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1. Project Name
Eversource X178-2 Transmission Line Rebuild and Optical Ground Wire Installation
2. Project Location —Include town(s), major roadways, and other pertinent landmark labels. Attach a map. Map should be at an appropriate scale and extent to orient a reader unfamiliar with the project location:
The X178-2 Transmission Line Rebuild and Optical Ground Wire (OPGW) Installation project crosses through the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF) in the Towns of Woodstock, Lincoln, and Easton in Grafton County, New Hampshire (NH). The transmission line corridor crosses through the WMNF between Daniel Webster Highway and Lost River Road in Woodstock, between Lost River Road in Woodstock through the Town of Lincoln and to Easton Valley Road in the Town of Easton, and off Gingerbread Road in the Town of Easton. The corridor also crosses portions of Reel Brook Trail in Easton, and Kinsman Ridge Trail in Lincoln.
3. Project Proponent/Contact —Include applicant information if project is not internal. Include White Mountain National Forest contact information:
Public Service Company of NH dba Eversource Energy is the applicant, Attn: Kurt Nelson, Licensing and Permitting at kurt.nelson@eversource.com, 603-634-3256 WMNF contact: Jasmin Faunce, Realty Specialist, jasmin.faunce@usda.gov, 603-481-4376
4. Implementation Timeframe —When is the project expected to start? Is timing critical? If so, why?
The X178-2 Project within the WMNF portion of the transmission line is proposed to begin in September 2025 pending receipt of various local, state, and federal permits. Permitting at the local, State and Federal level will be ongoing through the remainder of 2024 and through 2025. Eversource is able to complete utility pole replacements based on outage schedules which are scheduled far in advance. Therefore, timing is critical in order to complete the project safely and in accordance with outage schedules.
5. Project Funding —Is the project funded, or expected to be funded within proposed timeframe?
The project is currently fully funded.
6. Implementation Mechanism (e.g., contract, partner, permittee, force account):
Third party sub-contractor contracted with Eversource
7. Special Uses
Does the project require a special use permit? No If yes, has an application been accepted? Not applicable If yes, what level of review is needed? NA
8. Project fits a Categorical Exclusion? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
9a. Applicable Categorical Exclusion(s): 36 CFR 220.6(e)(2) Additional construction or reconstruction of existing telephone or utility lines in a designated corridor (DM Required) This category is applicable for this project because the proposed project includes replacement of existing poles within an existing and maintained utility line right-of-way (ROW). Upon completion of

construction, the transmission line ROW will continue to function and be maintained as an electrical utility line corridor.

9b. Is a Decision Memo required? ☒Yes ☐No

10. Purpose and Need—Describe relationship between the current and desired future condition. Why is the project needed?

The 115KV X178 Transmission Line is being rebuilt as it is a critical source of transmission infrastructure for northern New Hampshire. Physical inspections and engineering analysis of this line revealed that many of the existing wooden structures are in poor condition due to their age, woodpecker and insect damage, and pole rot. Due to the complexity of this line in terms of topography, limited access, geographic location and its importance in serving northern New Hampshire, it was determined by Eversource that the entirety of the line should be rebuilt. This project is needed to maintain public safety and reliability of the transmission line.

11. Project Description—Who, what, where, when, and how. Will trees be cut (about how many, what diameter, is a timber prescription needed)? Are there seasonal restrictions? Describe acres (footprint), access, methods, equipment, and duration, etc.

Eversource, current permit holder for utility lines, is proposing to rebuild the X178-2 segment which crosses through about 12.3 miles of WMNF in Woodstock, Lincoln, and Easton, NH. The proposed work will involve replacing about 140 wooden utility poles (i.e. structures) with steel pole equivalents in the existing ROW, as well as installing about 102,000 linear feet of OPGW. The OPGW is a fiber optic line that facilitates communications between substations and allows for monitoring and identification of the location of potential ground fault outages on the transmission system. Structure heights, which average about 52 feet, will increase up to 12 feet on average which is required to meet current National Electric Safety Code standards. The proposed project will not add any new lines within the ROW and Eversource is not proposing to expand the width of the ROW.

Constructability: Access to each structure will be required, as well as a work pad around each structure in order to stage equipment and vehicles during construction. Where access and work pads are proposed within wetlands with slopes less than approximately 10 percent, Eversource will use temporary timber matting in order to minimize rutting and compaction in wetlands. Individual timber mats are about four by sixteen feet and will be placed in adjoining segments in order to span wetlands. Upon completion of work, temporary timber matting will be removed. The maximum temporary timber mat work pad in wetlands will be about 100 by 100 feet in size. Helicopters may be used to transport materials and assist with installation of new structures. The usage of helicopters may allow for flexibility in difficult to reach work zones which would allow for a reduction in work pad size. Throughout construction, the principles of avoidance and minimization to sensitive natural resource areas (i.e. wetlands, riparian areas) will be implemented to the extent practicable. Some permanent grading will be required in wetlands with slopes greater than 10 percent before installation begins to facilitate safe construction, matting installation and better allow for future maintenance of the transmission infrastructure. Upon completion of work, original contours will be restored to the extent feasible. Temporarily displaced soils will be segregated and reapplied in a manner to maintain appropriate preexisting soil horizon structure. Erosion control best management practices such as application of straw mulch, biodegradable wattles, and erosion control blankets will be instituted throughout the ROW corridor. Regrowth of native vegetation will be monitored and if deemed necessary, native wetlands seed mix may be applied in some areas. Disturbed wetlands will be monitored to confirm that adequate wetlands hydrology is maintained, and revegetation is achieved. In upland areas, Eversource is proposing grading and construction of gravel access roads about 16 feet wide and gravel work pads about 100 by 100 feet in size at all structure locations except for those with steep topography or areas using micropile foundations. These access roads are required to maintain a safe access and minimize erosion and sedimentation during construction. Upon

completion of work, Eversource is proposing to leave gravel access roads and 30 by 60 foot gravel work pads in uplands in order to facilitate access to structures for future maintenance. The upland areas outside the 30 by 60 foot gravel pads will be restored by regrading to original contours to the greatest extent feasible and adding native or naturalized seed and weed-free mulch to exposed soils. As part of required erosion control monitoring, routine inspections will be completed by erosion control professionals during construction and restoration activities.

Once new structures have been erected, existing wood pole structures will be cut at the base, either flush or below ground surface, and all original wood structure elements and associated hardware will be removed by helicopter or by ground vehicle from the ROW corridor. Used wood poles are placed into dumpsters and disposed of offsite in accordance with legal disposal requirements.

Existing conductors and static wire (the top wire on the poles that assist in lightning protection) are removed in their entirety, by means of a spooling process. Conductor and static wire are unclipped at each structure and threaded through blocks temporarily installed on each structure that allow for the existing wires to be pulled through a series of structures by mechanical spools staged at various locations within the ROW and for new conductor and OPGW to be pulled into place.

Helicopter Installation Methods: Eversource is proposing to use helicopters to assist in the installation of structures in locations that are difficult to replace using traditional methods. Eversource is proposing to use helicopter assistance to drill and set poles for proposed Structures 252 through 275. This structure span includes structures within a large peatland located between Harvard Brook and Eliza Brook, and the area near Kinsman Trail connecting to Reel Brook Trail.

One or more freight helicopters would transport transmission structures, drilling and ground equipment, as well as assist with structure installation during construction. Transport helicopters will be used to transport transmission structure segments and associated hardware to the structure installation locations. For most structures the vertical transmission poles consist of two segments and others three. Depending on weights, the vertical segments will be preassembled in a laydown area outside of the WMNF or remain in segments and will be flown to the structure installation locations. The pole segments maybe directly mounted onto the foundations or onto the lower segment already in place via helicopter with the support of ground crews or may be temporarily laid down adjacent to the installation location on cribbing for a temporary basis prior to erection or at a laydown area within the ROW. Ground crews will support rigging activities for pole segments and other structure hardware items that are temporarily laid down in the ROW.

Smaller helicopters will be used to transport personnel to various work locations in the ROW corridor. Multiple temporary landing locations within the existing cleared ROW corridor will be used. Fat Trucks, a four wheeled, low ground pressure (1.6 PSI), amphibious off-road vehicle that has oversized rubber tires that can be variably inflated depending on ground conditions, may be used to transport personnel and or equipment to structure installation locations within the ROW roughly along the travel paths shown on the current plan set, with its utility being most advantageous in the Bog Pond area.

Off ROW Access: About nine miles of the ROW have no road crossings, from the entrance into the WMNF off Lost River Road in Woodstock near existing Structure 193 to Easton Valley Road in Easton near existing Structure 296. The terrain in between these two roads crossing through the WMNF is steep and varying, resulting in potentially dangerous work conditions for construction crews. Additional access routes within the nine miles of WMNF that are off the ROW serve to enhance safety in the event of an emergency during construction, by providing an additional path out of the ROW to the nearest crossroad and to avoid steep terrain and open ledge face conditions within the ROW where possible.

Eversource has identified two off ROW access routes within the WMNF. The first off ROW access route is located in the Town of Woodstock and follows portions of Crooked Pike Road – comprised of an unnamed trail, portion of Crooked Pike Spur A, and Crooked Pike Spur B. The second off ROW

access route begins in the Town of Woodstock and exits the ROW near Gordon Pond Brook, and contains a portion of Primary 156 Snowmobile Trail, then connects to Halftrack Trail where it crosses into the Town of Lincoln, and enters into the ROW in various spurs, and fully reenters the ROW near the Boles Brook crossing. Eversource is proposing to widen and build up these trails as part of the proposed project. Up to 539 trees greater than three inches diameter at breast height may need to be removed to support safe access for construction equipment. Project activities are scheduled to begin in fall 2025 and would take about one year to complete. Tree cutting or trimming will not occur between April 15 and October 31.

12. Management Areas and Forest Plan—Describe affected management areas (MAs) and any potential inconsistencies with the forest plan.

2.1 General Forest Management

6.3 Semi-Primitive Motorized (allowing snowmobile)

8.3 Appalachian Trail

13. Known Resource Conditions/Issues:

Within the WMNF, GZA contractors has conducted several natural resource evaluations and have identified and delineated wetlands and vernal pools areas. Project area may include sensitive plant habitat and non-native invasive species. The project is occurring in potential Lynx, Northern Long Eared Bat, and Monarch Butterfly habitat, as well as potential habitat for multiple Regional Forester Sensitive Species. Cultural resources may be present in the project area.

Kinsman Ridge Trail, a portion of the Appalachian Trail, passes through the existing ROW by existing Structure 259. During active construction, it is anticipated there will be construction equipment in and around the trail and hikers may need to be rerouted around the construction area.

Municipalities will be contacted to coordinate any local permitting needs. At the State level, through the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, Eversource anticipates submitting Standard Dredge and Fill Wetlands Permits, Shoreland Permits by Notification, NHDOT Permits, and Alteration of Terrain Permits. At the Federal level, Eversource anticipates obtaining coverage under the EPA Construction General Permit and preparing a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan and will coordinate with the Army Corps of Engineers for an Individual Permit or Pre-Construction Notification permit as necessary.

14. Additional Resource Considerations: Will your project occur (check all boxes that may apply and use the box below for any comments):

Within one-half mile from (1) talus or (2) anthropogenic or naturally formed rock crevices in rocky outcrops, rock faces or cliffs? Yes ☒ No ☐

During the bat inactive season (November 1 to April 14)? Yes ☒ No ☐

During the bat active season (April 15 to October 31)? Yes ☒ No ☐

During the bat pup season (May 15 to August 15)? Yes ☒ No ☐

The below information will help inform if engineering review is required or needed for decision and level of review. If all answers are no, engineering review is not required per project scope.

1. Bridge (all types other than bog bridge)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2. Dam	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. Building (administrative, backcountry shelter, bathroom, garage, others.)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4. Road	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Retaining wall greater than three feet	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6. Parking area	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7. Other infrastructure (please describe)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8. Culvert	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

15. Public Involvement—Describe anticipated level of public involvement (e.g., SOPA only, length of scoping period, etc.). What is target SOPA publication date? Will Public Affairs be needed?

The proposed project requires a wetlands permit application through the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services. Each affected town has the opportunity to provide public comment on the application, and Eversource a public hearing will be held to review the proposed project. In addition, Eversource is subject to local permitting requirements in each town. Abutters are notified of public hearings for local permit applications, as applicable. SOPA publishing date targeted for January 2025.

16. Required Supplemental Information—The following materials must be included with the proposal for Responsible Official signature.

- ☒ Photographs and/or video documentation of project area
- ☒ Figure and/or spatial data

Project is appropriate and ready for consideration at Small Projects Day.

Responsible Official and Date