



THE EARLVILLE POST

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75 Cents

**Leland
Town &
Country
Labor Day
Weekend
Events**

Saturday

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Court Hands RICL Foes a Big Win

By **STU BLOOM**

OTTAWA—Opponents of the proposed Rock Island Clean Line (RICL) scored a major victory last month as an appellate court ruled that RICL is not a public utility, and that the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) therefore lacked the authority to issue a “certificate of public convenience and necessity,” which would have enabled RICL’s developers to construct, operate, and maintain a \$1.8 billion high voltage electric transmission line across the state.

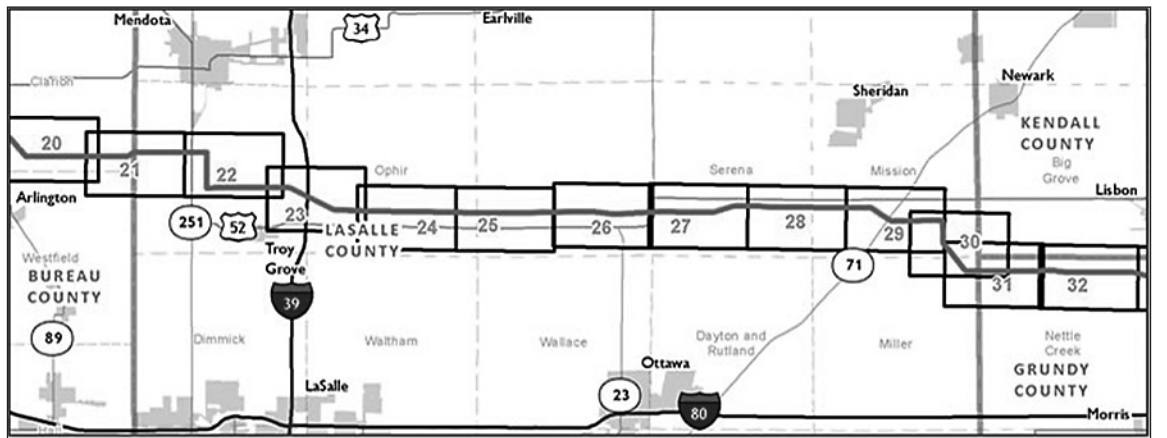
“Rock Island has not attained public utility status within the meaning of the Public Utilities Act,” concludes the unanimous opinion written by Justice Tom M. Lytton of the Third District Appellate Court in Ottawa. “Because Rock Island is not a public utility, the Commission lacked authority to issue a certificate of public convenience and necessity.”

The successful appeal of the ICC’s order was filed by the Illinois Landowner’s Alliance, the Illinois Farm Bureau, and the Commonwealth Edison Company.

The Illinois Landowner’s Alliance is a nonprofit entity composed of approximately 300 members who own or have an interest in land affected by the path of the transmission line. According to testimony given by Paul Marshall of the alliance at the ICC hearing, roughly 100,000 acres of land fall on or along the proposed project route.

RICL was formed to construct and manage an electric transmission line project that would run from O’Brien County in northwest Iowa to Grundy County in northeast Illinois, where it would connect to an electrical grid serving the midwest and northeast.

The primary purpose of the project is to connect future wind generation facilities in northwest Iowa, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Minnesota with electricity markets in



Rock Island Clean Line

PROPOSED RICL ROUTE

The proposed route of the Rock Island Clean Line through LaSalle County would take it through Troy Grove, Ophir, Freedom, Serena, and Mission Townships.

Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, the District of Columbia, and eight other states in the northeast.

The proposed line would span 379 miles through Iowa to the Mississippi River, and then cross just north of the Quad Cities. It would then extend approximately 121 miles in Illinois to a ComEd substation in Grundy County, crossing LaSalle County generally along the route of U. S. Highway 52.

RICL’s application with the ICC for a certificate of public convenience and necessity to authorize it to operate as a transmission-only public utility in Illinois said that the demand for electricity from renewable resources in Illinois and surrounding states will remain high for years to come. That is assured by state renewable portfolio standards requirements imposed by recent legislation, the application says. Those state-imposed mandates require utilities to replace energy generated by fossil fuels with renewable energy, and at least 75 percent of that renewable energy must come from wind power.

The Great Plains states have excellent conditions for generating energy from the wind, but there is a lack of transmission lines to take that energy from the sparsely pop-

ulated Great Plains to the population centers of the industrial Midwest and the northeast.

RICL’s application said that therefore, “the development of additional transmission infrastructure is critical to our nation’s ability to utilize its wind resources to meet the demand for electricity from renewable sources.”

In testimony before the ICC, David Berry, vice president of strategy and finance for RICL, testified that developers will not invest capital in the construction of additional wind generation facilities in the Great Plains without reasonable assurance of adequate transmission capacity and infrastructure to deliver the energy to population centers. RICL would be a means of transmitting the energy to those population centers.

RICL says the project would deliver 15 million megawatt-hours of electricity each year, enough to power 1.4 million homes.

But Dr. Jeffrey Gray, a federal electricity regulation and policies expert testifying at the ICC hearing for the landowner’s group said that the demand or need for the project is “speculative” and that the “impact of the project is unknown because [RICL] has not addressed the costs of negative land use impacts

and has assumed traits and characteristics about connecting generators that cannot be substantiated because the generators have yet to be built.”

Financing of the project is another concern raised by the appeal. As of the date of its application, RICL had raised only \$21.6 million of the estimated \$1.8 billion construction cost.

The application outlined a plan for raising the capital necessary to finance construction at an unspecified future date on a “project financing basis,” under which the project would pay for itself through revenues it received from anticipated purchase agreements with wind generators in northwest Iowa. The developer planned to use long-term contracts with wind farm operators as collateral for borrowing the money needed to build the line. Therefore, RICL claimed, Illinois electricity users would not bear the cost of the line’s construction.

RICL’s application did not identify any of the companies with which it would negotiate long-term contracts.

ICC staff economist Richard Zuraski testified that a competitive electricity market already exists in

see **RICL** on page 3

County Resident Confirmed with West Nile Virus

The LaSalle County Health Department says it has confirmed the first human case of West Nile virus in the county this year. A resident over the age of 70 tested positive for the virus in mid-August.

The Health Department also says that two more crows have tested positive for West Nile virus, one found in Mendota on August 24 and the other from Oglesby on August 25. These are the fourth and

fifth birds found with the virus in the county this summer.

In nature, West Nile virus cycles between mosquitoes and birds. Some infected birds can develop high levels of the virus in their bloodstream, and mosquitoes can become infected by biting those infected birds. Some but not all infected birds get sick and die of the disease.

Finding dead birds may be a sign

that West Nile virus is circulating between birds and the mosquitoes in an area. After birds begin testing positive for the virus, it is not uncommon for people to come down with the disease.

“As summer winds down and fall is near, there are plenty of outdoor activities to enjoy,” says a Health Department press release. “We stress prevention to avoid mosquito bites when attending picnics,

fairs, sporting events, and other outdoor activities. In addition, with the recent rain we have experienced throughout the county, it is a good time to walk around your yard and empty standing water out of any container. Mosquitoes don’t fly far from their breeding sites, so people can control them, and West Nile virus, in their own yard by just emptying standing water.”