



For Release:  
Contact:

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Amy Rutledge  
Communications Manager  
218.723.7400  
arutledge@mnpower.com

# ***MEDIA ADVISORY***

## **Minnesota Power gathers 12 osprey chicks for Iowa adoption**

Duluth, Minn.—Minnesota Power, an ALLETE (NYSE: ALE) company, came through for Iowa bird enthusiasts this week when members of the utility’s osprey relocation team “adopted” a dozen of the raptor chicks from nests atop transmission structures in central Minnesota.

After a long day of climbing poles and banding birds, 12 osprey chicks were trucked southward, where they were taken to their new habitat on waterways in northwest and west-central Iowa.

For more than a decade, MP has been helping Iowa Department of Natural Resources officials import wild ospreys, fish-eating raptors that thrive in northern and central Minnesota but were driven out of Iowa decades ago by the use of chemical pesticides. The Minnesota-born osprey chicks “imprint” on their new surroundings and return each spring to nest in Iowa when all goes according to plan.

A field team consisting of six Iowans, an avian biologist and bird conservationist with the Minnesota Audubon Society and linemen and environmental specialists from Minnesota Power worked a remote area of lakes and forests north of Brainerd, Minn. to obtain the chicks. Bill Fraundorf, an environmental compliance specialist with Minnesota Power, had scouted by land and by helicopter osprey nests in the preceding week.

After a full day’s work, Minnesota Power linemen Cole Schwarz and Casey Pederson had retrieved 12 birds from 11 different transmission structures. Normally, the osprey chicks are relocated shortly before they’re able to fly. The 12<sup>th</sup> chick retrieved Tuesday surprised everyone watching.

“I’d climbed about halfway up the structure and I kind of looked up and saw the chick coming out a little,” lineman Cole Schwarz recalled. “Then its wings came out a little bit and it just took off. It had to be its first flight, that’s for sure. It was going pretty slow.”

Fraundorf said it was getting late in the day and Schwarz was climbing his last structure when that 12<sup>th</sup> osprey chick unexpectedly jumped from the nest.

“We all watched as the chick came to a reasonably gentle landing in a soybean field about a quarter-mile away,” Fraundorf said. “The bird was fine when it was recovered. Later we joked that this is the first time Iowa is getting a flight-tested osprey chick.”

Fraundorf, who has led the company’s osprey relocation effort since 2003, looked for osprey nests “that are active and accessible” along six different Minnesota Power transmission lines north of Deerwood on June 28. About a week later, he boarded a helicopter with Schwarz to survey the nests from the air.

They flew over six transmission lines near Riverton and the Breezy Point, Minn. area, surveying more than 220 transmission structures. They peered down into about 50 osprey nests to count birds that are often indistinguishable from their dun colored nest material. They counted about 67 chicks.

Federal and state permits granting MP and Iowa permission to remove the chicks require that at least one chick must be left in each nest.

After the collection, Minnesota Power and Fraundorf were presented with a plaque from the state of Iowa "in recognition of outstanding contributions to the Osprey Reintroduction Program."

Pat Schlarbaum, program lead for the Iowa DNR Osprey Program, said the award had special significance because it was presented on behalf of the state's natural resources department as well as its wildlife agency.

"We deal not only with the game species, but we're wildlife, too," Schlarbaum said. "All the bird lovers in the Midwest can say there really are some positive environmental programs happening. Kids hear about them in school. Kids bring it to their parents' attention. Those are lifelong memories. Those ospreys are their ospreys."

"You're sharing what I call the highly desirable, watchable wildlife species," he added. "Minnesota is willing to share with their neighbors to the south. What ALLETE (and Minnesota Power) is initiating gets amplified throughout the Midwest. What ALLETE contributes to Iowa allows us to sustain a population that nobody had any dream we could sustain in Iowa."

*Minnesota Power, a division of ALLETE, provides retail electric service within a 26,000-square-mile area in northeastern Minnesota to 144,000 customers and wholesale electric service to 16 municipalities. More information can be found at [www.mnpower.com](http://www.mnpower.com).*