Lake Ripley Management District

LAKE RIPLEY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT RESOLUTION 2026-09-19

A Resolution Opposing the Proposed Bell-Center-Columbia-Sugar Creek-Illinois/Wisconsin State Line 765 kV Competitive Transmission Project (BECI)

WHEREAS, the Town of Oakland, Jefferson County, Wisconsin is a predominantly rural and agricultural community characterized by prime farmland, family farms, wetlands, woodlands, prairies, open space, rural residences, and natural resources that contribute substantially to the Town's economy, environment, rural character, and quality of life; and

WHEREAS, the Midcontinent Independent System Operator, Inc. (MISO) has approved the Bell Center-Columbia-Sugar Creek-Illinois/Wisconsin State Line 765-kV Competitive Transmission Project (BECI) as part of its Long-Range Transmission Planning portfolio, and Midcontinent Grid Solutions has been selected to develop and construct the project (the "BECI Project"); and

WHEREAS, the BECI Project is proposed to consist of approximately 190 miles of new single-circuit 765-kV transmission facilities extending across Wisconsin to an interconnection at the Illinois/Wisconsin state line with a final transmission-line route yet to be determined, but current proposals contemplate a substantial portion of the BECI Project being constructed within the Town of Oakland; and

WHEREAS, construction of a new 765-kV transmission corridor through the Town would result in all of the following within the Town: the creation of numerous and vast rights-of-way; clearing of vegetation; installation of large transmission structures; taking of private property; construction-related access limitations; and permanent restrictions on the use and development of affected property; and

WHEREAS, such a corridor in the Town would reduce property values, limit the use and enjoyment of private property, fragment productive farmland, interfere with farming practices and drainage systems, compact soils, cause crop losses, and reduce the productivity and long-term agricultural value of farmland within the Town; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Oakland's rural scenery, agricultural landscape, natural resources, and community character contribute to Town tourism, recreation, local businesses, and

the overall attractiveness of the area, and large-scale transmission infrastructure would discourage Town tourism and negatively affect these vital economic activities; and

WHEREAS, the proposed corridor within the Lake Ripley Management District (the "Lake District") would affect wetlands, woodlands, prairies, waterways, wildlife habitat, environmental corridors, and other natural resources while permanently altering the rural landscape, agricultural heritage, scenic character, open space, and residential quality of the Town; and

WHEREAS, the Lake District Board finds that the potential loss of property values, agricultural productivity, tourism activity, local economic development, tax-base stability, and use of local land and natural resources would result in an overall negative impact on the Town's economy, revenues, residents, landowners, and resources; and

WHEREAS, the Lake District Board believes transmission planning and routing decisions should fully evaluate alternatives that avoid or minimize impacts on established rural communities, productive agricultural lands, residences, environmentally sensitive areas, and private property, with meaningful participation by affected municipalities and landowners; and

WHEREAS, the vision set forth in the Town of Oakland's Comprehensive Plan is for a sustainable community where economic prosperity, ecological integrity, and social and cultural vibrancy live in balance; and

WHEREAS, the following conditions outlined in the Town's Comprehensive Plan are necessary for a sustainable future: preserve existing farm operations; protect prime agricultural land and woodlands; discourage the proliferation of nonfarm land uses within predominantly agricultural areas; prohibit development within floodplains or wetlands; promote orderly development that will enable the Town to provide services in an economical and efficient manner; protect environmental areas; maintain the rural character of the Town; maintain the attractiveness of the landscape as viewed from roads and highways in the Town; protect surface and groundwater quality; and encourage good soil conservation practices; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Oakland contains Lake Ripley, a 420-acre lake that is an environmental and recreational resource; and

WHEREAS, Lake Ripley is an economic driver of local tourism, generates significant property tax revenues, supports local tourism, and anchors community commerce; and

WHEREAS, the Lake District Board finds it necessary to protect the water quality and safety of all lakes in the Town to preserve the environmental and economic benefits; and

WHEREAS, the Lake Ripley Management District owns a 240-acre nature preserve that is vital for providing critical ecosystem services such as storing floodwaters, filtering harmful pollutants from surface runoff, and sustaining rich regional biodiversity; and

WHEREAS, the District's preserve is an extremely important stopover site for migrating birds and waterfowl; and

WHEREAS, the District has been diligently working for the last 35 years to fulfill its mission of protecting the Lake Ripley watershed, using millions of local, state, and federal funds; and

WHEREAS, the District has engaged an engineering firm to develop a project to enhance long-term water quality in Lake Ripley through targeted watershed interventions aimed at mitigating nutrient and sediment inputs in partnership with local landowners and residents; and

WHEREAS, one of the 'Farmland Conservation Goals' in the Lake District's '10-Year Lake Management Plan' is to maintain a collaborative relationship with the Town of Oakland to ensure that lands within the watershed receive proper protection during any type of development; and

WHEREAS, a transmission line route proposed BECI Project follows approximately seven miles of the Enbridge pipeline corridor located in the Town of Oakland; and

WHEREAS, gas pipelines and transmission lines are not compatible, and can cause a large-scale emergency event; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Oakland has experienced the two largest crude oil spills in Wisconsin history (250,000 gallons in 1973 and 69,000 gallons in 2024) at the Enbridge Oakland Pump Station located immediately adjacent to the inlet stream to Lake Ripley; and

WHEREAS, District residents have expressed concerns about another large-scale utility running through their properties and causing additional potential environmental impacts, operational disruptions, and losses in property value.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that for all of the reasons described in the recitals and further stated below, the Lake Ripley Management District Board of the Town of Oakland, Jefferson County, Wisconsin, formally and unequivocally opposes the routing and construction of the proposed BECI 765-kV high-voltage transmission line through the Town of Oakland, finding that the BECI Project would place disproportionate and unique burdens upon the Town through potential reductions in property values, loss of productive farmland, impacts upon agricultural operations, deterrence of tourism and recreation,

disruption of the rural landscape, environmental harm, and negative effects upon the Town's local economy, revenues, natural resources, and quality of life.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Lake Ripley Management District Board urges Midcontinent Grid Solutions, MISO, the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin, and all other agencies and entities involved in the planning and approval of the BECI Project to select a route that avoids the Town of Oakland and the headwaters and watershed of Lake Ripley and minimizes impacts upon agricultural lands, rural residences, private property, tourism, environmentally sensitive areas, and local economic resources.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Lake District Board urges Midcontinent Grid Solutions to utilize existing transmission, transportation, and rail corridors, specifically by using Interstate 90 South from Portage to Beloit to deliver power directly to the Illinois border and to use the Interstate 43 spur East to the Sugar Creek Substation near Elkhorn.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the statements, recitals, comments, issues, and matters described in this Resolution are unique to the Lake Ripley Management District and the Town of Oakland and require consideration when determining the location of the BECI Project.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that nothing in this Resolution is intended to conflict with or supersede any applicable state or federal law or the lawful jurisdiction of the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin or any other governmental agency.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Lake Manager is hereby authorized to provide a copy of this Resolution and all public comments received by the District to the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin, Midcontinent Grid Solutions, M ISO, Jefferson County, the District's state and federal representatives, the Governor of Wisconsin, and any other relevant agencies and government officials.

This Resolution was duly adopted by the District Board of the Lake Ripley Management District at the September Board Meeting held on **September 19, 2026**.

LAKE RIPLEY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

By: _____

Jimmy DeGidio, Board Chair

Attested by:

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Lianna Spencer, Lake Manager