

# Presenter

## Jared Ecklund–Senior Planner



# ALLETE/MN Power

Laskin Energy Center

Hoyt Lakes, MN



SAINT  
**LOUIS**  
**COUNTY**  
MINNESOTA

# Request

- ALLETE/MN Power is requesting approval for a Commercial Solar Utility Facility as a Utility Facilities-Class III use.
  - The project estimates there will be 14,800 solar panels.
  - Each panel is 39"x78"
  - They will be affixed by pile foundations driven 15 feet deep.
  - The project also includes a perimeter fence and an access road.
  - The application indicated the areas under the panels will be seeded and maintained as native pollinator friendly grass species.
  - The applicant anticipates little to no additional traffic after completion of the project.
- The proposal is located near/within the Laskin Energy Park.
- MN Power has other infrastructure within this area.
- The subject parcels are bordered by the City of Hoyt Lakes to the East and the Partridge River to the West.
- The property is near the old mine area around Colby Lake.





# St. Louis County

January PC Meeting



Prepared By: Planning & Community Development  
(218) 725-5000  
www.stlouiscountymn.gov  
Source: St. Louis County  
Map Created: 12/10/2021



## Allete Enterprise

### Location Map

PIN: 570-0022-00185



0 0.75 1.5  
Miles



St. Louis County MN



# St. Louis County

January PC Meeting



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(218) 725-3000  
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## Allete Enterprise Location Map

PIN: 570-0022-00185



0 0.25 0.5  
Miles



St. Louis County MN



# St. Louis County

January PC Meeting



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## Allete Enterprise Zoning Map

PIN: 570-0022-00185



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## Site Map



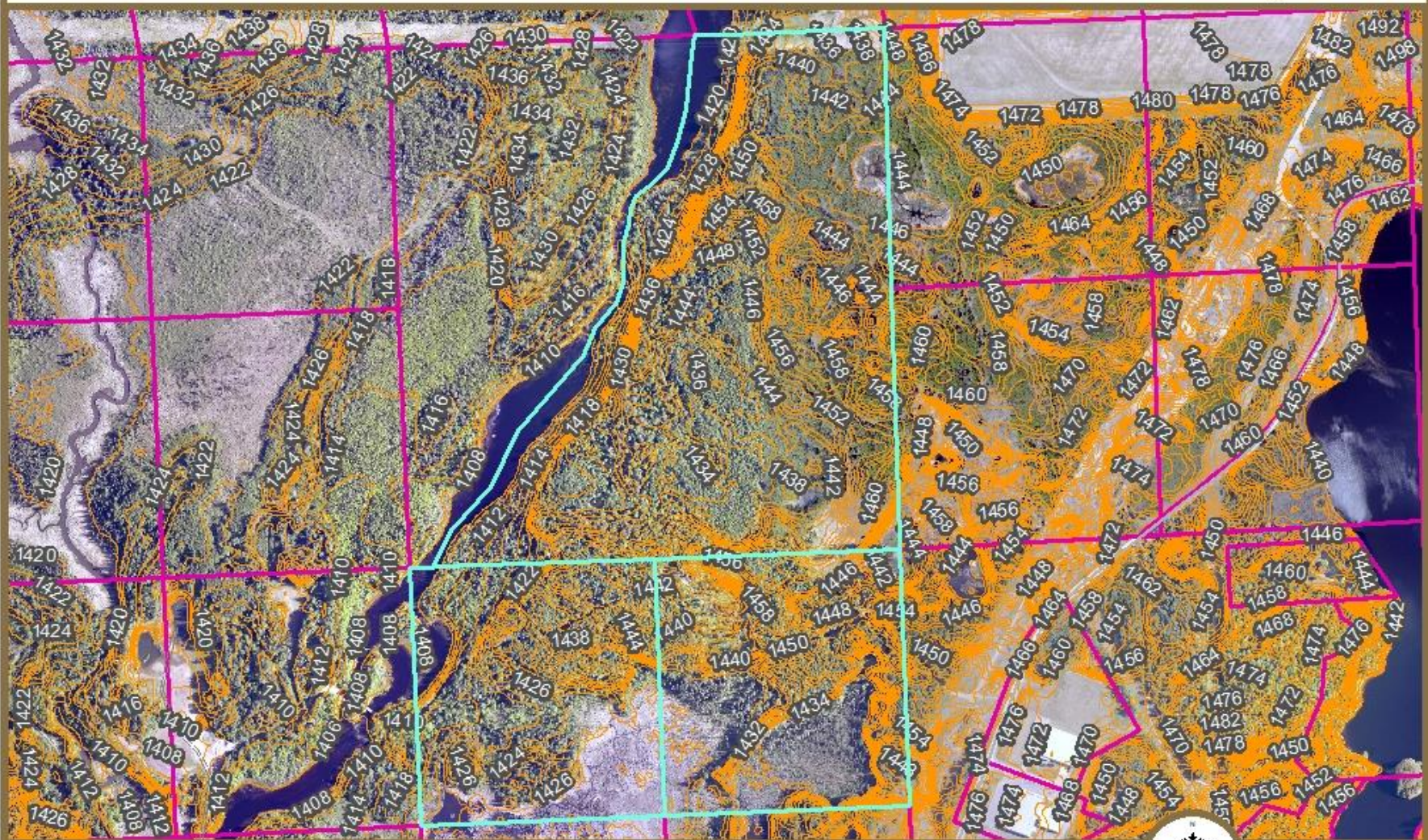
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Feet



St. Louis County MN



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## Site Map



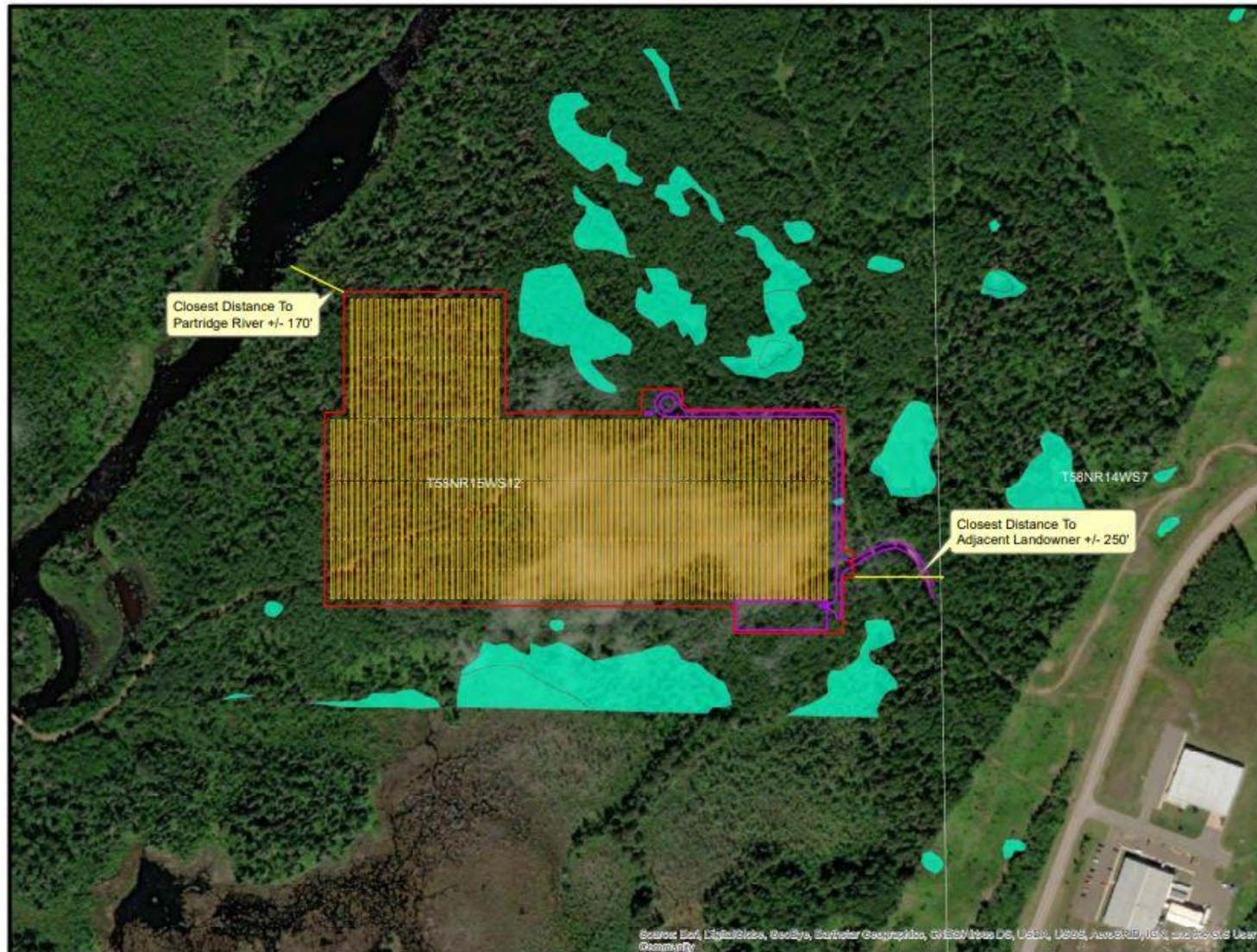
0 310 620 930  
Feet



St. Louis County MN



# Laskin Solar Project Layout



**Figure 1**

08/27/21

## Legend

- Laskin Solar Perimeter Fence
- Laskin Solar Panel Layout
- Laskin Solar Access Road
- Laskin Solar Surveyed Wetlands



0.1

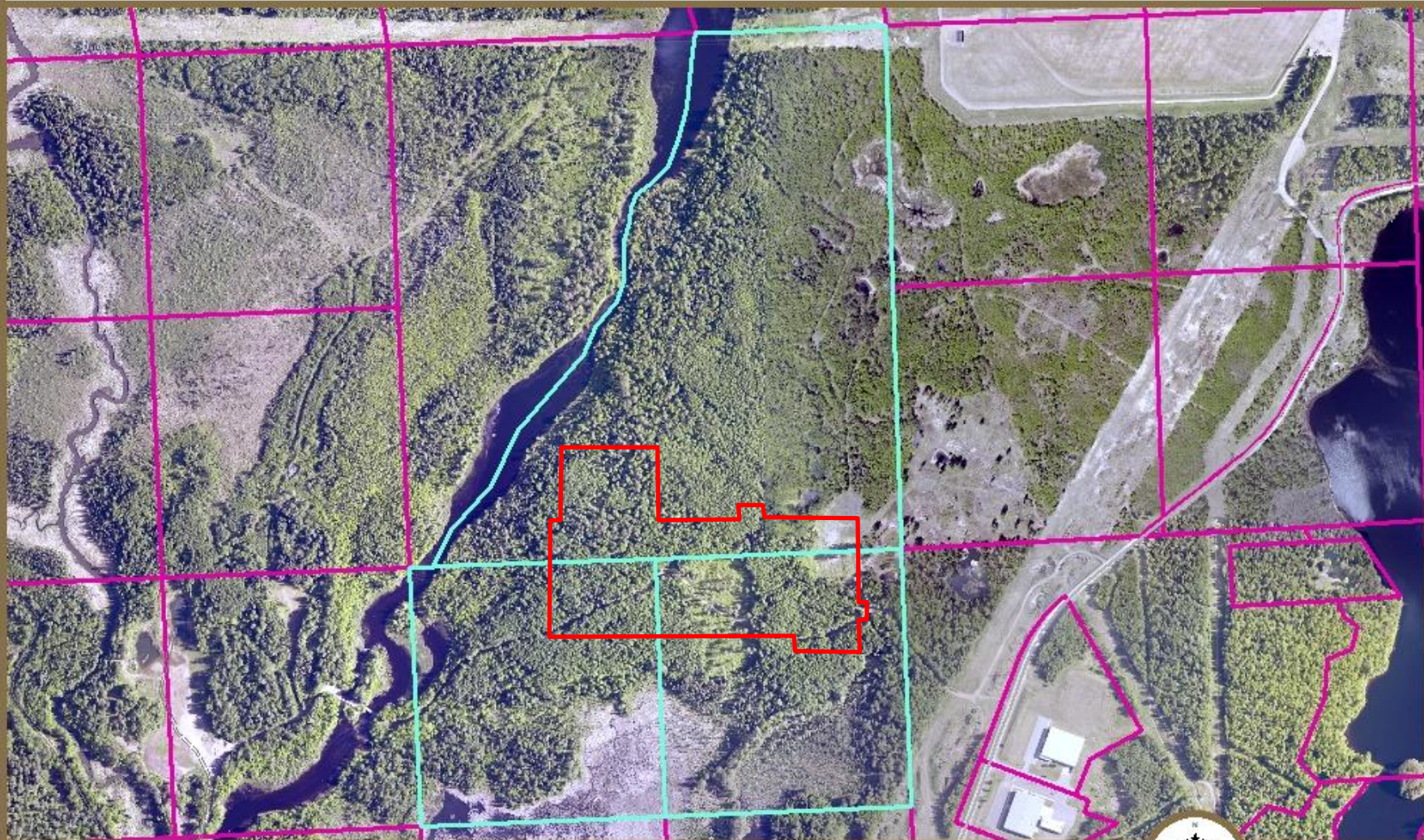
Miles



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community



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## Approximate Location of the Project Site Map



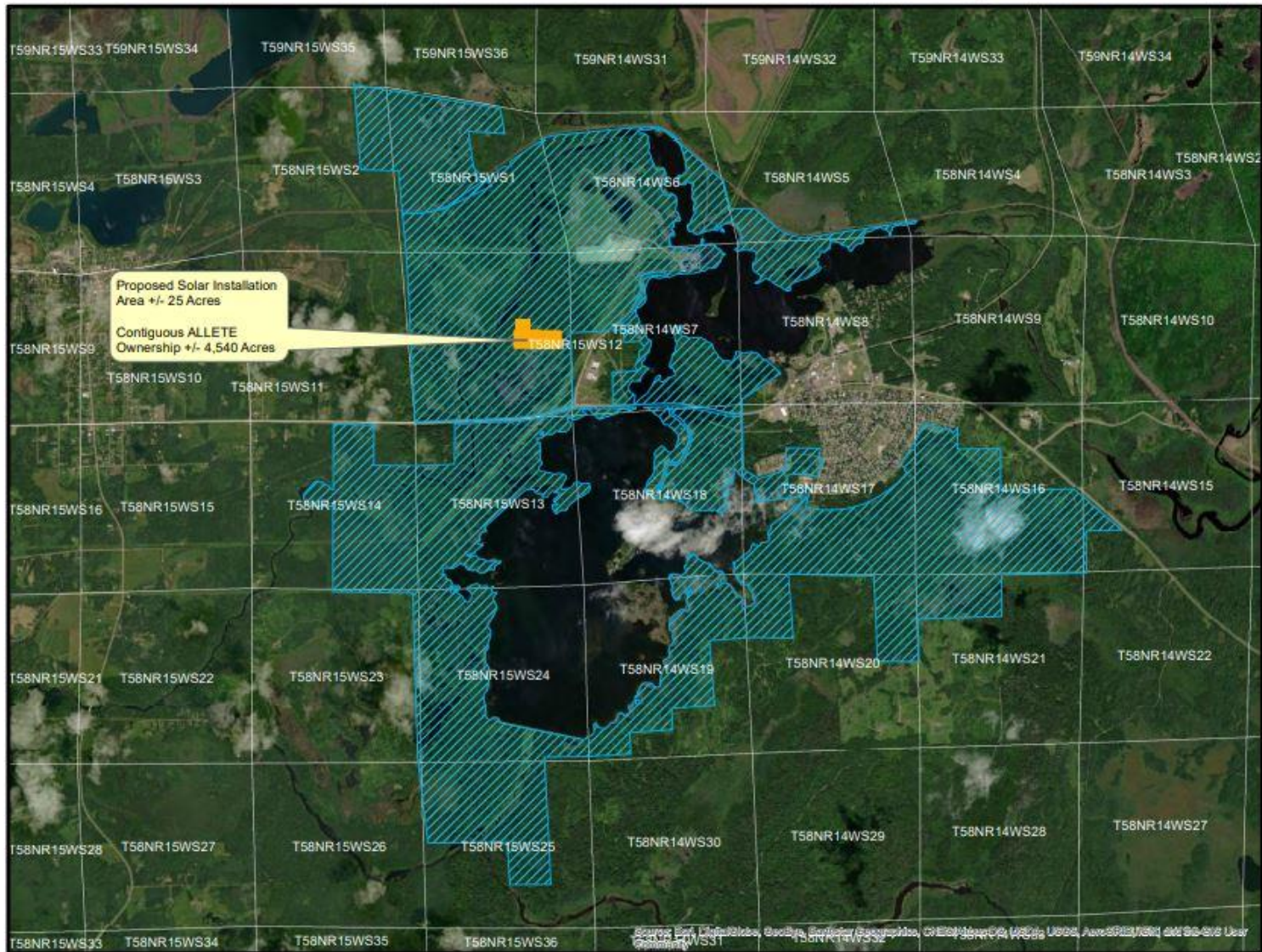
0 310 620 930  
Feet



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# ALLETE/Minnesota Power Ownership



**Figure 2**

08/27/21

## Legend

- Laskin Solar Panel Layout
- ▨ Adjacent MP Ownership



1 Miles







Colby Lake Rd. Looking North



Colby Lake Rd. Looking South

Looking towards the site from Colby Lake Rd.







Photos of the Laskin Energy Park





# Staff Facts & Findings





# Plans and Official Controls

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1. The property is located within the Industrial land use category in the future land use map of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.
  - a. The proposed use is not classified as industrial, but the use is not incompatible with other current or future industrial uses in the area.
2. One Economic Development goal of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan is to take advantage of opportunities to expand renewable energy resources.
3. Objective ED-6.1 is to encourage utilities to develop utility-scale solar, wind and biomass facilities in Forest and Agriculture areas designated on the future land use map.
  - a. Although this property is not located in a Forest and Agriculture category of the future land use map, it is zoned Forest and Agriculture Management (FAM).





# Neighborhood Compatibility

1. This property is located within the Laskin Energy Park.
  - a. This park is intended for industrial development because there is infrastructure to support it.
  - b. This is part of the reasoning for the Industrial future land use category in the comp plan.
2. The subject parcels are bordered to the east by the City of Hoyt Lakes and by the Partridge River to the west.
  - a. The access to the site appears to cross a parcel owned by the City of Hoyt Lakes.
3. Some of the zoning within the Laskin Energy Park is zoned Residential because of the proximity to Whitewater Lake which is a Natural Environment Lake.
  - a. The parcels that will contain this proposal are zoned Forest and Agriculture Management
4. Minnesota Power has multiple facilities within the Laskin Energy Park.
5. From the Laskin Energy Park website, there are currently two tenants (Laskin Energy Center and Premier Plastics) and there are three additional properties available for development.
  - a. Some of this area available for development may be within the City of Hoyt Lakes.
  - b. It is also possible that some of the tenants have changed recently.
6. Minnesota Power/ALLETE Enterprises owns over 4,500 contiguous acres within this area.





# Orderly Development

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1. It is anticipated that future growth in this area would consist primarily of industrial uses.
2. The little bit of residential zoning around Whitewater Lake would restrict industrial development along the portion of the Highway 110 corridor that is within St. Louis County's zoning jurisdiction.
  - a. This may help act as a buffer to the proposed and any future industrial or utility facility uses.
3. Much of the site has remained undeveloped for some time.
4. There have been other projects planned for this site in the past several years that did not move into the development phase of the project.
5. The site has previously been used for forest management and the applicant indicated it is classified as a greenfield site.
  - a. Greenfield sites are typically undeveloped sites located in or near a city that have been set aside for future industrial or commercial sites.
  - b. As opposed to brownfield sites, greenfield sites generally have not been developed in the past and do not have environmental cleanup work that needs to be done before development can occur.





# Desired Pattern of Development

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1. Based on the comprehensive land use plan and the plan for the Laskin Energy Park, future development of other industrial and utility facilities in the area would be the desired pattern of development.
2. The public would benefit from this proposal because it allows Minnesota Power to generate energy from renewable resources.
3. There would likely be area to develop within the Laskin Energy Park for future uses even if the proposed facility is developed.



# Other Factors

1. The applicant has submitted a copy of their Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and indicated that they will be applying for the necessary National Pollutant Discharge Eliminations System (NPDES) Permit through the MPCA.
2. There are some wetlands that would be impacted by the proposal, but the number of impacts would likely fall within the amount allowed by a de-minimis exemption. All Wetland Conservation Act standards will need to be met.
  - a. St. Louis County has reviewed and approved the wetland delineation for the site.
3. Disposing of photovoltaic panels (solar panels) after use can be a concern.
  - a. The state is currently working on a stewardship program for the recycling of the panels after use to preserve resources, protect the environment, and minimize the cost burdens that may be viewed as a negative impact to the development of renewable energy facilities.
4. Access to the site appears to cross a parcel owned by the City of Hoyt Lakes.
  - a. Access shall be approved by the appropriate road authority and the City.





# PLANNING COMMISSION CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL OF A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT

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1. Does the use conform to the land use plan?
2. Is the use compatible with the existing neighborhood?
3. Will the use impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of the surrounding area?
4. Is the location and character of the proposed use considered consistent with a desirable pattern of development?
5. What, if any, other factors should be taken into consideration on this case?



# RECOMMENDATION

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If the Planning Commission determines that the proposal meets the criteria for granting a conditional use permit for a commercial solar utility facility as a Utility Facilities-Class III, the following conditions shall apply:

1. The use shall comply with all local, county, state and federal regulations.
2. The applicant shall obtain access approval from the appropriate road authority.
3. The requirements of the Wetland Conservation Act shall be followed.
4. Best management practices and plan for stormwater management shall be followed during construction.
5. A land use permit shall be required for the installation of the solar panels.





# Correspondence



# Planning Commission

Questions?





# Public

## Questions?



SAINT  
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