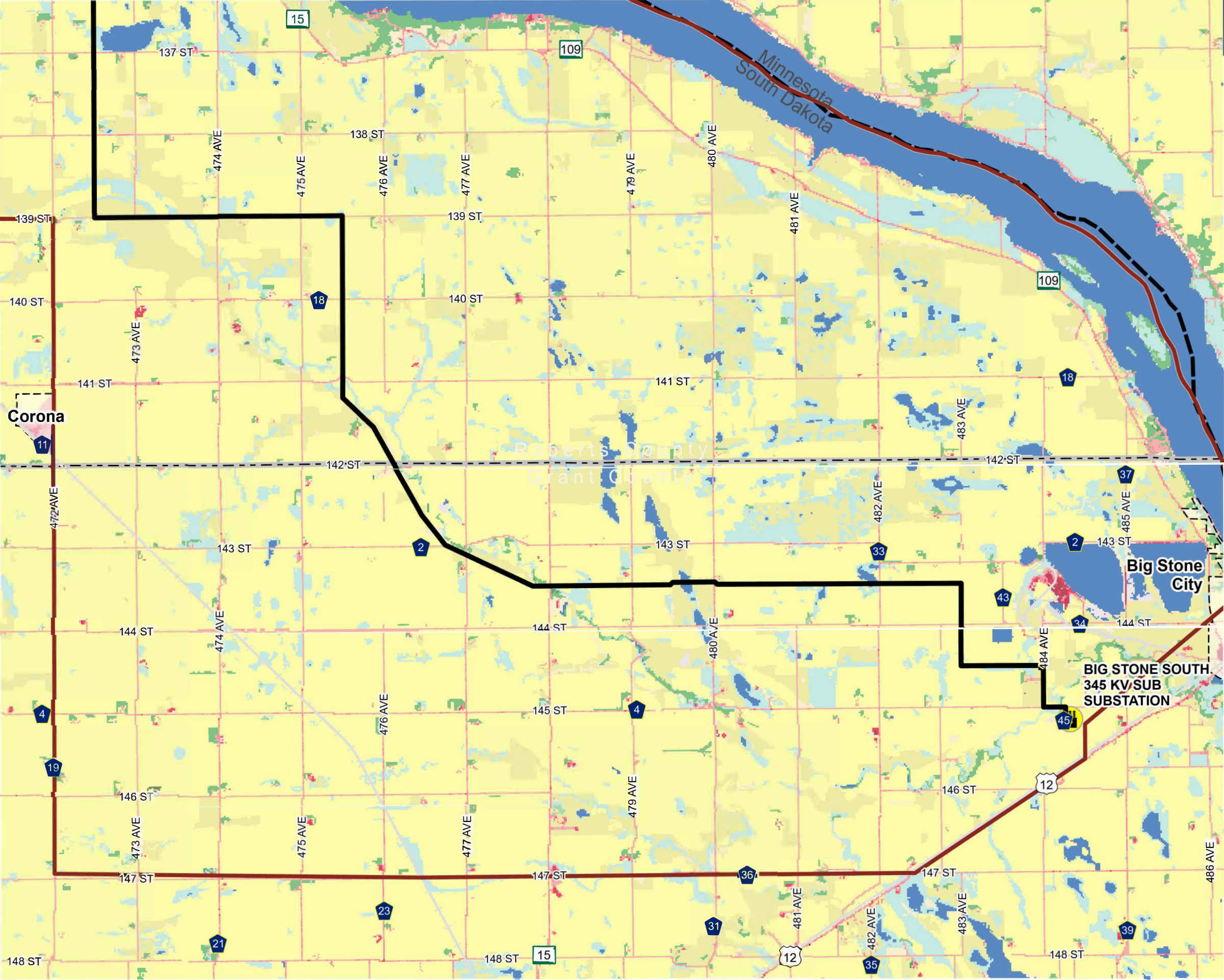
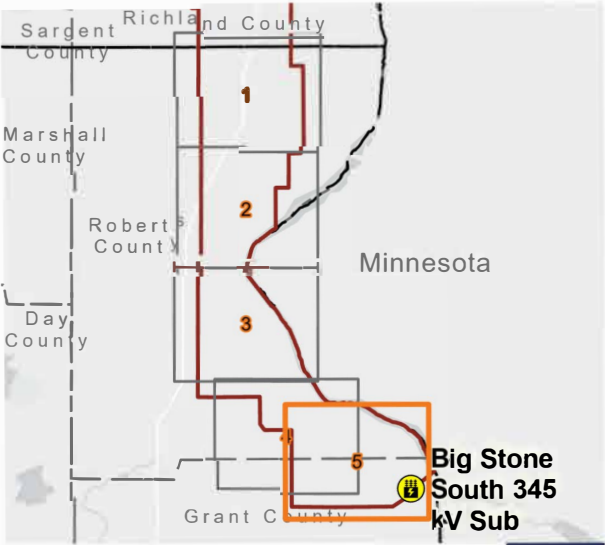


Figure 3 - HAPET
Duck Thunderstorm
Model



Big Stone South
to Hankinson to Bison

BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

- Facility

Study Area

City Boundary

County Boundary

PLSS Sections

State Boundary

Priority Level (Pairs / Sq Mi)

Priority 1 (>100 pairs/sq mi)

Priority 2 (80-100 pairs/sq mi)

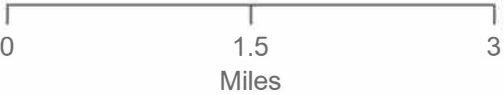
Priority 3 (60-80 pairs/sq mi)

Priority 4 (40-60 pairs/sq mi)

Priority 5 (25-40 pairs/sq mi)

Priority 6 (10-25 pairs/sq mi)

Priority 7 (0-10 pairs/sq mi)



Data Current as of: 6/23/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

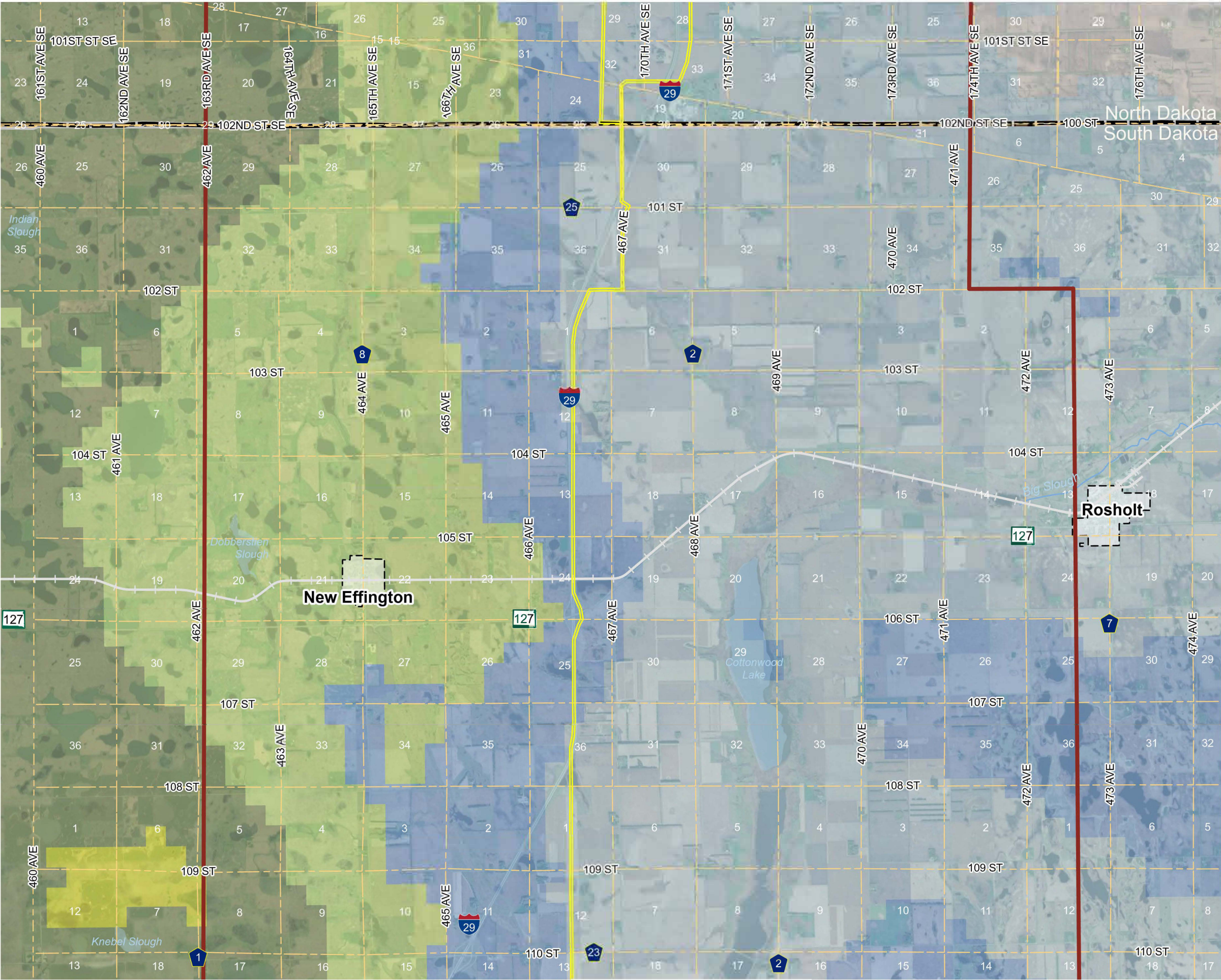
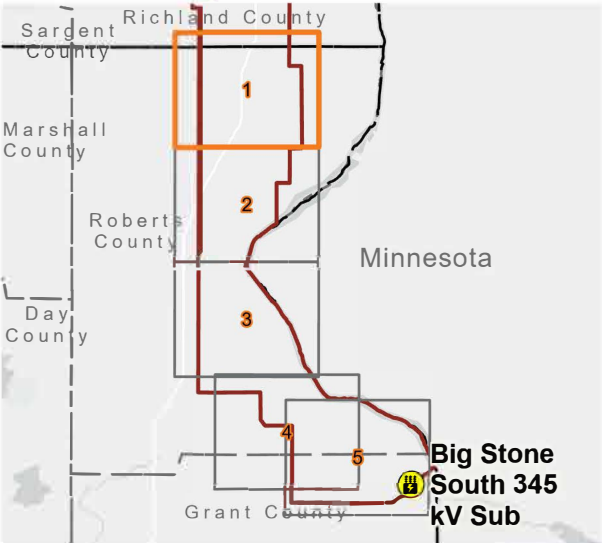


Figure 3 - HAPET
Duck Thunderstorm
Model



Big Stone South
to Hankinson to Bison

BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

- Facility

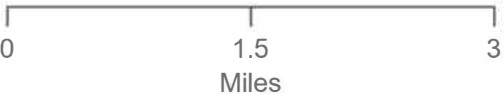
Study Area

County Boundary

PLSS Sections

State Boundary
- Priority Level (Pairs / Sq Mi)

 - Priority 1 (>100 pairs/sq mi)
 - Priority 2 (80-100 pairs/sq mi)
 - Priority 3 (60-80 pairs/sq mi)
 - Priority 4 (40-60 pairs/sq mi)
 - Priority 5 (25-40 pairs/sq mi)
 - Priority 6 (10-25 pairs/sq mi)
 - Priority 7 (0-10 pairs/sq mi)



Data Current as of: 6/23/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

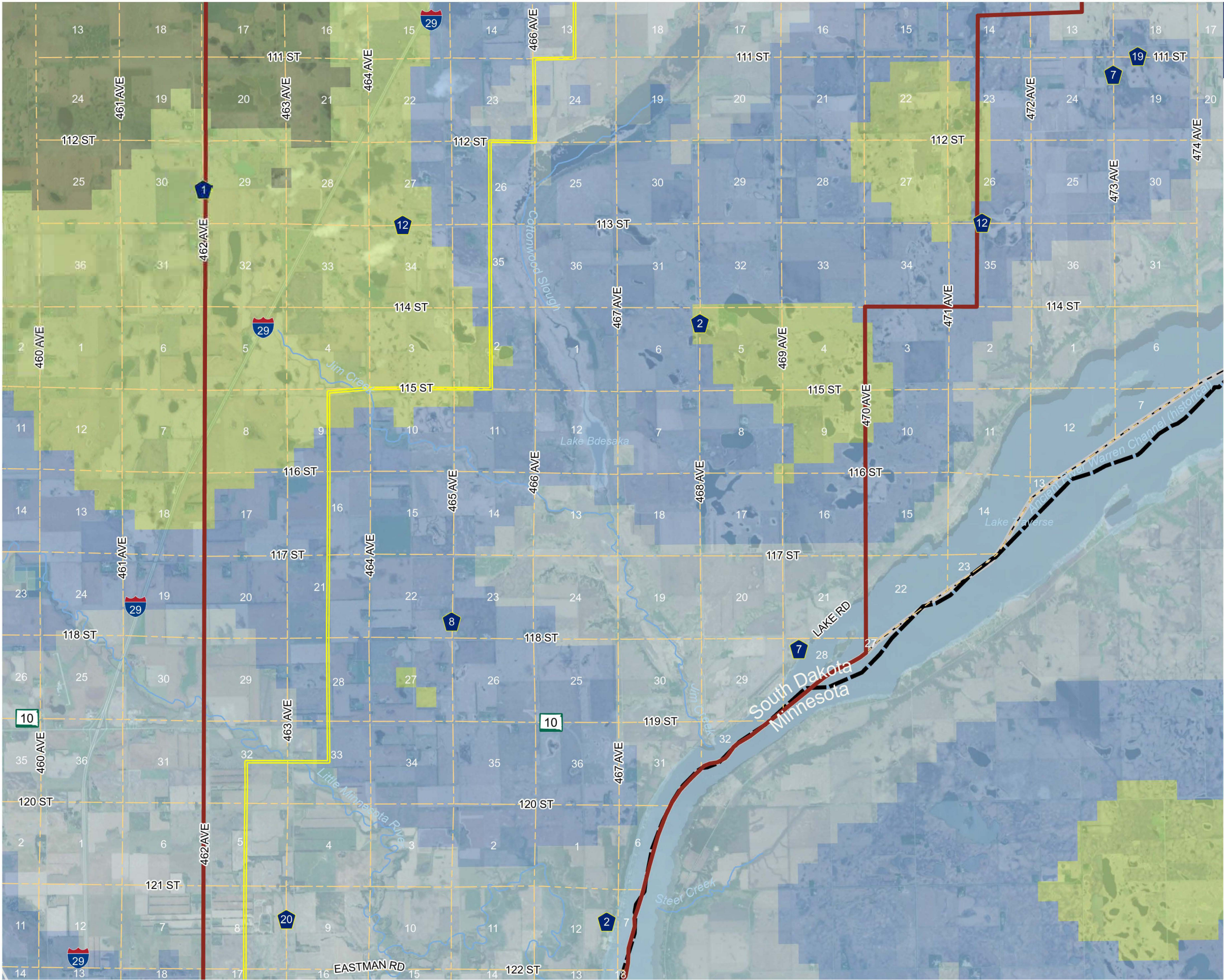
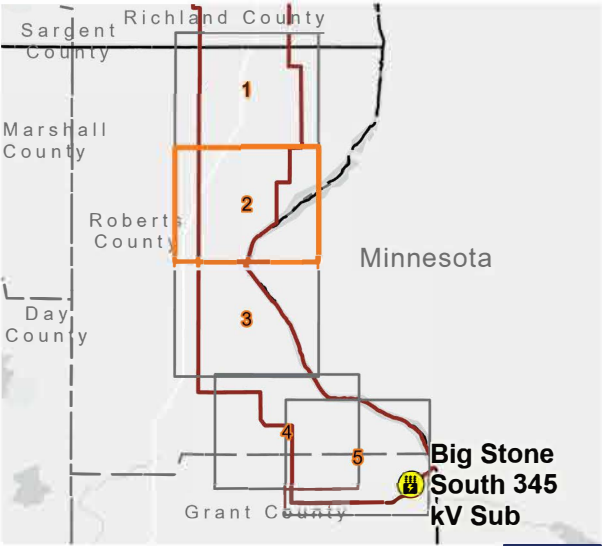


Figure 3 - HAPET
Duck Thunderstorm
Model



Big Stone South
to Hankinson to Bison

BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

- Facility

Study Area

City Boundary

County Boundary

PLSS Sections

State Boundary
- Priority Level (Pairs / Sq Mi)

Priority 1 (>100 pairs/sq mi)

Priority 2 (80-100 pairs/sq mi)

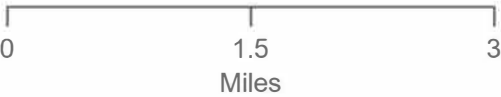
Priority 3 (60-80 pairs/sq mi)

Priority 4 (40-60 pairs/sq mi)

Priority 5 (25-40 pairs/sq mi)

Priority 6 (10-25 pairs/sq mi)

Priority 7 (0-10 pairs/sq mi)



Data Current as of: 6/23/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

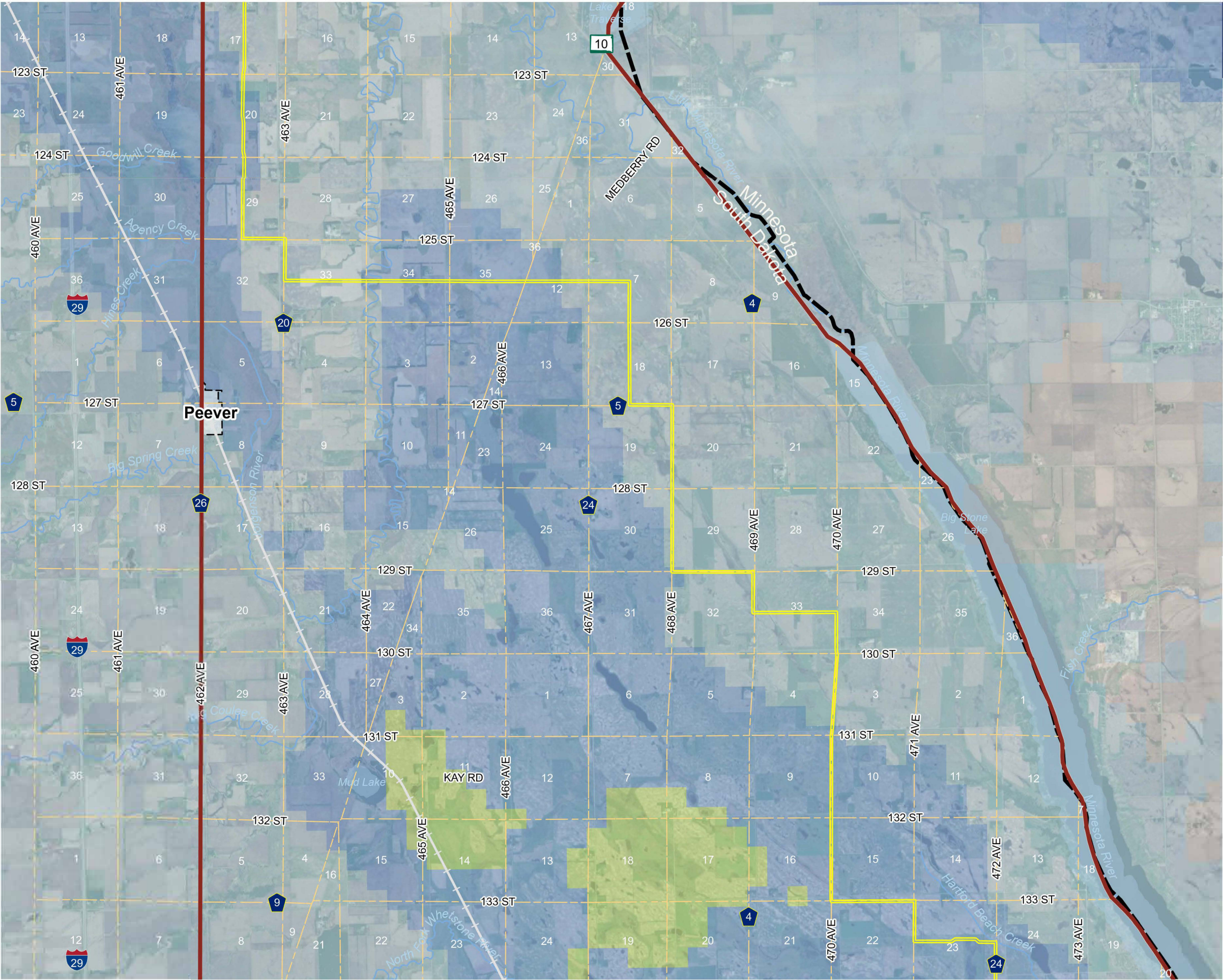
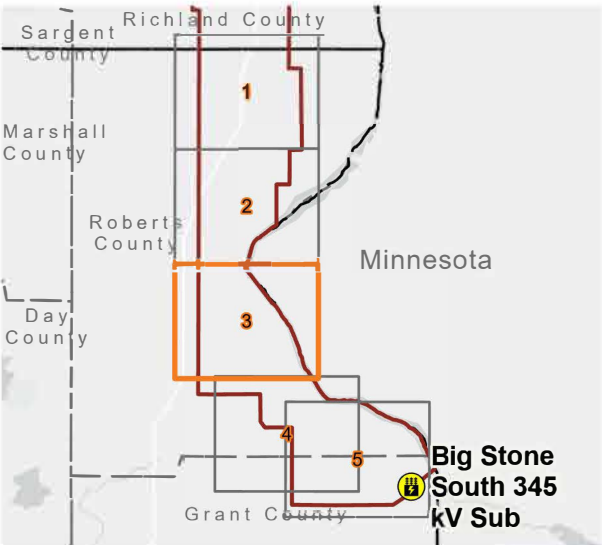


Figure 3 - HAPET
Duck Thunderstorm
Model



Big Stone South
to Hankinson to Bison

BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

- Facility

Study Area

City Boundary

County Boundary

PLSS Sections

State Boundary
- Priority Level (Pairs /
Sq Mi)

Priority 1 (>100
pairs/sq mi)

Priority 2 (80-100
pairs/sq mi)

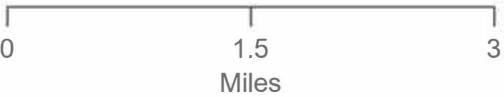
Priority 3 (60-80
pairs/sq mi)

Priority 4 (40-60
pairs/sq mi)

Priority 5 (25-40
pairs/sq mi)

Priority 6 (10-25
pairs/sq mi)

Priority 7 (0-10
pairs/sq mi)



Data Current as of: 6/23/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

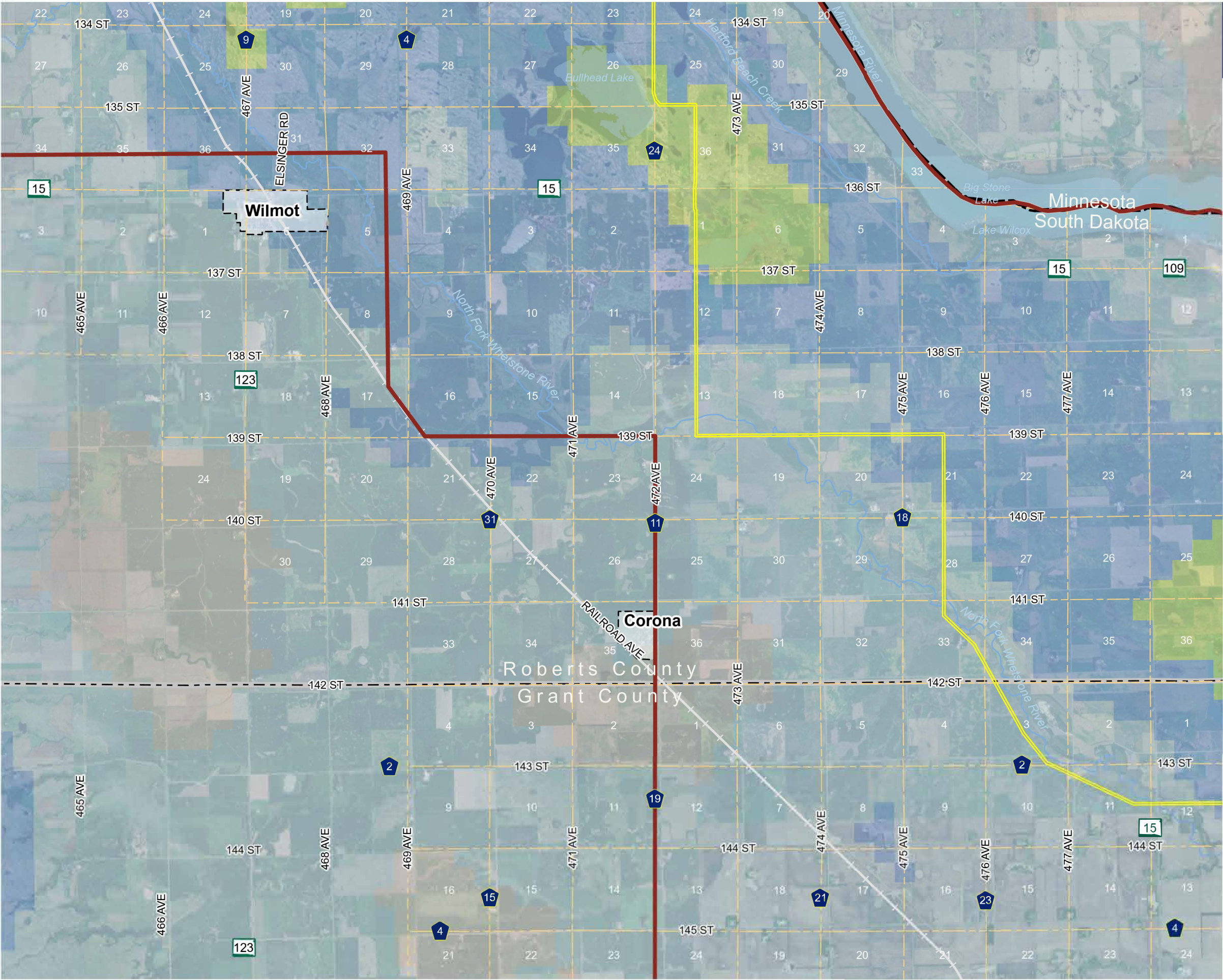
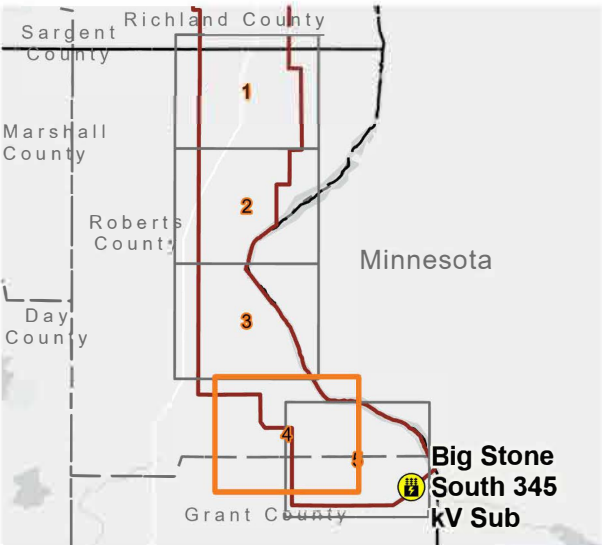


Figure 3 - HAPET
Duck Thunderstorm
Model



Big Stone South
to Hankinson to Bison

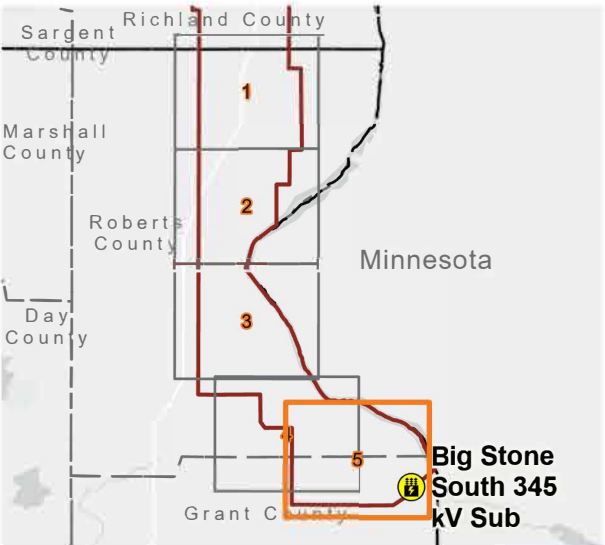
**BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT**

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Facility | Priority Level (Pairs / Sq Mi) |
| Study Area | Priority 1 (>100 pairs/sq mi) |
| City Boundary | Priority 2 (80-100 pairs/sq mi) |
| County Boundary | Priority 3 (60-80 pairs/sq mi) |
| PLSS Sections | Priority 4 (40-60 pairs/sq mi) |
| State Boundary | Priority 5 (25-40 pairs/sq mi) |
| | Priority 6 (10-25 pairs/sq mi) |
| | Priority 7 (0-10 pairs/sq mi) |



0 1.5 3
Miles

Data Current as of: 6/23/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

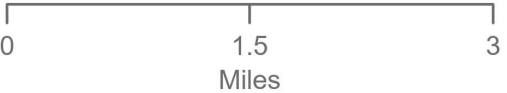


**Figure 4 - USFWS Wilson's
Phalarope Species Probability
Model**



**BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT**

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| Facility | Out of Species Range |
| Study Area | Priority 1 (Top 25%) |
| City Boundary | Priority 2 (25 - 50%) |
| County Boundary | Priority 3 (50 - 75%) |
| PLSS Sections | Priority 4 (75 - 100%) |
| State Boundary | |



Data Current as of: 8/6/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

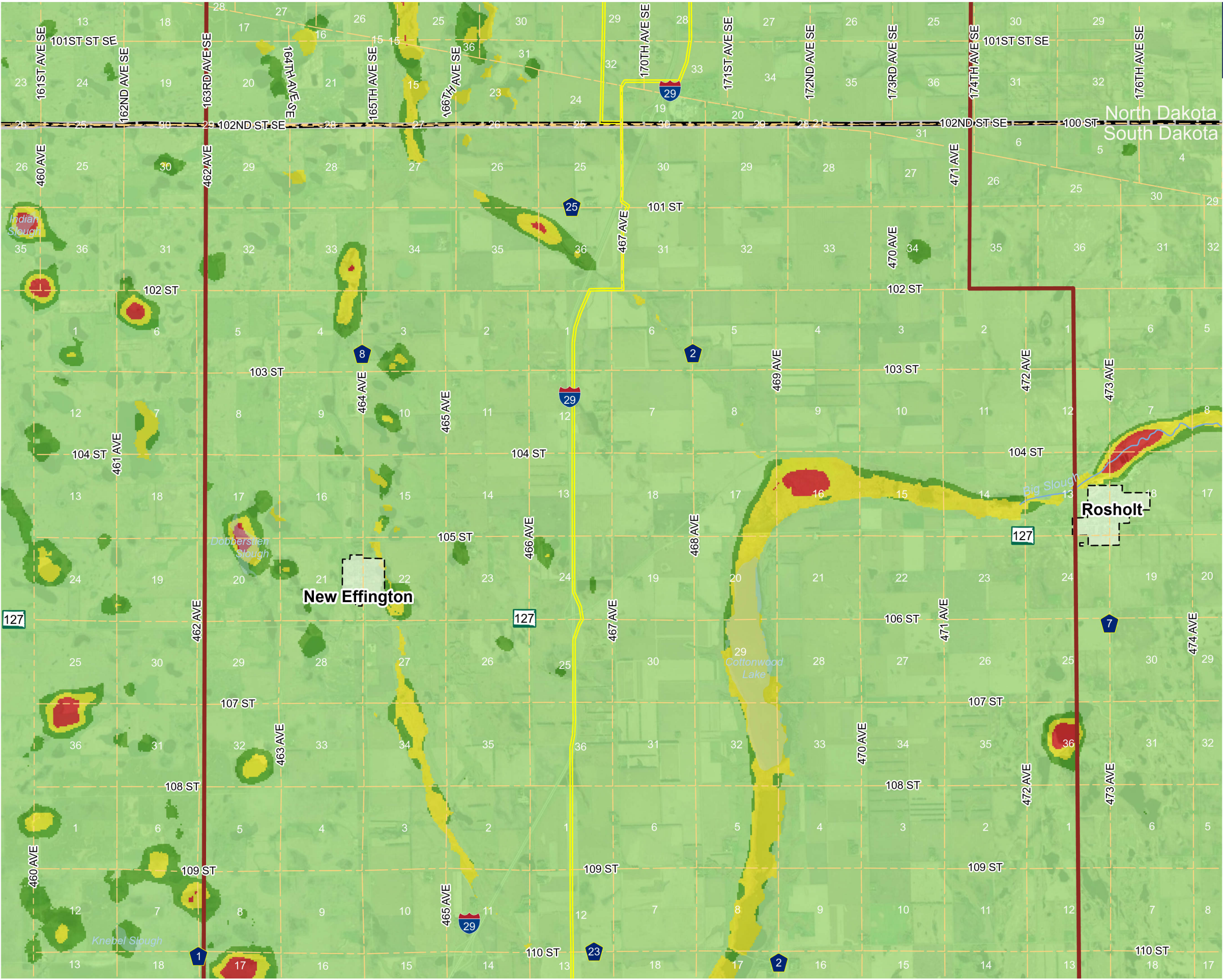
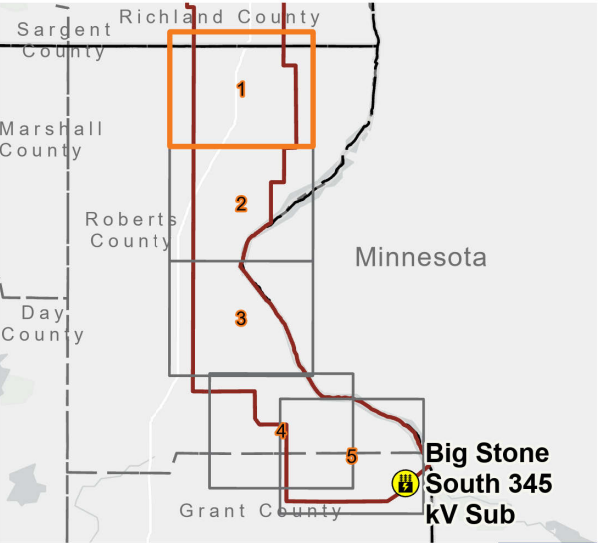


Figure 4 - USFWS Wilson's
Phalarope Species Probability
Model



BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| Facility | Out of Species Range |
| Study Area | Priority 1 (Top 25%) |
| County Boundary | Priority 2 (25 - 50%) |
| PLSS Sections | Priority 3 (50 - 75%) |
| State Boundary | Priority 4 (75 - 100%) |



0 1.5 3
Miles

Data Current as of: 8/6/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

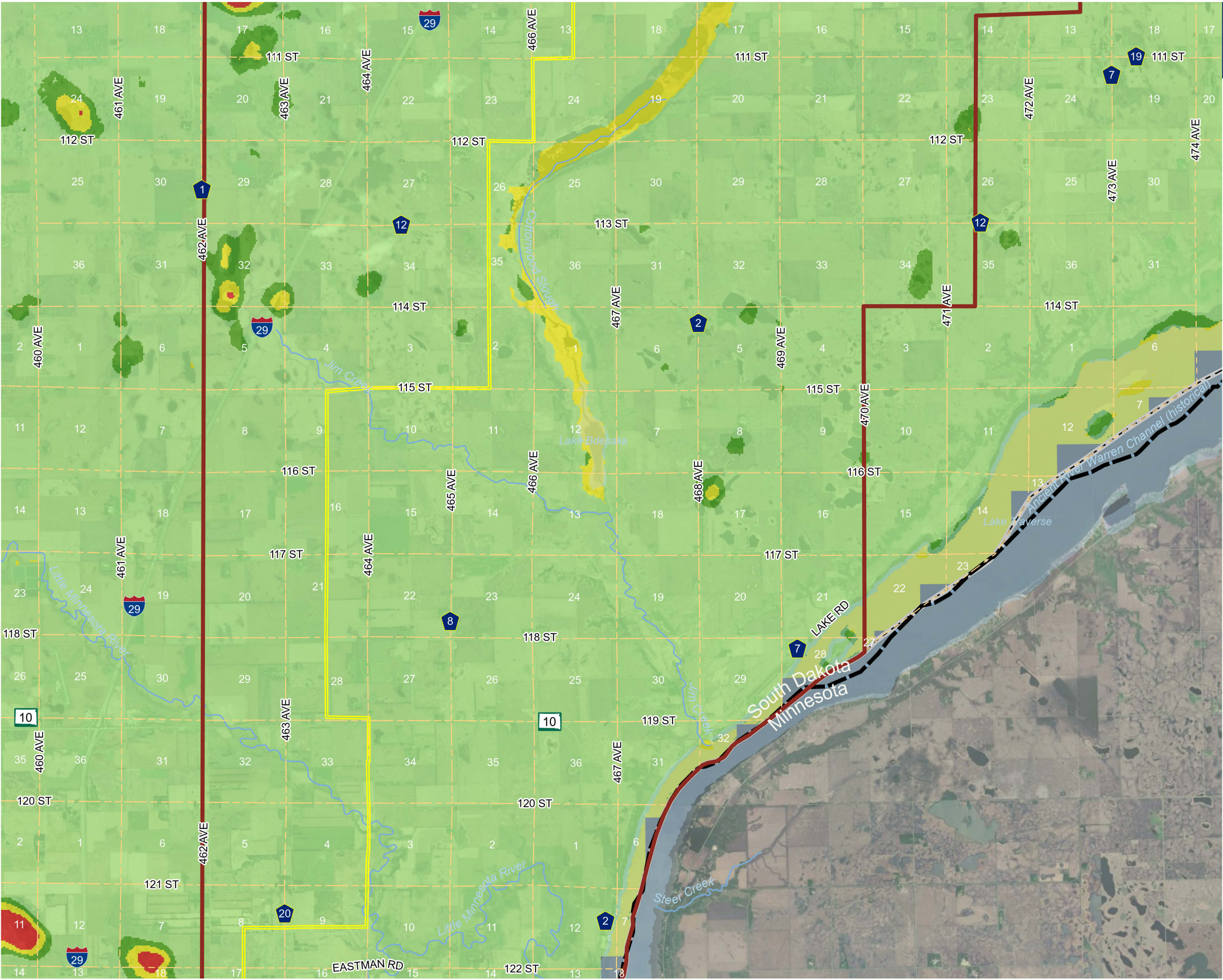
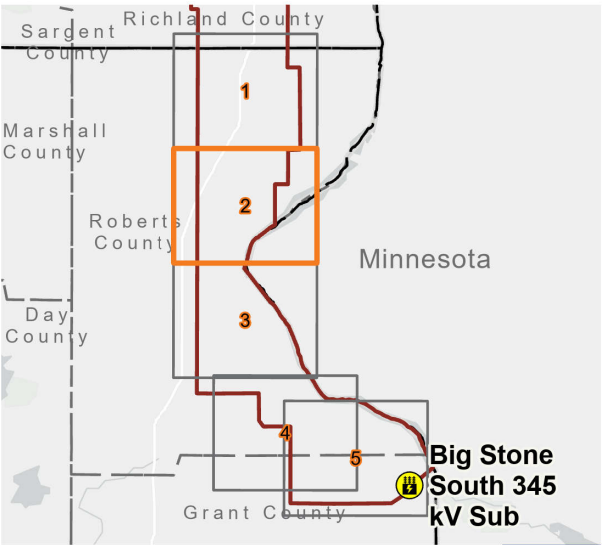


Figure 4 - USFWS Wilson's
Phalarope Species Probability
Model



BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

- Facility

Study Area

City Boundary

County Boundary

PLSS Sections

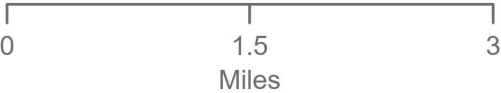
State Boundary
- Out of Species Range

Priority 1 (Top 25%)

Priority 2 (25 - 50%)

Priority 3 (50 - 75%)

Priority 4 (75 - 100%)



Data Current as of: 8/6/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

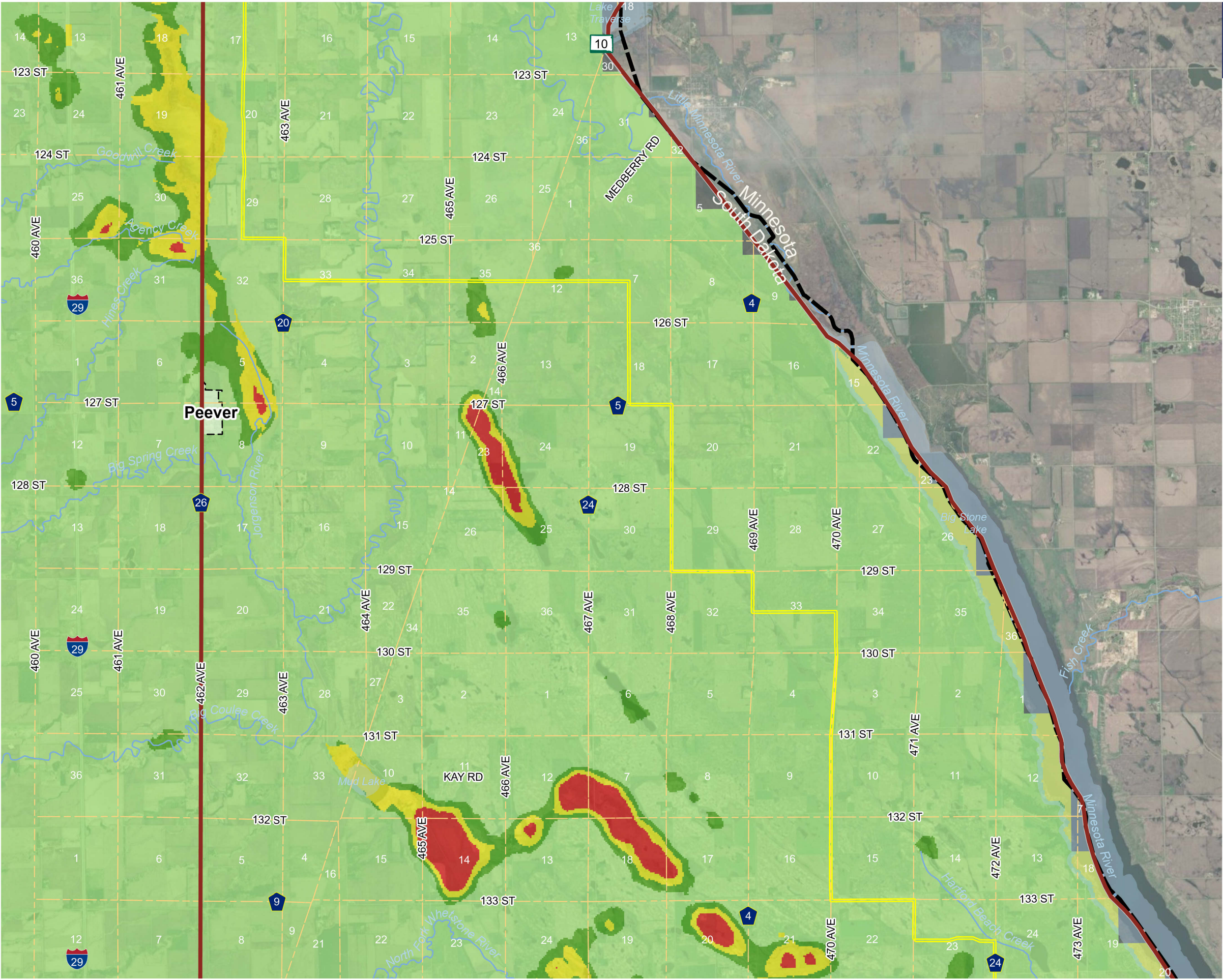
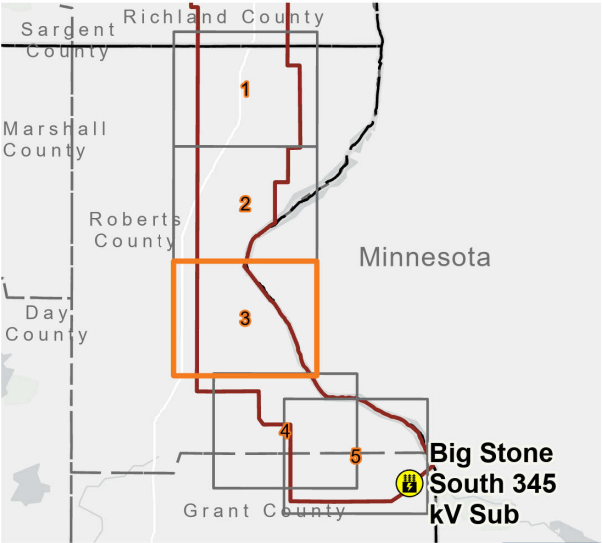


Figure 4 - USFWS Wilson's
Phalarope Species Probability
Model



BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

- Facility

Study Area

City Boundary

County Boundary

PLSS Sections

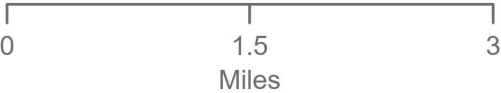
State Boundary
- Out of Species Range

Priority 1 (Top 25%)

Priority 2 (25 - 50%)

Priority 3 (50 - 75%)

Priority 4 (75 - 100%)



Data Current as of: 8/6/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

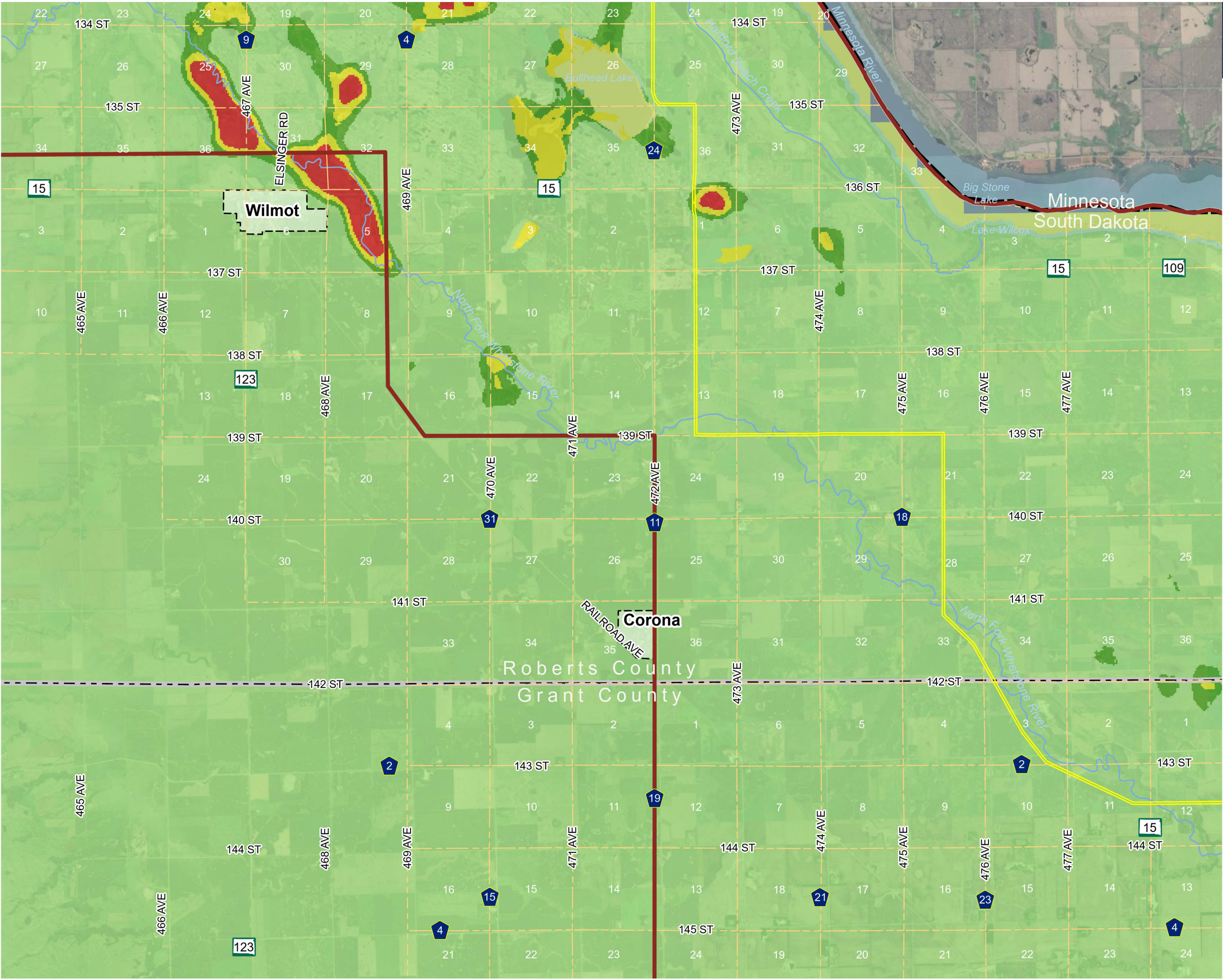
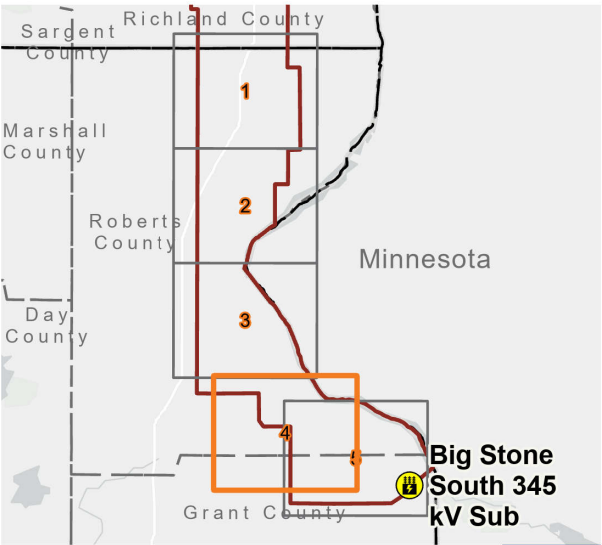


Figure 4 - USFWS Wilson's
Phalarope Species Probability
Model



**BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT**

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| Facility | Out of Species Range |
| Study Area | Priority 1 (Top 25%) |
| City Boundary | Priority 2 (25 - 50%) |
| County Boundary | Priority 3 (50 - 75%) |
| PLSS Sections | Priority 4 (75 - 100%) |
| State Boundary | |



0 1.5 3
Miles

Data Current as of: 8/6/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

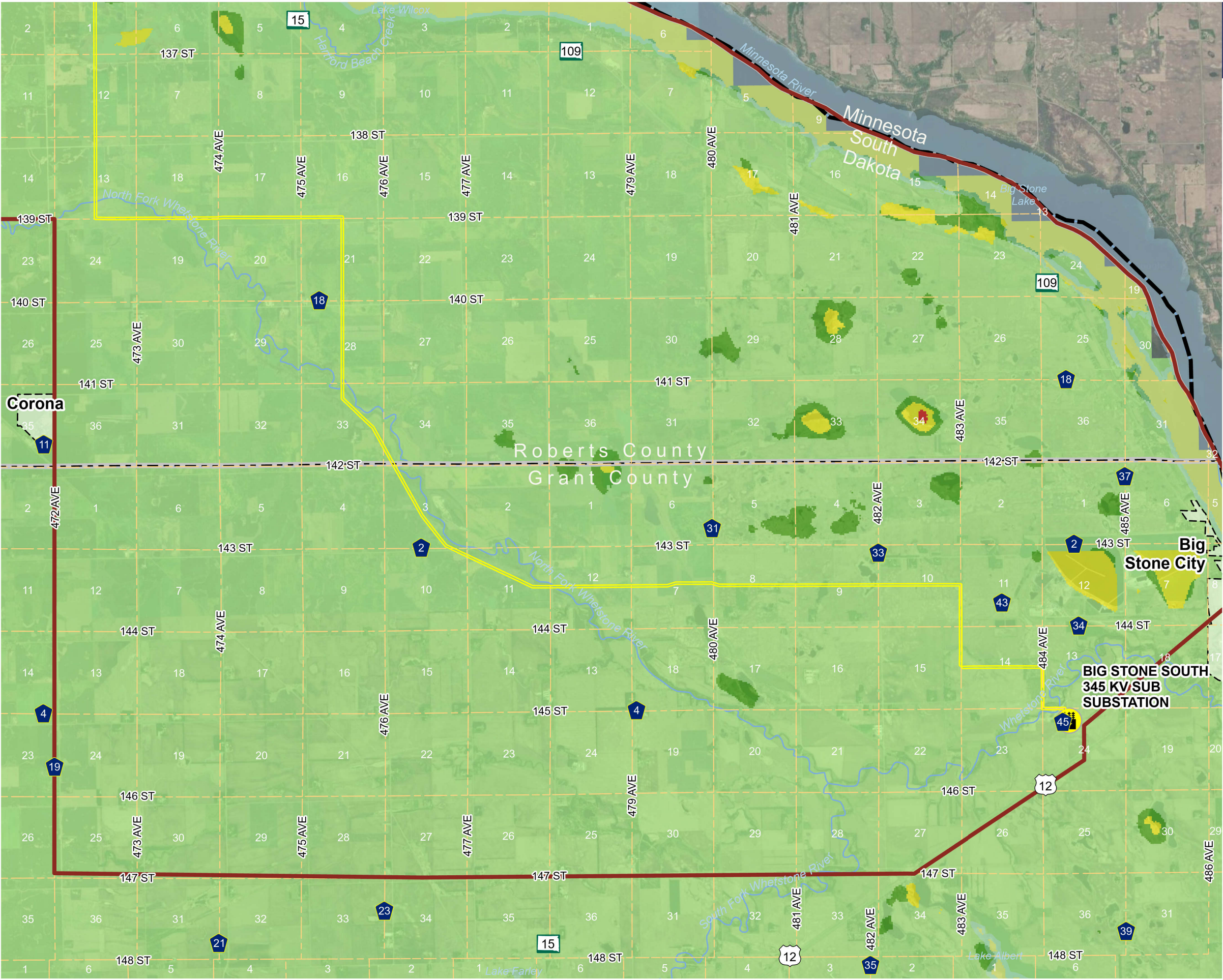
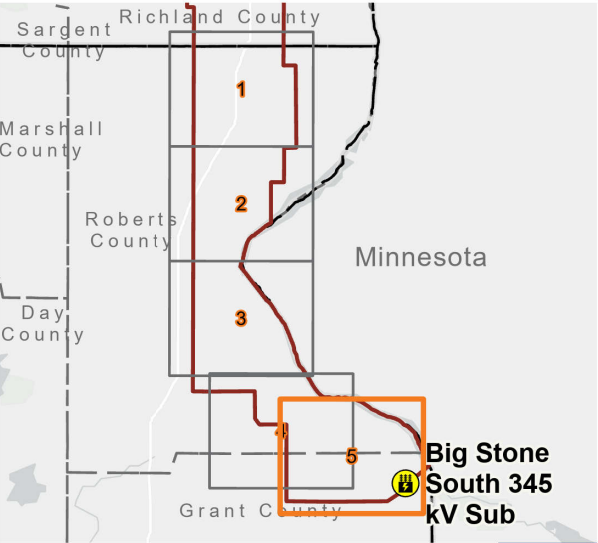
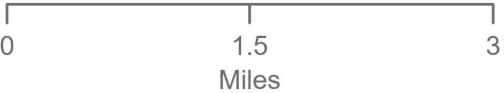


Figure 5 - Desktop Delineated
Western Regal Fritillary Habitat



BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

- Facility
- Study Area
- City Boundary
- County Boundary
- PLSS Sections
- State Boundary
- Western Regal Fritillary
- Unbroken Grasslands



Data Current as of: 8/6/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

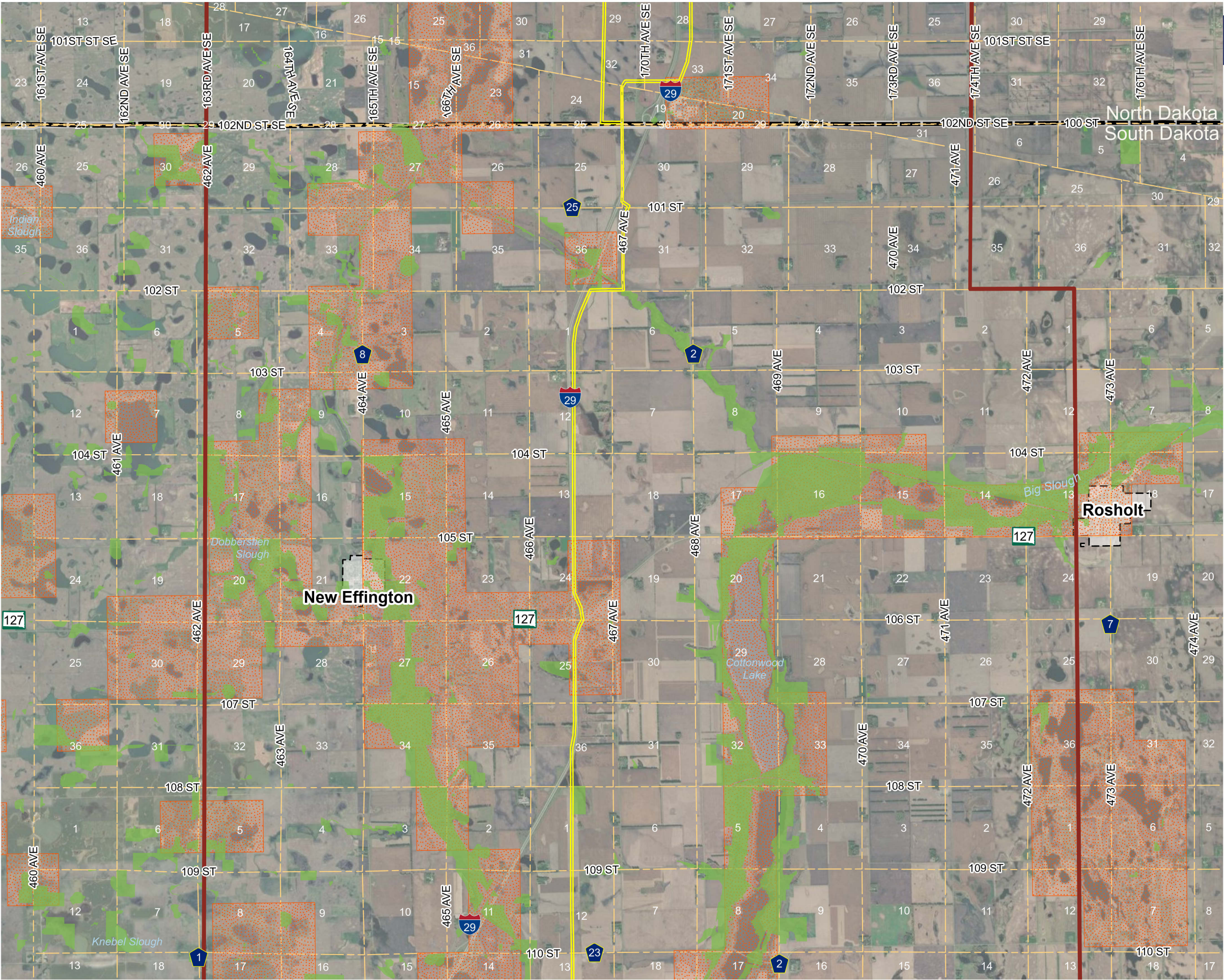
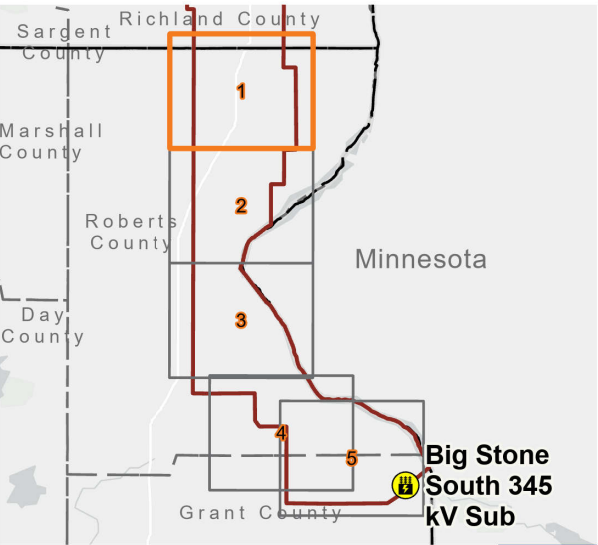
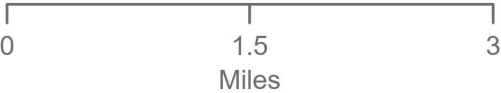


Figure 5 - Desktop Delineated
Western Regal Fritillary Habitat



BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

- Facility
- Study Area
- County Boundary
- PLSS Sections
- State Boundary
- Western Regal Fritillary
- Preliminary Route Desktop
- Delineated Western Regal Fritillary Habitat
- Unbroken Grasslands



Data Current as of: 8/6/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

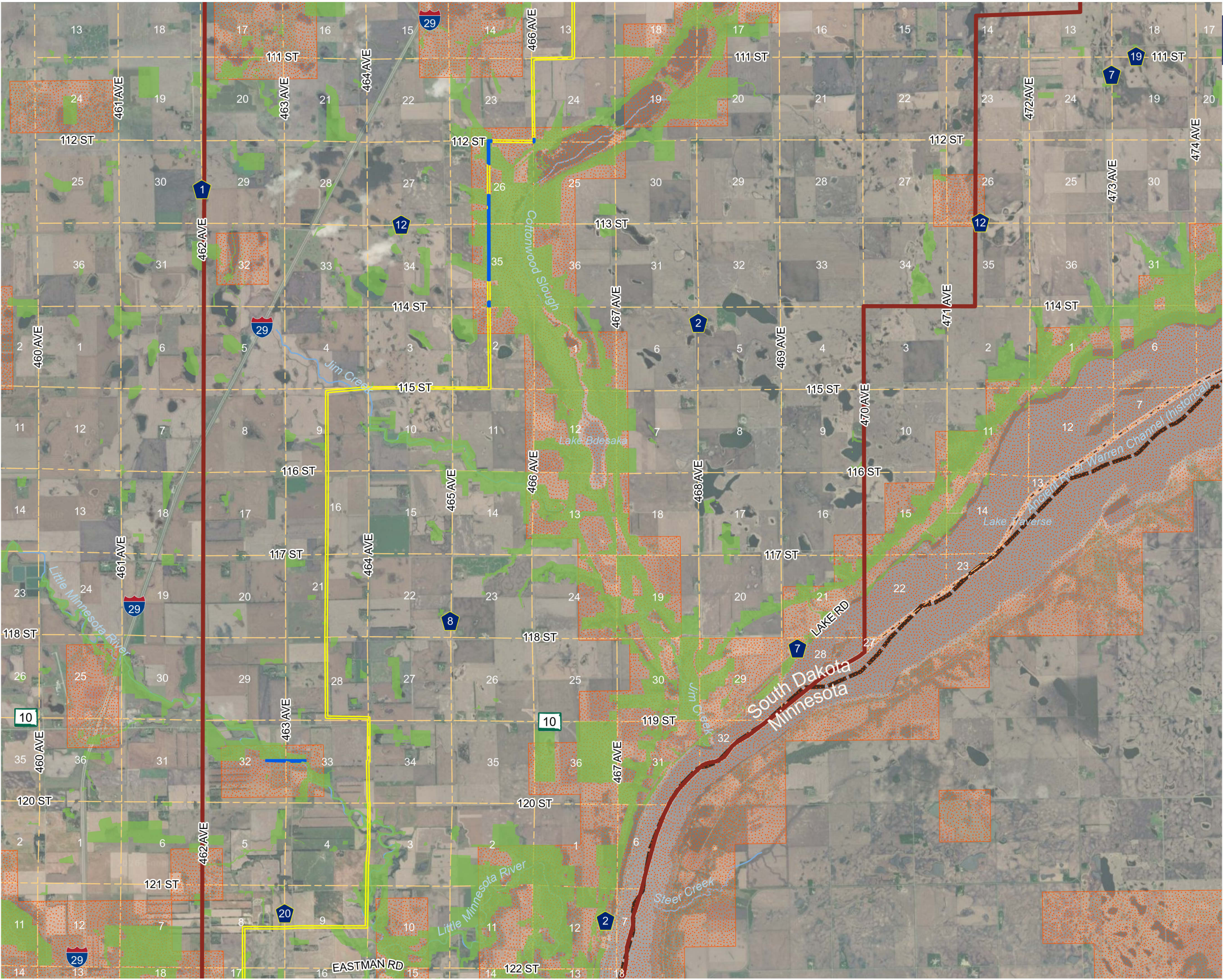
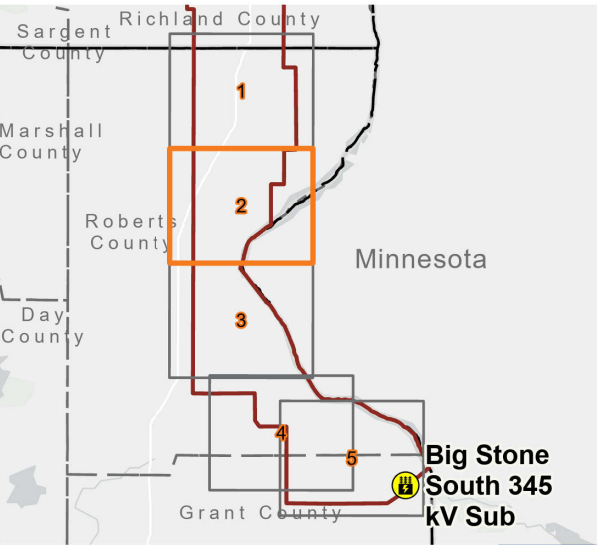
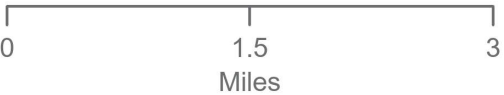


Figure 5 - Desktop Delineated
Western Regal Fritillary Habitat



BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

- Facility
- Study Area
- City Boundary
- County Boundary
- PLSS Sections
- State Boundary
- Western Regal Fritillary
- Preliminary Route Desktop
- Delineated Western Regal Fritillary Habitat
- Unbroken Grasslands



Data Current as of: 8/6/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

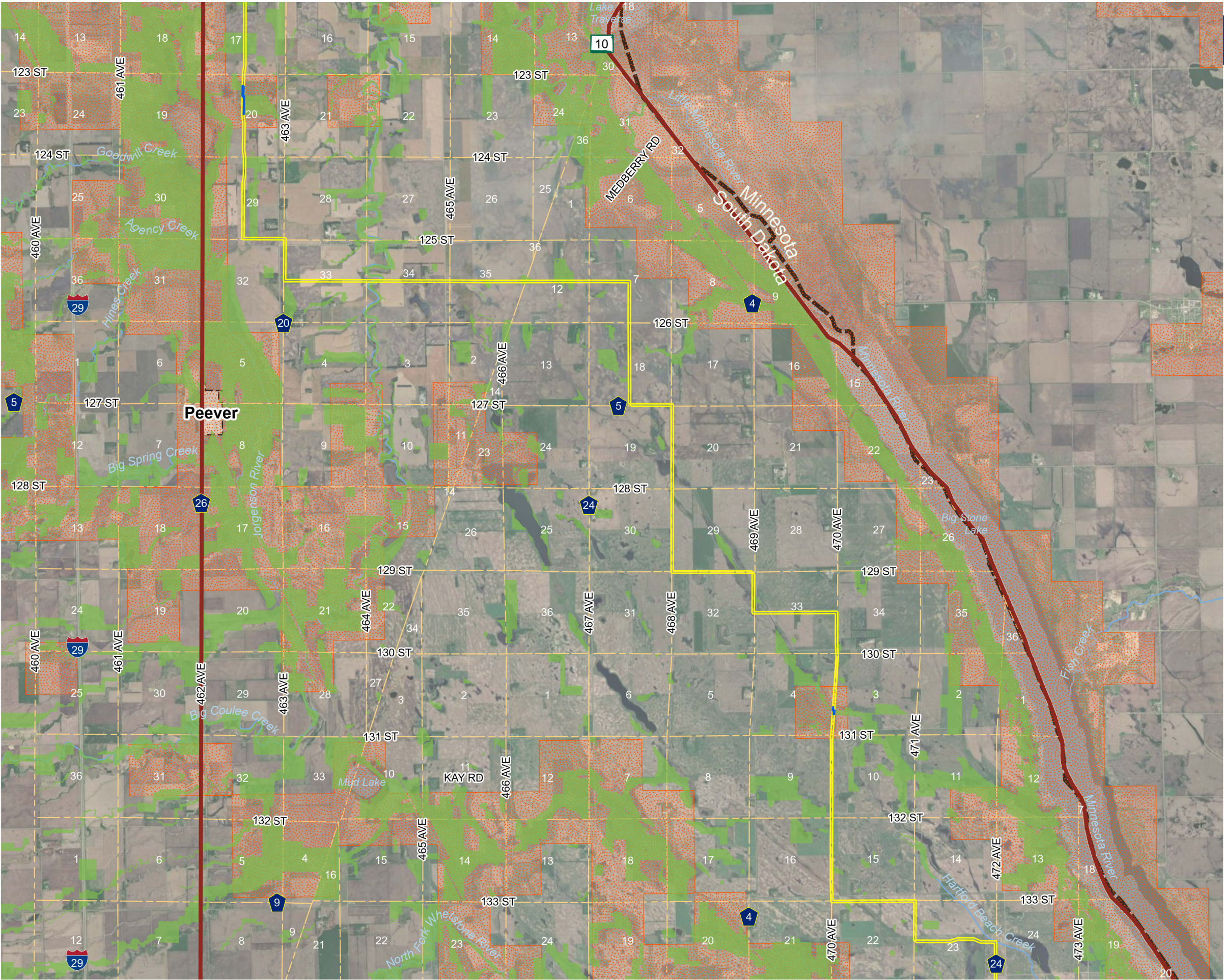
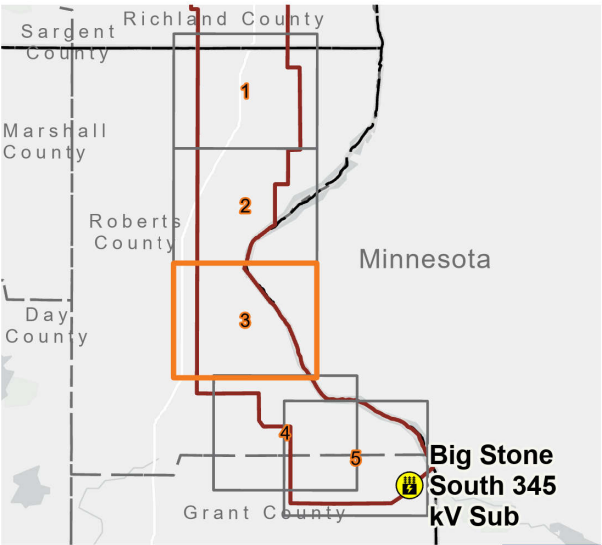
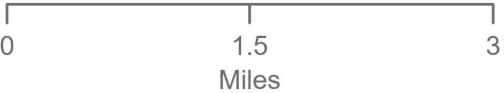


Figure 5 - Desktop Delineated
Western Regal Fritillary Habitat



BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

- Facility
- Study Area
- City Boundary
- County Boundary
- PLSS Sections
- State Boundary
- Western Regal Fritillary
- Preliminary Route Desktop
- Delineated Western Regal Fritillary Habitat
- Unbroken Grasslands



Data Current as of: 8/6/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

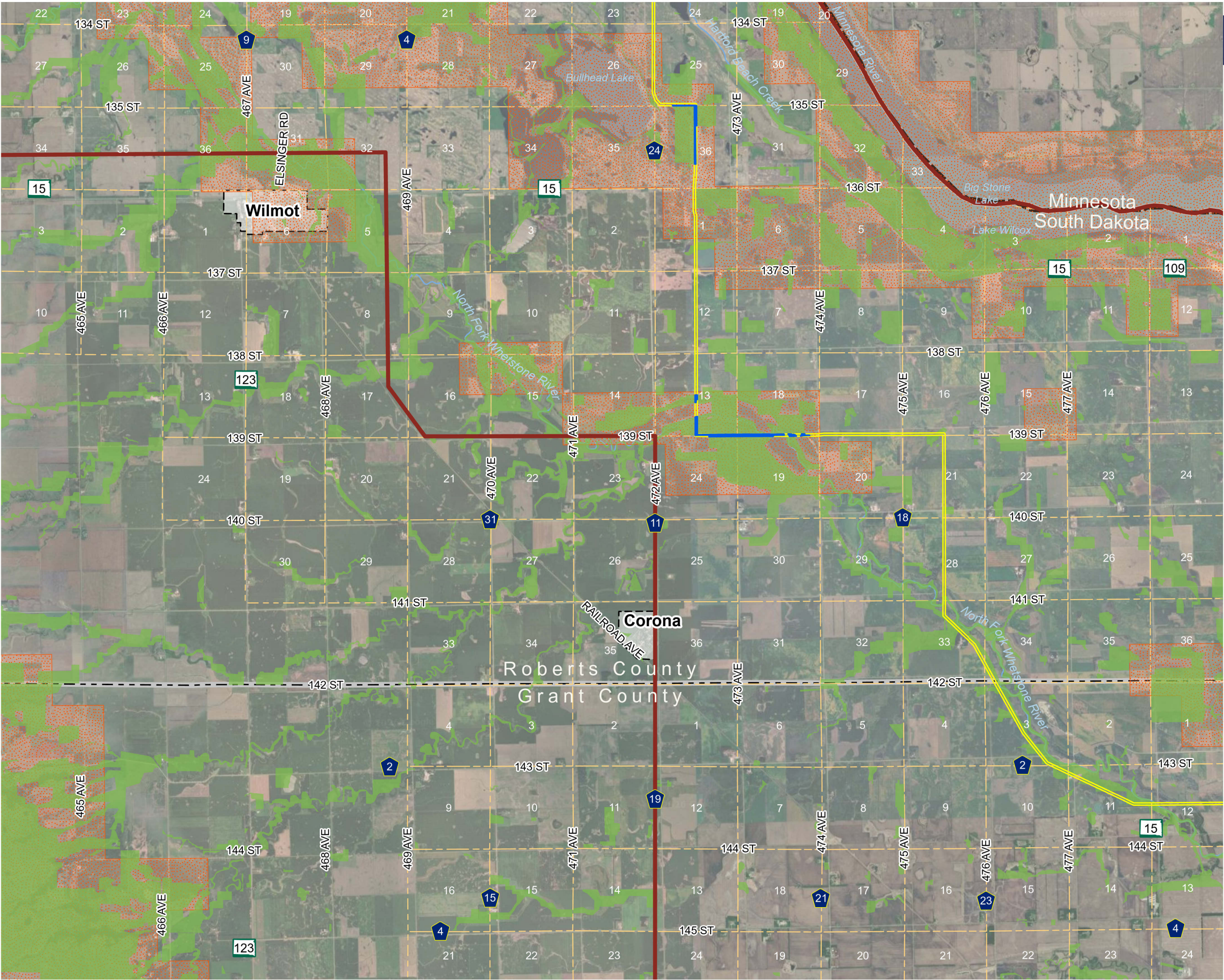
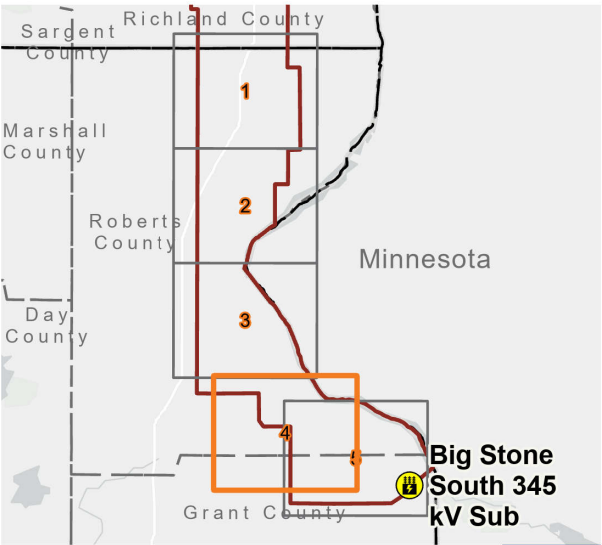
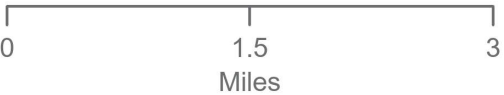


Figure 5 - Desktop Delineated
Western Regal Fritillary Habitat



**BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT**

- Facility
- Study Area
- City Boundary
- County Boundary
- PLSS Sections
- State Boundary
- Western Regal Fritillary
- Preliminary Route Desktop
- Delineated Western Regal Fritillary Habitat
- Unbroken Grasslands



Data Current as of: 8/6/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

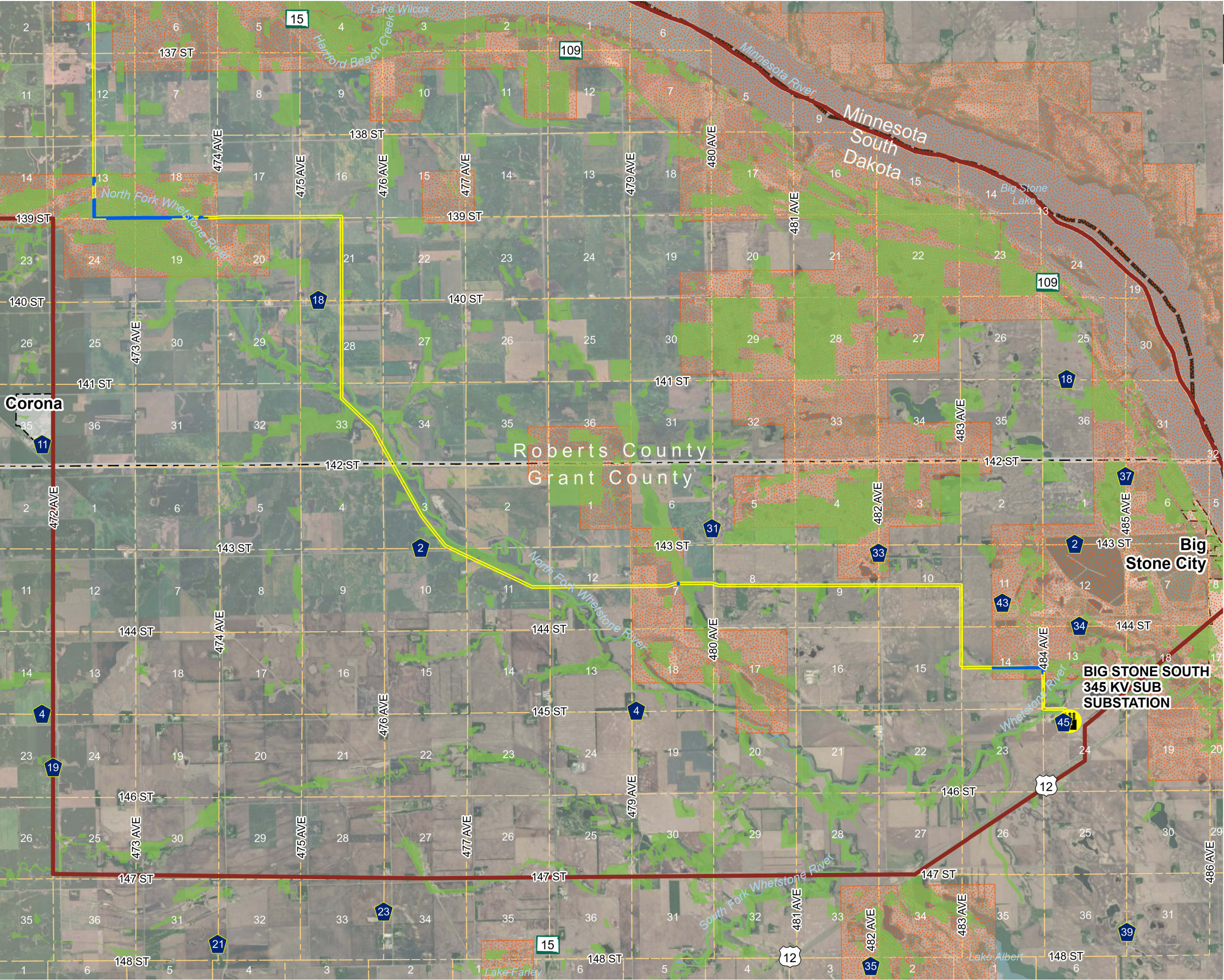
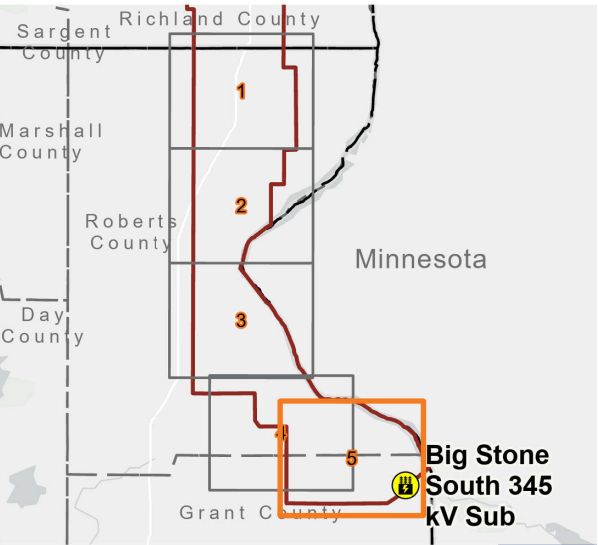


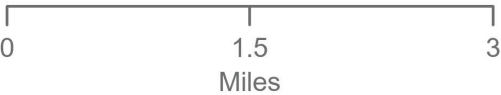
Figure 6 - Desktop Delineated
Dakota Skipper
Habitat



Big Stone South
to Hankinson to Bison

BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

- Facility
- Study Area
- City Boundary
- County Boundary
- PLSS Sections
- State Boundary
- Dakota Skipper
- Unbroken Grasslands



Data Current as of: 8/6/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

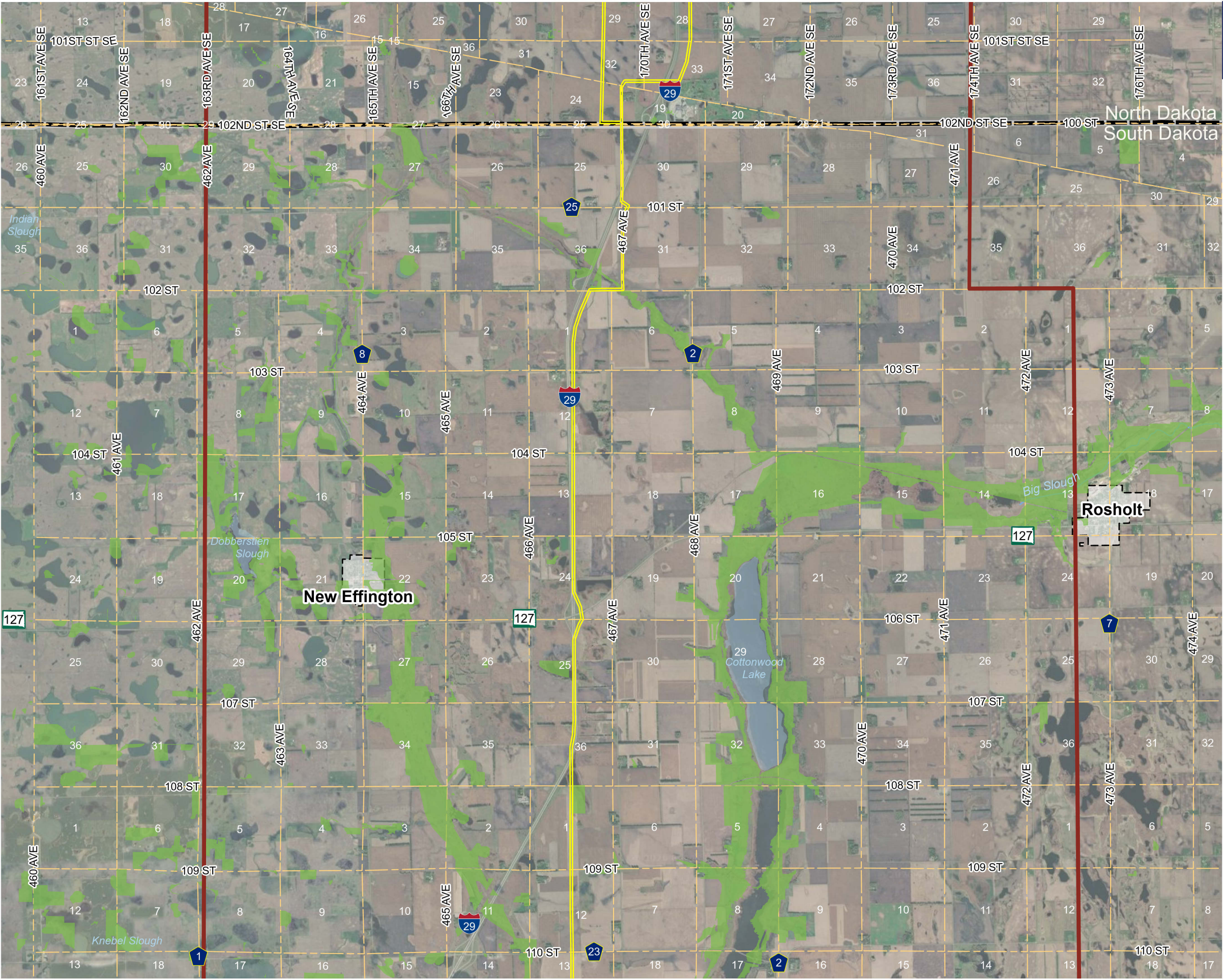
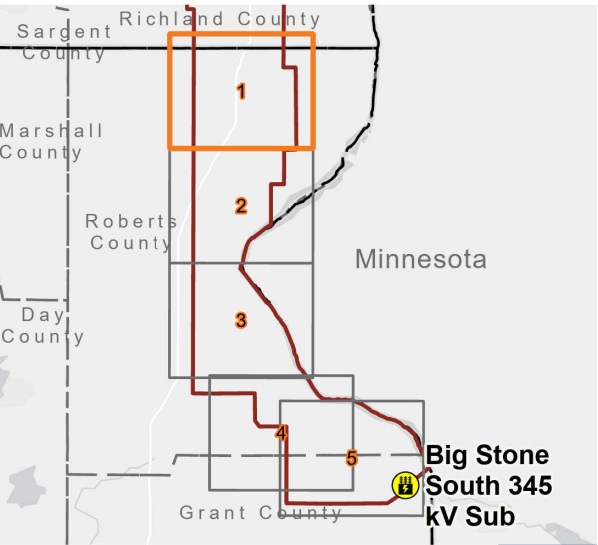


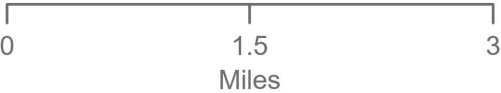
Figure 6 - Desktop Delineated
Dakota Skipper
Habitat



Big Stone South
to Hankinson to Bison

BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

- Facility
- Study Area
- County Boundary
- PLSS Sections
- State Boundary
- Dakota Skipper
- Preliminary Route
- Desktop
- Delineated Dakota Skipper Habitat
- Unbroken Grasslands



Data Current as of: 8/6/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

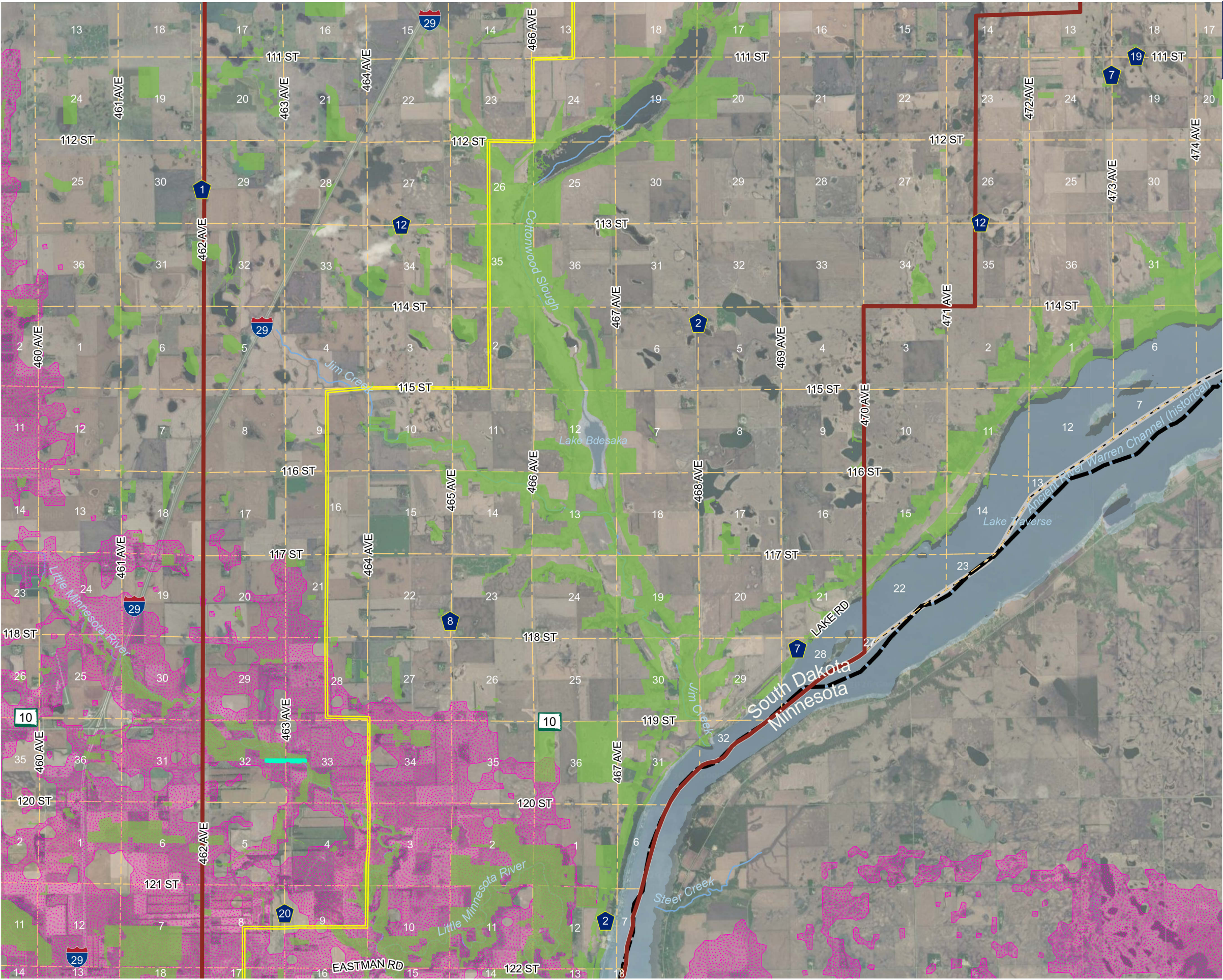
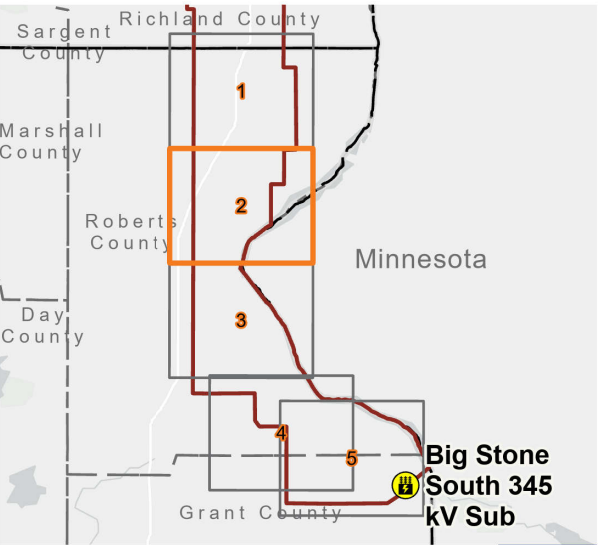


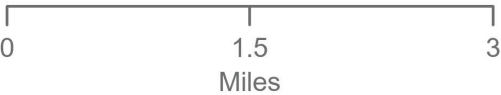
Figure 6 - Desktop Delineated
Dakota Skipper
Habitat



Big Stone South
to Hankinson to Bison

BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

- Facility
- Study Area
- City Boundary
- County Boundary
- PLSS Sections
- State Boundary
- Dakota Skipper
- Preliminary Route
- Desktop
- Delineated Dakota Skipper Habitat
- Unbroken Grasslands



Data Current as of: 8/6/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

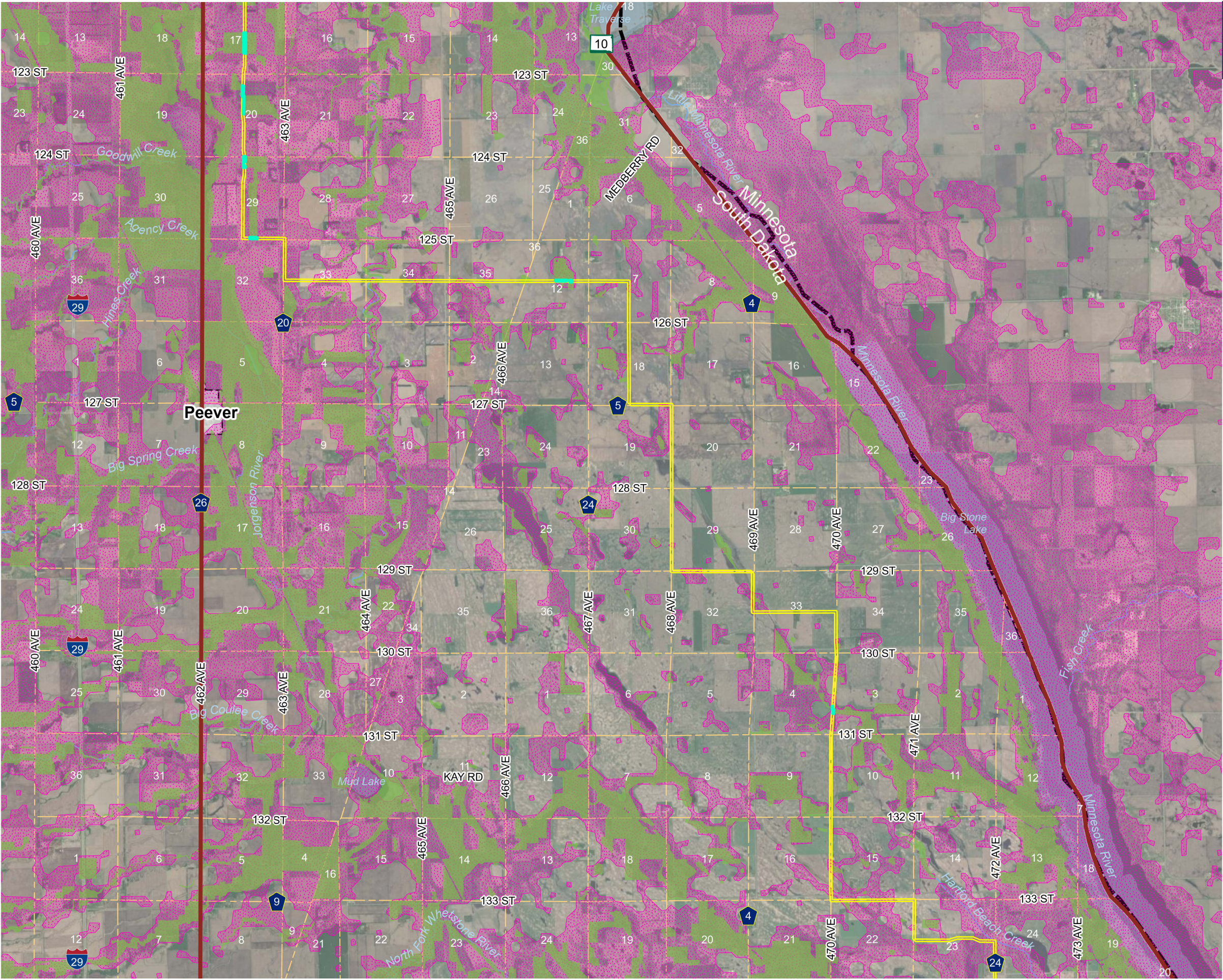
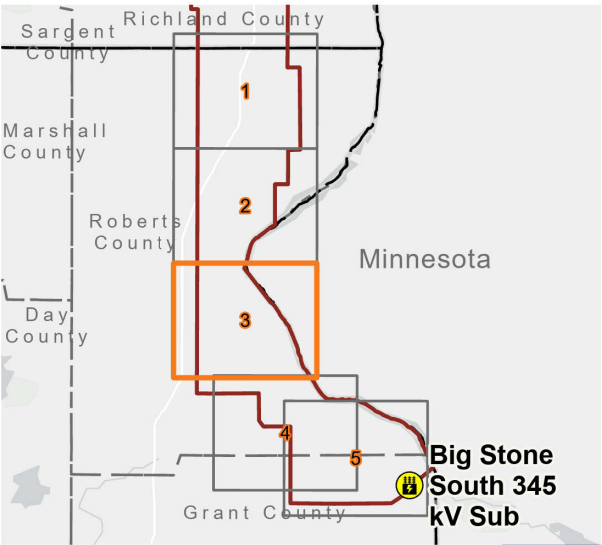


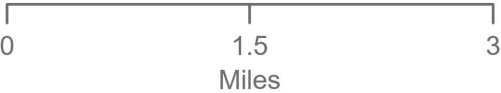
Figure 6 - Desktop Delineated
Dakota Skipper
Habitat



Big Stone South
to Hankinson to Bison

BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

- Facility
- Study Area
- City Boundary
- County Boundary
- PLSS Sections
- State Boundary
- Dakota Skipper
- Preliminary Route
- Desktop
- Delineated Dakota Skipper Habitat
- Unbroken Grasslands



Data Current as of: 8/6/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change

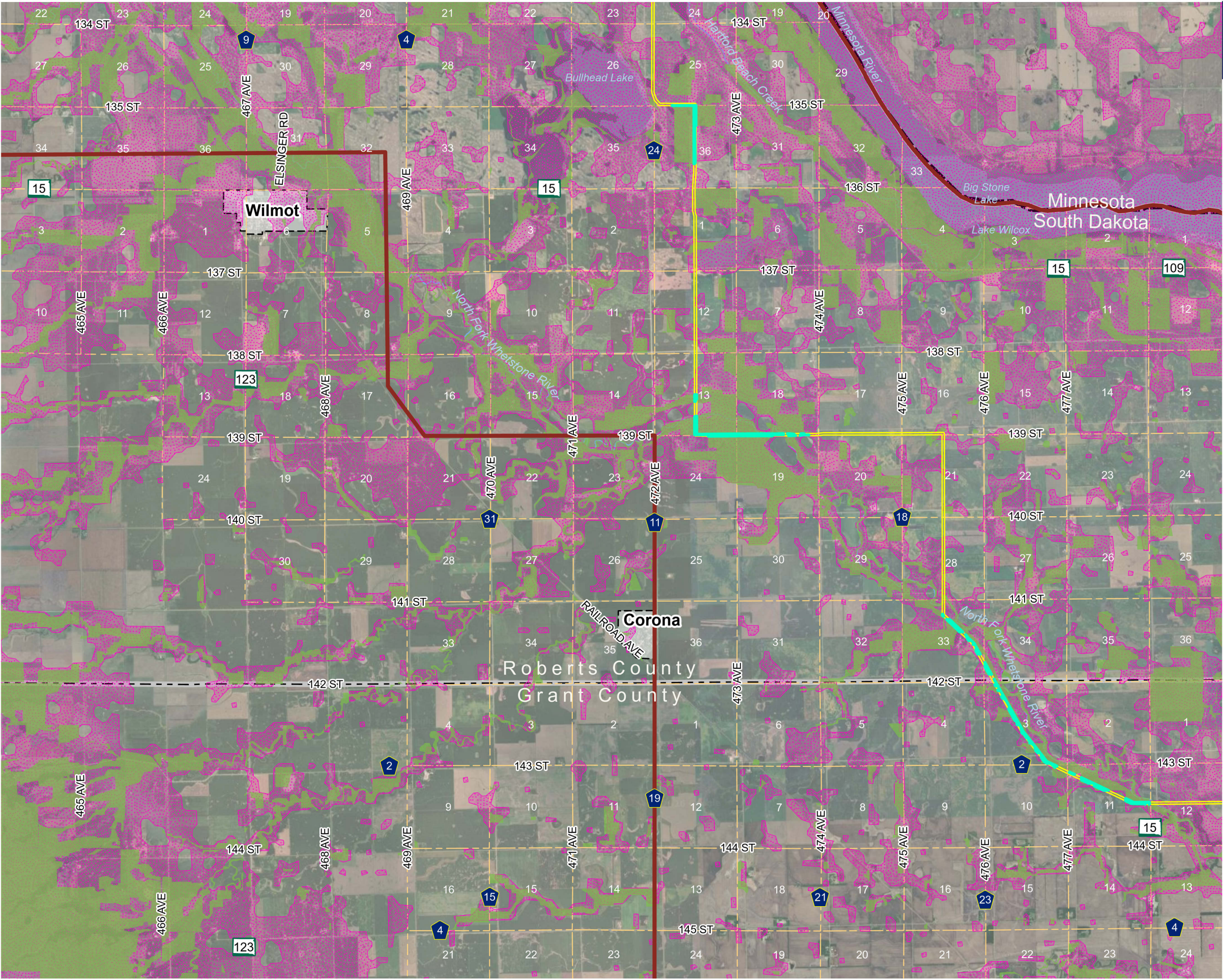
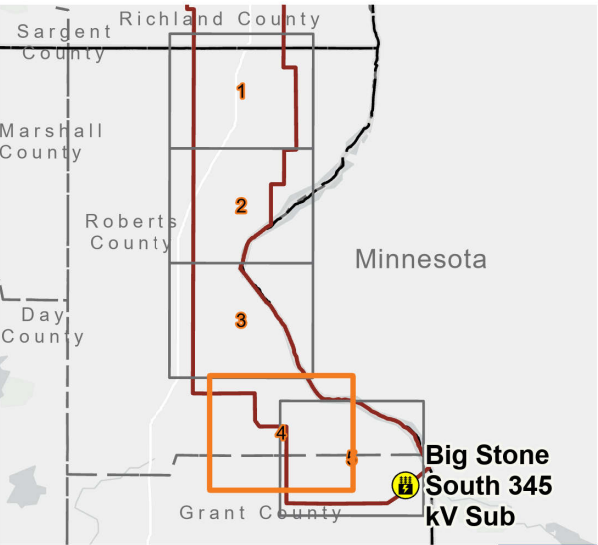


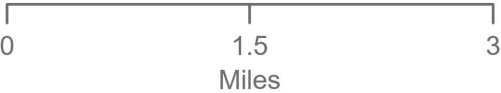
Figure 6 - Desktop Delineated
Dakota Skipper
Habitat



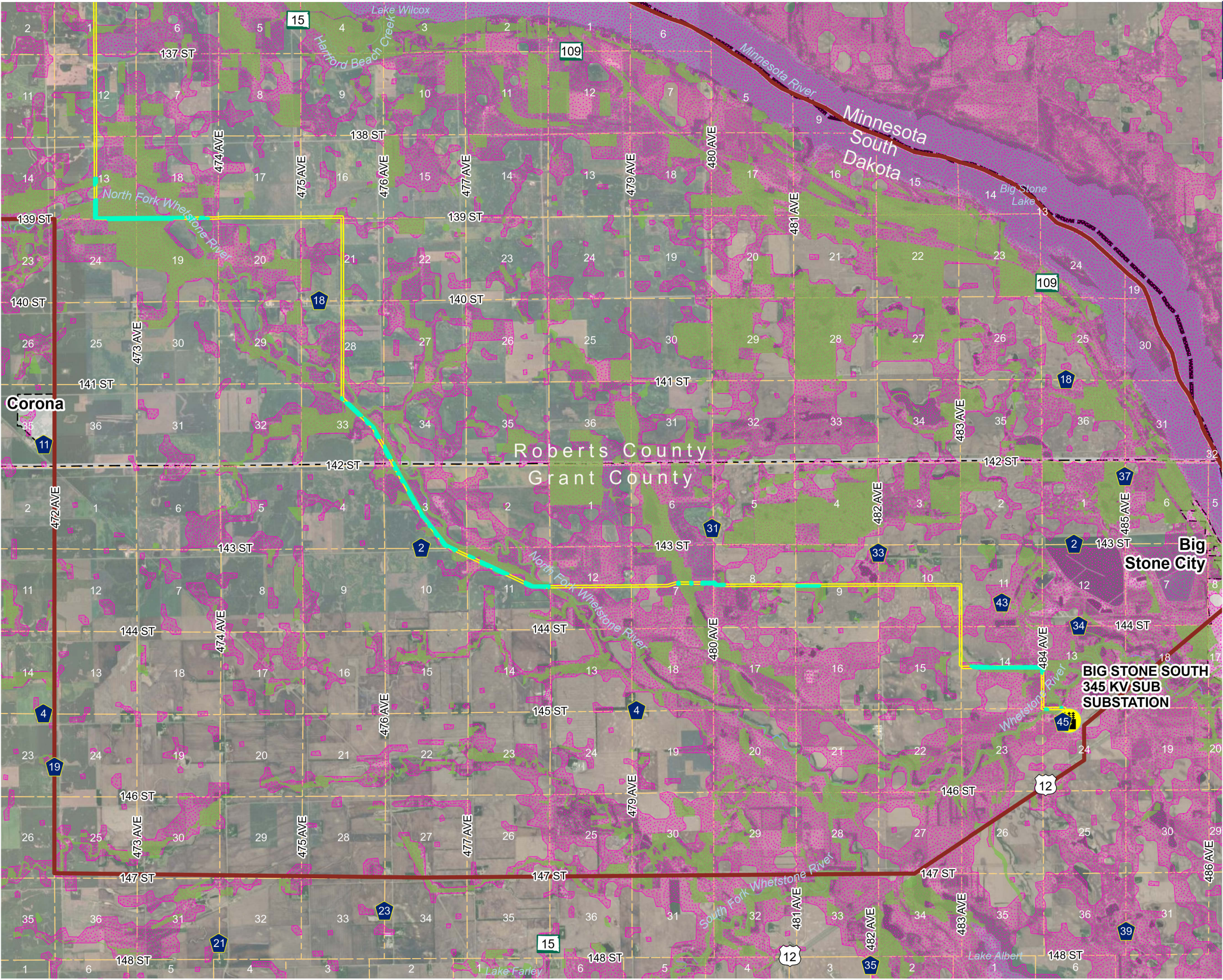
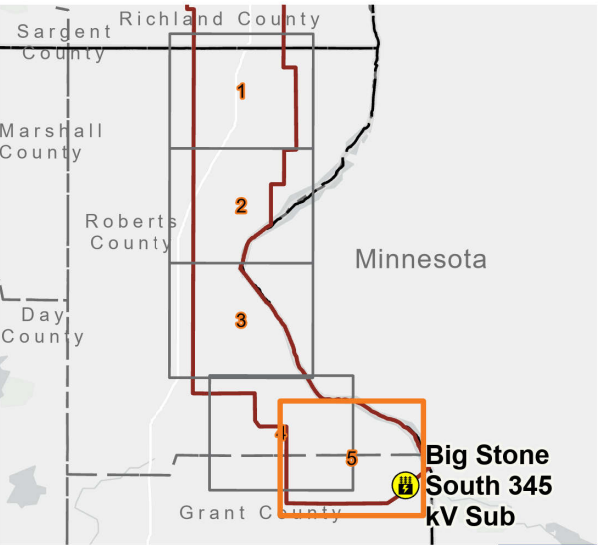
Big Stone South
to Hankinson to Bison

**BIG STONE SOUTH TO
HANKINSON TO BISON
TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT**

- Facility
- Study Area
- City Boundary
- County Boundary
- PLSS Sections
- State Boundary
- Dakota Skipper
- Preliminary Route
- Desktop
- Delineated Dakota Skipper Habitat
- Unbroken Grasslands



Data Current as of: 8/6/2026
*Preliminary routes subject to change



Appendix B. South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks Response Letter



SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF GAME, FISH AND PARKS

523 EAST CAPITOL AVENUE | PIERRE, SD 57501

June 12, 2026

Jill Rust, CEP
HDR Engineering, Inc. on behalf of Otter Tail Power Company
1011 S Phillips Ave
Sioux Falls, SD 57104

RE: Big Stone South to Hankinson to Bison Transmission Line

Dear Jill,

Thank you for contacting the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) regarding the proposed construction of a new 345-kilovolt (kV) transmission line extending from the existing Big Stone South Substation near Big Stone City, South Dakota, through the Hankinson Substation near Hankinson, North Dakota, and terminating at the Bison Substation.

A search of the South Dakota Nongame Conservation Database, formerly the South Dakota Natural Heritage Database, was conducted for the above-referenced project by project staff on 2/4/2026. This database tracks species at risk, including those legally designated as threatened or endangered, as well as rare species. Rare species are those with restricted distributions, specialized habitat requirements, declining populations, or populations that are isolated due to geographic or climatic factors. Please note that many areas of South Dakota have not been surveyed for rare or protected species, and the absence of a species from the database does not preclude its presence.

Additionally, GFP met with staff from HDR Engineering, Inc. and Otter Tail Power Company on 5/4/2026 and 2/18/2026 to discuss mitigation techniques and survey recommendations.

Based on the information provided from these meetings and from the database search, no significant impacts to fish and wildlife resources are anticipated. We expect this determination to remain unchanged provided the following recommendations are considered during project planning and construction:

Fish Recommendations

- If any work is proposed within streams, or if fish passage could be blocked during construction, fish surveys should be completed beforehand and fish should be relocated from affected areas as necessary. Please coordinate with GFP if this is needed.

Wetland and Riparian Habitat Recommendations

- Avoid placing towers within streams or riparian areas adjacent to streams.
- Disturbance to riparian and wetland areas should be kept to an absolute minimum.
- If riparian vegetation is removed, it should be quantified and replaced on-site. Seeding with native species should occur immediately following construction to reduce erosion and sedimentation.
- Power structures located within one-half mile to one mile of a water body should include perch and nest deterrents, as well as effective insulating covers over energized equipment. Line markers to reduce avian collisions should be considered in areas known for bird migration or travel corridors, particularly near wetlands and river crossings.

Grassland Habitat and General Habitat Recommendations

- Avoid further fragmentation of native prairie and intact grassland habitat. There are several high-quality grassland areas within the project area. Transmission lines should be routed outside intact grasslands whenever possible and placed within existing rights-of-way (ROWs), this will also help reduce the impact on rare plant species.
- Regal Fritillaries (*Argynnis idalia*; federally threatened) were identified close to your project area. We recommend coordinating with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to determine the best mitigation strategies.
- A site-specific sediment and erosion control plan should be developed for the project.
- Any disturbed grassland habitat should be reseeded with native species following construction.

Grouse Recommendations

- To minimize disturbance to lekking grouse, avoid construction activities adjacent to known leks from March 25 through April 30 when feasible. If construction must occur during this period, activities should begin after 10:00 a.m. when possible.

Migratory Bird and Nesting Recommendations

- The Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC) published "Suggested Practices for Avian Protection on Power Lines" and "Reducing Avian Collisions with Power Lines: State of the Art" in 2012. We recommend following applicable APLIC guidance.
- If tree clearing is necessary, particularly between May 1 and August 1, trees should be inspected for active bird nests prior to removal. Active nests of state-protected birds (SDCL 41-11-10) and federally protected birds under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act

(MBTA) may not be moved, disturbed, or destroyed until nesting activity has concluded (SDCL 41-11-7).

- While no raptor nests were found within the 150 foot buffer, if additional raptor surveys encounter bald eagle nests, or other nests protected under the MBTA, we recommend coordinating with USFWS and SDGFP for proposed buffer distances for infrastructure placement.

Bat Tree-Clearing Recommendations

- Tree clearing should be avoided from June 1 through August 15 to prevent impacts during the northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*; federally endangered) pup-rearing season. During this time, most bat species may have non-volant young, and tree removal can be detrimental. If tree clearing during this period cannot be avoided, surveys should be conducted to determine whether bat roosts are present. If bat roosts are identified, please notify GFP as soon as possible to discuss appropriate next steps.
- If you suspect that the northern long-eared bat or tricolored bat (*Pipistrellus subflavus*; proposed federally threatened) are using trees that need to be removed, please coordinate with USFWS.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this project. Please keep GFP involved in future correspondence regarding project planning and implementation. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me at 605.394.6052.

Sincerely,

Mandy Pearson

Mandy Pearson
Senior Wildlife Biologist
4130 Adventure Trail
Rapid City, SD 57702
mandy.pearson@state.sd.us

Appendix C. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation Report



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
South Dakota Ecological Services Field Office
420 South Garfield Avenue, Suite 400
Pierre, SD 57501-5408

Phone: (605) 224-8693 Fax: (605) 224-1416

<https://www.fws.gov/office/south-dakota-ecological-services>



In Reply Refer To:

06/10/2026 22:06:20 UTC

Project Code: 2026-0101683

Project Name: Big Stone to Hankinson Transmission Line Project

Subject: List of threatened and endangered species that may occur in your proposed project location or may be affected by your proposed project

To Whom It May Concern:

The enclosed species list identifies threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate species, as well as proposed and final designated critical habitat, that may occur within the boundary of your proposed project and/or may be affected by your proposed project. The species list fulfills the requirements of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) under section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

New information based on updated surveys, changes in the abundance and distribution of species, changed habitat conditions, or other factors could change this list. Please feel free to contact us if you need more current information or assistance regarding the potential impacts to federally proposed, listed, and candidate species and federally designated and proposed critical habitat. Please note that under 50 CFR 402.12(e) of the regulations implementing section 7 of the Act, the accuracy of this species list should be verified after 90 days. This verification can be completed formally or informally as desired. The Service recommends that verification be completed by visiting the IPaC website at regular intervals during project planning and implementation for updates to species lists and information. An updated list may be requested through the IPaC system by completing the same process used to receive the enclosed list.

The purpose of the Act is to provide a means whereby threatened and endangered species and the ecosystems upon which they depend may be conserved. Under sections 7(a)(1) and 7(a)(2) of the Act and its implementing regulations (50 CFR 402 *et seq.*), Federal agencies are required to utilize their authorities to carry out programs for the conservation of threatened and endangered species and to determine whether projects may affect threatened and endangered species and/or designated critical habitat.

A Biological Assessment is required for construction projects (or other undertakings having similar physical impacts) that are major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment as defined in the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4332(2)).

(c)). For projects other than major construction activities, the Service suggests that a biological evaluation similar to a Biological Assessment be prepared to determine whether the project may affect listed or proposed species and/or designated or proposed critical habitat. Recommended contents of a Biological Assessment are described at 50 CFR 402.12.

If a Federal agency determines, based on the Biological Assessment or biological evaluation, that listed species and/or designated critical habitat may be affected by the proposed project, the agency is required to consult with the Service pursuant to 50 CFR 402. In addition, the Service recommends that candidate species, proposed species and proposed critical habitat be addressed within the consultation. More information on the regulations and procedures for section 7 consultation, including the role of permit or license applicants, can be found in the "Endangered Species Consultation Handbook" at:

<https://www.fws.gov/media/endangered-species-consultation-handbook>

Migratory Birds: In addition to responsibilities to protect threatened and endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), there are additional responsibilities under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) to protect native birds from project-related impacts. Any activity resulting in take of migratory birds, including eagles, is prohibited unless otherwise permitted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)). For more information regarding these Acts see <https://www.fws.gov/law/bald-and-golden-eagle-protection-act>, <https://www.fws.gov/media/endangered-species-act-1>, and/or <https://www.fws.gov/law/migratory-bird-treaty-act-1918>.

It is the responsibility of the project proponent to comply with these Acts by identifying potential impacts to migratory birds and eagles within applicable NEPA documents (when there is a federal nexus) or a Bird/Eagle Conservation Plan (when there is no federal nexus). Proponents should implement conservation measures to avoid or minimize the production of project-related stressors or minimize the exposure of birds and their resources to the project-related stressors. For more information on avian stressors and recommended conservation measures see <https://www.fws.gov/birds/bird-enthusiasts/threats-to-birds.php>.

In addition to MBTA and BGEPA, Executive Order 13186: *Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds*, obligates all Federal agencies that engage in or authorize activities that might affect migratory birds, to minimize those effects and encourage conservation measures that will improve bird populations. Executive Order 13186 provides for the protection of both migratory birds and migratory bird habitat. For information regarding the implementation of Executive Order 13186, please visit <https://www.fws.gov/law/migratory-birds>

Please be aware that bald and golden eagles are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 703-712, as amended), as well as the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668 et seq.). Projects affecting these species may benefit from the development of an Eagle Conservation Plan (ECP), see guidance at this website (<https://www.fws.gov/node/266177>). An ECP can assist developers in achieving compliance with regulatory requirements, help avoid "take" of eagles at project sites, and provide biological support for eagle permit applications. Additionally, we recommend wind energy developments adhere to our Land-based Wind Energy Guidelines for minimizing impacts to migratory

birds and bats.

We have recently updated our guidelines for minimizing impacts to migratory birds at projects that have communication towers (including meteorological, cellular, digital television, radio, and emergency broadcast towers). These guidelines can be found at:

<https://www.fws.gov/story/incidental-take-beneficial-practices-communication-towers>
<http://www.towerkill.com>

According to National Wetlands Inventory maps, (available online at <https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/national-wetland-inventory>) wetlands exist adjacent to the proposed construction corridor. If a project may impact wetlands or other important fish and wildlife habitats, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347) and other environmental laws and rules, recommends complete avoidance of these areas, if possible. If this is not possible, attempts should be made to minimize adverse impacts. Finally if adverse impacts are unavoidable, measures should be undertaken to replace the impacted areas. Alternatives should be examined and the least damaging practical alternative selected. If wetland impacts are unavoidable, a mitigation plan addressing the number and types of wetland acres to be impacted, and the methods of replacement should be prepared and submitted to the resource agencies for review.

Please check with your local wetland management district to determine whether Service interest lands exist at the proposed project site, the exact locations of these properties, and any additional restrictions that may apply regarding these sites. The Offices are listed below. If you are not sure which office to contact, we can help you make that decision.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Huron Wetland Management District, Federal Building, Room 309, 200 4th Street SW, Huron, SD 57350; telephone (605) 352-5894. Counties in the Huron WMD: Beadle, Buffalo, Hand, Hughes, Hyde, Jerauld, Sanborn, Sully.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Lake Andes Wetland Management District, P O Box 18, Pickstown, South Dakota, 57367; telephone (605) 487-7603. Counties in the Lake Andes WMD: Aurora, Brule, Charles Mix, Davison, Douglas.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Madison Wetland Management District, P.O. Box 48, Madison, South Dakota, 57042, telephone (605) 256-2974. Counties in the Madison WMD: Bon Homme, Brookings, Clay, Deuel, Hamlin, Hanson, Hutchinson, Kingsbury, Lake, Lincoln, McCook, Miner, Minnehaha, Moody, Turner, Union, Yankton.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sand Lake Wetland Management District, 39650 Sand Lake Drive, Columbia, South Dakota, 57433; telephone (605) 885-6320. Counties in the Sand Lake WMD: Brown, Campbell, Edmunds, Faulk, McPherson, Potter, Spink, Walworth.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Waubay Wetland Management District, 44401 134A Street, Waubay, South Dakota, 57273; telephone (605) 947-4521. Counties in the Waubay WMD: Clark, Codington, Day, Grant, Marshall, Roberts.

You are welcome to visit our website (<https://www.fws.gov/office/southdakota-ecological-services>) or to contact our office/staff at the address or phone number above for more information.

We appreciate your concern for threatened and endangered species. The Service encourages Federal agencies to include conservation of threatened and endangered species into their project planning to further the purposes of the Act. Please include the Consultation Code in the header of this letter with any request for consultation or correspondence about your project that you submit to our office.

Note: IPaC has provided all available attachments because this project is in multiple field office jurisdictions.

Attachment(s):

- Official Species List
- USFWS National Wildlife Refuges and Fish Hatcheries
- Bald & Golden Eagles
- Migratory Birds
- Wetlands

OFFICIAL SPECIES LIST

This list is provided pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, and fulfills the requirement for Federal agencies to "request of the Secretary of the Interior information whether any species which is listed or proposed to be listed may be present in the area of a proposed action".

This species list is provided by:

South Dakota Ecological Services Field Office

420 South Garfield Avenue, Suite 400

Pierre, SD 57501-5408

(605) 224-8693

This project's location is within the jurisdiction of multiple offices. However, only one species list document will be provided for all offices. The species and critical habitats in this document reflect the aggregation of those that fall in each of the affiliated office's jurisdiction. Other offices affiliated with the project:

North Dakota Ecological Services Field Office

3425 Miriam Avenue

Bismarck, ND 58501-7926

(701) 250-4481

PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Code: 2026-0101683

Project Name: Big Stone to Hankinson Transmission Line Project

Project Type: Transmission Line - New Constr - Above Ground

Project Description: New transmission line from Big Stone Substation in South Dakota to Hankinson Substation in North Dakota.

Project Location:

The approximate location of the project can be viewed in Google Maps: <https://www.google.com/maps/@45.9487029,-96.83579278322355,14z>



Counties: North Dakota and South Dakota

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT SPECIES

There is a total of 7 threatened, endangered, or candidate species on this species list.

Species on this list should be considered in an effects analysis for your project and could include species that exist in another geographic area. For example, certain fish may appear on the species list because a project could affect downstream species.

IPaC does not display listed species or critical habitats under the sole jurisdiction of NOAA Fisheries¹, as USFWS does not have the authority to speak on behalf of NOAA and the Department of Commerce.

See the "Critical habitats" section below for those critical habitats that lie wholly or partially within your project area under this office's jurisdiction. Please contact the designated FWS office if you have questions.

-
1. [NOAA Fisheries](#), also known as the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), is an office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration within the Department of Commerce.

MAMMALS

NAME	STATUS
Northern Long-Eared Bat <i>Myotis septentrionalis</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9045 General project design guidelines: https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov/project/TE764NNRWZFBVM377FN544R6SE/documents/generated/9654.pdf	Endangered

BIRDS

NAME	STATUS
rufa red knot <i>Calidris canutus rufa</i> There is proposed critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1864 General project design guidelines: https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov/project/TE764NNRWZFBVM377FN544R6SE/documents/generated/8763.pdf	Threatened

INSECTS

NAME	STATUS
Dakota Skipper <i>Hesperia dacotae</i> There is final critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1028 General project design guidelines: https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov/project/TE764NNRWZFBVM377FN544R6SE/documents/generated/9522.pdf	Threatened
Monarch butterfly <i>Danaus plexippus</i> There is proposed critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9743	Proposed Threatened
Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee <i>Bombus suckleyi</i> Population: No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10885 General project design guidelines: https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov/project/TE764NNRWZFBVM377FN544R6SE/documents/generated/9852.pdf	Proposed Endangered
Western regal fritillary <i>Argynnis idalia occidentalis</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/12017	Proposed Threatened

FLOWERING PLANTS

NAME	STATUS
Western prairie fringed Orchid <i>Platanthera praecleara</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1669 General project design guidelines: https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov/project/TE764NNRWZFBVM377FN544R6SE/documents/generated/9621.pdf	Threatened

CRITICAL HABITATS

THERE ARE NO CRITICAL HABITATS WITHIN YOUR PROJECT AREA UNDER THIS OFFICE'S JURISDICTION.

YOU ARE STILL REQUIRED TO DETERMINE IF YOUR PROJECT(S) MAY HAVE EFFECTS ON ALL ABOVE LISTED SPECIES.

USFWS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE LANDS AND FISH HATCHERIES

Any activity proposed on lands managed by the [National Wildlife Refuge](#) system must undergo a 'Compatibility Determination' conducted by the Refuge. Please contact the individual Refuges to discuss any questions or concerns.

The following FWS National Wildlife Refuge Lands and Fish Hatcheries lie fully or partially within your project area:

FACILITY NAME	ACRES
ROBERTS COUNTY WATERFOWL PRODUCTION AREA <a %5c%22roberts+county+waterfowl+production+area%5c%22\""="" href="https://www.fws.gov/our-facilities?keywords=\">https://www.fws.gov/our-facilities?keywords=\"%5C%22ROBERTS+COUNTY+WATERFOWL+PRODUCTION+AREA%5C%22\"	425.634

BALD & GOLDEN EAGLES

Bald and Golden Eagles are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act ² and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) ¹. Any person or organization who plans or conducts activities that may result in impacts to Bald or Golden Eagles, or their habitats, should follow appropriate regulations and consider implementing appropriate avoidance and minimization measures, as described in the various links on this page.

1. The [Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act](#) of 1940.
2. The [Migratory Birds Treaty Act](#) of 1918.
3. 50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)

There are Bald Eagles and/or Golden Eagles in your [project](#) area.

Measures for Proactively Minimizing Eagle Impacts

For information on how to best avoid and minimize disturbance to nesting bald eagles, please review the [National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines](#). You may employ the timing and activity-specific distance recommendations in this document when designing your project/activity to avoid and minimize eagle impacts. For bald eagle information specific to Alaska, please refer to [Bald Eagle Nesting and Sensitivity to Human Activity](#).

The FWS does not currently have guidelines for avoiding and minimizing disturbance to nesting Golden Eagles. For site-specific recommendations regarding nesting Golden Eagles, please consult with the appropriate Regional [Migratory Bird Office](#) or [Ecological Services Field Office](#).

If disturbance or take of eagles cannot be avoided, an [incidental take permit](#) may be available to authorize any take that results from, but is not the purpose of, an otherwise lawful activity. For assistance making this determination for Bald Eagles, visit the [Do I Need A Permit Tool](#). For assistance making this determination for golden eagles, please consult with the appropriate Regional [Migratory Bird Office](#) or [Ecological Services Field Office](#).

Ensure Your Eagle List is Accurate and Complete

If your project area is in a poorly surveyed area in IPaC, your list may not be complete and you may need to rely on other resources to determine what species may be present (e.g. your local FWS field office, state surveys, your own surveys). Please review the [Supplemental Information on Migratory Birds and Eagles](#), to help you properly interpret the report for your specified location, including determining if there is sufficient data to ensure your list is accurate.

For guidance on when to schedule activities or implement avoidance and minimization measures to reduce impacts to bald or golden eagles on your list, see the "Probability of Presence Summary" below to see when these bald or golden eagles are most likely to be present and breeding in your project area.

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Bald Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1626	Breeds Dec 1 to Aug 31
Golden Eagle <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1680	Breeds Jan 1 to Aug 31

PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE SUMMARY

The graphs below provide our best understanding of when birds of concern are most likely to be present in your project area. This information can be used to tailor and schedule your project activities to avoid or minimize impacts to birds. Please make sure you read ["Supplemental Information on Migratory Birds and Eagles"](#), specifically the FAQ section titled "Proper

Interpretation and Use of Your Migratory Bird Report" before using or attempting to interpret this report.

Probability of Presence (■)

Green bars; the bird's relative probability of presence in the 10km grid cell(s) your project overlaps during that week of the year.

Breeding Season (■)

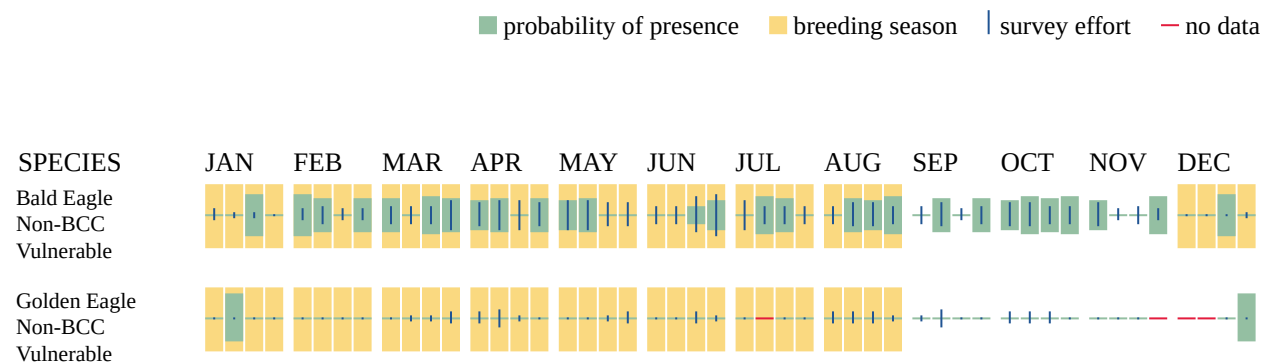
Yellow bars; liberal estimate of the timeframe inside which the bird breeds across its entire range.

Survey Effort (|)

Vertical black lines; the number of surveys performed for that species in the 10km grid cell(s) your project area overlaps.

No Data (—)

A week is marked as having no data if there were no survey events for that week.



Additional information can be found using the following links:

- Eagle Management <https://www.fws.gov/program/eagle-management>
- Measures for avoiding and minimizing impacts to birds <https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/avoiding-and-minimizing-incidental-take-migratory-birds>
- Nationwide avoidance and minimization measures for birds <https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/nationwide-standard-conservation-measures.pdf>
- Supplemental Information for Migratory Birds and Eagles in IPaC <https://www.fws.gov/media/supplemental-information-migratory-birds-and-bald-and-golden-eagles-may-occur-project-action>

MIGRATORY BIRDS

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) ¹ prohibits the take (including killing, capturing, selling, trading, and transport) of protected migratory bird species without prior authorization by the Department of Interior U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service).

1. The [Migratory Birds Treaty Act](#) of 1918.
2. The [Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act](#) of 1940.
3. 50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)

For guidance on when to schedule activities or implement avoidance and minimization measures to reduce impacts to migratory birds on your list, see the "Probability of Presence Summary" below to see when these birds are most likely to be present and breeding in your project area.

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
American Golden-Plover <i>Pluvialis dominica</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10561	Breeds elsewhere
Bald Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1626	Breeds Dec 1 to Aug 31
Black Tern <i>Chlidonias niger surinamenis</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3093	Breeds May 15 to Aug 20
Black-billed Cuckoo <i>Coccyzus erythrophthalmus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9399	Breeds May 15 to Oct 10
Bobolink <i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9454	Breeds May 20 to Jul 31
California Gull <i>Larus californicus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10955	Breeds Mar 1 to Jul 31

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Chimney Swift <i>Chaetura pelagica</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9406	Breeds Mar 15 to Aug 25
Franklin's Gull <i>Leucophaeus pipixcan</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10567	Breeds May 1 to Jul 31
Golden Eagle <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1680	Breeds Jan 1 to Aug 31
Golden-winged warbler <i>Vermivora chrysoptera</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8745	Breeds May 1 to Jul 20
Grasshopper Sparrow <i>Ammodramus savannarum perpallidus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8329	Breeds Jun 1 to Aug 20
Henslow's Sparrow <i>Centronyx henslowii</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3941	Breeds May 1 to Aug 31
Hudsonian Godwit <i>Limosa haemastica</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9482	Breeds elsewhere
Le Conte's Sparrow <i>Ammospiza leconteii</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9469	Breeds Jun 1 to Aug 15
Le Conte's Sparrow <i>Ammospiza leconteii</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9469	Breeds Jun 1 to Aug 15
Le Conte's Sparrow <i>Ammospiza leconteii</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9469	Breeds Jun 1 to Aug 15

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Lesser Yellowlegs <i>Tringa flavipes</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9679	Breeds elsewhere
Marbled Godwit <i>Limosa fedoa</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9481	Breeds May 1 to Jul 31
Northern Harrier <i>Circus hudsonius</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8350	Breeds Apr 1 to Sep 15
Pectoral Sandpiper <i>Calidris melanotos</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9561	Breeds elsewhere
Red-headed Woodpecker <i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9398	Breeds May 10 to Sep 10
Short-billed Dowitcher <i>Limnodromus griseus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9480	Breeds elsewhere
Western Grebe <i>Aechmophorus occidentalis</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/6743	Breeds Jun 1 to Aug 31
Willet <i>Tringa semipalmata</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10669	Breeds Apr 20 to Aug 5

PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE SUMMARY

The graphs below provide our best understanding of when birds of concern are most likely to be present in your project area. This information can be used to tailor and schedule your project activities to avoid or minimize impacts to birds. Please make sure you read "[Supplemental Information on Migratory Birds and Eagles](#)", specifically the FAQ section titled "Proper Interpretation and Use of Your Migratory Bird Report" before using or attempting to interpret this report.

Probability of Presence (■)

Green bars; the bird's relative probability of presence in the 10km grid cell(s) your project overlaps during that week of the year.

Breeding Season (■)

Yellow bars; liberal estimate of the timeframe inside which the bird breeds across its entire range.

Survey Effort (|)

Vertical black lines; the number of surveys performed for that species in the 10km grid cell(s) your project area overlaps.

No Data (—)

A week is marked as having no data if there were no survey events for that week.





Additional information can be found using the following links:

- Eagle Management <https://www.fws.gov/program/eagle-management>
- Measures for avoiding and minimizing impacts to birds <https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/avoiding-and-minimizing-incidental-take-migratory-birds>
- Nationwide avoidance and minimization measures for birds
- Supplemental Information for Migratory Birds and Eagles in IPaC <https://www.fws.gov/media/supplemental-information-migratory-birds-and-bald-and-golden-eagles-may-occur-project-action>

WETLANDS

Impacts to [NWI wetlands](#) and other aquatic habitats may be subject to regulation under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, or other State/Federal statutes.

For more information please contact the Regulatory Program of the local [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers District](#).

Please note that the NWI data being shown may be out of date. We are currently working to update our NWI data set. We recommend you verify these results with a site visit to determine the actual extent of wetlands on site.

FRESHWATER EMERGENT WETLAND

- PEM1Cd
- PEM1Ah
- PEM1B
- PEM1Cx
- PEM1Ad
- PEM1F
- PEM1C
- PEM1Af
- PEM1A
- PEM1/ABF

FRESHWATER FORESTED/SHRUB WETLAND

- PFO1A
- PFO1Ad
- PFOA

OTHER

- Pf

RIVERINE

- R4SBC

Project code: 2026-0101683

- R2UBFx
- R2UBF
- R4SBCx
- R4SBA
- R5UBH
- R2UBH
- R3UBH

FRESHWATER POND

- PUBFx
- PABFx
- PUBH
- PABF
- PUBF

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