

Environmental Assessment

# 137 Line Extension Project

Prepared on behalf of the City of Hoyt Lakes

St. Louis County, Minnesota

HOYTL 164461

Hoyt Lakes and Babbitt, MN | April 2022



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# Environmental Assessment

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Prepared on behalf of the City of Hoyt Lakes  
St. Louis County, Minnesota

SEH No. HOYTL 164461

April 2022

I hereby certify that this report was prepared by me or under my direct supervision.

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# List of Acronyms

BMPs – Best Management Practices	ROW – Right of Way
CON – Certificate of Need	SEH – Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc.
EA – Environmental Assessment	SHPO – State Historic Preservation Office
EOs – Element Occurrences	THPOs – Tribal Historic Preservation Offices
ELE – Electric Fields	USACE – United States Army Corps of Engineers
EMF – Electromagnetic Fields	USEPA – United States Environmental Protection Agency
EQB – Environmental Quality Board	USFWS – United States Fish and Wildlife Service
FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency	USGS – United States Geological Survey
GHG – Greenhouse gas	WCA – Wetland Conservation Act
HVTL – High Voltage Transmission Line	
MDH – Minnesota Department of Health	
MNDNR – Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	
MP – Minnesota Power	
MPCA – Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	
MW – Megawatts	
NHIS – Natural Heritage Information System	
NIEHS – National Institute of Environmental Health Services	
NPDES – National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System	
NRCS – Natural Resource Conservation Service	
OHWL – Ordinary High Water Level	
OSA – Office of the State Archaeologist	
OSHA – Occupational Safety and Health Administration	
PUC – Public Utilities Commission	
PWI – Public Waters Inventory	

# Environmental Assessment

## 137 Line Extension Project

Prepared for the City of Hoyt Lakes

### 1 Introduction

Minnesota Power has proposed to extend the existing Embarrass – Babbitt 115 kV (kilovolt) High Voltage Transmission Line (HVTL) approximately 8-miles between the City of Hoyt Lakes and the City of Babbitt in Minnesota. The project is known as the 137 Line Extension Project.

This state Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared on behalf of the City of Hoyt Lakes and is intended to evaluate the potential impacts related to the proposed project. The EA process provides federal, state, and local officials, as well as the general public, with an understanding of the potential environmental impacts associated with the project through site evaluations, analysis of existing information about the project location, and public participation to identify unique site factors.

#### 1.1 Project Description

Minnesota Power (herein “the Applicant” or “MP”) proposed to construct, operate, maintain, and own a new 115 kV HVTL to be located in Sections 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 of Township 59 North and Range 4 West, Sections 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 of Township 59 North and Range 13 W, and Sections 33 and 34 of Township 50 North and Range 13 West in St. Louis County, Minnesota. **Figure 1** shows an overview of the project location in context of surrounding communities and existing transmission lines.

The proposed HVTL would connect to existing transmission lines and substations. The extension begins on the south side of the Peter Mitchell Mine, which is approximately five (5) miles south of the urban and developed area of the City of Babbitt. The extension terminates at the existing Mesaba Junction Switching Station, which is located roughly 5.5 miles north of the urban and developed area of the City of Hoyt Lakes. **Figures 2 and 3** show the proposed route on a United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5’ quadrangle map and 2019 aerial photography respectively.

Construction is proposed for 2023.

##### 1.1.1 HVTL

The existing 137 Line would be extended approximately eight (8) miles in length. It would be constructed through a new corridor for approximately five (5) miles, and it would parallel the existing 1 Line corridor for approximately three (3) miles.

The project will be constructed on new wooden H-frame structures at a span of 500 feet to 1,000 feet apart and a height of approximately 70 feet above grade. The two (2) wood poles are approximately 24 inches in diameter at the ground and embedded into native soils. The HVTL will

have guy wire and anchors at dead-ends and tangents and will include optical ground wire and shield wire above conductors. Helical anchors are used to anchor guy wires. This HVTL is similar in design and height to the existing lines in the region.

## 1.2 Project Purpose

The purpose of the proposed extension of the 115kV HVTL is to provide a second connection of power produced by Minnesota Power to the Peter Mitchell Mine. Currently, the Embarrass – Babbitt 115 kV transmission line is the sole source of electricity to the Peter Mitchell Mine and the only transmission source to the Babbitt 115/46 kV substation. Much of this line was originally constructed in 1951 to serve the mine. Due to the continuous nature of mining operations and the criticality of mine pit pumping load, planned outages for transmission line maintenance have been infrequent and short in duration. Regular maintenance has consisted of completing remedial measures while the transmission line remains energized as well as some extensive repairs during brief planned outages. However, the age of the transmission line and limited outage opportunities for more extensive repairs has led to an accumulation of critical maintenance requirements. This has been confirmed by recent inspections and, if left unaddressed, may result in an increased probability and severity of unplanned outages. Unplanned outages may result in production interruptions and costs at the Peter Mitchell Mine. The transmission line now requires extensive maintenance and reconstruction which cannot be completed while energized. As a result, the applicant proposes extending the Embarrass – Babbitt 115 kV transmission line to the Mesaba Junction Switching Station to ensure continued reliable operation of this transmission line.

The 137 Line Extension Project meets three (3) critical needs for the Hoyt Lakes and Babbitt area:

1. Providing redundancy to an industrial load pocket that requires near-constant availability.
2. Improving reliability by providing two (2) independent sources to the area.
3. Enabling asset renewal by allowing the existing 115 kV line to be taken out of service to be rebuilt.

## 1.3 Alternate Routes

No alternate routes were considered for the 137 Line Extension Project. The proposed route parallels an existing corridor where practicable, for constructability and minimization of environmental effects. Additionally, the segment of the route that requires new corridor is the shortest distance practicable to minimize environmental effects.

# 2 Regulatory Framework

This section summarizes the regulatory framework for the Project, including necessary permits and approvals, and project eligibility for review under this framework.

Minnesota Power introduced the proposed project at council meetings to the City of Babbitt on July 20, 2021 and to the City of Hoyt Lakes on June 22, 2021. Minnesota Power notified the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) of its intent to permit the Project using the local review process in a letter dated October 18, 2021. In a letter dated November 8, 2021, the PUC confirmed receipt of the letter and acknowledged Minnesota Power provided notice that the

project is undergoing local review under Minnesota Statute 216E.05 and Minnesota Rules 7849.6200. PUC correspondence is attached in **Appendix A**.

## 2.1 Conditional Use Permit

The City of Hoyt Lakes understands that this Project meets the eligibility requirements of local review provided under Minnesota Statutes 216E.05 and Minnesota Rules 7850.5300. The local review process is appropriate for this situation because the Project is within the jurisdiction of Hoyt Lakes and Babbitt. The City of Babbitt has delegated their authority for environmental review to the City of Hoyt Lakes. The project will require conditional use permits, under the authority of the City of Hoyt Lakes and the City of Babbitt.

To ensure that the public is given the full opportunity to review the EA and any input that process may have on the conditional use permit, the City of Hoyt Lakes will hold a public hearing at a City of Hoyt Lakes Planning Commission meeting. Pending the recommendation of the Hoyt Lakes Planning Commission and any modifications made in response to public comment, the Hoyt Lakes and Babbitt City Councils can then approve, modify with conditions, or reject their respective conditional use permits.

The City of Hoyt Lakes Planning Commission will hold a Public Hearing on Tuesday, April 19, 2022, at 5:00pm at the Hoyt Lakes Municipal Building (206 Kennedy Memorial Drive, Hoyt Lakes) to receive input on content of the EA. A Notice of Public Hearing was published prior to the hearing date, inviting the public to provide oral or written comments for consideration by the Planning Commission. Any persons may provide input at the Public Hearing. This matter will be acted on and forwarded to the Hoyt Lakes City Council for final decision.

## 2.2 Environmental Assessment Requirement

In accordance with Minnesota Rule 7850.5300 Subp. 5, the local unit of government that maintains jurisdiction over a qualifying project shall prepare an EA for the project. Upon completion of the EA, the local unit of government shall publish notice in the Environmental Quality Board (EQB) Monitor that the EA is available for review, describe how a copy of the EA may be reviewed, indicate that the public may comment on the EA, and define the process of submitting comments to the local unit of government. The local unit of government shall provide a copy of the EA to the Minnesota PUC upon completion of the document. The local unit of government shall not make a final decision on the permit until at least 10 days after the notice appears in the EQB Monitor.

The EA contains information on the human and environmental impacts of the proposed project and addresses any mitigating measures for potential impacts. In accordance with the rule, the City of Hoyt Lakes provided the general public an opportunity to comment on the scope of the EA at a public meeting on March 15, 2022. The City noticed the meeting in the Mesabi Tribune on March 1, 2022. The EA will be presented at the Planning Commission meeting on April 19, 2022. This meeting will offer the public an opportunity to learn about the Project, suggest alternatives, and contribute to the EA by identifying issues that require addressing. Any member of the public is permitted to raise concerns and comment on the content of the EA.

## 2.3 Certificate of Need Requirement

No Certificate of Need (CON) is required for the 137 Line Extension Project because the proposed HVTL is less than 200 kV, less than ten miles in length, and does not cross a state line.



For these reasons the Project is exempt from a CON under Minnesota Statutes 216B.243 and 216B.2421 Subd. 2.

## 2.4 Other Required Permits and Approvals

Table 1 – Required Permits and Approvals

Agency	Permit or Approval	Regulated Activity	Status
<b>Federal</b>			
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)	Clean Water Act, Section 404 Permit; anticipated Nationwide Permit or General Permit	Work in jurisdictional wetlands	Pre-construction Notification to be submitted, if needed
<b>State</b>			
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES)	Construction Stormwater – Water Quality and Erosion Control	To be obtained
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR)	Utility Crossing License	Crossing of a Public Water by a Utility	To be obtained
<b>Local</b>			
City of Hoyt Lakes	Local Review	Construction of the 115 kV HVTL	In process
City of Babbitt	Local Review	Construction of the 115 kV HVTL	Delegated to Hoyt Lakes
City of Hoyt Lakes	Wetland Conservation Act of 1991 No Loss Determination	Temporary disturbance in jurisdictional wetlands	To be obtained
City of Babbitt	Wetland Conservation Act of 1991 No Loss Determination	Temporary disturbance in jurisdictional wetlands	To be obtained

## 3 Assessment of Environmental Consequences and Mitigation

This section describes the environment on and around the project site, including the physical, biotic, and human environmental resources that could potentially be affected by the proposed project. The area that could be affected by the project varies by the specific resource and is identified in the appropriate section.

### 3.1 Environmental Setting

The proposed project is located parallel to an existing utility corridor and a new corridor. The existing utility corridor is in an industrial area that was previously and is currently used for mining and mineland reclamation. The new corridor crosses undeveloped forests and wetlands.

**Figure 4** shows a land use map across the proposed corridor. The entire corridor is in private ownership and inaccessible to the public. The corridor is within the municipal boundaries of the cities of Hoyt Lakes and Babbitt; however, the southern terminus of the corridor is located approximately 5.5 miles north of the developed and populated area of Hoyt Lakes, and the northern terminus is located approximately 4.8 miles south of the developed and populated area of Babbitt.

Impacts to the environment from construction are expected to be minimal and short-term for the stretch that parallels an existing utility corridor. The new corridor was reviewed for a practicable route that best minimizes environmental impacts. Minnesota Power will minimize negative human and environmental impacts during construction using Best Management Practices (BMPs) to manage erosion and sedimentation, fugitive dust, and noise.

The proposed HVTL would connect to existing transmission lines and substations. The extension begins on the south side of the Peter Mitchell Mine, which is approximately five (5) miles south of the urban and developed area of the City of Babbitt. The extension terminates at the existing Mesaba Junction Switching Station, which is located roughly 5.5 miles north of the urban and developed area of the City of Hoyt Lakes.

## 3.2 Air Quality

### 3.2.1 Affected Environment

The potentially affected environment for criteria pollutants under the Clean Air Act is central St. Louis County in the Cities of Hoyt Lakes and Babbitt. This area is neither a non-attainment nor maintenance area for criteria pollutants under the Clean Air Act.

The potentially affected environment for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is broad in scope. GHG emissions can affect climate, and climate change is a global phenomenon.

### 3.2.2 Environmental Consequences

HVTLs do not produce significant air emissions; therefore, there will be not air quality impacts resulting from the long-term operation of the facilities. Minimal air quality impacts (i.e., dust) may result from the construction of the project due to construction activities, heavy equipment operation, and increased vehicle activity along roads. Air quality impacts are anticipated to be negligible.

Project construction will result in a temporary increase in GHG emissions due to construction activities, including truck hauling and heavy equipment operation. These impacts are anticipated to be negligible.

### 3.2.3 Mitigation

All construction personnel will be required to follow the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations throughout project construction. Air quality impacts will be localized to the immediate construction area and mitigated for by dust control measures (e.g., spraying water or mulching as appropriate). Contractors will be encouraged to limit or prohibit idling equipment while inactive, to reduce emissions. No other mitigation is proposed for this resource.

## 3.3 Biological Resources

Biological resources include vegetation, wildlife habitat, and sensitive species. The project is in the Laurentian Uplands ecological subsection of the Laurentian Mixed Forest ecological province. This area of central St. Louis County has both existing industrial facilities as well as natural areas including wetlands, forests, woodlands, rivers, and lakes (**Figure 4**).

### 3.3.1 Affected Environment

#### 3.3.1.1 Vegetation

Vegetation in the project corridor is comprised of areas that have previously been altered by clearing and mining operations and areas that have not been cleared or altered. The existing vegetation within the HVTL corridor is limited to herbaceous grasses and forbs that have colonized following disturbance. The corridor is maintained free of tall woody vegetation.

The vegetation within the new corridor is undeveloped forested wetland. MNDNR has mapped native plant communities (NPCs) throughout most of the corridor. Additionally, the new corridor crosses the Hundred Mile Swamp, an area of “High” biodiversity significance (**Figure 5**). This area is comprised of a large acid peatland and forested peatland wetland complex and a mosaic of fire dependent forest and forested peatland. The project corridor crosses two (2) S3-ranked or higher NPCs: Northern Mesic Mixed Forest (FDN43) and White Pine – Red Pine Forest (FDn43a) NPCs. S-ranks are conservation status ranks, reflecting the risk of each community being eliminated from Minnesota. NPCs complexes identified but not classified specifically enough to have S-ranks are shown as “Possible S1-S3” on **Figure 5**.

#### 3.3.1.2 Wildlife

The project vicinity and greater Hoyt Lakes and Babbitt area includes wildlife habitats typical of the region. Outside of the active mining areas, the region consists of a variety of forested and wetland habitats. Several shallow open water wetlands, Wyman Creek (a PWI designated trout stream), and Mud Lake (a PWI water basin) occur within the project corridor. Streams, lakes, and open water mine pits are also nearby the project corridor.

White-tailed deer and black bear are the most common large mammals in the region. Small and medium-sized mammals common to the area (e.g., gray squirrels, red fox, mice, voles, shrews, and lemmings) are also likely present. The forested and wetland habitats are also suitable habitat for many migratory birds.

#### 3.3.1.3 Threatened and Endangered Species

The project corridor is within the breeding/distributional range of the federally-listed gray wolf (*Canis lupis* – federally endangered), Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis* – federally threatened), and northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis* – federally threatened) and is also within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) mapped critical habitat of the Canada lynx (USFWS 2021). The project corridor is within the breeding range of the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), which is not a threatened or endangered species but is protected under federal statute.

Wooded habitat for gray wolf, Canada lynx, and northern long-eared bat is located throughout the region, including the existing corridor and the new corridor. Northern long-eared bat hibernacula and roost trees have not been reported from the same township as the project corridor (MNDNR & USFWS 2021).

A query of the Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) database in December 2021 under SEH License Agreement #1027 identified element occurrences (EOs) of several state-listed special concern species within one (1) mile of the project corridor including: small green wood orchid (*Platanthera clavellata*), least moonwort (*Botrychium simplex*), small shinleaf (*Pyrola minor*), bog rush (*Juncus stygius* var. *americanus*), and the northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*). No EOs of any state-threatened or state-endangered species were documented within one (1) mile of the project corridor.

## 3.3.2 Environmental Consequences

### 3.3.2.1 Vegetation

Permanent conversion of approximately 33 acres of forested wetland and 34 acres of forested upland would result from the widening of the existing corridor by approximately 60 feet and for the new 100-foot-wide right-of-way (ROW) corridor. The forested area to be cleared is second-growth upland and wetland forest including two (2) S3-ranked or higher NPCs: Northern Mesic Mixed Forest (FDn43) and White Pine – Red Pine Forest (FDn43a) NPCs. The conversion to open wetland/grassland is an impact to these plant communities. Removal of woody vegetation in the corridor will not prevent FDn43 and FDn43a communities from persisting on either side of the corridor.

The ROW corridors will be cleared of woody vegetation on a 6–7-year cycle. This will involve mechanical clearing using low-pressure tracked equipment in frozen conditions. Herbicide application may be utilized if needed. The initial clearing of the new corridors may involve herbicide application to slow the regrowth of woody vegetation.

### 3.3.2.2 Wildlife

The crossing of Wyman Creek (see **Figure 9**), a PWI designated trout stream, will have H-frame structures located on land on either side of the lake, above the OHWL. While Mud Lake, a PWI water basin, is located within the project corridor, the HVTL will be constructed to the south. No in-water work is proposed; therefore, no impacts to fisheries and aquatic wildlife are anticipated.

The approximately 67 acres of tree clearing for the new HVTL corridor could impact breeding migratory birds. Most of the corridor will be maintained free of woody vegetation; however, at the margins of the corridor shorter woody species (e.g., speckled alder, hazelnuts, and willow species) may regenerate. This early-successional regrowth can provide breeding habitat for some birds, offsetting some of the effects of tree clearing in the corridor. To further minimize impacts to migratory birds, tree clearing will occur in the winter outside of the breeding season of most migratory birds. Winter clearing will also minimize potential impacts to northern long-eared bat.

### 3.3.2.3 Threatened and Endangered Species

Although the project corridor is within the distributional range of gray wolf, Canada lynx, and northern long-eared bat, the nature of the project is such that no effects to these federally-listed species are anticipated. The ROW clearing will cause a loss of approximately 67 acres of forested habitat; however, this wildlife habitat is neither locally nor regionally rare and native herbaceous vegetation is expected to persist in the corridor.



There are no known bat hibernacula nor roost trees within the project corridor and the nearest known roost tree is more than 15-miles away (MNDNR & USFWS 2021). Tree clearing will occur in the winter to limit potential adverse effects.

No critical habitat conversion nor disruption of habitat for federally-listed species is proposed. Effects on these species are anticipated to be negligible.

### 3.3.3 Mitigation

Tree clearing will be conducted in winter to minimize effects on vegetation, wildlife, and protected species. The potential spreading of invasive/noxious species will be further mitigated through standard BMPs including cleaning all equipment and materials before bringing onsite and, where practicable, avoiding the disturbance of existing invasive/noxious species populations to limit their spread.

## 3.4 Land-Based Economies

Transmission lines have the potential to affect land-based economies. These include agriculture, forestry, mining, and tourism.

### 3.4.1 Affected Environment

The project is in an area of current and former industrial and mining land use as well as areas of undeveloped forest and wetland. Mining activities are important in the local and regional economy in the vicinity of the project. The predominant geophysical setting for the project is the Mesabi Iron Range, a narrow band of iron-rich strata, one-fourth to three miles wide. This formation has had a major impact on the economy and settlement of the region for over 100 years.

Forestry is a common land use in the region. However, land ownership in the corridor is private mining interests and there are no current forestry uses in the project corridor.

There are no agricultural land uses in the project corridor, nor are there any soil units that the St. Louis County Soil Survey (USDA 2022) maps as prime, unique, or of statewide importance farmlands.

### 3.4.2 Environmental Consequences

A segment of the HVTL will run parallel an existing corridor that is already cleared, and therefore has limited potential for consequences to land-based economies. Co-location of the new HVTL in an existing corridor will have no new encroachments on mining facilities or resources and will be compatible with adjacent mining land uses. The length of new corridor is owned by private mining interests and will not conflict with known forestry activities.

The entire HVTL corridor crosses in areas of mining/industrial land use that are inaccessible by the public; therefore, recreational or tourism use is excluded.

### 3.4.3 Mitigation

The project is anticipated to have negligible effects on land-based economies; therefore, no mitigation is proposed.

## 3.5 Recreation

Recreational resources to consider include facilities such as designated non-motorized recreational trails, motorized all-terrain vehicle and snowmobile trails, public parks and ballfields, designated canoe routes, and public boat access areas.

### 3.5.1 Affected Environment

No public recreational facilities are in the project corridor. The region is known for outdoor recreational opportunities; however, the proposed project is located within an existing industrial/mining land use area and is inaccessible to the public.

### 3.5.2 Environmental Consequences

No changes to recreational resources will result from this project.

### 3.5.3 Mitigation

Negligible effects to this resource are anticipated; therefore, no mitigation is proposed.

## 3.6 Hazardous Materials

### 3.6.1 Affected Environment

The use of the project site for mining and mineland reclamation has led to the storage of solid waste nearby, including mine tailings basins, settling basins, and material stockpiles. **Figure 8** details historic mining features.

One (1) leak site (LS0006423) from 1992 was identified in the vicinity of the project site. The leak site was contained and no drinking water contamination occurred according to the MPCA's "What's in My Neighborhood?" website (<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/data/whats-my-neighborhood>, accessed December 2021).

### 3.6.2 Environmental Consequences

No involvement of hazardous waste during project construction or operation is anticipated. No work in contaminated areas is anticipated. The construction contractor will be responsible for disposal of any waste resulting from project construction. Waste will be reused, recycled, or disposed of in accordance with local, state, and federal regulations.

### 3.6.3 Mitigation

Negligible effects to this resource are anticipated; therefore, no mitigation is proposed. Should any contaminated soil be encountered during construction, the state duty officer will be notified immediately at 651-649-5451 or 1-800-422-0798.

## 3.7 Geologic and Groundwater Resources

### 3.7.1 Affected Environment

The physical landscape of the region is typically shallow glacial till over bedrock embedded with lakes, drainages, and wetland basins. The surface geology at the site consists of Quaternary

outwash and silty till. Exposed bedrock is also frequent. Mining and reclamation have modified surface features by placement of mine tailings and overburden in portions of the project corridor.

Groundwater sources in the project corridor include both bedrock and sources located in overlying Quaternary glacial till deposits. Underlying the Quaternary deposits in the area is the Virginia Formation, a bedrock formation ranging in total thickness from 0 to 2,000 feet. The Virginia Formation is typically used in conjunction with other iron formations as an aquifer for water supplies. Water from the Quaternary drift aquifers is preferred as a potable water source over the bedrock aquifers due to the potential for lower iron content. The project is not within 500 feet of any domestic well or designated wellhead protection area.

### 3.7.2 Environmental Consequences

Winter construction and the limited amount of ground disturbance for installation of the poles for each H structure will minimize construction impacts related to ground disturbance/excavation. Project effects on geologic and groundwater resources, domestic wells, and designated wellhead protection areas are not anticipated.

### 3.7.3 Mitigation

No effects to this resource are anticipated, therefore no mitigation is proposed.

## 3.8 Historical, Architectural, Archeological, and Cultural Resources

Archaeological and historic resources are regulated federally under the National Historic Preservation Act (36 CFR Part 18) and under the Minnesota Field Archaeology Act (M.S. 138.31 – 138.42) at the state level. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) administers the state statutory requirements and provides coordination with federal agencies for federal requirements. Similarly, Minnesota's Tribes and the 1898 Treaty Office have Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs) to administer tribal interest in cultural resources and archaeological sites. The area of the proposed action's potential environmental impact is identified as the area within which direct or indirect impacts could reasonably be expected as a result of the proposed action.

### 3.8.1 Affected Environment

Review of the Minnesota Office of the State Archaeologist (OSA) viewer indicates one (1) known site in each of the following sections: Sections 9, 10, 11, and 16 in Township 59 North, Range 14 West; and in Section 6, Township 59 North, Range 13 West. Section 16 intersects the southern terminus of the project. Section 6 Township 59 North, Range 13 West is located nearby the project corridor. (<https://osa.gisdata.mn.gov/OSA-viewer/> accessed December 2022). No other areas of the project corridor have known sites indicated on the OSA viewer. **Figure 6** shows the project corridor in the context of Sections with known resources.

Approximately three (3) miles of the project corridor is in and adjacent to past and current mineland areas that have been disturbed for excavation and placement of tailings and overburden, and parallel to the existing HVTL corridor. The remaining five (5) miles of the project corridor is located in undisturbed forest and wetland.

### 3.8.2 Environmental Consequences

No known archaeological sites or potential historic properties that are eligible under the National Historic Preservation Act are documented in the portions of the project corridor where ground

disturbance will take place. Construction is planned for winter months, so ground disturbance will be limited to placement of H-frame structures.

### 3.8.3 Mitigation

No effect is anticipated, therefore no mitigation is proposed. If archaeological sites are encountered during any phase of construction, the contractor will cease activities and the SHPO will be contacted immediately.

## 3.9 Land Use

### 3.9.1 Affected Environment

The project corridor is located within the Mineral Mining zoning districts of both the City of Hoyt Lakes and the City of Babbitt. The district defines compatible and appropriate land uses and maintains the intended use. Permitted uses in Babbitt's Mineral Mining district are, "...forestry and mineral mining including all ancillary activities necessary for management operations and uses involved in the mineral extraction, processing, transportation, and disposal of waste as regulated by the State of Minnesota (City of Babbitt Code of Ordinances 6.11)." Similarly, permitted uses in Hoyt Lakes' Mineral Mining district are, "Mineral mining including all ancillary activities necessary for management, operation and uses involved in the mineral extraction, processing, transportation and disposal of waste as regulated by the state [City of Hoyt Lakes Code of Ordinances §152.099 (B)]." Local zoning and land use oversight within the project corridor is implemented by the City of Hoyt Lakes and the City of Babbitt.

### 3.9.2 Environmental Consequences

As an ancillary activity necessary for operations in mineral extraction, the project conforms with existing planning and zoning of the project corridor. The project will require conditional use permits from the City of Hoyt Lakes and the City of Babbitt, as described in **Section 2.1** above.

### 3.9.3 Mitigation

The project is consistent with existing land use and zoning; therefore, no mitigation is proposed.

## 3.10 Noise

### 3.10.1 Affected Environment

The project is located in an area predominantly used for mining activities. The surrounding area is mostly rural and predominantly forested. Sources of existing noise audible to residents include mining activities, vehicles, and recreation (hunting, water resource usage, etc.), but overall background noise levels are relatively low. Higher noise levels exist in mining areas.

Standard levels of noise associated with construction activities and equipment operation would result from the proposed project. These impacts would be concentrated along the HVTL corridor. Noise impacts are expected to be minimal and would be similar to noise impacts resulting from normal mining operations. Operation of the newly constructed HVTL will abide by MPCA Noise Pollution Control Rules, Chapter 7030.



### 3.10.1.1 Minnesota Pollution Control Noise Pollution Rules

The MPCA outlines guidelines for noise pollution levels in residential zones and designates acceptable decibels for daytime and nighttime. Noise should not exceed 60 decibels more than 50% of the time and 65 decibels more than 10% of the time, during daytime. Noise should not exceed 50 decibels more than 50% of the time and 55 decibels more than 10% of the time during nighttime (10:00 PM – 7:00 AM).

### 3.10.1.2 Local Noise Ordinances

The Cities of Hoyt Lakes and Babbitt do not have any local noise ordinances that would regulate the project beyond the MPCA requirements.

## 3.10.2 Environmental Consequences

During the project, noise impacts will result from construction of the HVTL and operation of heavy equipment and haul trucks. These noise impacts would occur intermittently throughout the construction period and during daytime hours.

The project would take place entirely within areas of mining/industrial land use, and the 115 kV line is co-located parallel to an existing HVTL corridor. The closest residential homes are approximately five (5) miles away to the north and to the southeast. The project corridor is inaccessible to the public. Given the distance of residences from the HVTL, it is anticipated that the noise standards will be met. Negligible noise impacts to those residences are anticipated due to the distance from the project corridor.

### 3.10.3 Mitigation

Noise impacts to nearby residents are anticipated to be negligible. Construction will take place within and adjacent to an area of existing industrial/mining land use for the proposed substation. No exceedances of Minnesota noise standards are anticipated; therefore, no mitigation measures are required.

## 3.11 Public Safety

### 3.11.1 Affected Environment

Extremely low-frequency electric and electromagnetic fields (ELF-EMF) are present where voltage is transmitted through a conductor. EMFs result from electrically charged particles which may cause effects in a field surrounding the transmission line. The effect decreases with distance from the line. The electrical effects relating to a HVTL would be characterized as “corona effect” or “field effect”. Examples of conductors to be used in the project include an HVTL, distribution (feeder) lines, substation transformers, house wiring, and electrical appliances. HVTLs are not fundamentally different from other electrical conductors and also exhibit ELF-EMFs.

Since 1979, there has been considerable attention focused on understanding the effects of electric and magnetic fields (EMF) on humans. The question of whether exposure to power-frequency (60 Hz) magnetic fields can cause biological responses or even health effects has been the subject of considerable research for the past three decades. There is presently no Minnesota statute or rule that pertains to magnetic field exposure. Comprehensive reviews of the health effects from power-frequency fields conclude that the evidence of health risk is minimal.

The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) concluded in a report that there is little scientific evidence correlating ELF-EMF exposures with health risk (2002).

The Minnesota State Interagency Working Group on EMF Issues, consisting of members from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), Department of Commerce, MPUC, MPCA, and EQB conducted research related to EMF, which resulted in similar findings to the NIEHS report (2002). The group concluded:

*“Research on the health effects of EMF has been carried out since the 1970s. Epidemiological studies have mixed results – some have shown no statistically significant association between exposure to EMF and health effects, and some have shown a weak association. More recently, laboratory studies have failed to show such an association, or to establish a biological mechanism for how magnetic fields may cause cancer.”*

The MDH concludes that the current body of evidence is insufficient to establish a cause and effect relationship between EMF and adverse health effects. However, as with many other environmental health issues, the possibility of health risk from EMF cannot be dismissed. The conclusions of the Minnesota State Interagency Working Group are also consistent with those reached by the MDH and the NIEHS.

### 3.11.2 Environmental Consequences

While the general consensus is that electric fields pose no risk to humans, the question of whether exposure to magnetic fields potentially can cause biological responses or even health effects continues to be the subject of research and debate. Based on the most current research on electromagnetic fields, facilities such as those comprising the project are not expected to have significant impact to public health and safety due to ELF-EMF. The addition of these transmission facilities is not expected to add significantly to the presence of ELF-EMF exposure in the vicinity. In addition, land use in the area of the project is mining/industrial and is inaccessible to the public; therefore, there is low potential for individuals to be physically close to the proposed facilities for an extended time.

### 3.11.3 Mitigation

Negligible effects due to ELF-EMF are anticipated; therefore, no mitigation is proposed.

## 3.12 Socioeconomics

Social and economic impacts may be judged as significant if they cause the relocation of any resident or business; alteration of surface transportation patterns; division or disruption of established communities; disruption of orderly, planned development; or an appreciable change in employment.

### 3.12.1 Affected Environment

The affected environment considered for potential socioeconomic effects is the Cities of Hoyt Lakes and Babbitt (the nearest population centers) and greater St. Louis County. St. Louis County is one of 87 counties in Minnesota. According to U.S. Census data, the estimated population for the county was 200,231 in 2020. The total population of Hoyt Lakes was 2,020 in 2020, and the total population of Babbitt was 1,397. During the summer, the regional population increases because of the large number of temporary residents and tourists that spend time in the

area. Major industries in Hoyt Lakes and Babbitt and the surrounding area include mining, timber, and tourism.

### 3.12.2 Environmental Consequences

Construction of the project is anticipated to cost several million dollars for labor and equipment. During construction, the project would function as a “basic industry” in St. Louis County, in the northeastern region and the State of Minnesota. Basic industries are those business and government activities that bring outside income into an area economy. Income from sources outside the area that is received as paychecks and spent generates more income and employment in the area. This is called the multiplier effect.

Construction and extraction employment accounts for 5.4% percent of the St. Louis County workforce (<https://mn.gov/deed> Accessed April 2022). If local contractors were employed for portions of the construction, total wages and salaries paid to contractors and workers in St. Louis and adjacent counties would contribute to the total personal income of the region. Additional personal income would be generated in the local, regional, and state economies due to the multiplier effect of each dollar paid in salaries and wages. Multipliers used for basic industries are estimated to be between one and three times the original salary and wages. This multiplier effect occurs as earners buy goods and services locally with the money earned and contribute to local, state and national taxes. Purchase of goods such as energy, fuel, operating supplies, and equipment also generate sales tax revenues.

Long-term impacts to the St. Louis County tax base because of the construction and operation of the project, would contribute to the local economy in northeastern Minnesota. Development of energy projects in this region is important in diversifying and strengthening the economic base and encouraging economic growth of the region and the local counties where energy projects are located. County government expenses are not expected to increase because of the project. Industries in St. Louis County do not expect adverse effects during construction or operation of the project.

### 3.12.3 Mitigation

Socioeconomic impacts associated with the project would be primarily beneficial. These positive environmental consequences result from the influx of wages and purchases made at local businesses during project construction. Since the social and economic consequences resulting from the project are expected to be beneficial to the local community, mitigation is not proposed.

## 3.13 Public Services and Transportation

Public services and transportation resources include community resources such as emergency services, infrastructure, and traffic patterns resulting from the final project or influx of construction personnel and equipment.

### 3.13.1 Affected Environment

The project is in a lightly populated, rural area in northeastern Minnesota. There is an established transportation and utility network that provides access and necessary services to the industry near the project corridor. The developed areas of Babbitt and Hoyt Lakes are the closest urban areas to the project, at approximately five (5) and 5.5 miles away, respectively. Roadway infrastructure adjacent to the project is limited, with few county and township roads in the vicinity.

## 3.13.2 Environmental Consequences

The project is expected to have a minimal effect on the existing infrastructure. The following is a brief description of the impacts that may occur during the construction and operation of the project:

### Electrical Service

Local electric service would not be disrupted by the project. The project will have a beneficial effect on service by providing reliable and adequate transmission capacity.

### Roads & Traffic

Motor vehicle traffic in the vicinity of the project corridor would temporarily increase during the construction phase. No ongoing changes to traffic or road usage are anticipated.

### Water Supply

Construction and operation of the project would not impact the water supply, nor require appropriation of surface water or dewatering of underground aquifers. The installation or abandonment of wells is not required. No effect on water supply is anticipated.

### Telephone and Fiber Optic

Construction and operation of the project would not affect telephone and/or fiber optic service in the vicinity of the project corridor.

### Police, Fire, and Emergency Services

Hoyt Lakes operates emergency response and a fire department. The Emergency Medical Service covers the tri-city area, including Hoyt Lakes, Aurora, and the Town of White. The City is served by the East Range Police Department, covering the communities of Aurora and Hoyt Lakes. The nearest hospital is the Essentia Health - Virginia Hospital. These services would not be disrupted by the project.

Babbitt operates emergency response and a fire department. The Emergency Medical Service provides service across 1,100 square miles around Babbitt with its primary service area being the cities of Babbitt and Embarrass. The City is served by the Babbitt Police Department, covering 108 square miles around Babbitt. The nearest hospital is the Ely Bloomenson Community Hospital. These services would not be disrupted by the project.

## 3.13.3 Mitigation

No effect or beneficial effect on public services, and negligible effects on transportation are anticipated; therefore, no mitigation is proposed.

## 3.14 Visual Resources

### 3.14.1 Affected Environment

Scenic quality is determined by evaluating the character and diversity of features in a landscape. Typically, more complex or diverse landscapes have a higher scenic quality than those



landscapes with less complex or diverse features. The project corridor lies in a rural area where mining and timber production are the primary land uses.

### 3.14.2 Environmental Consequences

The proposed HVTL will be located within mining/industrial property owned by private parties and is not visible from residential or recreational land uses.

### 3.14.3 Mitigation

Negligible effects to this resource are anticipated; therefore, no mitigation is proposed.

## 3.15 Water Resources

### 3.15.1 Affected Environment

#### 3.15.1.1 Floodplains

Floodplains are defined in Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management, as an area that would be inundated by a 1% annual chance flood. The project corridor is unmapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The project corridor does not cross and water resources that pose flooding hazards.

#### 3.15.1.2 Water Quality

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) Public Waters in or adjacent to the project corridor are shown on **Figure 9**. The project corridor crosses Wyman Creek, which is a designated trout stream. The project is located in the Embarrass River (#3158), Second Creek (#3150), Wyman Creek (#3148), Partridge River (#3146 and #3155) minor watersheds and the St. Louis River (#3) major watershed.

#### 3.15.1.3 Wetlands

Executive Order 11990 describes a wetland as an area that is inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances does support, a prevalence of vegetation or aquatic life typically adapted for saturated soil conditions. Wetland mapped by the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) are shown on **Figure 7**.

To further investigate the potential wetland impacts, SEH Scientists conducted a level 1 wetland delineation in 2022. The delineation was performed in accordance with methods in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) *Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual* (USACE 1987) and the *Regional Supplement to the Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual: Northcentral and Northeast Region* (USACE 2012).

The Level 1 delineation encompassed an approximate 1,683- acre area composed of the HVTL corridor, and an approximate 500-foot buffer on each side.

The Level 1 (desktop) delineations identified 41 wetland basins within the 1000-foot buffer of the transmission line corridor as shown on **Figures 10-1** through **10-10**. Wetlands identified through desktop review are labelled "Remote-sensing" (abbreviated "RS" on **Figures 10-1** through **10-10**) and numbered. Various wetland plant community types are present. These include seasonally flooded basin, fresh (wet) meadow, sedge meadow, shallow marsh, deep marsh, shallow open

water, alder thicket, shrub-carr, hardwood swamp, coniferous swamp, open bog, coniferous bog, and deepwater habitat by the Eggers and Reed (2014) classification system.

#### 3.15.1.4 Wild and Scenic Rivers

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act describes those areas eligible to be included in a system afforded protection under the Act as free flowing and possessing "...outstandingly remarkable, scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other similar values."

### 3.15.2 Environmental Consequences

#### 3.15.2.1 Floodplains

No designated FEMA floodplains have been mapped in the project corridor. The project will not impact any open water basins or watercourses. Therefore, no effects on floodplains are anticipated.

#### 3.15.2.2 Water Quality

An NPDES permit will be obtained prior to construction. Appropriate construction stormwater BMPs and erosion control measures will be implemented during construction to avoid and minimize water quality impacts.

Where the line crosses Wyman Creek, H-frames will be sited on either side of the watercourse and the line will cross the watercourse with no structure or disturbance below the ordinary high water level (OHWL).

#### 3.15.2.3 Wetlands

Any wetland impacts due to the project must follow the sequencing process of the Minnesota Wetland Conservation (WCA) of 1991 and the federal Clean Water Act. These procedures require that projects that may result in the draining and filling of wetland habitat should demonstrate avoidance and minimization of such impacts. Wetlands that cannot be feasibly avoided or minimized must be replaced by compensatory mitigation.

Wetland impacts along the HVTL corridor will include permanent conversion of forested wetland to open [likely fresh (wet) meadow and open bog] wetland community types in approximately 33 acres of forested wetland. H-frame structures will be placed in wetland along the corridor; however, placement of posts for H-frame structures does not constitute wetland fill. No other structures are proposed due to the project; therefore, no permanent wetland fill impacts are proposed. Wetland impacts are summarized in **Table 2**, along with the number of H-frame structures potentially placed in wetland. The number is presented as a range, as the precise spacing of H-frame structures will be determined in design.

Table 2 – Summary of Individual Wetland Crossings and H-Frame Structures

Wetland ID	Wetland Crossing (Linear Feet)	Minimum Number of H-Frame Structures (1,000-foot Spread)	Maximum Number of H-Frame Structures (500-foot Spread)
RS-04	82	0	0
RS-04	38	0	0
RS-05	50	0	0
RS-05	5	0	0
RS-06	121	0	0
RS-17	730	0	1
RS-23	810	0	1
RS-23	204	0	0
RS-24	50	0	0
RS-24	189	0	0
RS-24	632	0	1
RS-24	9,403	9	18
RS-24	835	0	1
RS-24	1,367	1	2
RS-24	193	0	0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>14,711</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>

### 3.15.2.4 Wild and Scenic Rivers

There are no rivers in the project corridor that have any national or statewide designation as evaluated by searching the Nationwide Rivers Inventory.

### 3.15.3 Mitigation

Wetland disturbance in the project corridor is regulated by the USACE, City of Hoyt Lakes, and City of Babbitt. Because there is no permanent loss of wetland, no mitigation is anticipated. If ultimately required during permitting, mitigation obligations would be fulfilled by purchase of credits from an established wetland bank. Exact replacement ratio and credit amounts would be determined in permitting.

## 3.16 Construction Phasing

The project will be completed in four (4) phases as described below:

1. Minnesota Power (MP) will hire a licensed land surveyor to mark the extents of the new ROW for the line
2. MP will begin clearing in frozen conditions starting with a travel way and development of ice roads. Once cleared, another round of surveying will stake structure and guy-wire anchor locations.
3. H-frame structures will be assembled at each site. Holes are drilled via tracked excavators fitted with hydraulic augers. Structures are set in place with cranes and guy

anchors are screwed in place with tracked equipment. With all structures assembled and erected, wires are strung completing the actual construction phase.

4. ROW clean up and stormwater BMP maintenance and revegetation, as needed.

## 4 Conclusions

The proposed project is anticipated to have no effect or negligible effects on environmental resources. Potential construction effects will be mitigated using standard construction BMPs. Impacts related to habitat type conversion (from forested to open grassland/wetland) will be mitigated by BMPs to avoid spread of invasive plant species, thereby protecting the integrity of remaining native plant communities in the vicinity.

## 5 References

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# Figures

Figure 1 – Project Overview Map

Figure 2 – Site Location Map

Figure 3 – Aerial Photo 2019

Figure 4 – Land Use Map (MLCCS 2016)

Figure 5 – MNDNR NPCs and Sites of Biodiversity Significance

Figure 6 – MN OSA Known Sites

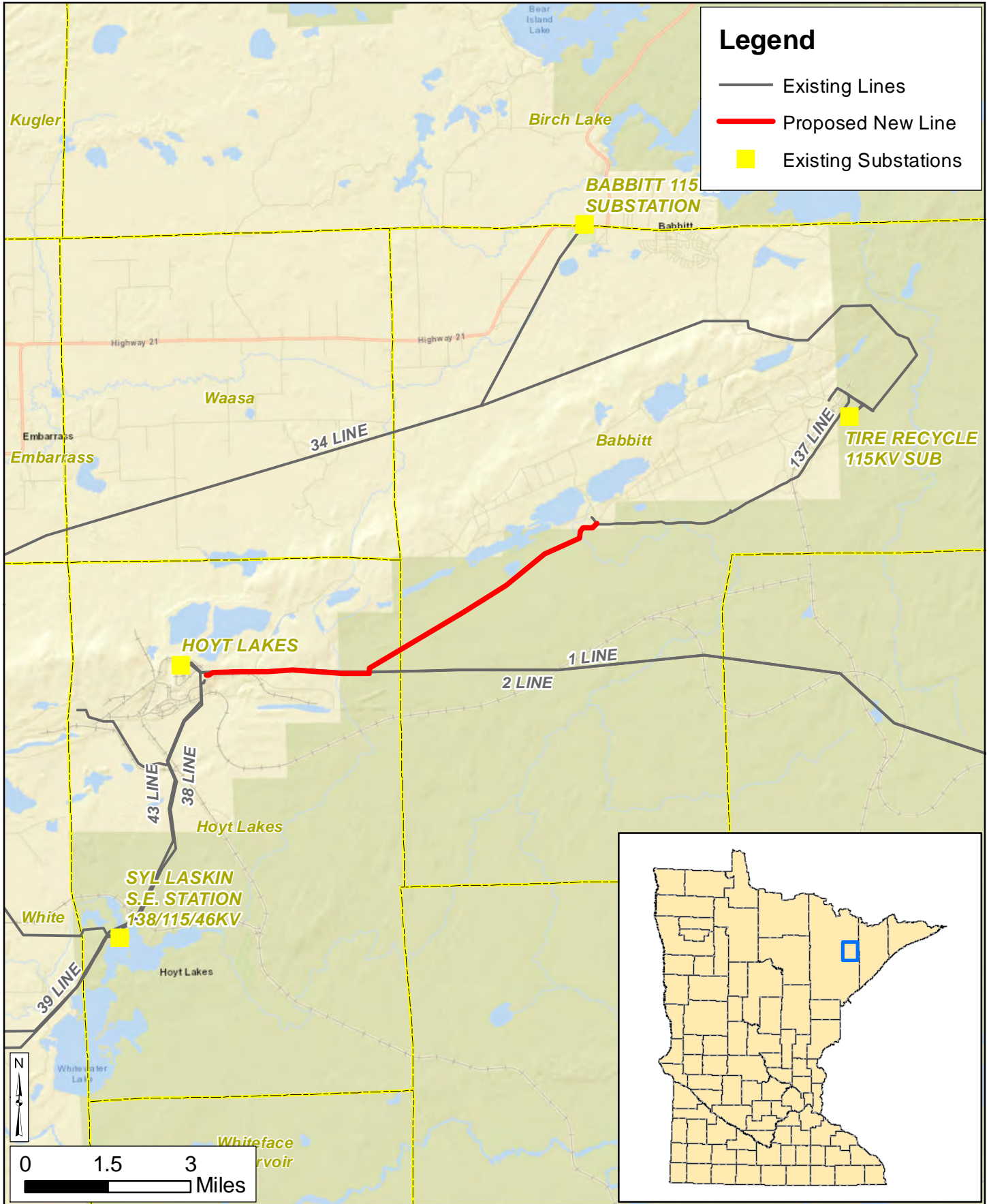
Figure 7 – National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) Map

Figure 8 – Historic Mine Features Disturbance Codes

Figure 9 – Public Waters Inventory (PWI) Map

Figures 10-1 to 10-10 – Level 1 Wetland Delineation Results

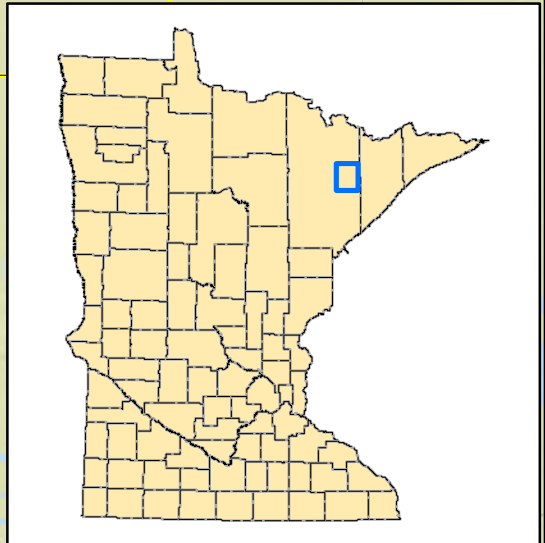
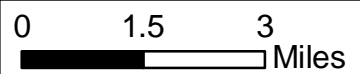




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### Legend

- Existing Lines
- Proposed New Line
- Existing Substations



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 Print Date: 1/26/2022

Map by: B. Tolcser  
 Projection: NAD83 UTM15N  
 Source: MnDNR, SEH Inc  
 Background: ESRI Basemap

## Project Overview Map

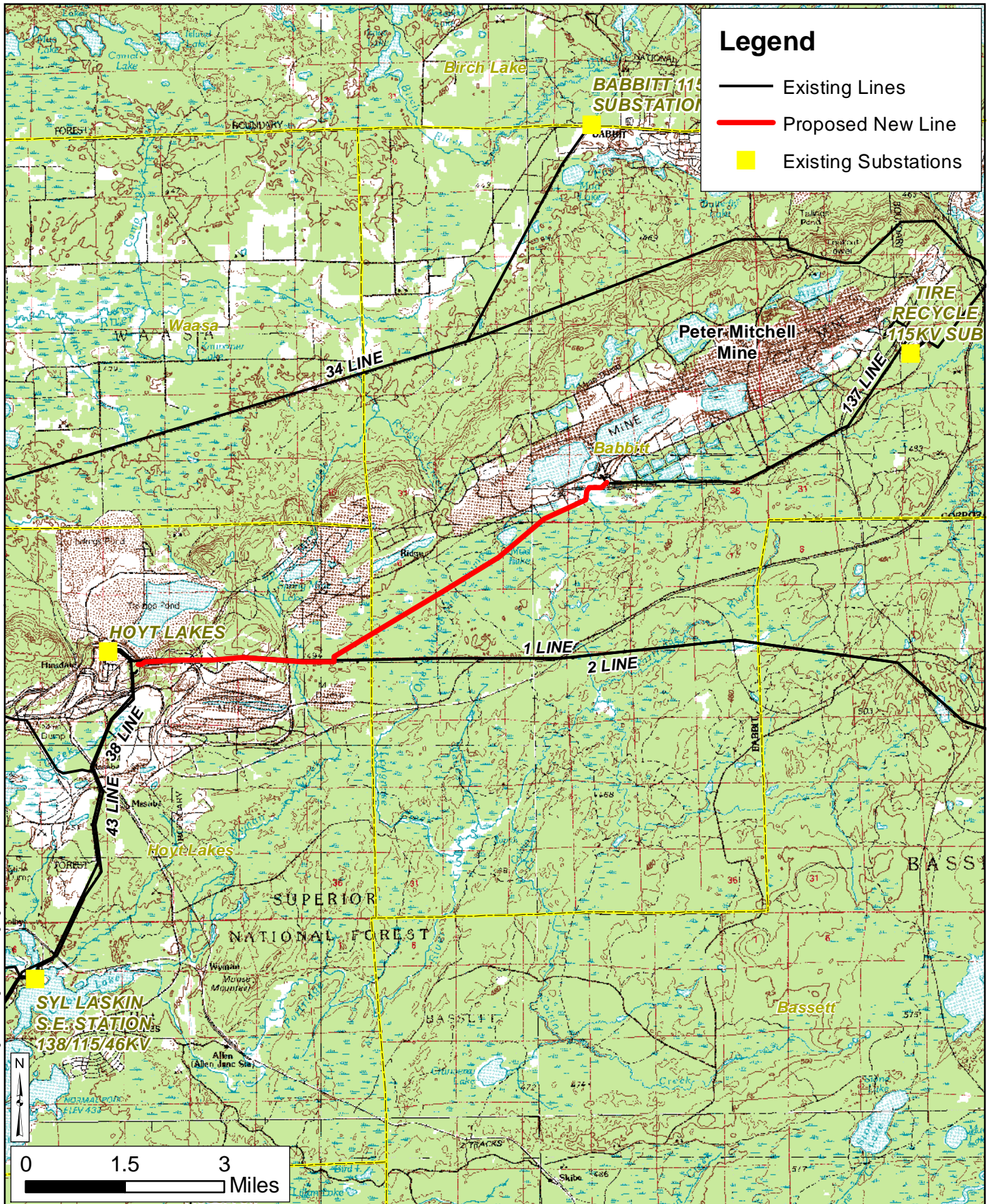
### 137 LINE EXTENSION EA

### St. Louis County, Minnesota

Figure  
1

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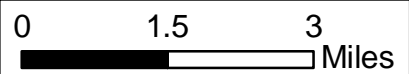




### Legend

- Existing Lines
- Proposed New Line
- Existing Substations

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 Projection: NAD83 UTM15N  
 Source: MnDNR, SEH\inc  
 Background: USGS 100k Topo

## Site Location Map

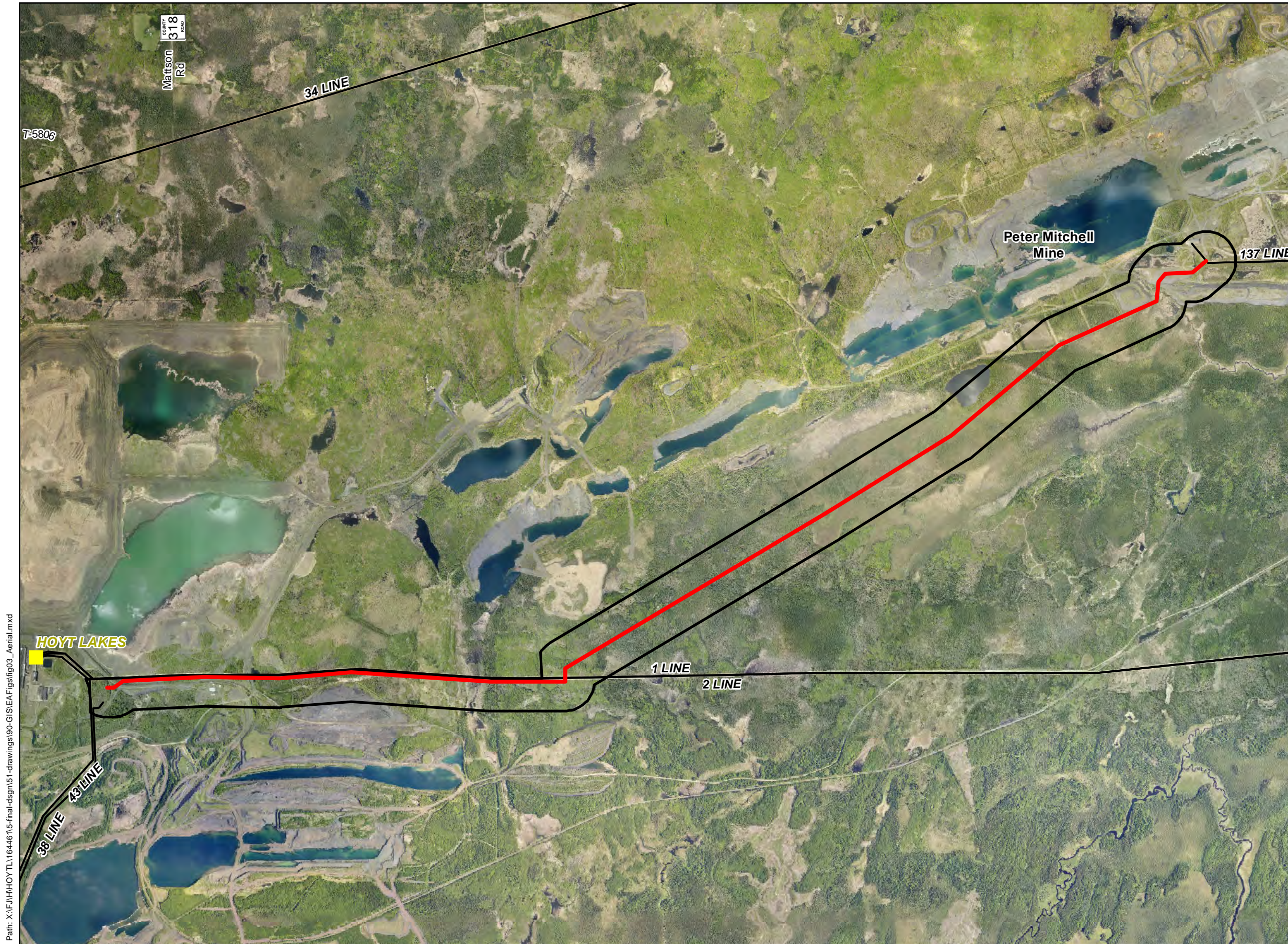
### 137 LINE EXTENSION EA





### St. Louis County, Minnesota

Figure  
2

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- Legend**
-  Existing Lines
  -  Existing Substations
  -  EA Study Area
  -  Proposed New Line

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Map by: B. Tolcser  
Projection: NAD83 UTM15N  
Source: MnDNR, SEHinc  
Background: St. Louis County, 2019

# 137 LINE EXTENSION EA

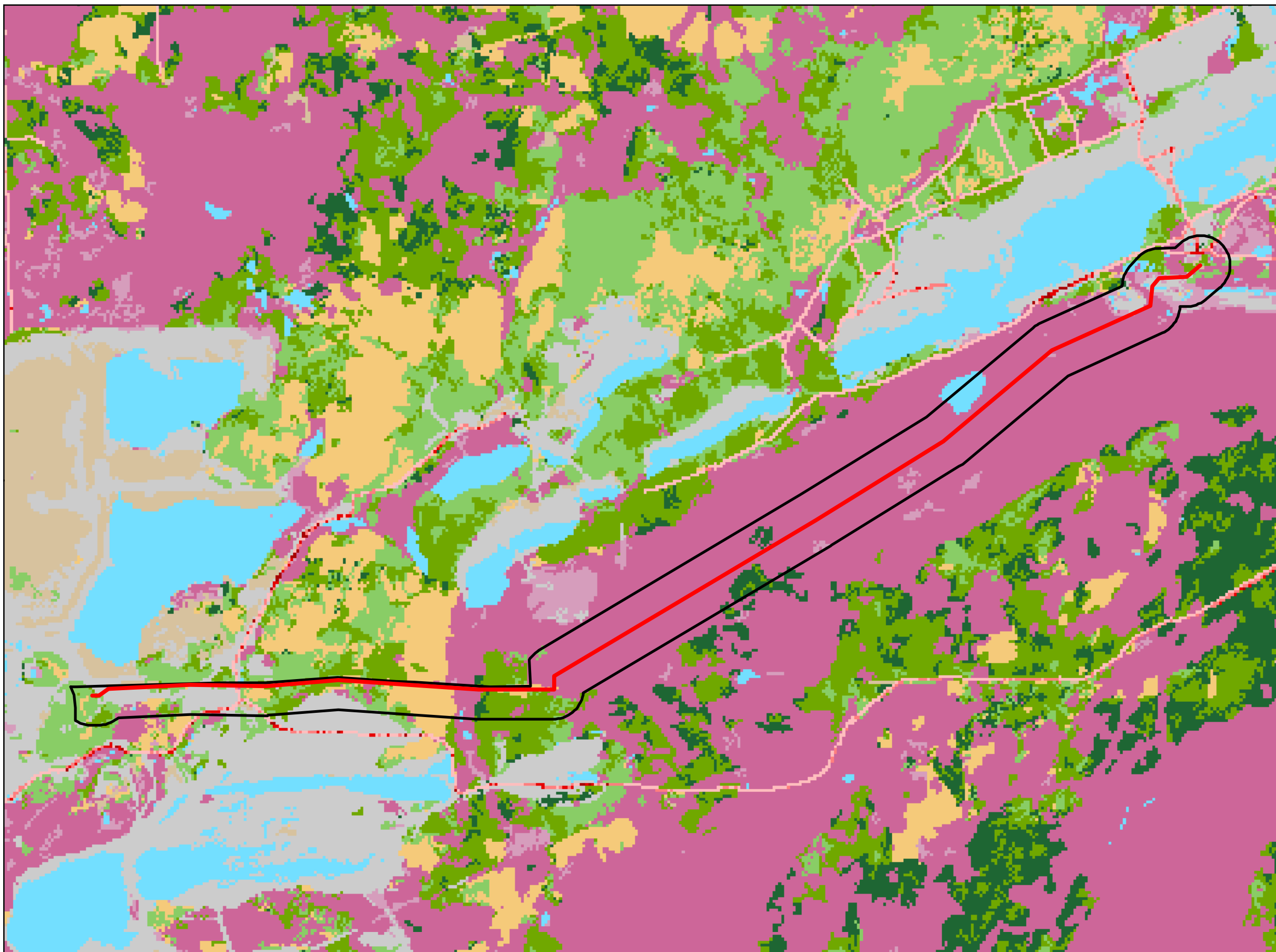
## St. Louis County, Minnesota

**Aerial Photo  
2019**

**Figure  
3**

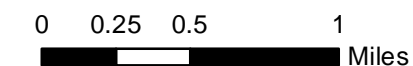


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### Legend

-  EA Study Area
-  Proposed New Line
- Land Cover Class**
-  Open Water
-  Developed, Open Space
-  Developed, Low Intensity
-  Developed, Medium Intensity
-  Developed, High Intensity
-  Barren Land (Rock/Sand/Clay)
-  Deciduous Forest
-  Evergreen Forest
-  Mixed Forest
-  Shrub/Scrub
-  Grassland/Herbaceous
-  Woody Wetlands
-  Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands



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Map by: B. Tolcser  
Projection: NAD83 UTM15N  
Source: MnDNR, SEHinc  
Background: St. Louis County, 2019

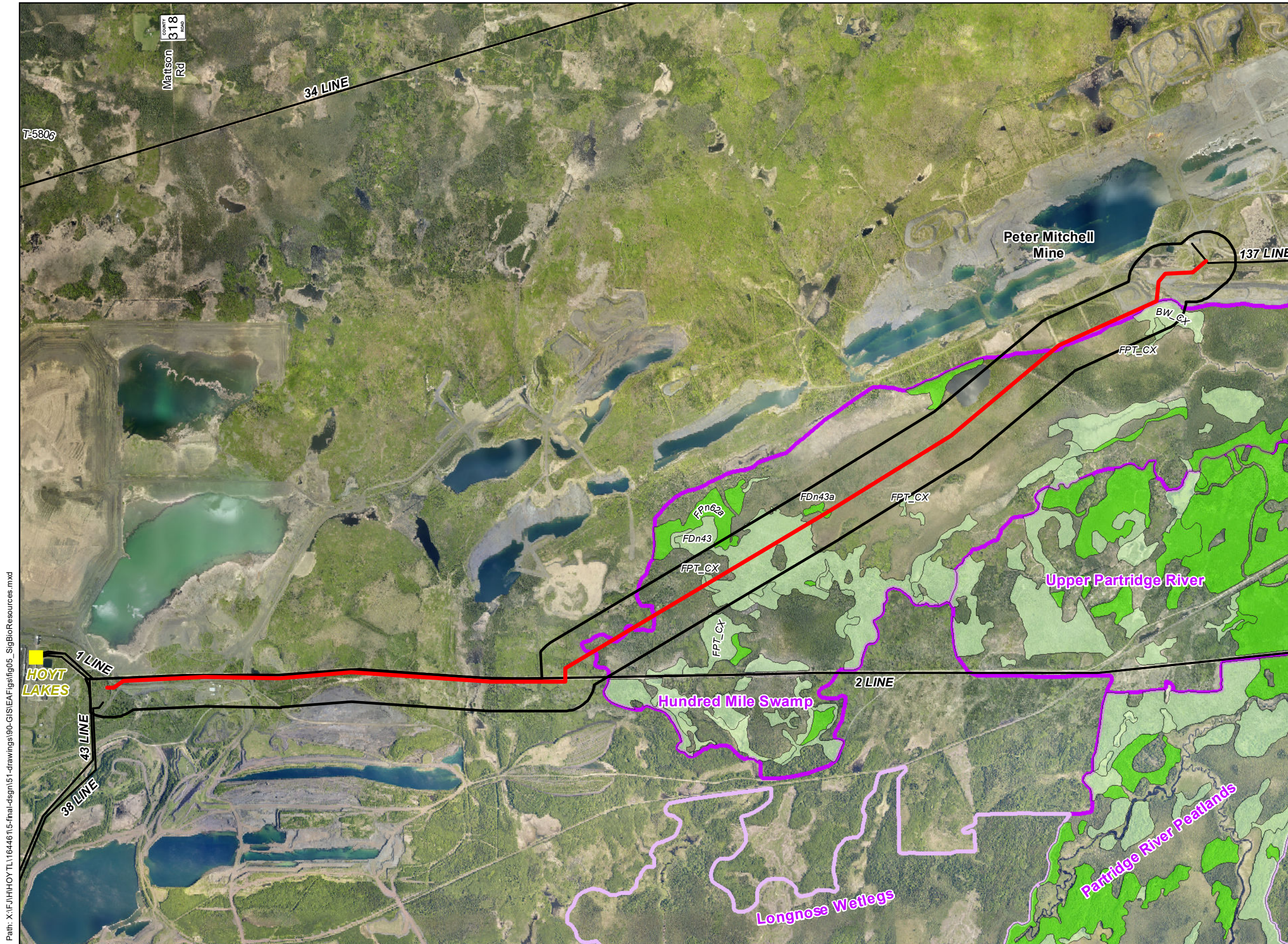
## 137 LINE EXTENSION EA

St. Louis County, Minnesota

**Land Use Map  
(MLCCS 2016)**

**Figure  
4**





**Legend**

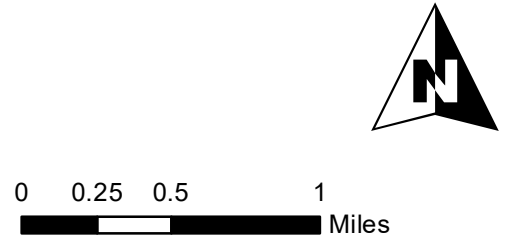
- Existing Lines
- Existing Substations
- EA Study Area
- Proposed New Line

**MBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance**

- High
- Moderate

**NPC S-Rank Category**

- S1-S3
- Possible S1-S3



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Map by: B. Tolcser  
Projection: NAD83 UTM15N  
Source: MnDNR, SEHinc  
Background: St. Louis County, 2019

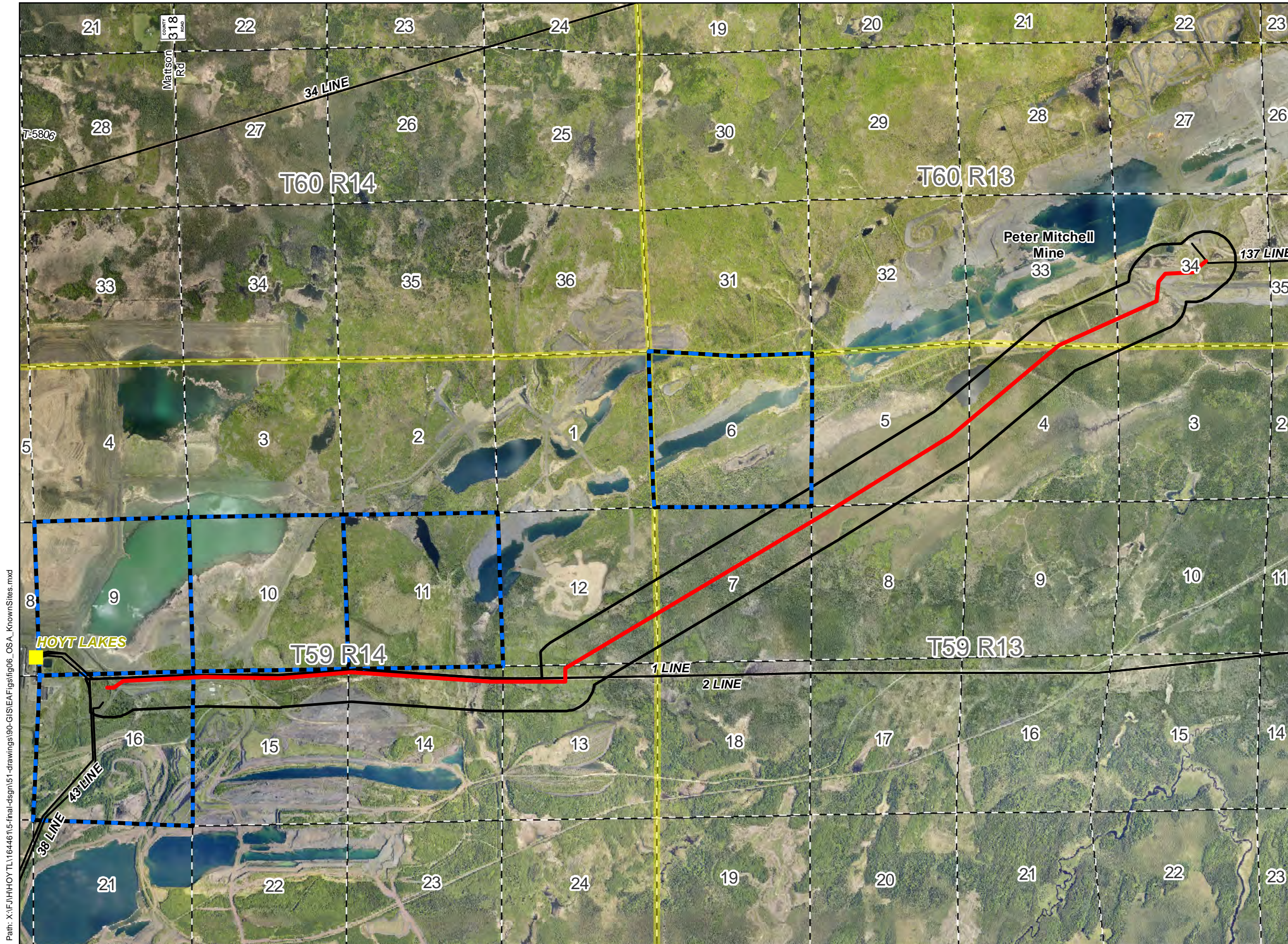
# 137 LINE EXTENSION EA

## St. Louis County, Minnesota

**MNDNR NPCs and Sites of Biodiversity Significance**

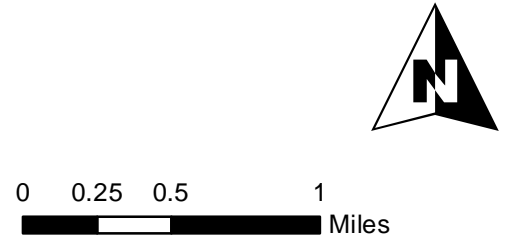
**Figure 5**





**Legend**

- Existing Lines
- Existing Substations
- EA Study Area
- Proposed New Line
- Township / Range (approx.)
- Section Boundaries (approx.)
- MN OSA Sections with Known Sites



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Path: X:\F\H\HOYTL\164461\5-final-dsgm\51-drawings\90-CIS\EA\Figs\fig06\_OSA\_KnownSites.mxd

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Print Date: 4/4/2022  
Map by: B. Tolcser  
Projection: NAD83 UTM15N  
Source: MnDNR, SEHinc  
Background: St. Louis County, 2019

## 137 LINE EXTENSION EA

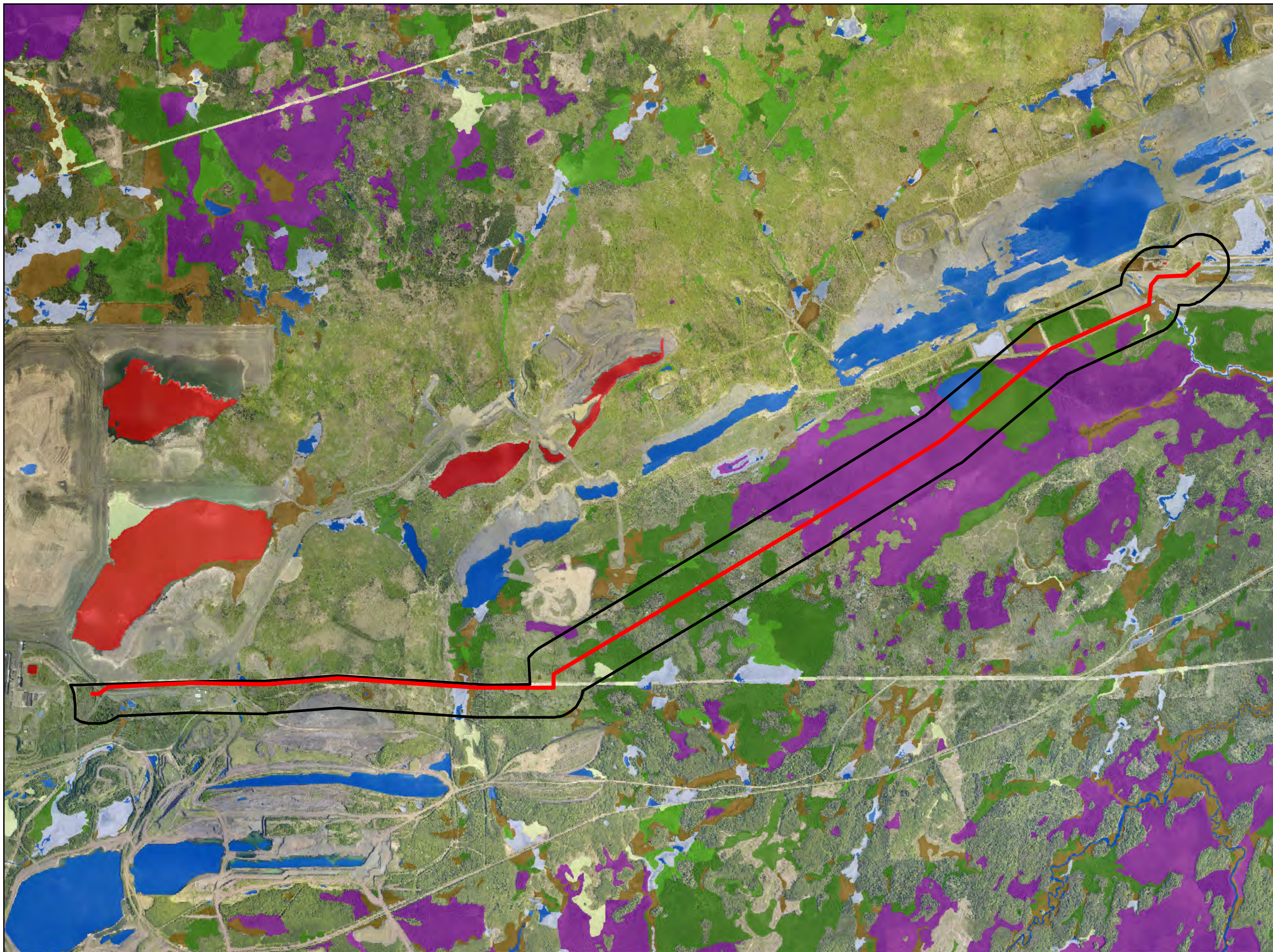
### St. Louis County, Minnesota

**MN OSA  
Known Sites**

**Figure  
6**



Path: X:\F\H\HOYTL1644615-final-dsgn\51-drawings\90-GIS\EA\Figs\fig07\_NWI.mxd



**Legend**

- EA Study Area
- Proposed New Line

**NWI Simplified Plant Community Class**

- Seasonally Flooded/Emergent
- Shallow Marsh
- Deep Marsh
- Shallow Open Water Community
- Non-Vegetated Aquatic Community
- Coniferous Wetland
- Hardwood Wetland
- Shrub Wetland
- Bog
- Artificially Flooded



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Source: MnDNR, SEHinc  
Background: St. Louis County, 2019

# 137 LINE EXTENSION EA

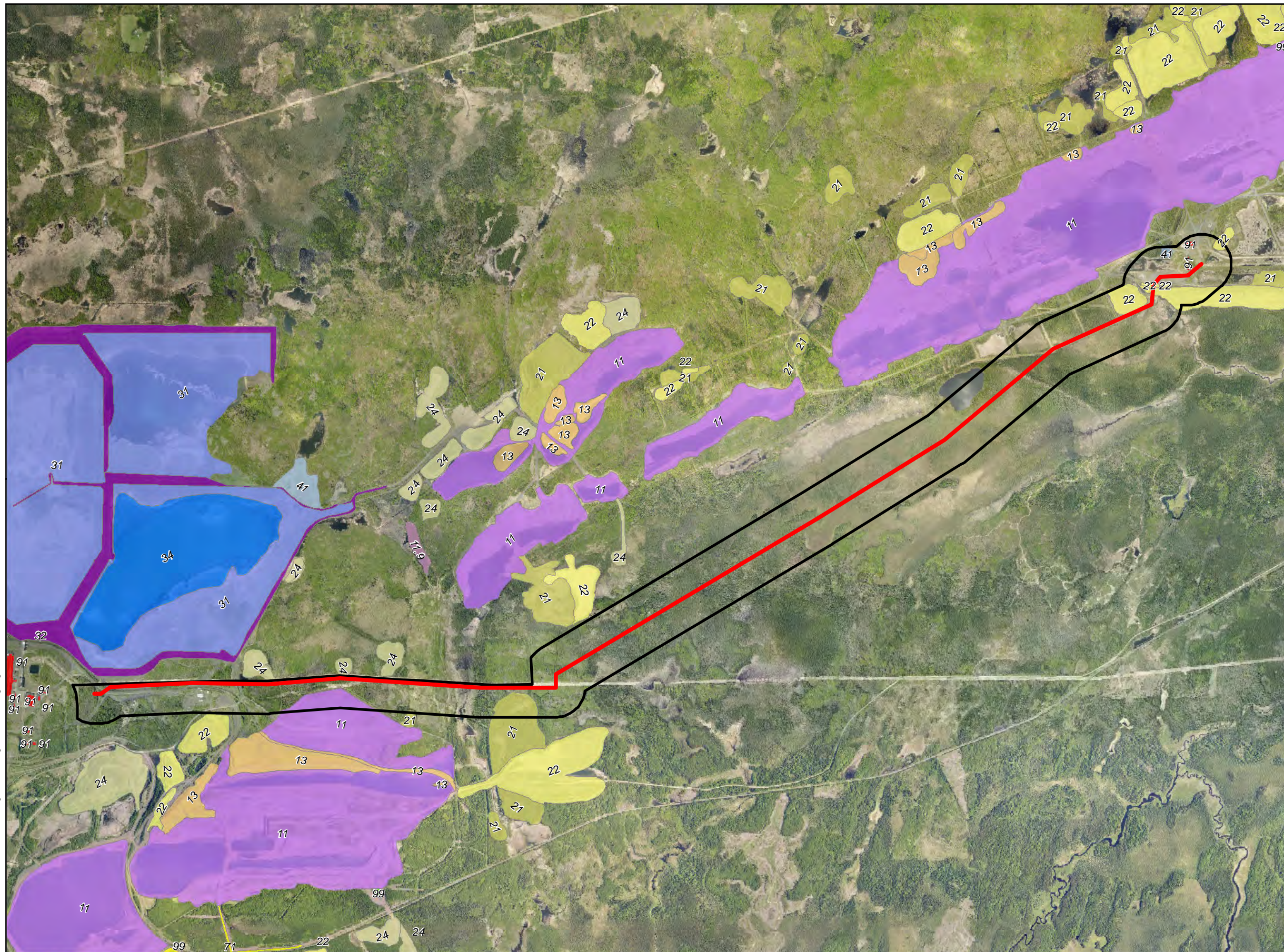
## St. Louis County, Minnesota

**National Wetlands  
Inventory (NWI)  
Map**

**Figure  
7**

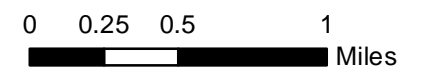


Path: X:\F\H\HOYTL\164461\51-drawings\90-GIS\EA\Figs\fig08\_HistoricMineFeatures.mxd



### Legend

- EA Study Area
- Proposed New Line
- Mine Feature - Disturbance Codes**
- Pits**
- 11 - Pit limit (taconite)
- 11.9 - Natural ore pit
- In-Pit Stockpiles**
- 13 - Rock in-pit stockpile
- Stockpiles**
- 21 - Surface stockpile
- 22 - Rock stockpile
- 24 - Mixed stockpile
- Tailings Basins**
- 31 - Tailings basin
- 32 - Dam limit
- 34 - Basin water
- Other Related Features**
- 41 - Reservoir/settling basin
- 71 - Haul road
- 91 - Plant/shop area
- 99 - Undisturbed (natural ground)



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Background: St. Louis County, 2019

## 137 LINE EXTENSION EA

St. Louis County, Minnesota

Historic Mine Feature  
Disturbance Codes

Figure  
8



Path: X:\F\H\HOYTL1644615-final-dsgn\90-GIS\EA\Figs\fig09\_PWI.mxd

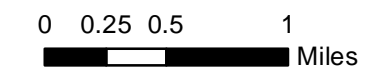


**Legend**

- EA Study Area
- Proposed New Line
- PWI Basins

**PWI Water Courses - Trout Streams**

- Public Watercourse (Non-Trout Stream)
- Public Watercourse, Trout Stream



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Map by: B. Tolcser  
Projection: NAD83 UTM15N  
Source: MnDNR, SEHinc  
Background: St. Louis County, 2019

## 137 LINE EXTENSION EA

### St. Louis County, Minnesota

**Public Waters  
Inventory (PWI)  
Map**





**Figure  
9**

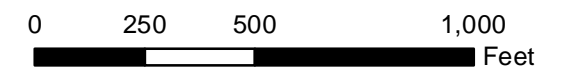
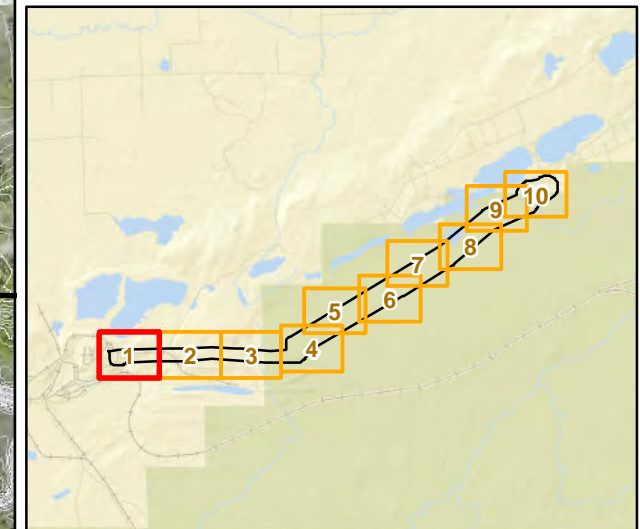


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### Legend

-  EA Study Area
- Plant Community Classification**
-  Shallow Open Water
-  Shrub-Carr
-  Hardwood Swamp



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Map by: bpt  
Projection: NAD83 UTM15N  
Source: MnDNR, SEHinc  
Background: St. Louis County, 2019

## 137 LINE EXTENSION EA

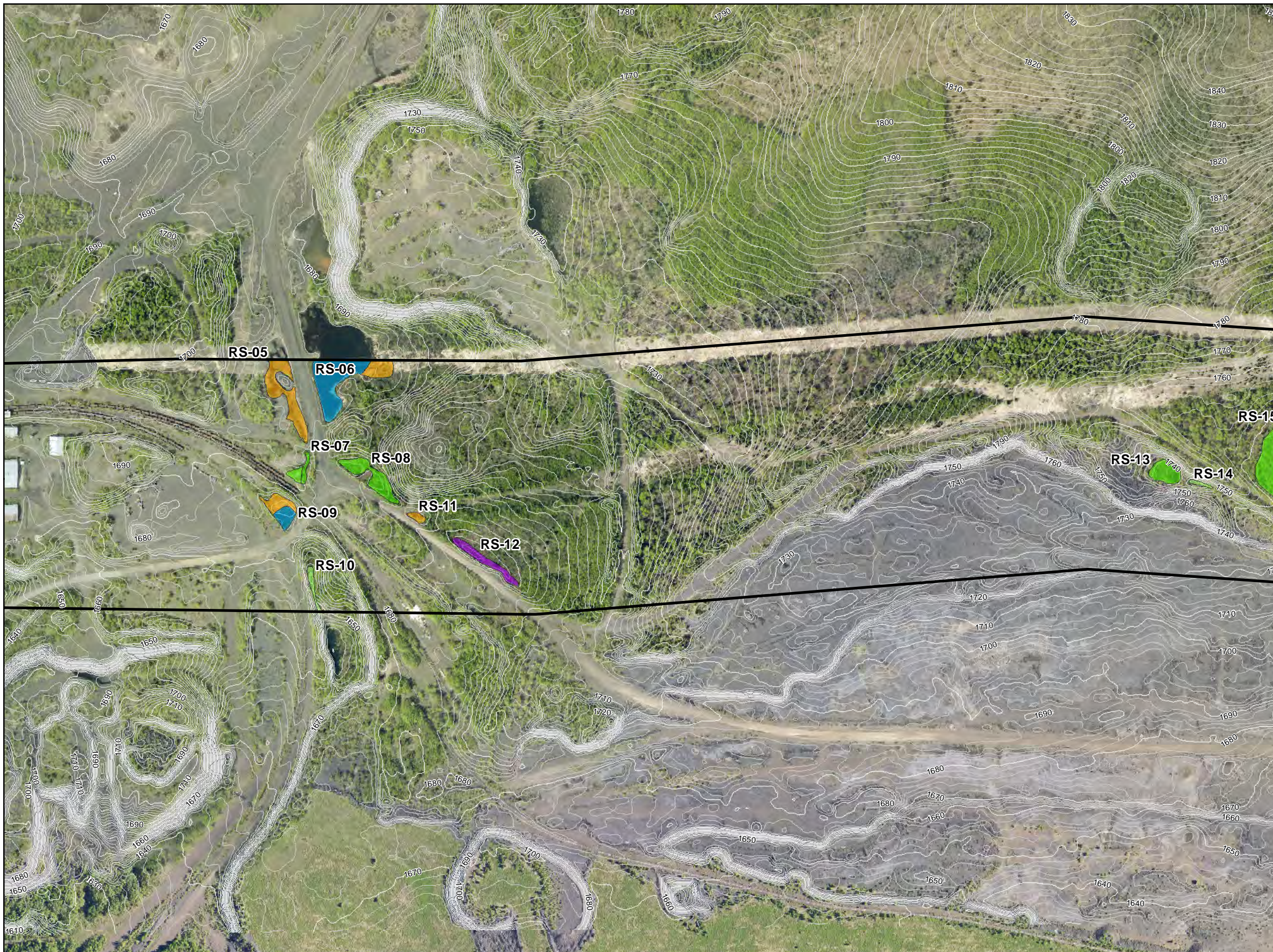
### St. Louis County, Minnesota

**Level 1 Wetland  
Delineation Results**

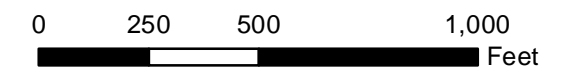
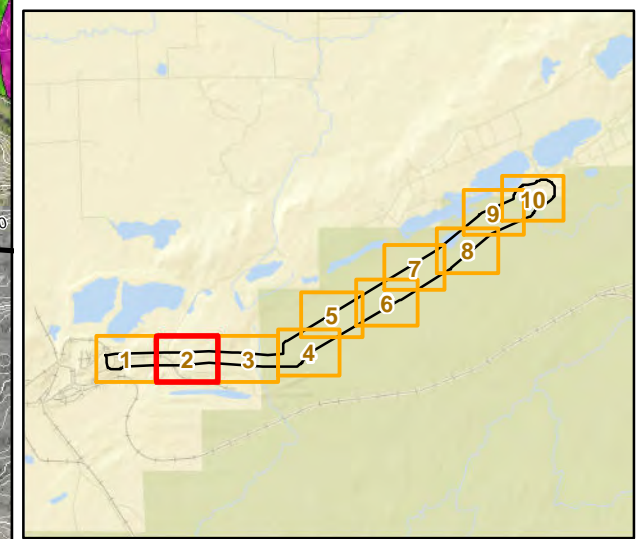
**Figure  
10-1**



Path: X:\H\HOYTL\164461\5-final-dsgn\90-GIS\EA\Figs\fig10\_Level1\_Delineation\_Results.mxd



- Legend**
- EA Study Area
  - Plant Community Classification**
  - Seasonally Flooded Basin
  - Shallow Marsh
  - Shallow Open Water
  - Shrub-Carr
  - Alder Thicket
  - Hardwood Swamp



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Map by: bpt  
 Projection: NAD83 UTM15N  
 Source: MnDNR, SEHinc  
 Background: St. Louis County, 2019

# 137 LINE EXTENSION EA

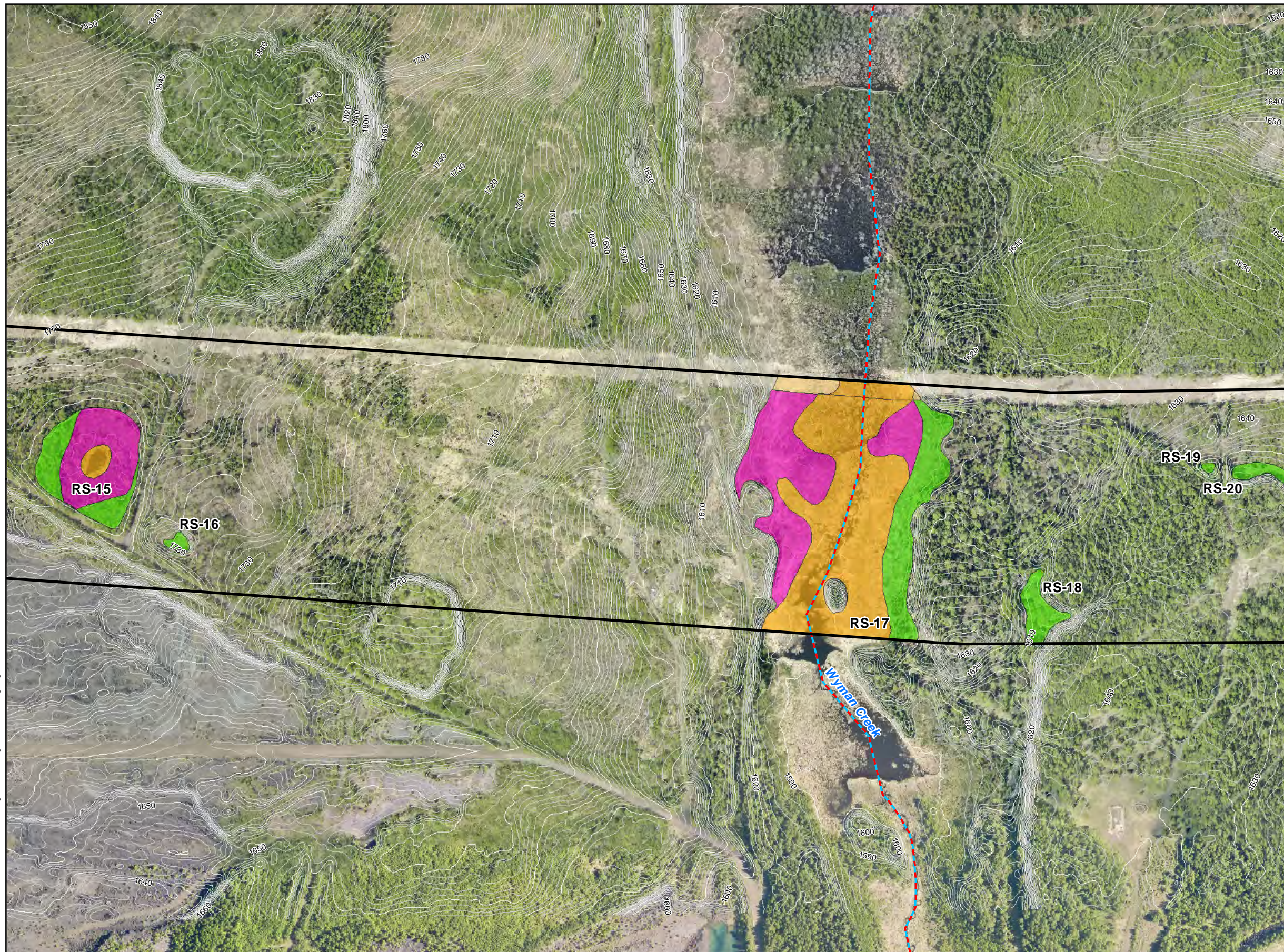
## St. Louis County, Minnesota

Level 1 Wetland Delineation Results







Figure 10-2

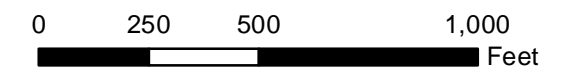
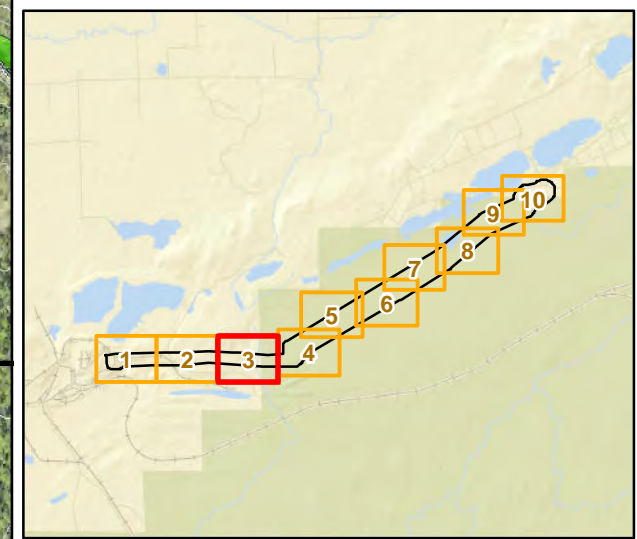


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### Legend

-  EA Study Area
-  Public Watercourse, Trout Stream
- Plant Community Classification**
-  Sedge Meadow
-  Shallow Marsh
-  Shrub-Carr
-  Hardwood Swamp



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Map by: bpt  
Projection: NAD83 UTM15N  
Source: MnDNR, SEHinc  
Background: St. Louis County, 2019

# 137 LINE EXTENSION EA

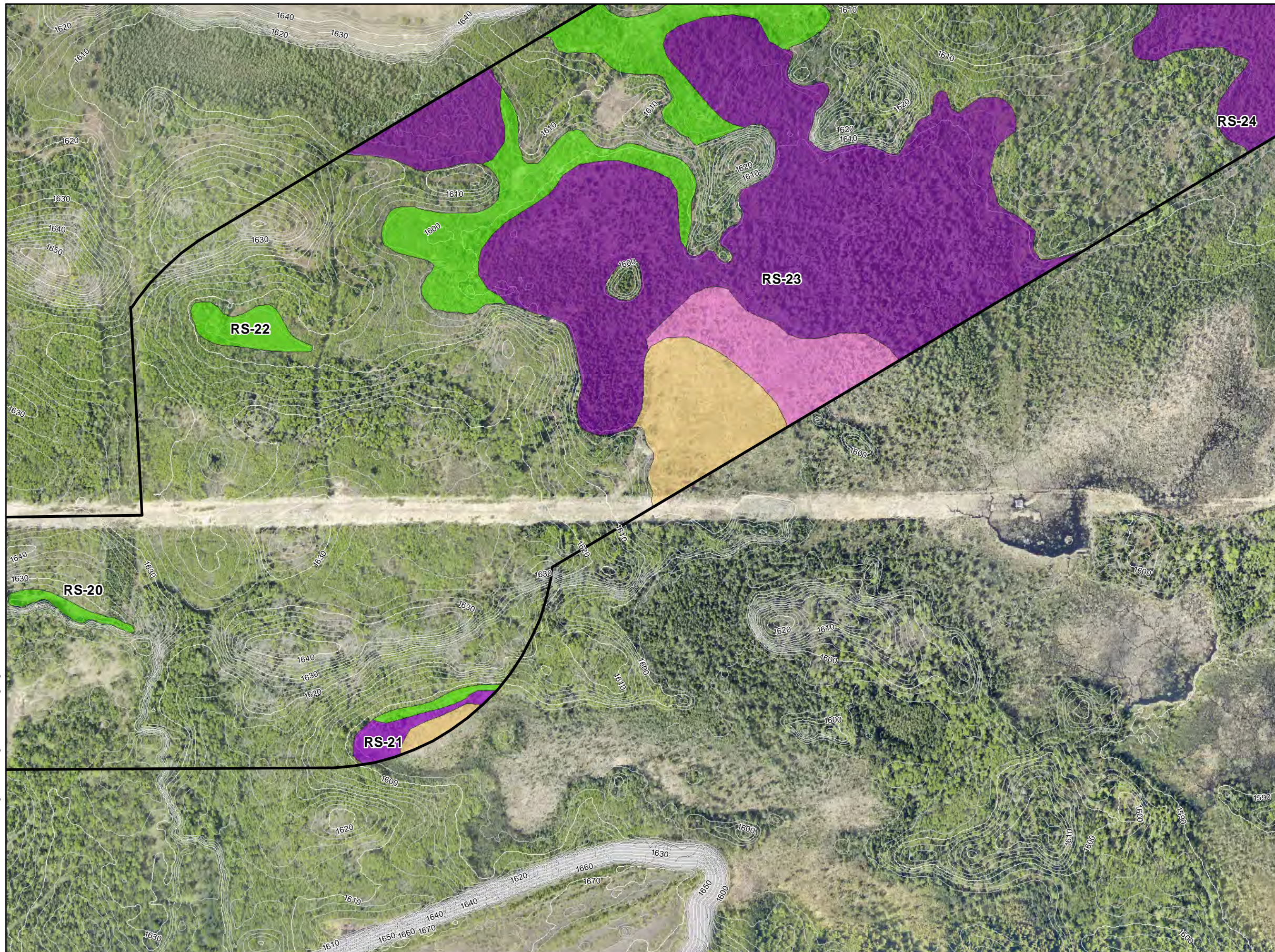
## St. Louis County, Minnesota

### Level 1 Wetland Delineation Results

### Figure 10-3

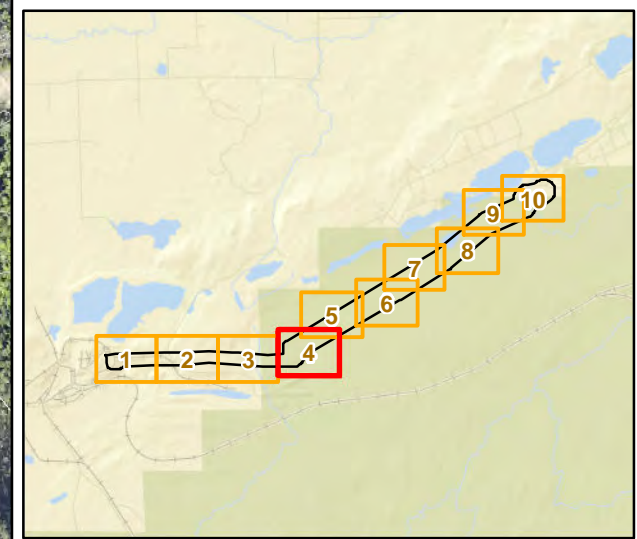


Path: X:\F\H\HOYTL\164461\5-final-dsgm\51-drawings\90-GIS\EA\Figs\fig10\_Level1\_Delineation\_Results.mxd



**Legend**

- EA Study Area
- Plant Community Classification**
  - Sedge Meadow
  - Alder Thicket
  - Hardwood Swamp
  - Open Bog
  - Coniferous Bog



North arrow pointing up with 'N'.

Scale bar: 0, 250, 500, 1,000 Feet.

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Source: MnDNR, SEHinc  
Background: St. Louis County, 2019

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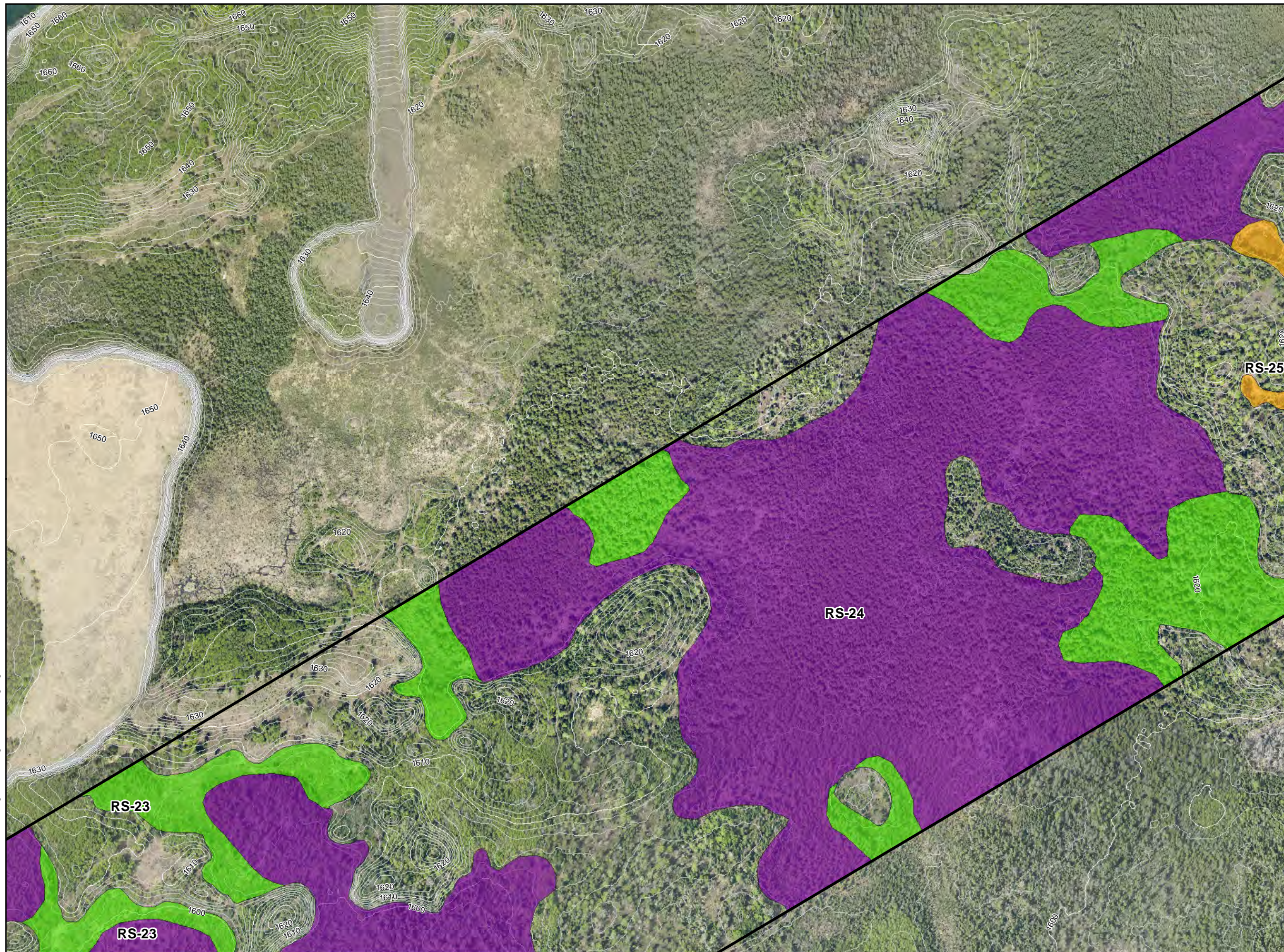
## St. Louis County, Minnesota

**Level 1 Wetland Delineation Results**





**Figure 10-4**

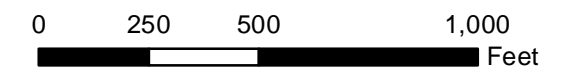
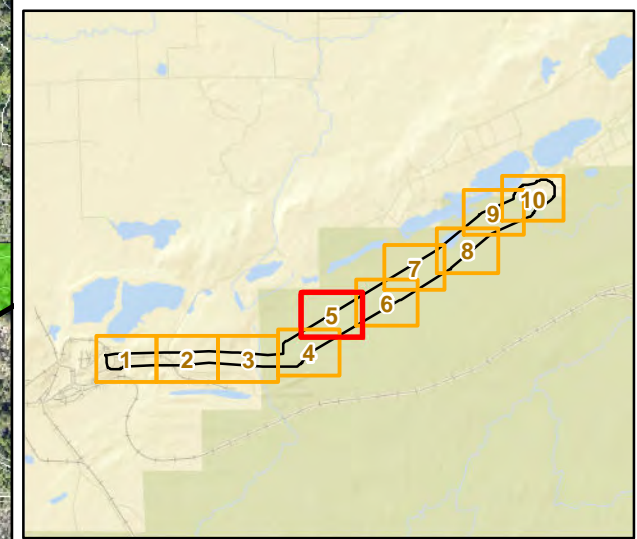


Path: X:\E\HOYTL\164461\5-final-dsgm\51-drawings\90-GIS\EA\Figs\fig10\_Level1\_Delineation\_Results.mxd



### Legend

-  EA Study Area
- Plant Community Classification**
-  Shallow Marsh
-  Hardwood Swamp
-  Coniferous Bog



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Projection: NAD83 UTM15N  
Source: MnDNR, SEHinc  
Background: St. Louis County, 2019

## 137 LINE EXTENSION EA

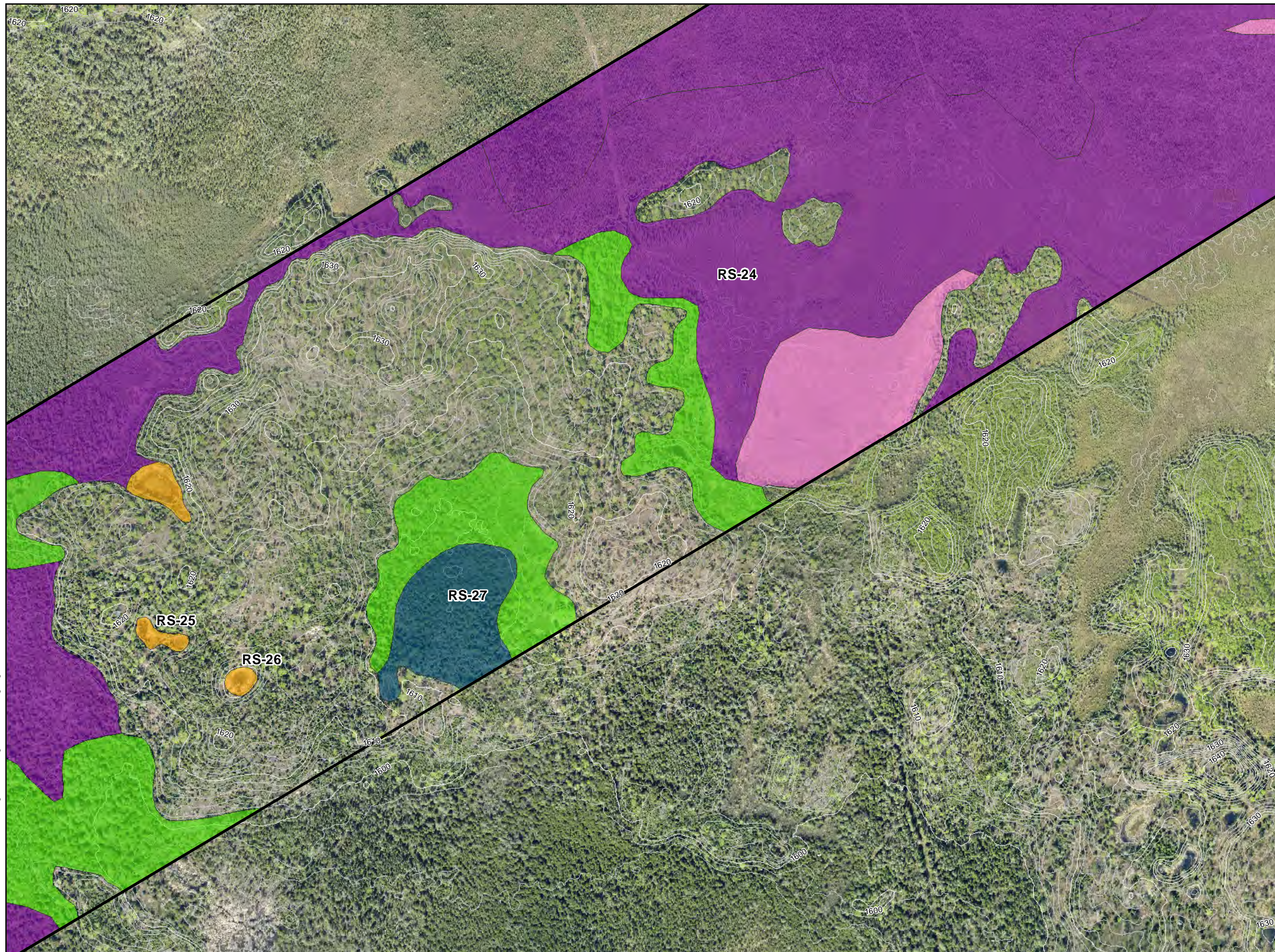
### St. Louis County, Minnesota

**Level 1 Wetland  
Delineation Results**

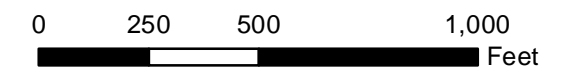
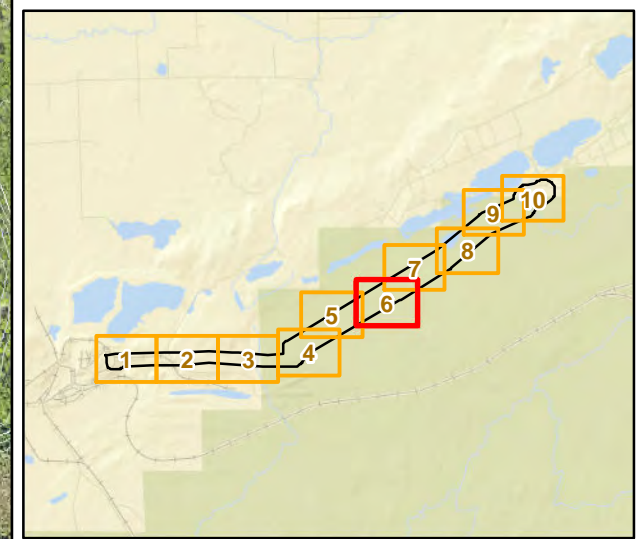
**Figure  
10-5**



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- Legend**
- EA Study Area
  - Plant Community Classification**
  - Shallow Marsh
  - Hardwood Swamp
  - Coniferous Swamp
  - Open Bog
  - Coniferous Bog



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Map by: bpt  
Projection: NAD83 UTM15N  
Source: MnDNR, SEHinc  
Background: St. Louis County, 2019

# 137 LINE EXTENSION EA

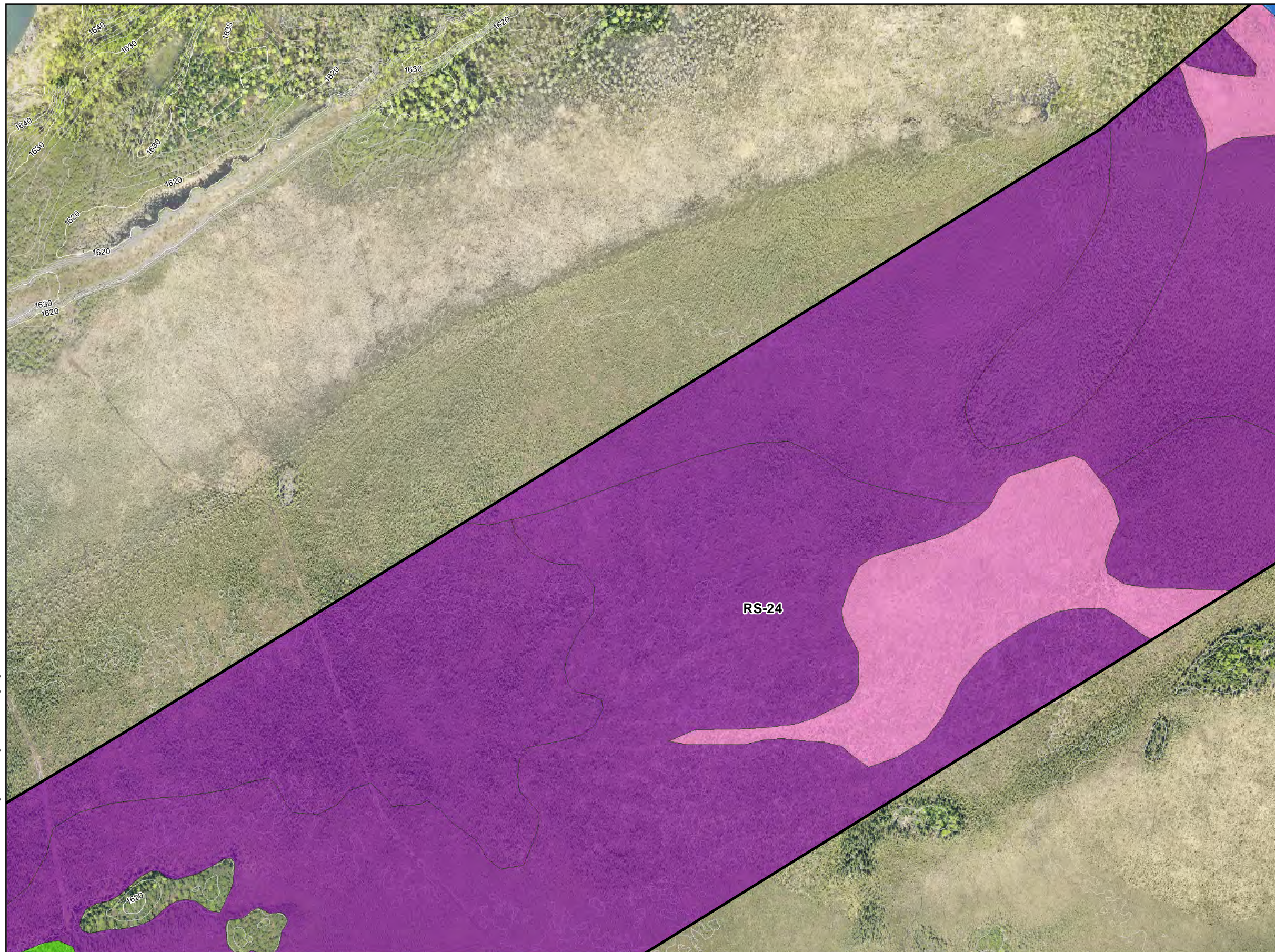
## St. Louis County, Minnesota

**Level 1 Wetland  
Delineation Results**






**Figure  
10-6**

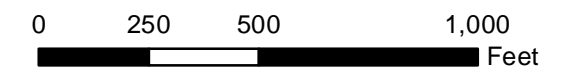
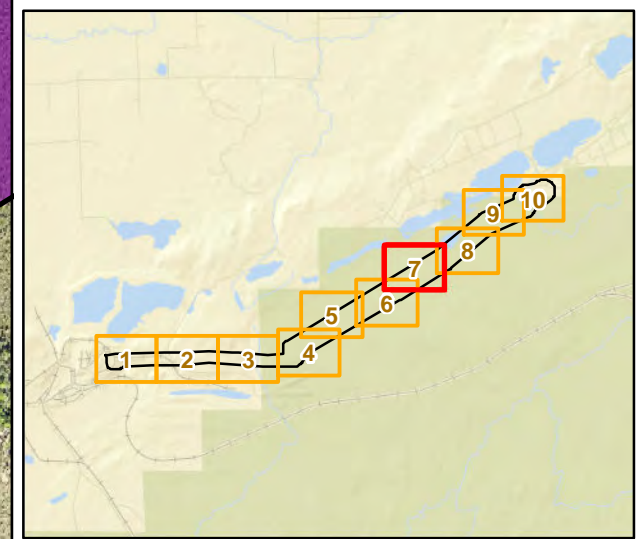


Path: X:\F\H\HOYTL\164461\5-final-dsgm\51-drawings\90-GIS\EA\Figs\fig10\_Level1\_Delineation\_Results.mxd



### Legend

-  EA Study Area
- Plant Community Classification**
-  Hardwood Swamp
-  Open Bog
-  Coniferous Bog
-  Deepwater Habitat



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Projection: NAD83 UTM15N  
Source: MnDNR, SEHinc  
Background: St. Louis County, 2019

## 137 LINE EXTENSION EA

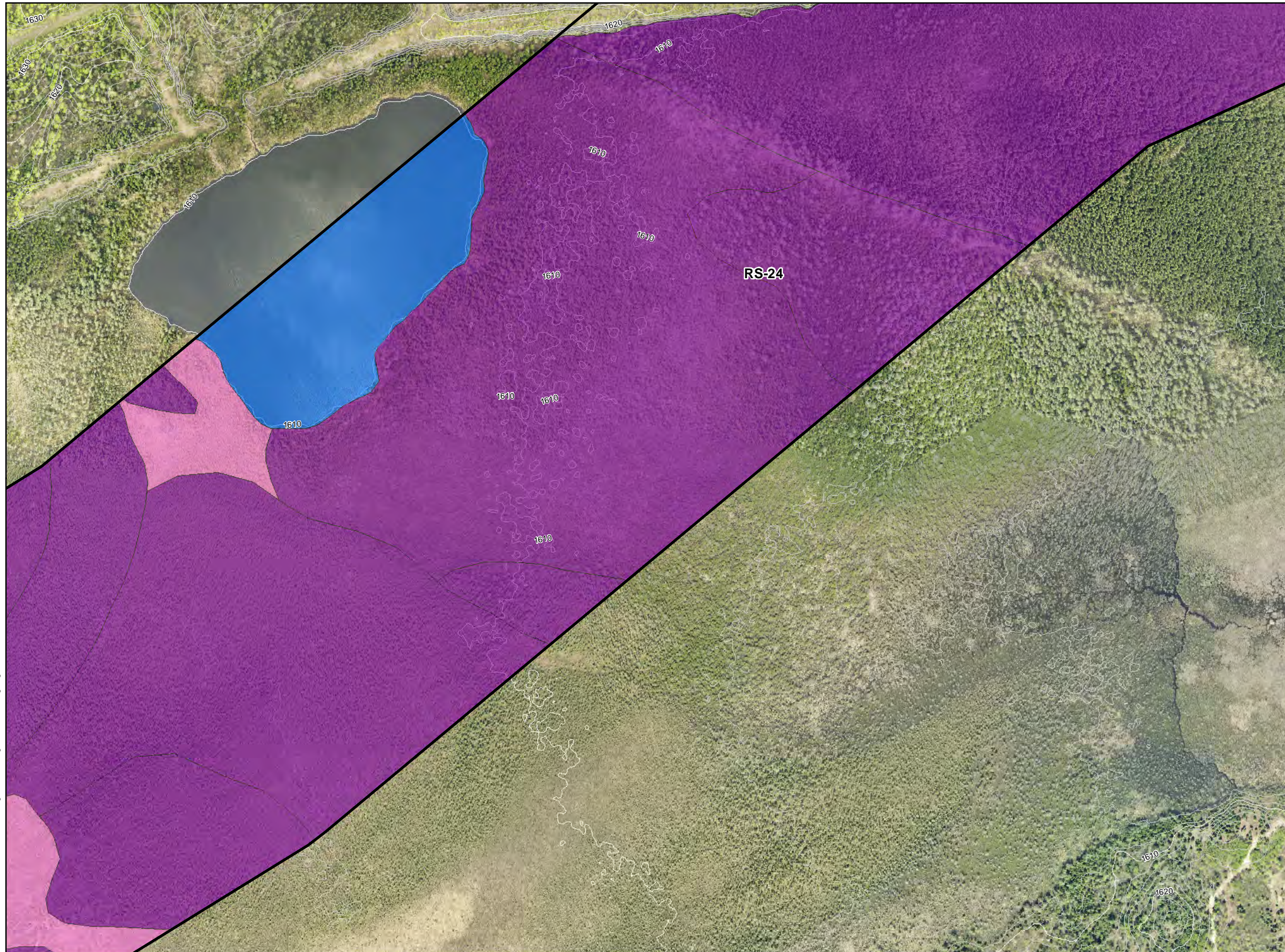
St. Louis County, Minnesota

Level 1 Wetland  
Delineation Results





Figure  
10-7

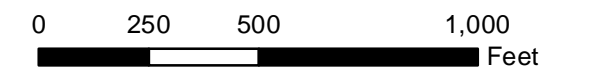
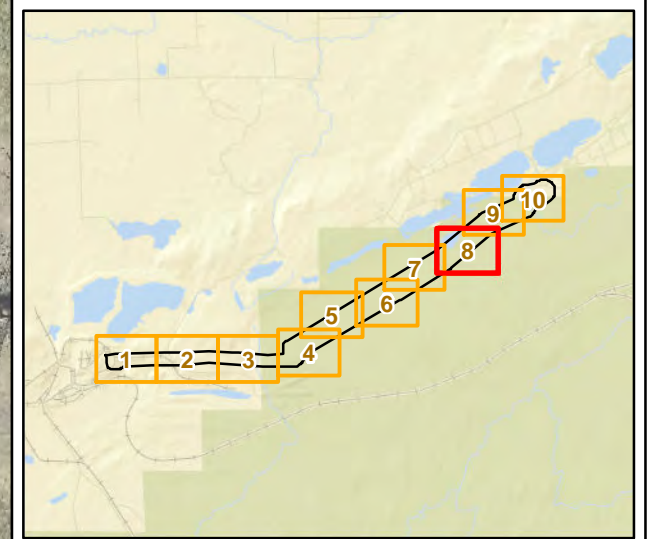


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### Legend

-  EA Study Area
- Plant Community Classification**
-  Open Bog
-  Coniferous Bog
-  Deepwater Habitat



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Map by: bpt  
Projection: NAD83 UTM15N  
Source: MnDNR, SEH Inc  
Background: St. Louis County, 2019

# 137 LINE EXTENSION EA

## St. Louis County, Minnesota

### Level 1 Wetland Delineation Results










### Figure 10-8

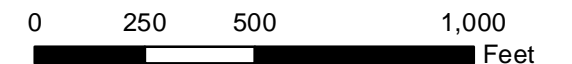
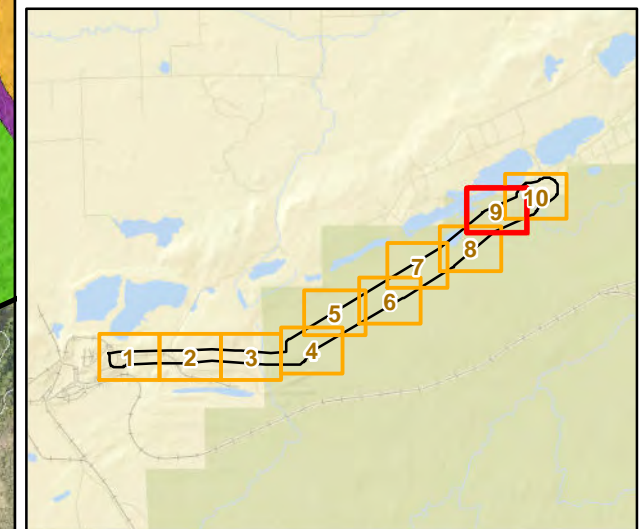


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### Legend

-  EA Study Area
- Plant Community Classification**
-  Shallow Marsh
-  Deep Marsh
-  Shrub-Carr
-  Hardwood Swamp
-  Coniferous Swamp
-  Open Bog
-  Coniferous Bog
-  Deepwater Habitat



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FAX: (651) 490-2150  
WATTS: 800-325-2055  
www.sehinc.com

Project: HOYTL 164461  
Print Date: 4/4/2022

Map by: bpt  
Projection: NAD83 UTM15N  
Source: MnDNR, SEHinc  
Background: St. Louis County, 2019

## 137 LINE EXTENSION EA

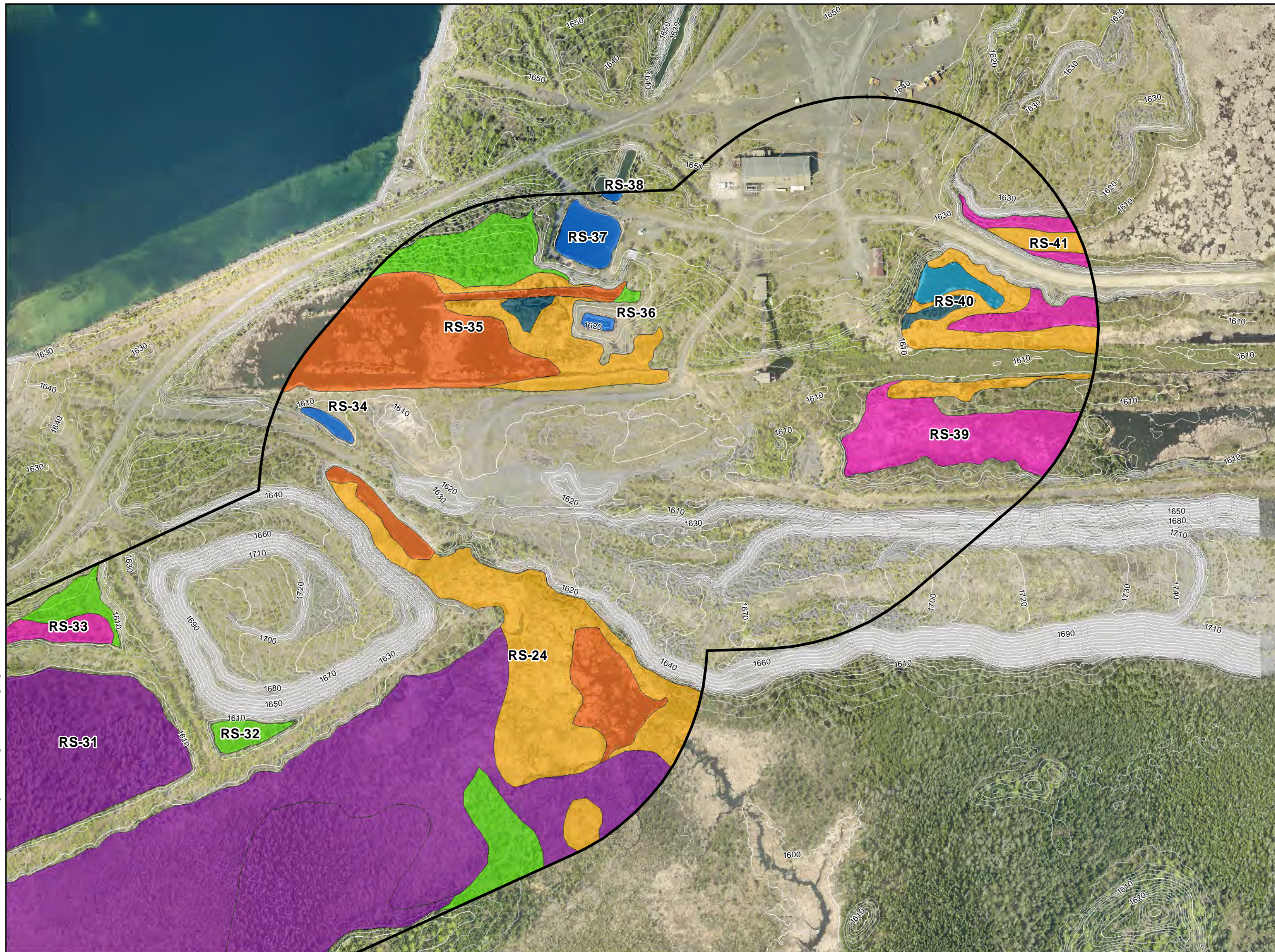
### St. Louis County, Minnesota

### Level 1 Wetland Delineation Results










### Figure 10-9

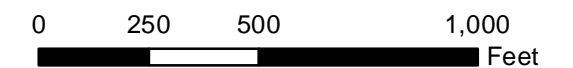
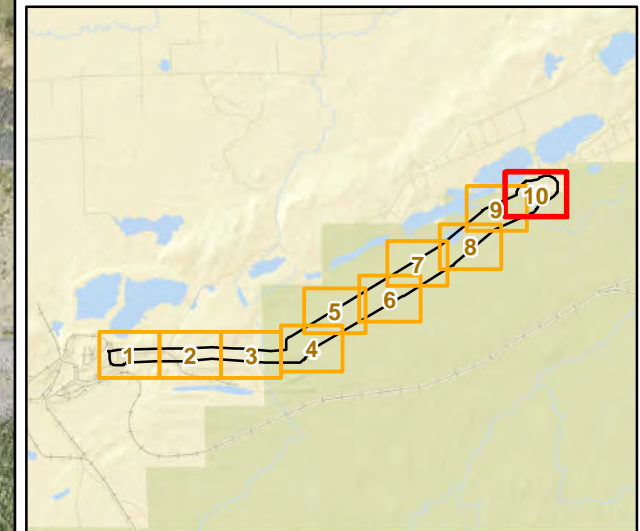


Path: X:\FH\HOYTL\164461\5-final-dsgm\51-drawings\90-GIS\EA\Figs\fig10\_Level1\_Delineation\_Results.mxd



### Legend

-  EA Study Area
- Plant Community Classification**
-  Shallow Marsh
-  Deep Marsh
-  Shallow Open Water
-  Shrub-Carr
-  Hardwood Swamp
-  Coniferous Swamp
-  Coniferous Bog
-  Deepwater Habitat



This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey map and is not intended to be used as one. This map is a compilation of records, information, and data gathered from various sources listed on this map and is to be used for reference purposes only. SEH does not warrant that the Geographic Information System (GIS) Data used to prepare this map are error free, and SEH does not represent that the GIS Data can be used for navigational, tracking, or any other purpose requiring exacting measurement of distance or direction or precision in the depiction of geographic features. The user of this map acknowledges that SEH shall not be liable for any damages which arise out of the user's access or use of data provided.



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Background: St. Louis County, 2019

## 137 LINE EXTENSION EA

### St. Louis County, Minnesota

### Level 1 Wetland Delineation Results

### Figure 10-10



# Appendix A

PUC Correspondence



AN ALLETE COMPANY

October 18, 2021

**VIA E-FILING**

Will Seuffert  
Executive Secretary  
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission  
121 7<sup>th</sup> Place East, Suite 350  
St. Paul, MN 55101

RE: 115 kV Transmission Line Local Review

Dear Mr. Seuffert:

In accordance with the Power Plant Siting Act, Minn. Stat. § 216E.05, subd. 3, this letter serves as the required notice to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) that Minnesota Power has elected to seek local review approval for the construction of an approximately 8 mile 115 kV high voltage transmission line within the corporate boundaries of both the City of Hoyt Lakes and the City of Babbitt, Minnesota.

The proposed line would connect the Mesaba Switching Station located in the NE ¼ of the NW ¼, Section 16, T. 59 N. R. 14 W, to the existing radial terminus of 137 line on the south side of the William Mitchell Mine in Babbitt Minnesota. The proposed 115 kV transmission line route would parallel the existing double-circuited 1&2 heading east from the Mesaba Switching Station and then northeasterly along a well vetted cross country corridor (see attached Figure 1-1).

The City of Hoyt Lakes will be conducting the environmental review for the project. Upon completion of the environmental review, Minnesota Power will also need to obtain a conditional use permit from the City of Hoyt Lakes and the City of Babbitt prior to construction. Both municipalities received a permit application on October 18, 2021 and have been informed they have 60 days to refer permitting to the Commission.

Questions regarding this project should be directed to Jim Atkinson, Minnesota Power, at 218-343-9119. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David R. Moeller'.

David R. Moeller  
Senior Attorney and  
Director of Regulatory Compliance

JBA:th

Enc.

cc: MPUC's General List of Interested Persons  
John Wachtler, Minnesota Department of Commerce  
Becky Lammi, City of Hoyt Lakes  
Cathy Hoheisel, City of Babbitt  
Jim Atkinson, Minnesota Power

November 8, 2021

David Moeller  
Minnesota Power  
30 West Superior Street  
Duluth, MN 55802

**RE: Local Review of Minnesota Power's 115 Kilovolt Transmission Line Project in Saint Louis County, Minnesota, Docket No. ET2/LR-21-746**

Dear Mr. David Moeller:

This letter confirms that the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) has received Minnesota Power's letter dated October 18, 2021, indicating it has elected to pursue local review and approval to construct approximately 8 miles of new 115 kilovolt (kV) transmission line to connect the Mesaba Switching Station to the existing radial terminus of the 137 Line on the south side of the William Mitchell Mine in the cities of Hoyt Lakes and Babbitt, Saint Louis County, Minnesota.<sup>1</sup>

Under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 216E, a route permit from the Commission is required for most high-voltage transmission lines that are greater than 100 kV. However, certain projects may be eligible for review and permitting by local units of government with jurisdiction instead of filing with the Commission. In this case, the 115 kV transmission line project proposed by Minnesota Power is eligible for local review under Minn. Stat. § 216E.05, subd. 2(3).

Minnesota Power has indicated that the City of Hoyt Lakes and the City of Babbitt will need to grant conditional permits for the project to be constructed. Under Minn. Stat. § 216E.05, subd. 1(b), a local unit of government may relinquish its jurisdiction by requesting the Commission assume jurisdiction and make a decision on the permit. The request must be filed with the

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<sup>1</sup> Minnesota Power, Letter of Intent – 115 kV Transmission Line Local Review, Document ID: [202110-178914-01](#)

Commission within 60 days after an application for a project has been filed with the local government unit. Minnesota Power filed conditional use permit applications with the City of Hoyt Lakes and the City of Babbitt on October 18, 2021.

Minnesota Power has indicated that the City of Hoyt Lakes will be conducting an environmental review for the project. Under Minn. R. 7850.5300, subp. 5, an environmental assessment must be prepared by the local government unit with jurisdiction over the project. Specific requirements of the environmental review process includes: providing an opportunity for the public to participate in the development of the scope of the environmental assessment before it is prepared; publishing notice in the EQB Monitor of when the assessment is available for review and of the procedure for commenting on the assessment; and withholding a final decision on the project until at least 10 days after the notice appears in the EQB Monitor. A copy of the environmental assessment and other relevant documents must be provided to the Commission upon completion. The environmental assessment and other required documents must be filed to Docket No. 21-746 using the Commission's electronic filing system (<https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling>).

This letter acknowledges that Minnesota Power has provided notice to the Commission and to those persons on the Commission's General Notification List that a permit has been applied for from local unit of governments as required by Minn. R. 7850.5300, subp. 3.

If you have any questions, please direct them to Charley Bruce at [charley.bruce@state.mn.us](mailto:charley.bruce@state.mn.us) or 651-201-2251.

Sincerely,



Will Seuffert  
Executive Secretary

Cc:

Becky Lammi  
City of Hoyt Lakes  
206 Kennedy Memorial Dr.  
Hoyt Lakes, MN 55750

Cathy Hoheisel  
City of Babbitt  
71 South Drive  
Babbitt, MN 55706

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