

From: Randy Schaefer [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, October 21, 2026 4:37 PM
To: PUC-PUC <PUC@state.sd.us>
Cc: Nelson, Chris [REDACTED]; Fiegen, Kristie [REDACTED]; Hanson, Gary (PUC) [REDACTED]
Subject: [EXT] Ottertail BSSHB

Good day to you all,

First, I want to again acknowledge and congratulate you on the tough, gutsy decision you made in 2023 re: declining the Summit pipeline permit application. I know the pressure you were under from leadership in the legislature, and especially Summit and other lobbyists. You'll always sleep well knowing you were on the right side of history. Thank you for that.

I write today to ask for your consideration and intervention into the unpopular proposed new Ottertail **Big Stone South to Hankinson to Bison** line that would run through our property 5mi north and 1w of Milbank, on the quarter of land NW of the intersection of [REDACTED]. The current existing line there includes a 120' easement. Ottertail proposes to install a second line, taller and with higher capacity, alongside the existing line. At first glance that location seems reasonable. However, what that means to landowners like me is that Ottertail would acquire an additional 150' from us – making the total easement taken 270'. On our property, that's a 270' wide strip – nearly the length of a football field – of precious and beautiful unbroken property running for about a half-mile controlled by Ottertail.

Landowners are asking why they would build a separate, new line adjacent to an existing large line. The obvious question is: Why not simply replace the poles and lines with new, larger poles and lines that would increase capacity as needed? We're told the current 230KV line that's doing everything needed today is nearing its capacity. The proposed new 345KV line adds **50%** more capacity, leaving the old existing line to be used only if there was an outage or some sort of emergency. So Ottertail proposes to maintain two separate lines, when only one is needed. It just doesn't make sense.

Please see the attached map of our property. This isn't cropland that we can keep farming. This easement takes almost all my unbroken, native grassland with all its trees and shrubs on top of the bluffs overlooking the Whetstone River. My father purchased this approximately 50 acres some 30 years ago for its natural beauty, and to provide hunting opportunities for his heirs. He and our family planted over a hundred trees there. He just turned 90, and he was very upset to hear that Ottertail would be killing some of those trees to clear the easement area. My Mom & Dad still live in their home just outside Milbank, so we stay there when we visit. They won't be there forever of course, so we plan to place a small cabin on the bluff near the road someday. Having an additional 150' of that area taken by Ottertail would literally eliminate the only area on which we're able to do that.

Simply put, this proposed line location will permanently and negatively impact the right to use and enjoy my own property.

I've been working with Ethan from HDR. He's been great, and serves as a liaison between Ottertail and landowners, most of whom oppose the new line as proposed. In good faith I did sign my

approval for Ottertail to access and survey our property through mid-August, and I met with Ethan onsite last week. I was frustrated to see that Ottertail had recently killed many of our honeysuckle, wild plum and snowberry shrubs at the bottom of draws that were over 100' below the power lines...ones that could easily be driven around by their ATVs, and would never grow tall enough to impede the lines. And I've kindly asked Ottertail to do whatever work they're required to do (they kill and clear trees and shrubs) anytime during the year EXCEPT September through early December, as that's when we hunt there. They were seen running multiple ATVs through our property the past few years in October and November, running deer off the property during deer hunting season...but that's an issue for another day as I'm asking you to focus on this proposed new line today.

I and other adjacent landowners agree that the solution is easy:

1. Replace the existing poles and line in this area with the new, larger line, thus requiring only a single line to maintain. Or if the PUC agrees with Ottertail that a new, separate line IS required:
2. Place the new line running east and west along 143rd St for a short stretch south of our property. There's no line there now, so none to tear out. It would allow for easy install along the road, and more importantly easy access to maintain throughout the year, especially during the winter. Our property is as rough as it gets in eastern SD, with steep wooded draws, small creeks and wet on the bottom, tough to access with any type of vehicle. Given that this proposed line is expected to last for the next 50+ years, the long-term maintenance & repair expense on the proposed route is drastically higher than it would be if the new line was installed along the road.

I do understand your role in this. During my 12yrs of service on the SD Board of Regents, I too made tough decisions, always with the best interests of my stakeholders in mind. I'm asking for your intervention to require Ottertail to move forward with one of the two less-invasive options suggested here.

Respectfully,

Randy Schaefer
Madison, SD

