

Assessment Activities

and the Manitoba–Minnesota Transmission Project

Manitoba Hydro is currently undertaking environmental assessment activities to apply for an *Environment Act* licence to construct a 500-kilovolt (kV) international transmission line. The environmental assessment process for the project is consistent with provincial and federal legislation, guidelines and procedures, as well as best practices. A number of assessment activities are currently being undertaken to assist with the environmental assessment. Examples of the assessment activities included in this process are listed below.

Mammal camera studies

The mammal camera study has been designed to better understand the distribution of large mammals in the study area. Fifty six cameras were deployed along the preferred alternate routes and along an existing 500-kV transmission line in the region. Data collected by the cameras provides information about wildlife in the region. The cameras also assist in determining if there is an abundance of large mammals based on detection rates.

White-tailed deer, American elk and black bear are important to First Nations, Metis, local residents and regulators. Acquiring data on the distribution of these species will assist in predicting the potential effects that this project may have on them.



Bird surveys will be conducted.

Traditional knowledge studies (TKS)

First Nations and Metis are working with Manitoba Hydro to better understand land, harvesting, culture, important sites and economic interests in the proposed project area. Information is shared to an extent that is comfortable for those involved.

First Nations and Metis with interest in the study area have been invited to conduct self-directed traditional knowledge studies of the area.

Study activities could include:

- Historical and other types of studies – field work including experts on traditional plants and medicines;
- Map biographies – interviews with elders and other key community knowledge holders to determine current and historically sensitive sites;
- Site visits – based on information from interviews and archival research, specific historically and culturally important sites may be visited to better understand how the project may potentially affect them.

Desktop data collection

Desktop data collection is the collection of data that has already been compiled from previous projects, reports and research regarding the study area. Most desktop data collection is completed at the early stages of a project to determine the types and amount of field work necessary for the project. Desktop data collection can assist in:

- identifying gaps in information;
- avoid work that has been completed;
- building from existing work;
- identifying others working in the same fields.

Many studies will include a combination of desktop data collection and field data collection.

Bird surveys

Bird surveys will be undertaken for the project. The first step consisted of desktop data collection for the regional assessment area with a specific focus on distribution and abundance of birds within the right-of-way and the local assessment area. Provincial and federal databases and past bird survey data will be used to assist in the assessment of potential effects on birds.

Surveys on water bird migration were undertaken at the wetlands near Richer and Deacon Reservoir as well as river crossings in the local assessment area.

The study will also include calculation of the density of breeding birds in relation to different habitat types, estimation of bird collision rates along the existing 500-kV transmission line in the area and identification of key wetland areas for water birds.

Predictive modelling – potential heritage resources

The assessment of heritage resource potential within a study area is based on consideration of locations of previously recorded archaeological sites, legally designated sites, archival data, historic and present land use information, and landscape characteristics that influence archaeological site distribution.

These data sets are reviewed to determine associations between the presence of certain biophysical characteristics and implied First Nation, Metis, fur trade, industrial and homestead land use activities that may have left physical evidence resulting in the formation of archaeological sites. The results of this review will help determine the potential for intact archaeological sites within the proposed study area. Intact sites are locations that have not been disturbed by previous development such as housing, road works and cultivation, or natural factors such as wind and water erosion.

For more information or if you would like to share your concerns, contact us at mmtp@hydro.mb.ca or toll free at 1-877-343-1631.

