

KAWE Tower and Antenna replacement

November 14, 2024

Background

Project Information

Project ID:	NGWS-2022-05-0024 KAWE
Recipient:	Corporation for Public Broadcasting
Subrecipient:	Northern Minnesota Public Television DBA Lakeland Public Broadcasting Service
Title:	KAWE Tower and Antenna replacement
Address:	27558 Everton Creek Road NW
Locality:	Blackduck, Beltrami County, MN
GPS:	47.7008333333, -94.4875000000
PLSS:	Township 149N Range 30W Section 28

Purpose and Need

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires FEMA to evaluate alternatives to the proposed project and describe the environmental impacts of each alternative. NEPA also requires an evaluation of the No Action alternative, which is the future condition without the project. This section describes the No Action alternative, the Proposed Action, and reviews the alternatives that were previously considered but eliminated from further evaluation.

Alternatives Analysis

Alternative 1 – No Action

This section provides a detailed scope statement for the no action alternative.

Construction Does Not Take Place, Antenna is Not Replaced

The KAWE communications tower and antenna at 47.70083, -94.48750 is essential to providing the only OTA television signal in the target area, as well as serving four Native American reservations (Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians of Minnesota, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, White Earth Nation of



Ojibwe and the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa). It is the only source of televised Emergency Alert System (EAS) alerts in the region, and it is the only broadcaster supplying nightly local news.

The current communications tower is forty-five years old and suffers from structural maintenance issues and communications technology malfunctions associated with its age. As time advances, these structural issues and technology malfunctions will continue to occur, and the services provided by the tower and antenna system will continue to experience periodic failure, as well as incurring increasing maintenance costs.

Thus, the No Action Alternative would not maintain critical resources for the community.

Alternative 2 – Proposed Action

This section provides a detailed scope statement for the proposed action.

Construction of New Communications Tower and Antenna

The project would erect a new 1000' communications tower and antenna to the immediate SE of the current communications tower located at 47.70083, -94.48750. The construction would include the broadcast tower and three bands of guy wires, with three wires per band.

The central foundation of the new tower would consist of a concrete base approximately 20' wide and 5'-6' deep. Each guy wire would be anchored using concrete footings, ranging in size from 2.76yd³ to 4.16yd³, embedded into the ground to depth of 10'. The anchors would be embedded at a radius of 324', 551.25', and 700' respectively from the center point of the tower.

Once constructed, the new communications tower and antenna system would be integrated into the existing transmitter building present on the site. The new communications tower and antenna would be capable of broadcasting Advanced Television Systems Committee Broadcast Standard (ATSC) 3.0, which delivers more detailed and higher quality emergency alerts and warning messaging. New fencing would be constructed around the new tower for security purposes.

Decommissioning of Former Communications Tower and Antenna

Throughout the construction of the new communications tower, the current tower and antenna will remain operational to maintain service. Once the new tower is operational, the current tower would be dismantled and removed. All materials associated with the decommissioned tower would be disposed of in accordance with all applicable local, state, and federal solid waste laws.



Exhibit 1: Applicant Provided Project Location

KAWE Transmitter Site
27558 Everton Creek Rd NE
Blackduck, MN 56630
N 47° 42' 3.0" W 94° 29' 15.0"



Exhibit 2: Project Location (USGS Topographic Map “Decker Lake Quadrangle, Minnesota”)

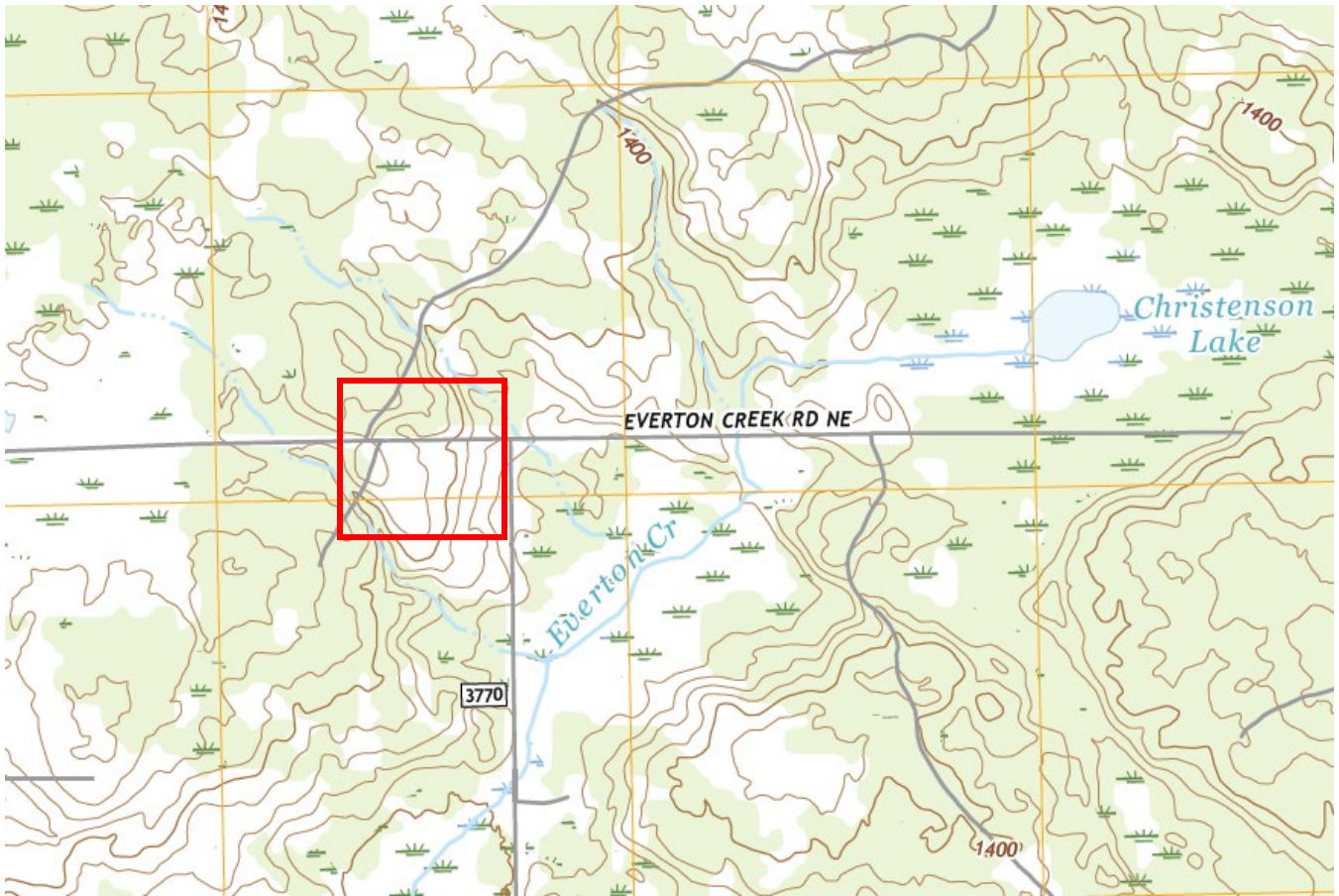


Exhibit 3: Viewshed of Project Site (Showing Existing KAWE Communications Tower, Transmitter Building, and MPR tower in background)



Alternatives Considered and Eliminated from Further Analysis

Maintenance and Improvement of Existing Communications Tower and Antenna

The current tower could be maintained yet would require structural improvements to adopt a new antenna, and even with these improvements, it would not be mechanically possible to integrate the required infrastructure to implement ATSC 3.0. Additionally, incorporating a second antenna on the existing tower would introduce new potential points of failure into the system by increasing the complexity of the mechanical systems, increasing risk of potential outages and discontinuation of critical emergency services.

In addition to all of the points outlined above, the improvements detailed in this alternative would be cost prohibitive compared to the cost of the construction of a new tower and antenna, and as such, this alternative was eliminated from consideration.

Construction of New Communications Tower and Antenna at Alternative Location

While the current communications tower site is operated under existing leases and rights-of-way with the U.S. Forest Service, it would be possible to construct the new communications tower and antenna at an alternative site. However, to do so would require the negotiation of new leases and new rights-of-way. To select a new site would introduce additional layers of significant cost and complexity on top of the construction of the new tower and antenna. As such, this alternative was eliminated from consideration.

Affected Environment

This project will occur on approximately ten acres of land in Beltrami County, Minnesota, approximately four miles outside the City of Blackduck (47.700833, -94.487500).

Preliminary Screening of Assessment Categories:

- Clean Water Act (CWA)
- Clean Air Act (CAA)
- Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA)
- Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA)
- Endangered Species Act (ESA)
- Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA)
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
- National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)
- Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSR)
- Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)
- Executive Order 11988 – Floodplains
- Executive Order 11990 – Wetlands
- Executive Order 12898 – Environmental Justice for Low Income & Minority Populations
- Executive Order 13112 – Invasive Species
- Executive Order 13175 – Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments

Resources Not Present

Based on a preliminary screening of resources and the project's geographic location, resources governed by the following federal laws and executive orders are not present in the project area and therefore do not require assessment.



- Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA)
- Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA)
- Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSR)

No or Negligible Impacts to Minor Impacts

The alternatives listed above are likely to result in no impacts or minor impacts to resources governed by the following federal laws and executive orders. Little to no coordination will be required for these impacts.

- Clean Water Act (CWA)
- Clean Air Act (CAA)
- Endangered Species Act (ESA)
- Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA)
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
- Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)
- Executive Order 11988 – Floodplains
- Executive Order 11990 – Wetlands
- Executive Order 12898 – Environmental Justice for Low Income & Minority Populations
- Executive Order 13112 – Invasive Species

Major Impacts

The alternatives listed above are likely to require close coordination with the appropriate agencies to identify and mitigate potentially significant impacts governed by the following laws and executive orders:

- National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)
- Executive Order 13175 – Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments

Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

No other immediate action is likely to occur in conjunction with this project.

Public Engagement

No public notice has been issued for this project at the time of writing. The final draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be published for public review and comment for 30 days before resolution.



References

United State Geological Survey. Decker Lake Quadrangle Topographic Map. Accessed on August 2nd, 2024.
<https://topobuilder.nationalmap.gov/>

Distribution List

The Tribal Nations and agencies listed below have been provided a copy of this document or will be notified of this project through FEMA Region 5 standard consultation procedures as directed under individual environmental laws and Executive Orders. Other state and local agencies and interested parties including local officials and organizations not listed below will also be provided with this scoping document.

- Beltrami County
- City of Blackduck
- Bois Forte Band of Chippewa Indians
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
- Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
- Lower Sioux Indian Community of Minnesota
- Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians
- Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Minnesota Homeland Security and Emergency Management
- Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians of Minnesota
- U.S. Army Corps. of Engineers
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service – Chippewa National Forest
- White Earth Band of Ojibwe

Anyone interested in providing comment on this document may respond as noted below within 30 days of the publication of this document at <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/environmental-historic/nepa-repository>. Be sure to include your name and contact information along with your comments.



Respond by Mail

Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region 5
c/o Duane Castaldi, Regional Environmental Officer
536 South Clark Street, 6th Floor
Chicago, IL 60605-1521

Respond by Email

Send comments to fema-r5-environmental@fema.dhs.gov.

