Appendix H

STRUM CONSULTING / 2021. RARE PLANT ASSESSMENT. L8001/5 TRANSMISSION LINE RIGHT-OF-WAY



August 9, 2021

Mr. Daniel Thompson Nova Scotia Power Inc. 1223 Lower Water St. Halifax, NS B3J 3S8

Dear Mr. Thompson,

Re: Rare Plant Assessment L8001/L8005 Transmission Line Right-of-way

Introduction

Strum Consulting was retained by Nova Scotia Power Inc. (NSPI) to complete a rare plant assessment along the right of ways (RoWs) for the existing L8001 transmission line and the proposed L8005 transmission line. Rare Plant Assessments were initially completed concurrently with wetland and watercourse assessments in 2020, but due to the seasonal timing of the 2020 surveys, additional surveys were deemed necessary to fully capture species present.

The purpose of the rare plant assessment was to identify any plant species of conservational interest (SOCI) present within the two corridors and record their location. For the purpose of this report, a SOCI is defined as:

- Species listed as 'Endangered', 'Threatened' or 'Special Concern' under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) or the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC);
- Species listed as 'Endangered', 'Threatened' or 'Vulnerable' under the NS *Endangered Species Act* (NS ESA); or
- Species with a Subnational Rarity Rank (S-Rank) of 'S1', 'S2', or 'S3' (ACCDC).

Methodology

A detailed desktop review was performed to identify areas along the RoWs where rare plants and lichens were most likely to occur. Data was collected from both the previous 2020 RoW surveys and Atlantic Canada Conservation Data Center (ACCDC) recordings, creating five conservation areas where rare plant surveys were to take place. Within these conservation areas, transects were made where rare species were most likely to occur, reducing surveying effort in areas such as active agricultural fields that have little to no probability for rare plant species.

Engineering • Surveying • Environmental

<u>Head Office</u> Railside, 1355 Bedford Hwy. Bedford, NS B4A 1C5 t. 902.835.5560 (24/7) f. 902.835.5574 Antigonish Office 3-A Vincent's Way Antigonish, NS B2G 2X3 t. 902.863.1465 (24/7) f. 902.863.1389 Moncton Office 45 Price Street Moncton, NB E1A 3R1 t. 1.855.770.5560 (24/7) f. 902.835.5574 <u>St. John's Office</u> #E120 - 120 Torbay Road St. John's, NL A1A 2G8 t. 709.738.8478 (24/7) f. 709.738.8494 The rare plant survey was conducted during peak flowering period, between July 8, 2021 and July 23, 2021. The study area was walked in a random meander technique where terrain allowed, with focus on unique and rare habitat that may be more likely to support rare species. The locations of identified rare plants were recorded using the ArcGIS application Survey123, and remotely sent to the main geodatabase for this project. Species identification was completed with the aid of Roland's Flora of Nova Scotia, with other resources, including Sedges of Main and Newcomb's Wildflower Guide, consulted if necessary. Plants that were difficult to identify due to lack of flowering were given a low identification confidence and are marked with an asterisk in Table 1.

Results

Eleven species of conservational interest were observed during the 2021 field program, with a total of 34 recorded observations (Drawing A1-1 to A1-30, attached). The 2020 botany survey found an additional 3 species of conservational interest and 5 observations, resulting in a total of 14 species and 39 observations over the two surveys. The species identified were located throughout the RoWs, with many located closer to disturbed areas along the existing L8001 RoW and along wetland margins. Table 1 outlines the rare species identified during field surveys.

Of the species identified, four were lichens and ten were vascular plants. The most observed species were Acadian jellyfish lichen and blood milkwort. The majority of species observed are not listed through SARA, COSEWIC, or NS ESA. However, three species are listed as either vulnerable, special concern or threatened [eastern white cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*), frosted glass whiskers (*Sclerophora peronella*), and eastern waterfan (*Peltigera hydrothyria*)]. The rarest species observed during the surveys was eastern waterfan, which is listed as threatened under SARA, COSEWIC, and NS ESA.

Three species [false foxglove (*Agalinis purpurea*), foam lichen (*sterocaulon sp.*), Rugel's plantain (*Plantago rugelii*)] were identified with a low level of confidence due to the lack of identifying features, such as flowers or spores. These species, particularly foam lichen, have been further analyzed to ensure the species is not a variety with a higher rarity ranking (e.g., listed by SARA, COSEWIC or NS ESA). As Nova Scotia agalinis was positively identified during the 2020 surveys, it is possible that the False foxglove from the 2021 surveys is the same species, which is less rare, however this could not be confirmed due to a lack of flower. Species identified with a low level of confidence are indicated with an asterisk in Table 1.

Common Name	Scientific Name	SARA	COSEWIC	NS ESA	S-Rank	Location Coordinate (NAD 83 UTM Zone 20)	Survey Year
Nova Scotia agalinis	Agalinis neascotica	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3S4	438322.30 E, 5064771.79 N	2020
Nova Scotia agalinis	Agalinis neascotica	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3S4	420849.01 E, 5076097.24 N	2020
False Foxglove*	Agalinis purpurea	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S1	-64.20657988, 45.88796699	2021

Table 1. Species of Conservation Interest identified during Field Surveys



Common Name	Scientific Name	SARA	COSEWIC	NS ESA	S-Rank	Location Coordinate (NAD 83 UTM Zone 20)	Survey Year
Alder-leaved Buckthorn	Endotropis alnifolia	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3	-63.34285865, 45.4140017	2021
Alder-leaved Buckthorn	Endotropis alnifolia	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3	-63.33340186, 45.41101454	2021
Alder-leaved Buckthorn	Endotropis alnifolia	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3	-63.32847792, 45.40978632	2021
Slender cottongrass	Eriophorum gracile	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S2S3	414760.17 E, 5079231.06 N	2020
Acadian Jellyfish Lichen	Leptogium Acadiense	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3S4	-63.62876203, 45.6046997	2021
Acadian Jellyfish Lichen	Leptogium Acadiense	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3S4	-63.62984764, 45.60754114	2021
Acadian Jellyfish Lichen	Leptogium Acadiense	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3S4	-63.9180557, 45.79927655	2021
Acadian Jellyfish Lichen	Leptogium Acadiense	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3S4	-63.5747853, 45.53015916	2021
Acadian Jellyfish Lichen	Leptogium Acadiense	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3S4	-63.57455493, 45.52981881	2021
Acadian Jellyfish Lichen	Leptogium Acadiense	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3S4	-63.5743103, 45.52947049	2021
Acadian Jellyfish Lichen	Leptogium Acadiense	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3S4	-63.57393751, 45.52915322	2021
Acadian Jellyfish Lichen	Leptogium Acadiense	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3S4	-63.57355168, 45.52900436	2021
Acadian Jellyfish Lichen	Leptogium Acadiense	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3S4	-63.57327287, 45.52869392	2021
Acadian Jellyfish Lichen	Leptogium Acadiense	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3S4	-63.57306192, 45.52840153	2021
Acadian Jellyfish Lichen	Leptogium Acadiense	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3S4	-63.57310347, 45.52802778	2021
Acadian Jellyfish Lichen	Leptogium Acadiense	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3S4	-63.56902013, 45.52644471	2021
Acadian Jellyfish Lichen	Leptogium Acadiense	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3S4	-63.56843006, 45.52637654	2021
Split Wing Monkey Flower	Mimuls alatus	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S4S5	-63.37160438, 45.42593044	2021
Eastern Waterfan	Peltigera hydrothyria	Threatened	Threatened	Threatened	S1	-63.57107694, 45.52728605	2021
Eastern Waterfan	Peltigera hydrothyria	Threatened	Threatened	Threatened	S1	-63.56150405, 45.52360257	2021



Common Name	Scientific Name	SARA	COSEWIC	NS ESA	S-Rank	Location Coordinate (NAD 83 UTM Zone 20)	Survey Year
Rugel's Plantain*	Plantago rugelii	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3	-63.41011484, 45.43371465	2021
Large Purple Fringed Orchid	Platanthera grandiflora	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3	-63.58181348, 45.53937557	2021
Large Purple Fringed Orchid	Platanthera grandiflora	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3	-63.58126773, 45.53849829	2021
Large Purple Fringed Orchid	Platanthera grandiflora	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3	-63.59201395, 45.55276844	2021
Large purple fringed orchid	Platanthera grandiflora	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3	474895.68 E. 5028171.39 N	2020
Round-leaved Orchid	Platanthera macrophylla	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S2	-63.91763584, 45.79900076	2021
Blood Milkwort	Polygala sanguinea	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3	-63.72178817, 45.70090437	2021
Blood Milkwort	Polygala sanguinea	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3	-63.72277573, 45.70146903	2021
Blood Milkwort	Polygala sanguinea	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3	-63.91618938, 45.79777752	2021
Blood Milkwort	Polygala sanguinea	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3	-63.91149496, 45.79465728	2021
Frosted Glass Whiskers	Sclerophora peronella	Special Concern	Special Concern	Not Listed	S1	-63.61098245, 45.58002461	2021
Yellow ladies' tresses	Spiranthes ochroleuca	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3	474903.69 E, 5028196.80 N	2020
Foam Lichen*	Stereocaulon spp.	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3	-63.58488965, 45.54372816	2021
Foam Lichen*	Stereocaulon spp.	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3	-63.58261235, 45.54013861	2021
Foam Lichen*	Stereocaulon spp.	Not Listed	Not Listed	Not Listed	S3	-63.59504691, 45.55730565	2021
Eastern White Cedar	Thuja occidentalis	Not Listed	Not Listed	Vulnerable	S1	-63.76408462, 45.72052183	2021

*Low identification confidence due to lack of flowering and/or specimen quality

Geodatabase Description

The results of the 2021 rare plant surveys have been compiled into an ESRI geodatabase file titled '21-7902_RarePlants_Lichen_20210806'. The geodatabase file includes the species name, the species type (i.e., plant or lichen), photos, date of collection, location and any unique field notes taken during the survey. An electronic data glossary is attached that corresponds with the geodatabase's contents and attributes.



Conclusions and Recommendations

The rare plant surveys completed along the L8001 and L8005 Transmission Lines in 2021 identified numerous species of conservational interest in addition to the specimens observed during surveys in 2020. Species that had low identification confidence should be treated as positively identified for planning purposes unless the site is revisited at a future time to confirm identification.

It is recommended that avoidance and/or buffer zone requirements (applicable for lichen species) are incorporated into design and planning of any activities associated with the construction of the new L8005 Transmission Line. If avoidance is not feasible, Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests should be consulted to determine an appropriate course of action.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

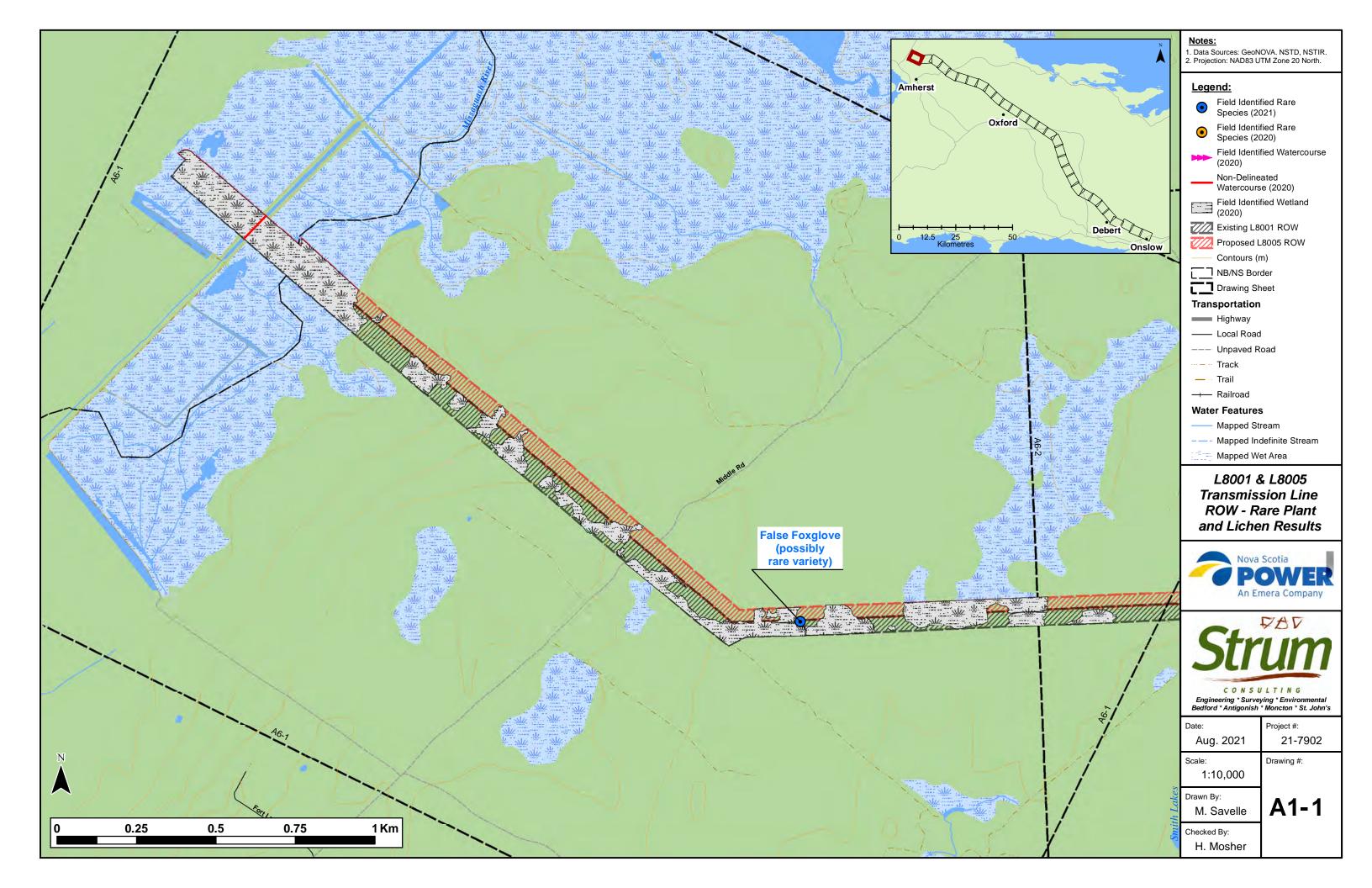
Thank you,

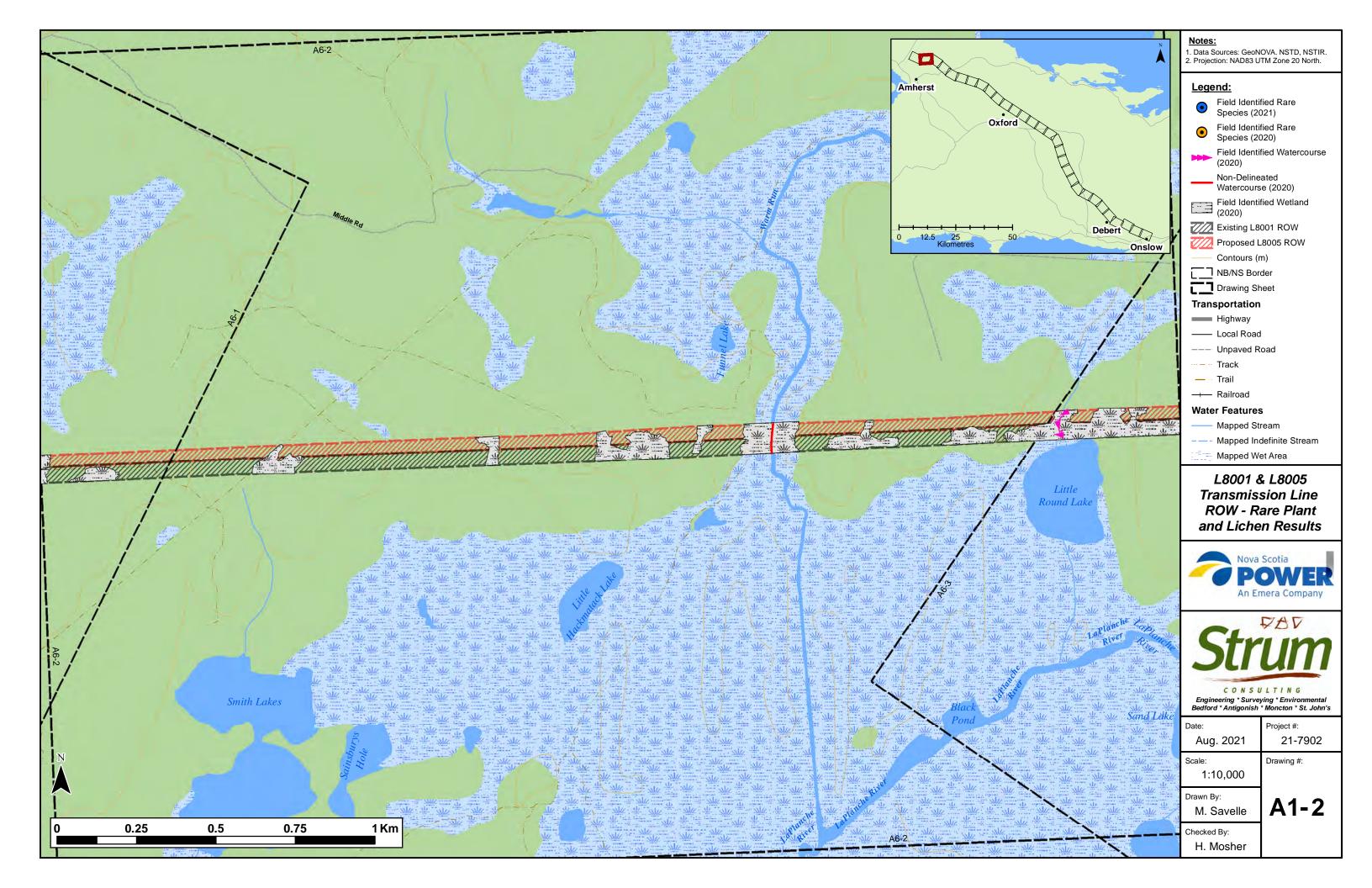
Heather Mosher

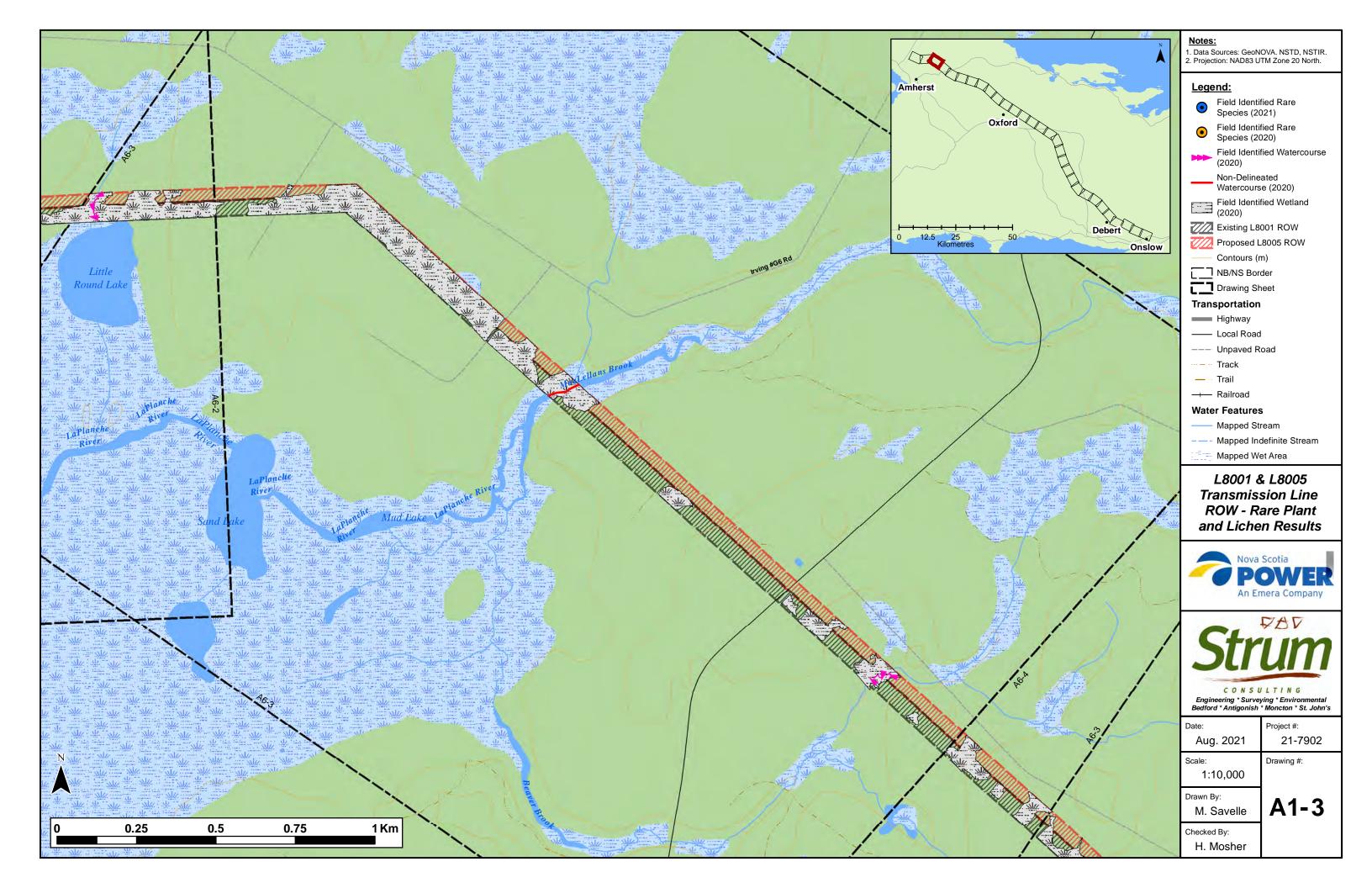
Heather Mosher, MSc. Environmental Scientist hmosher@strum.com

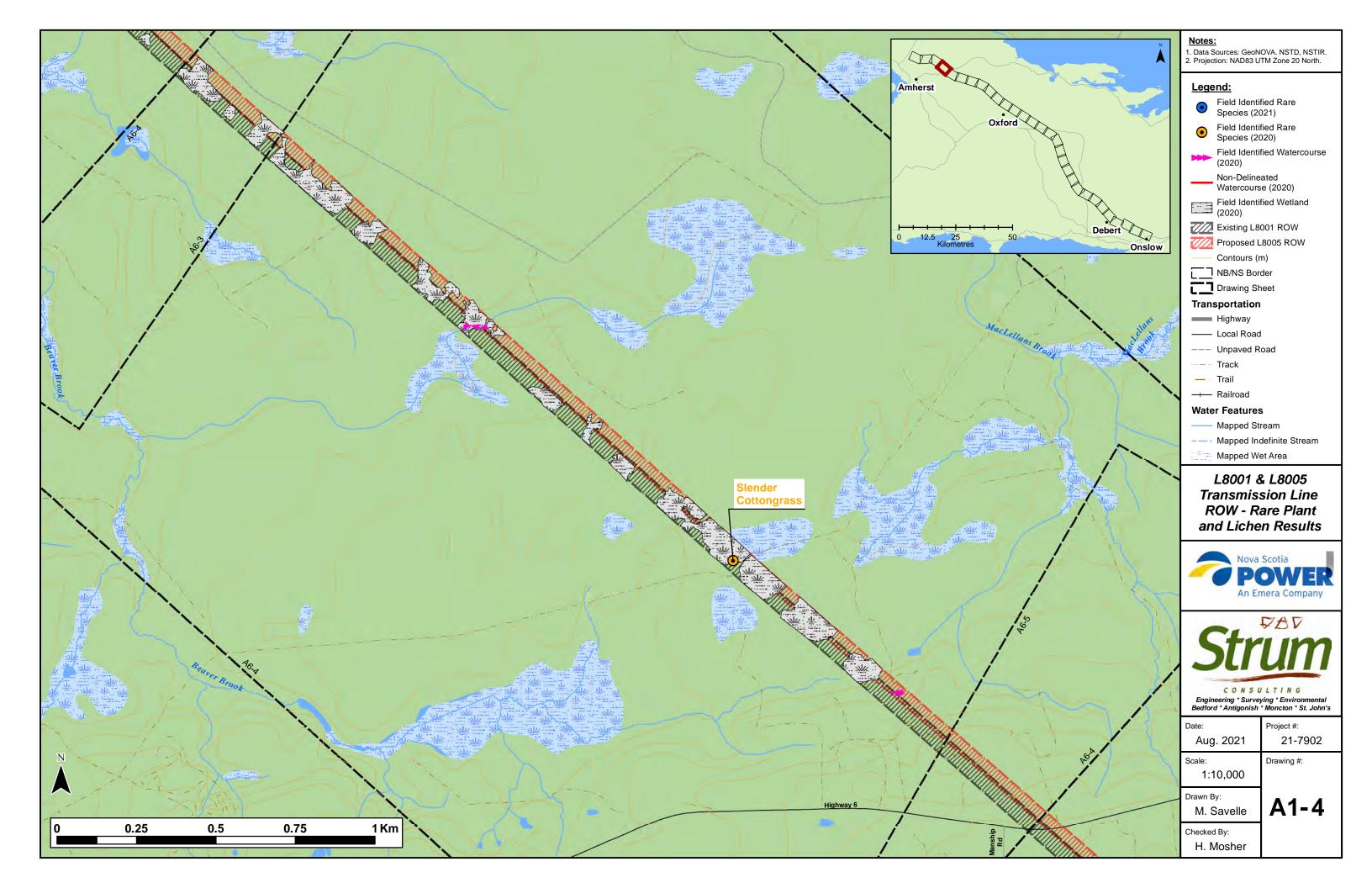
Scott Dickey, MREM Manager, Environmental Services <u>sdickey@strum.com</u>

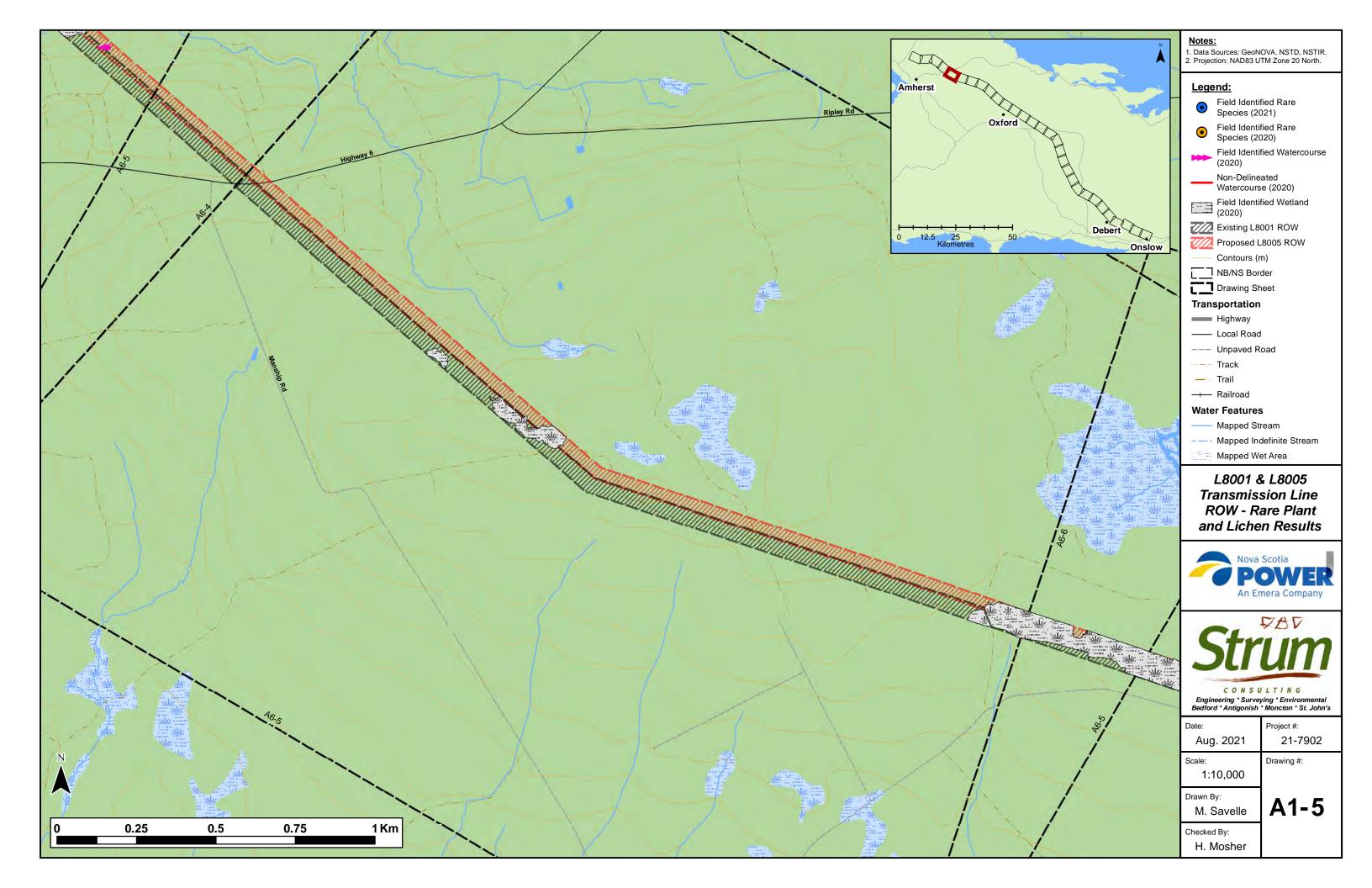


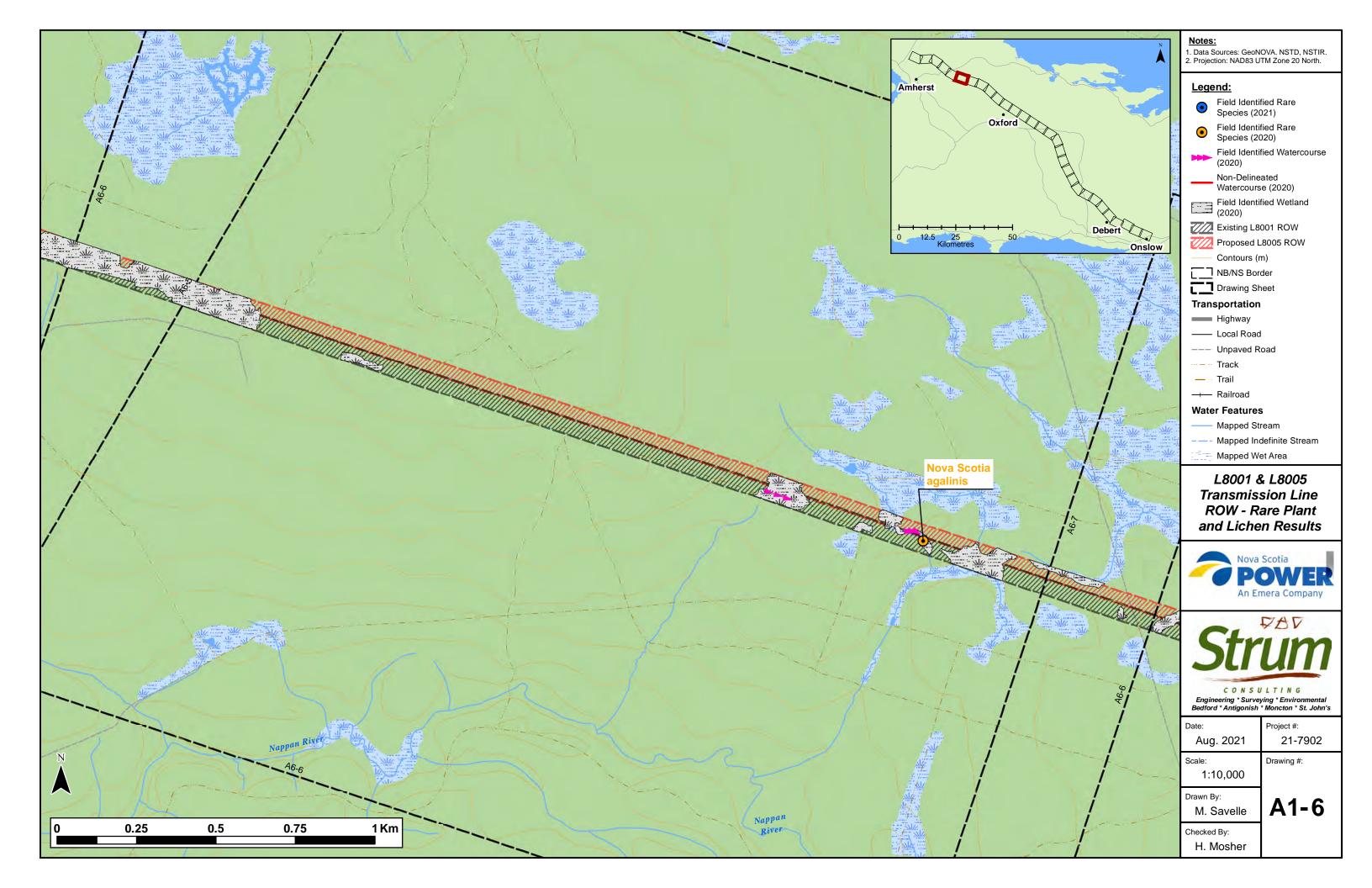


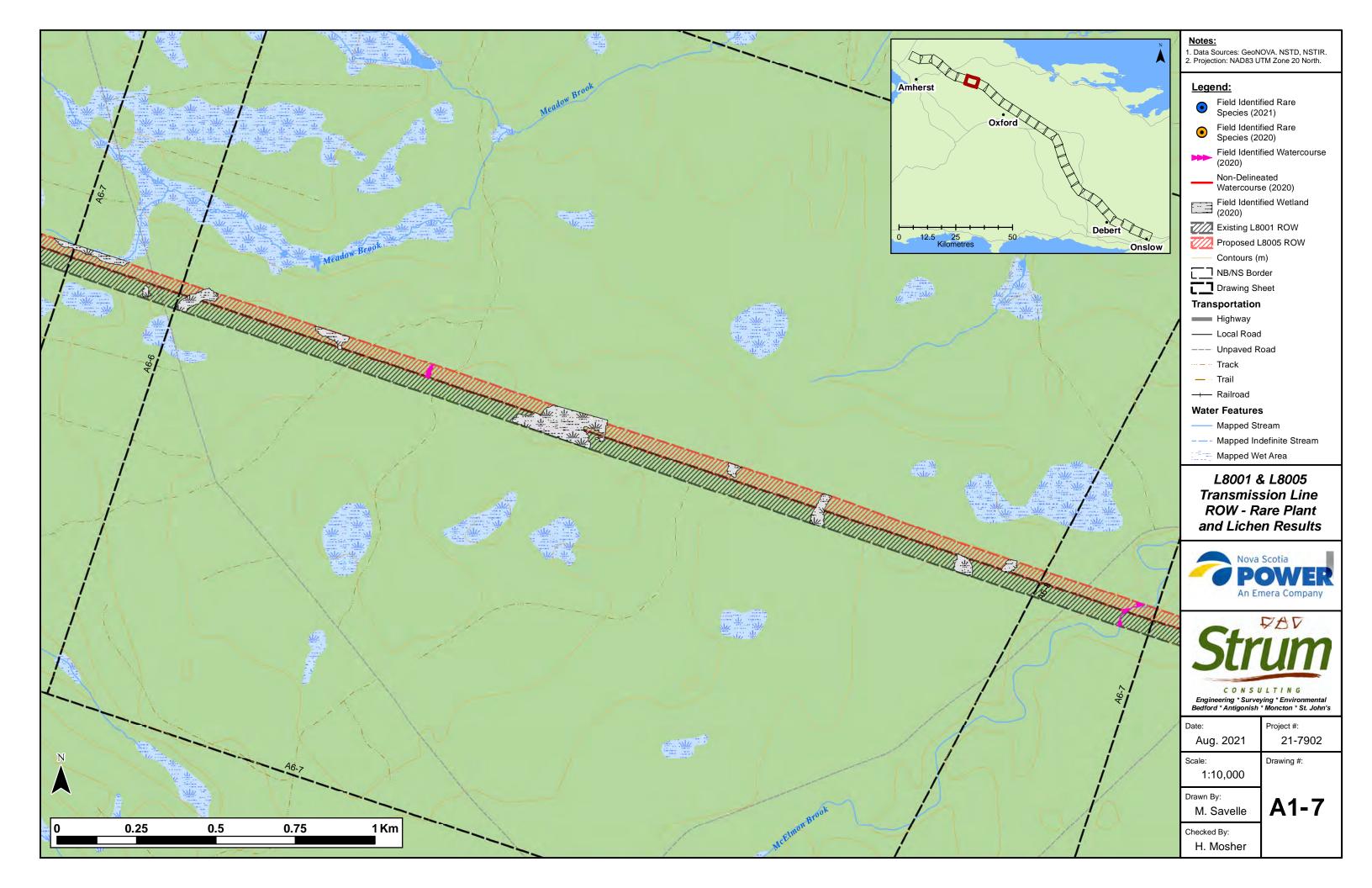


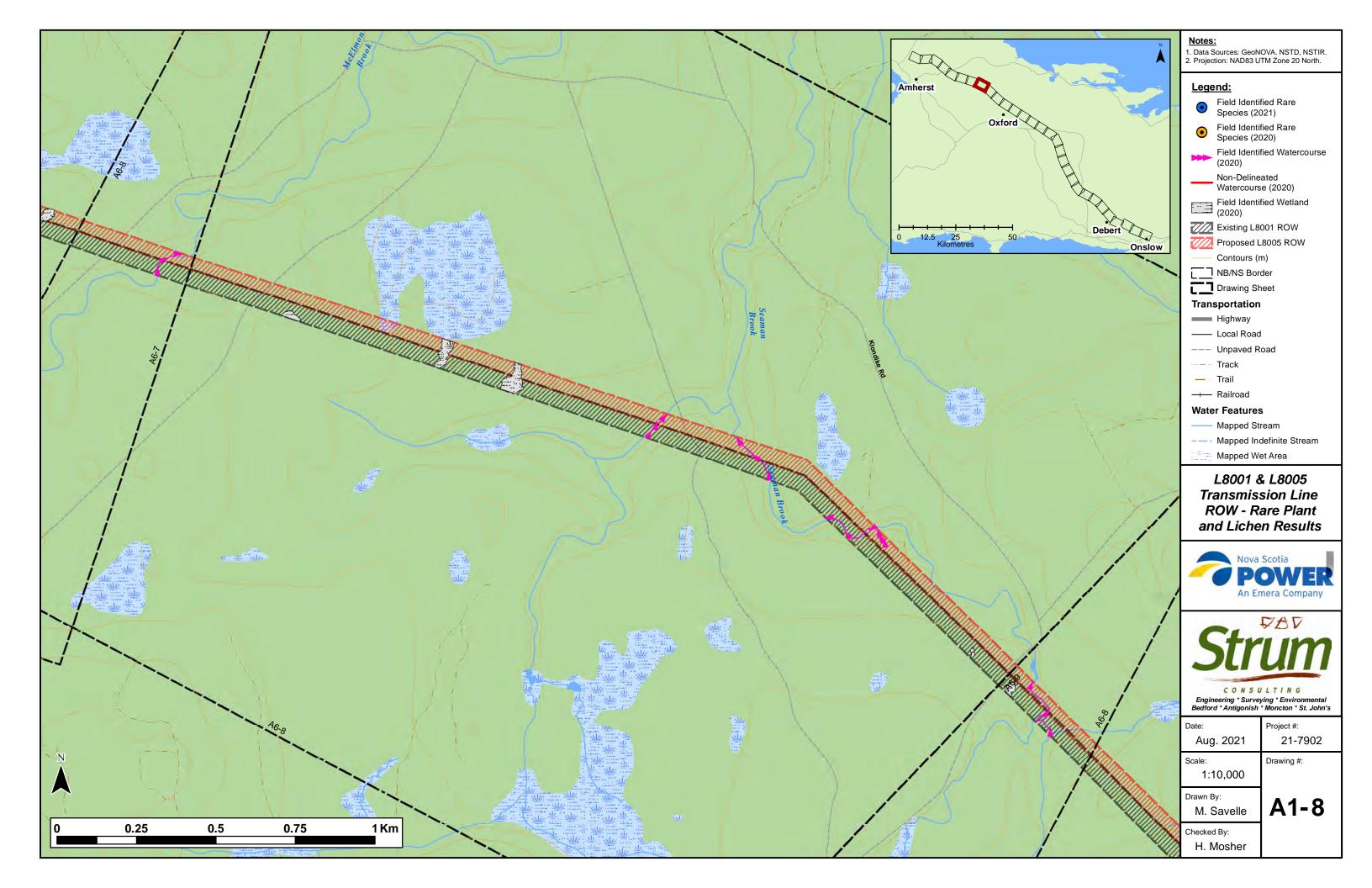


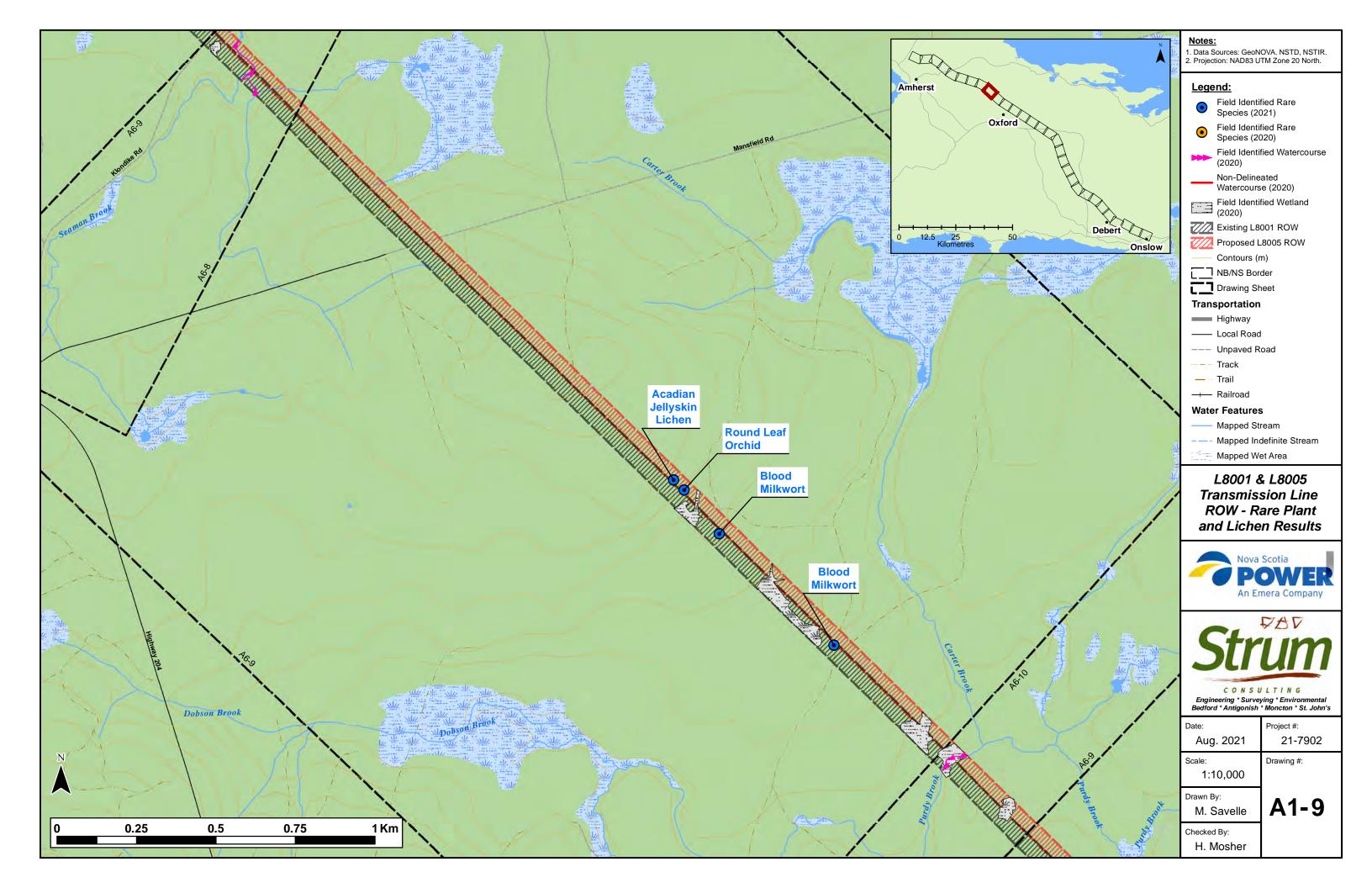


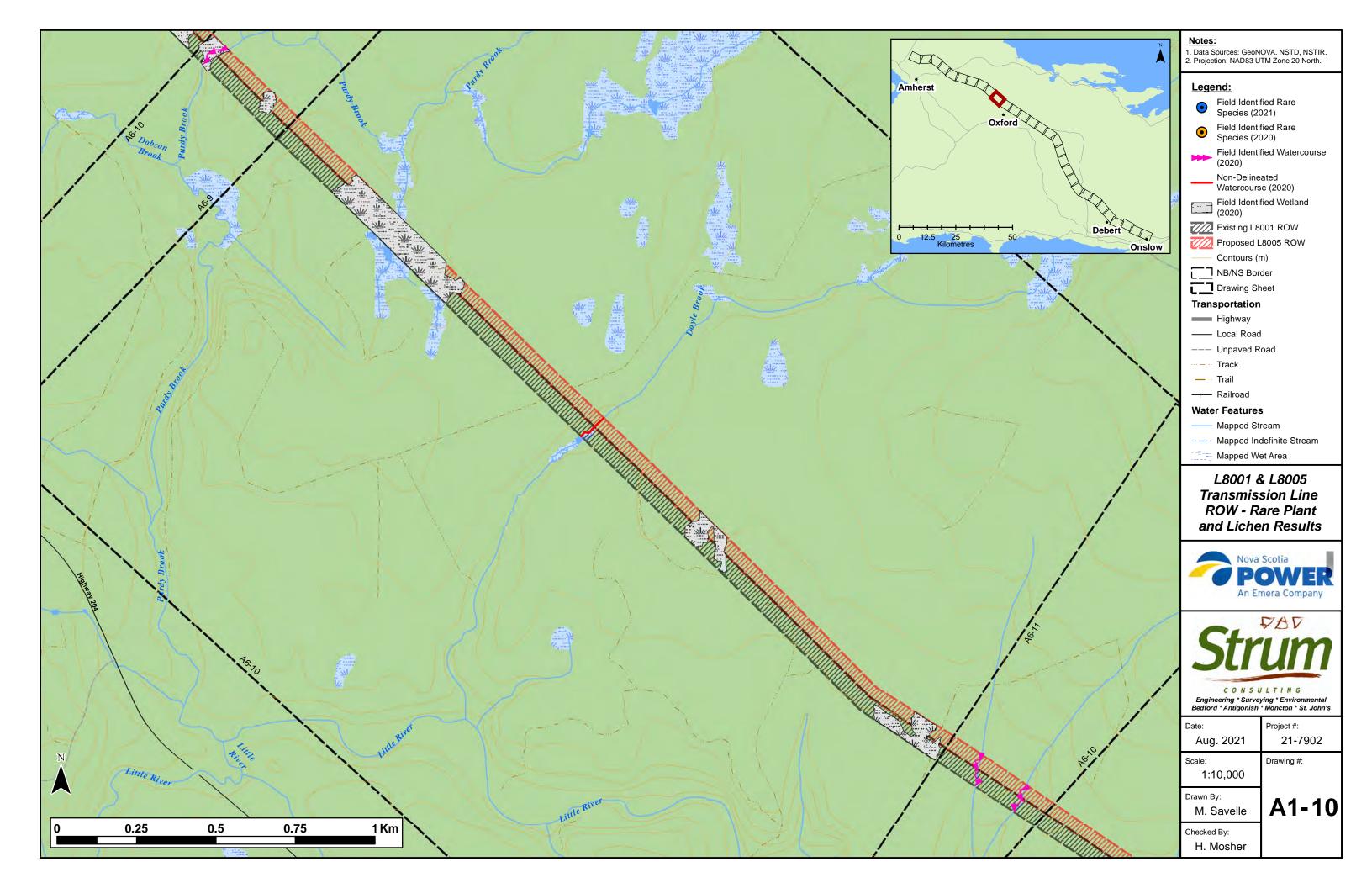


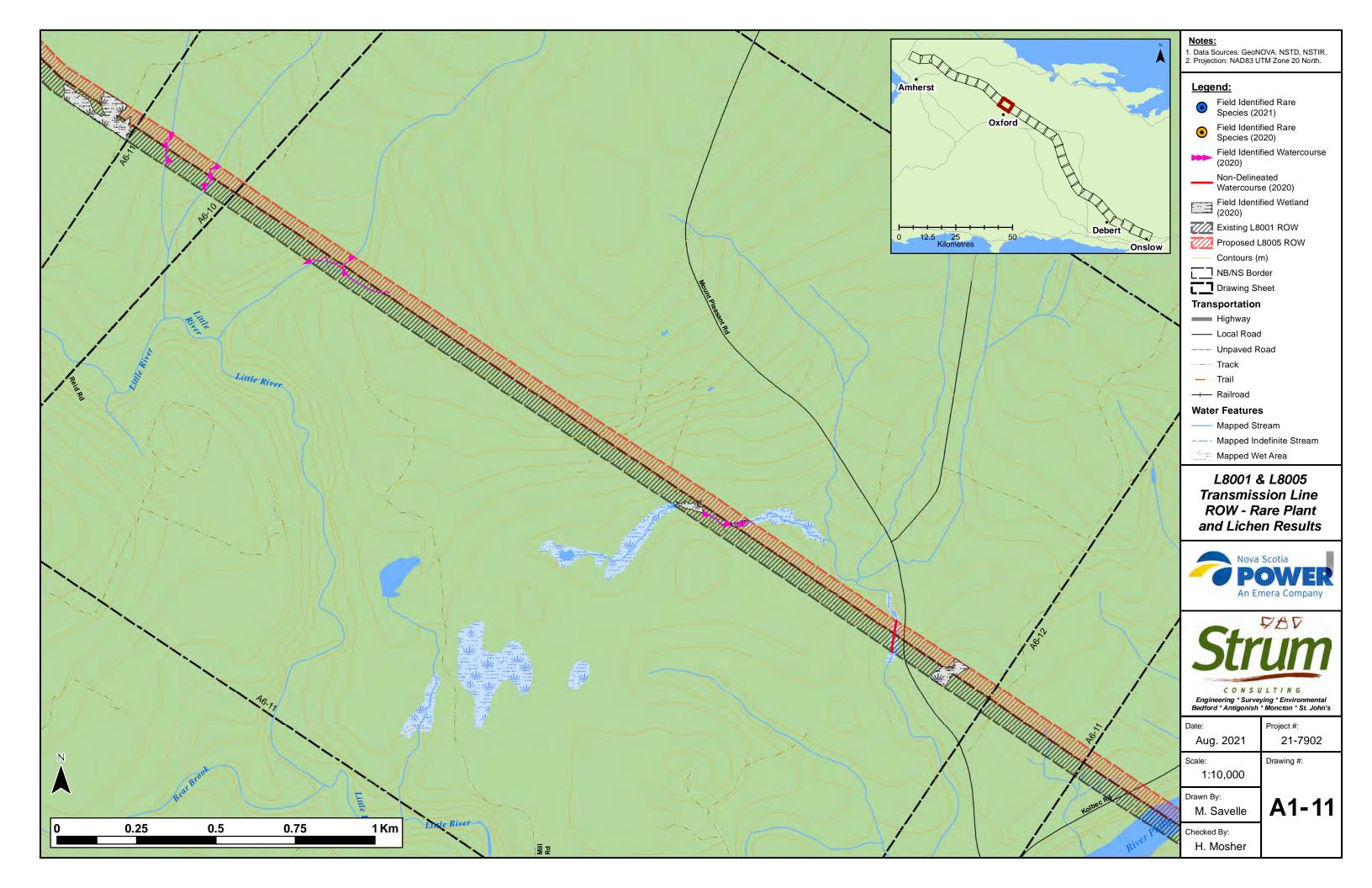


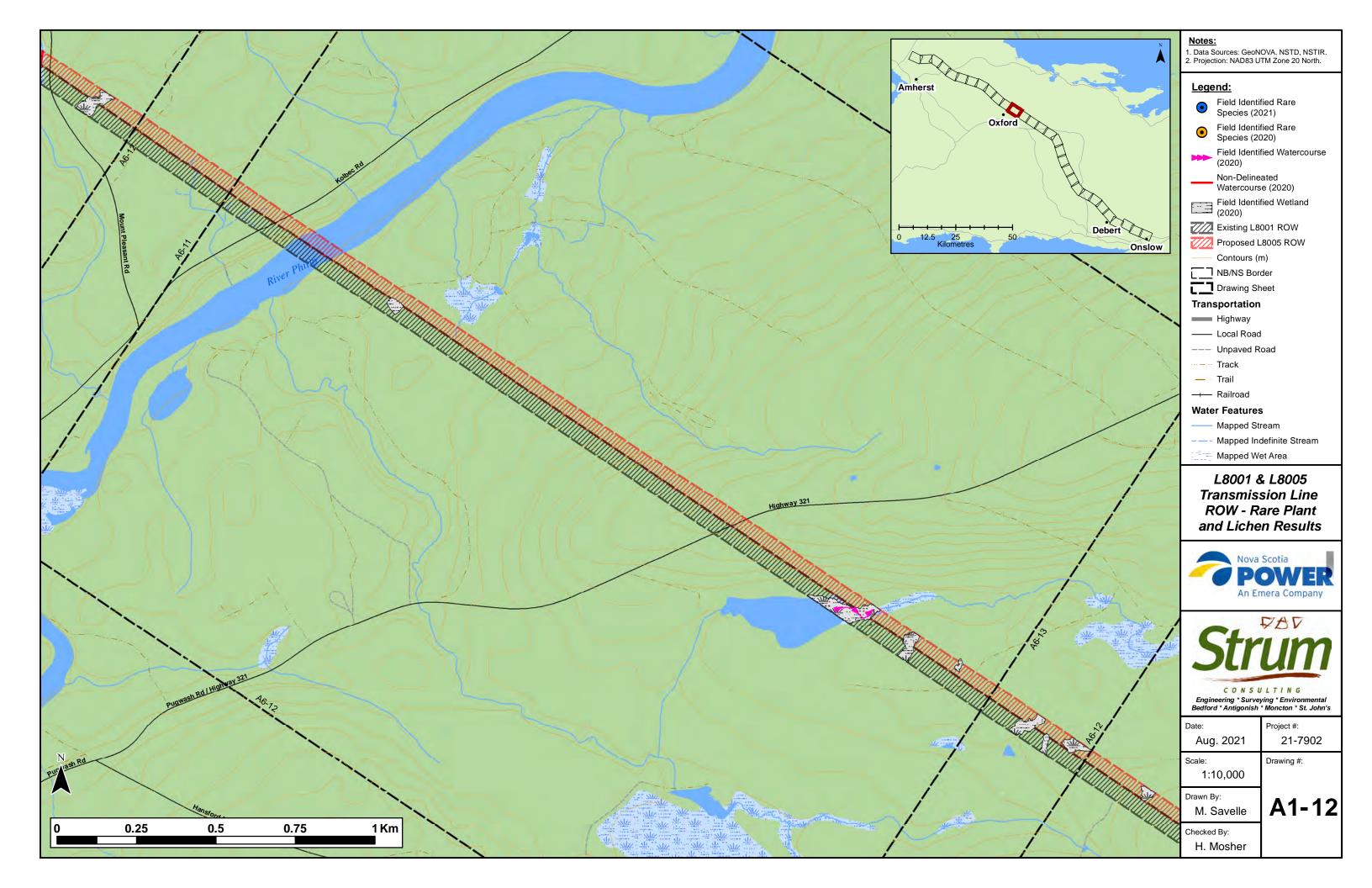


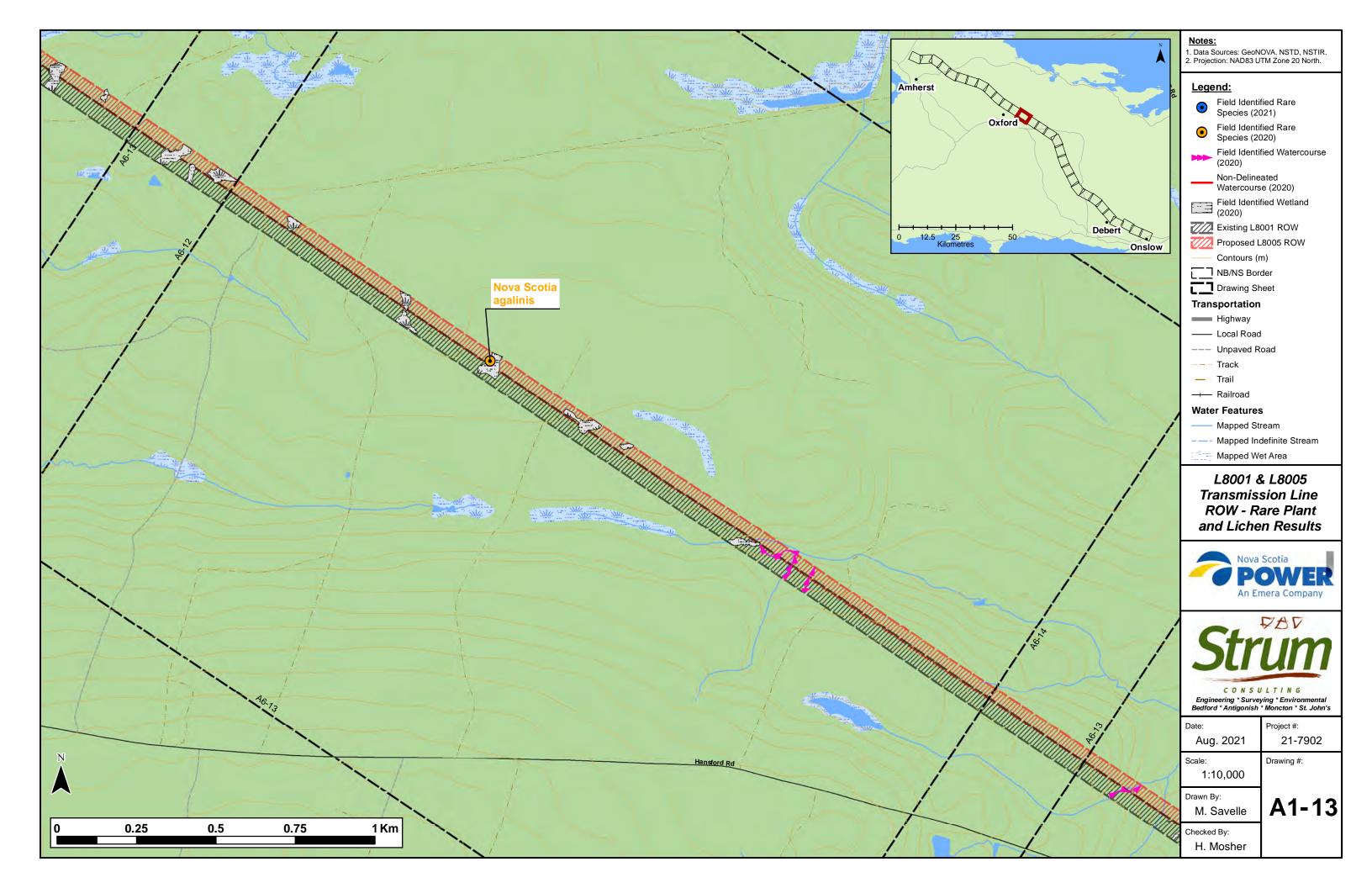


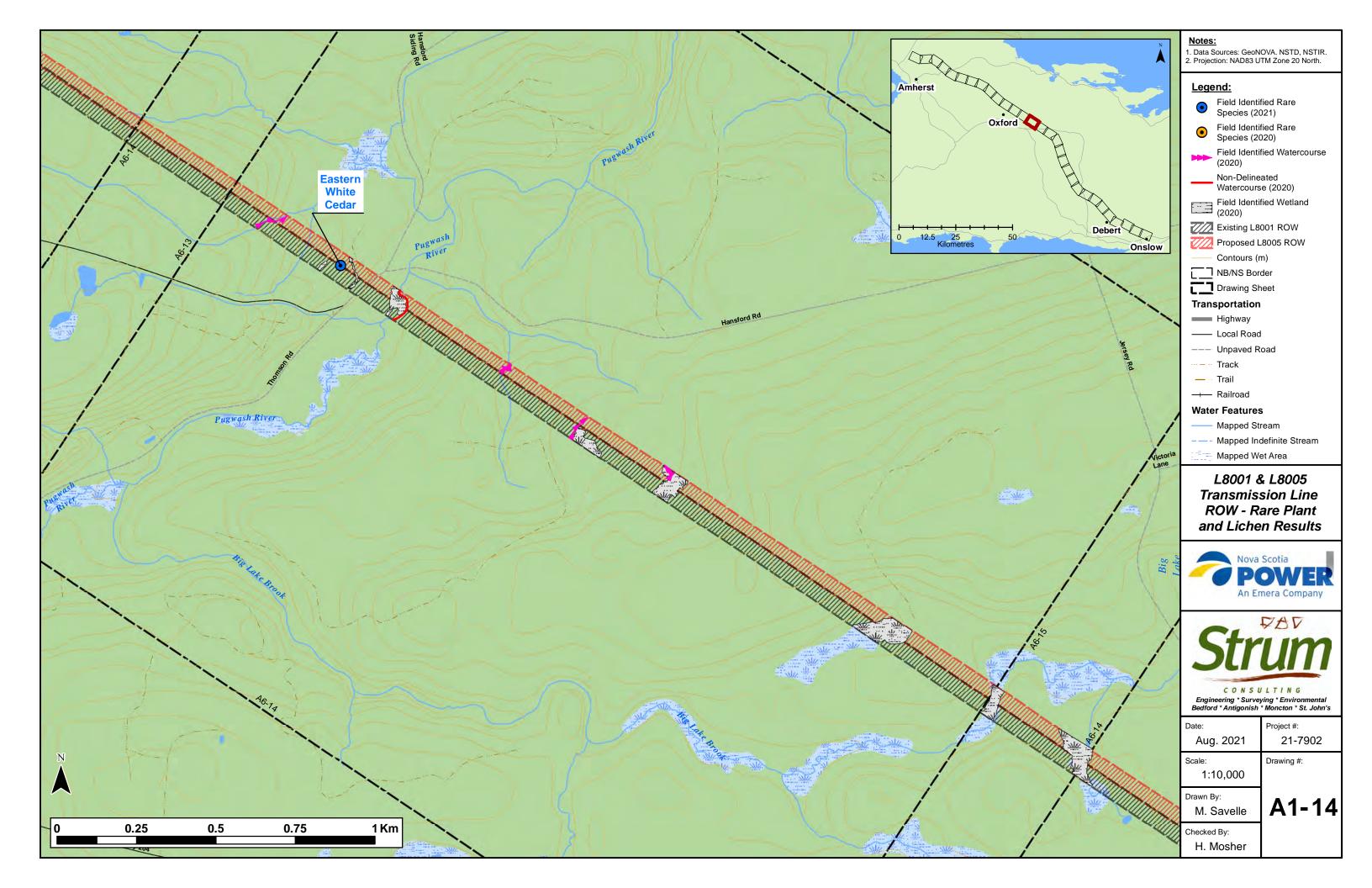


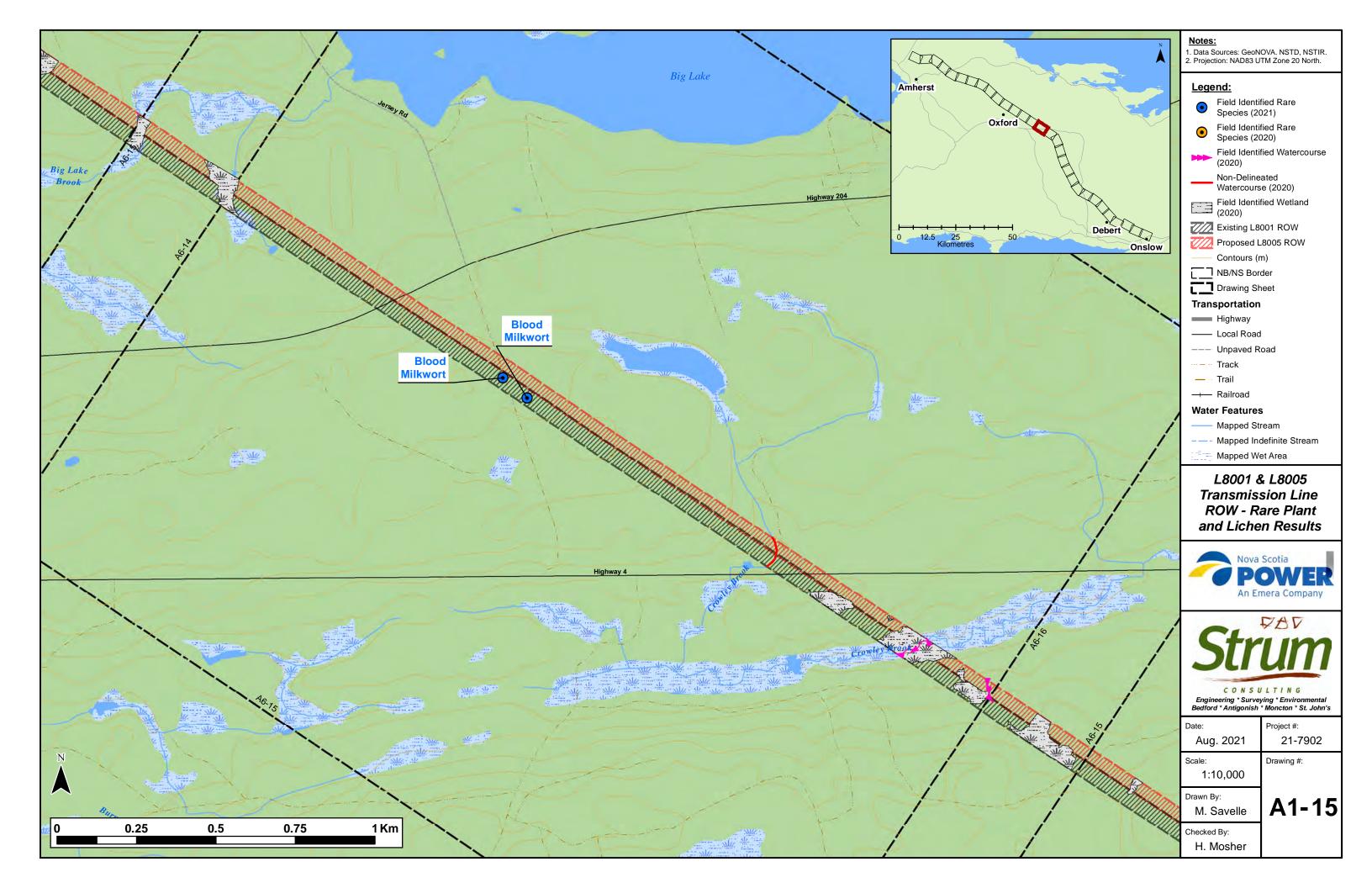


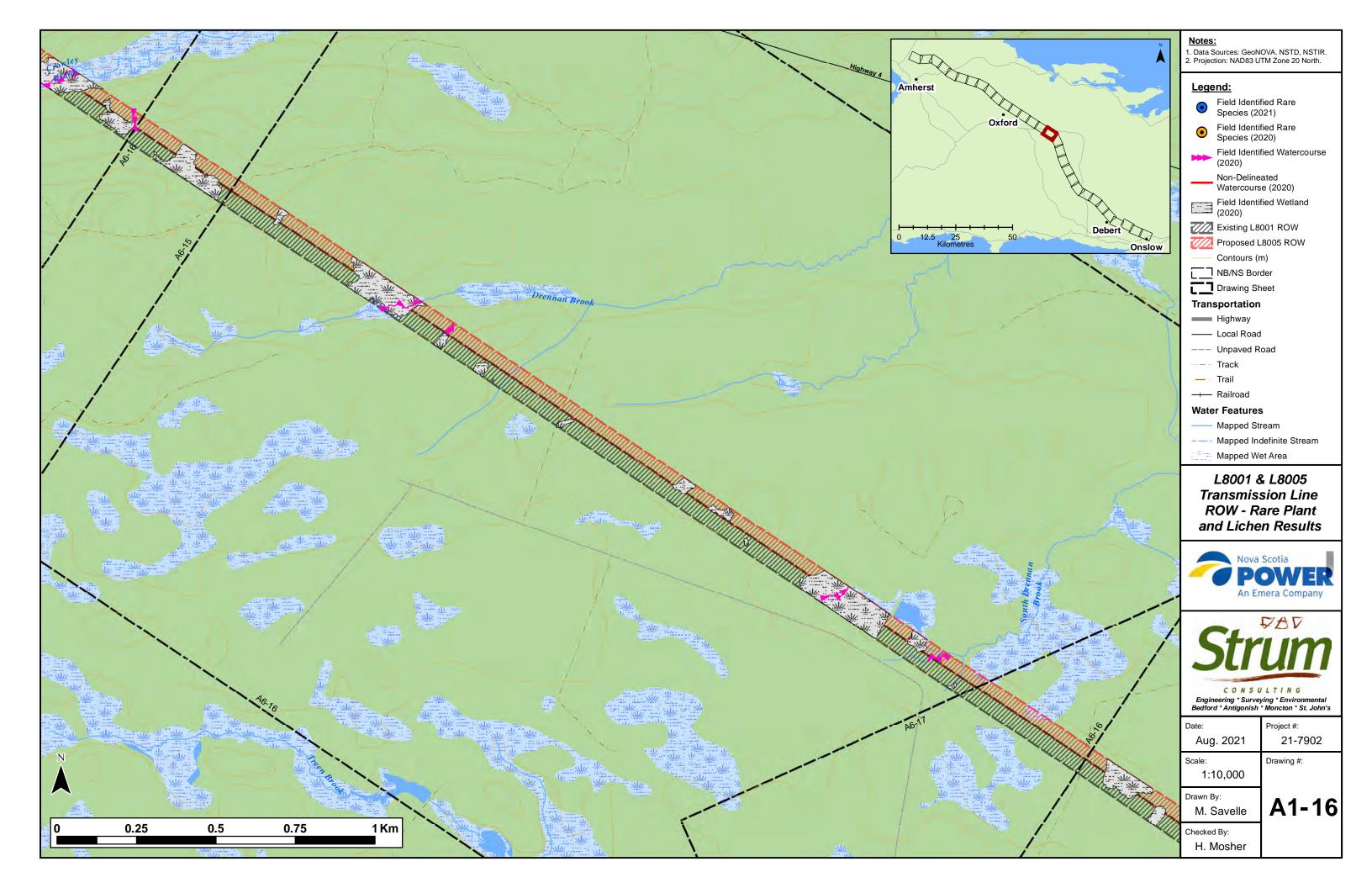


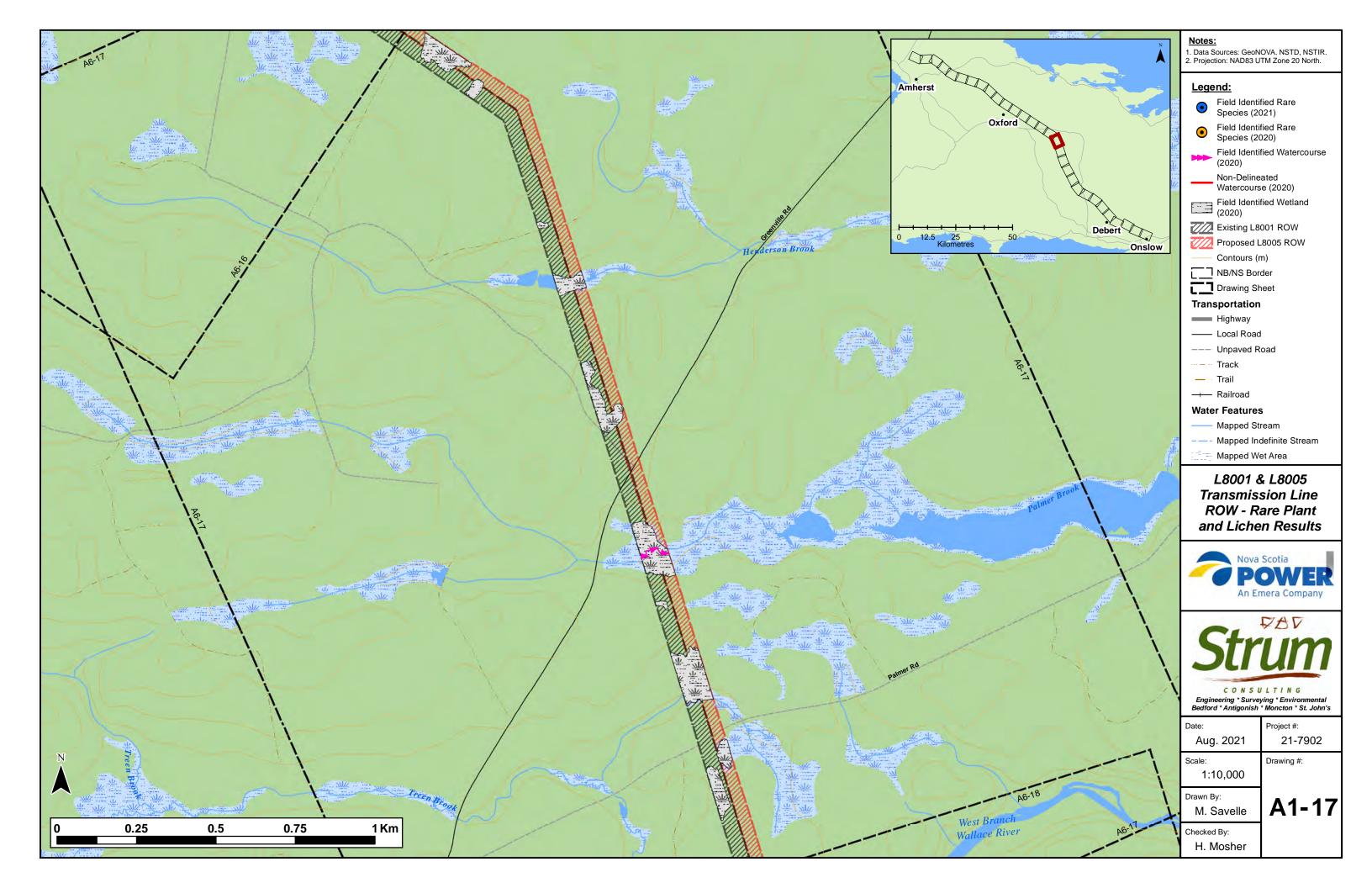


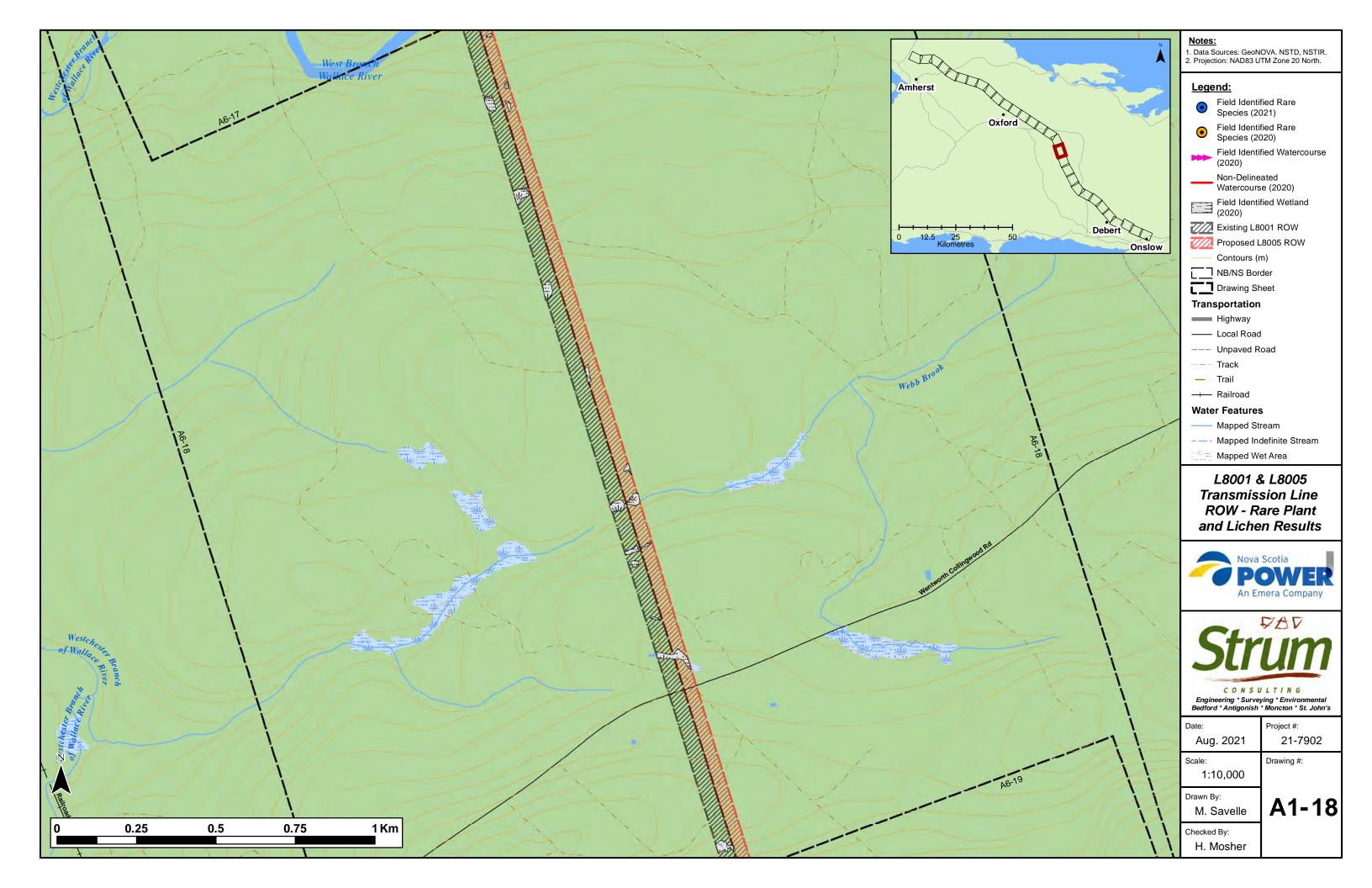


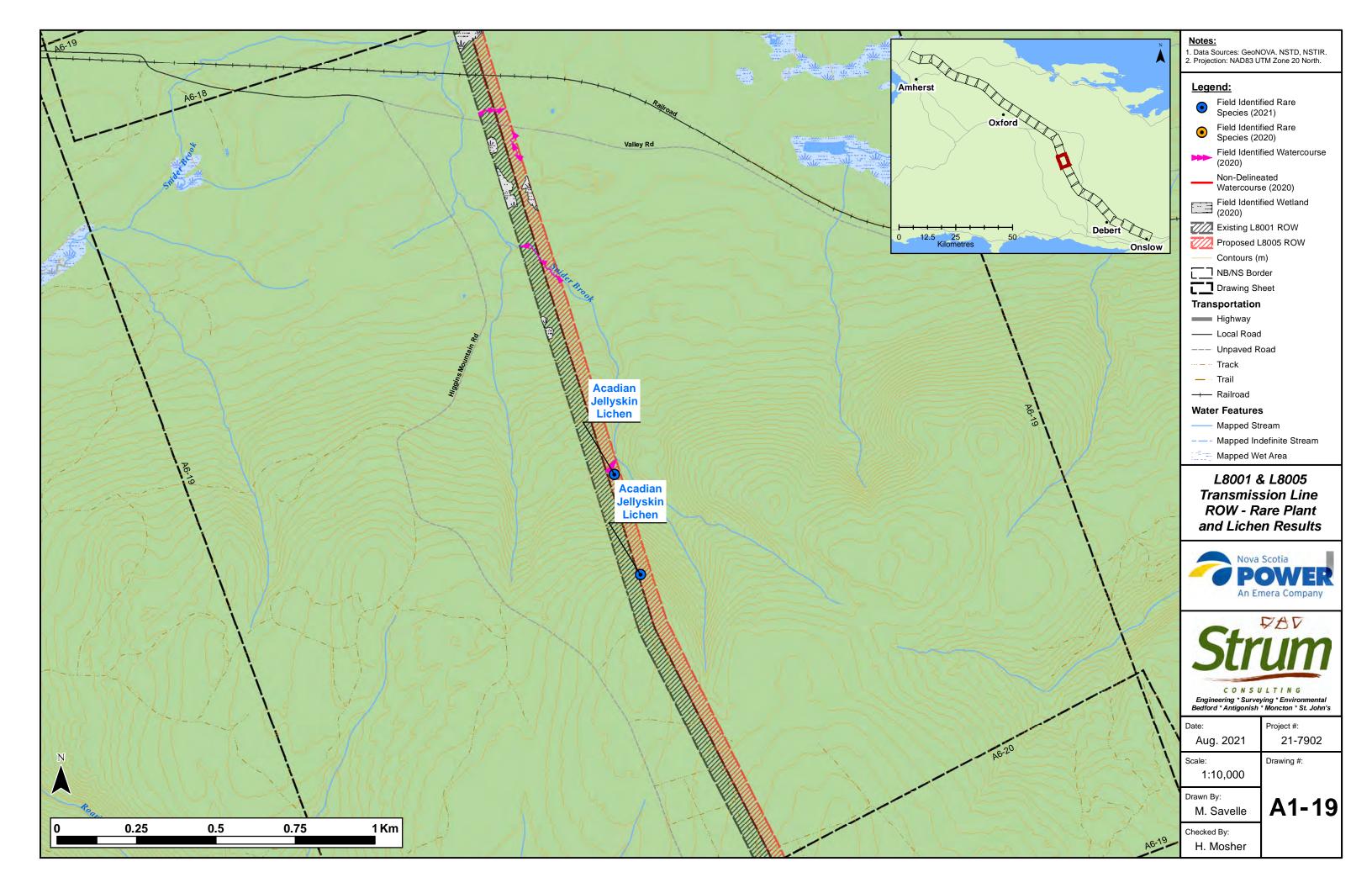


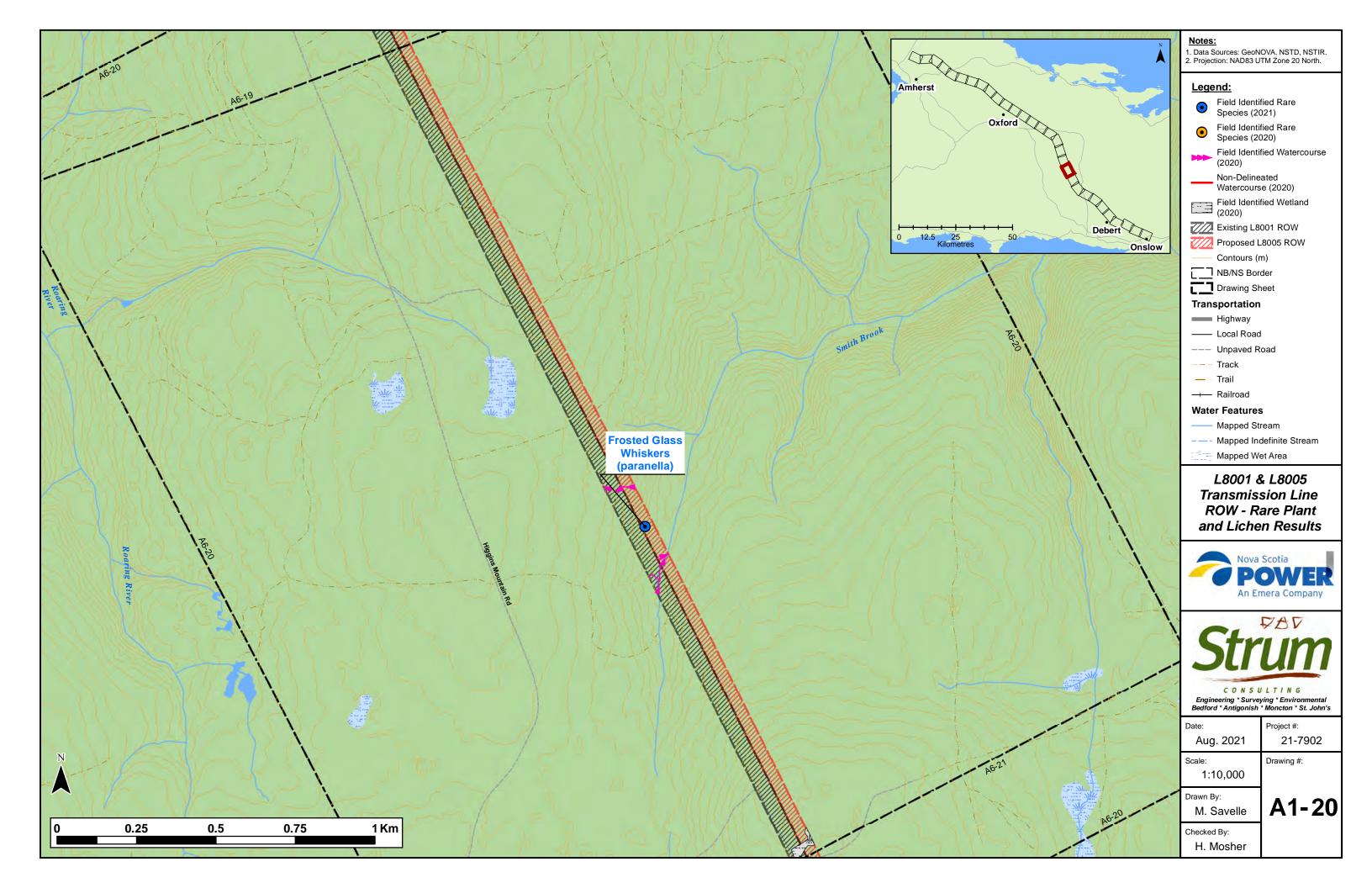


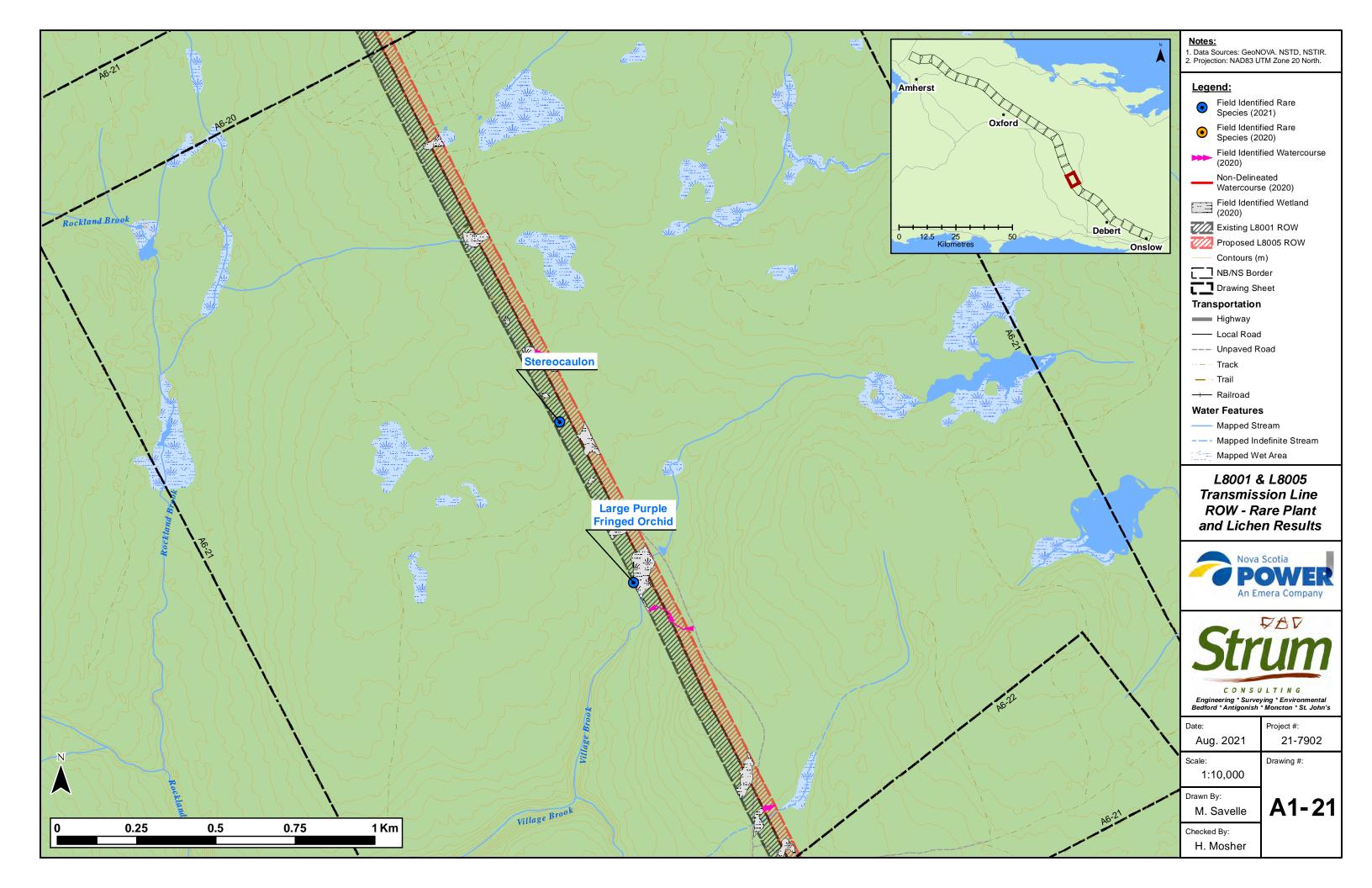


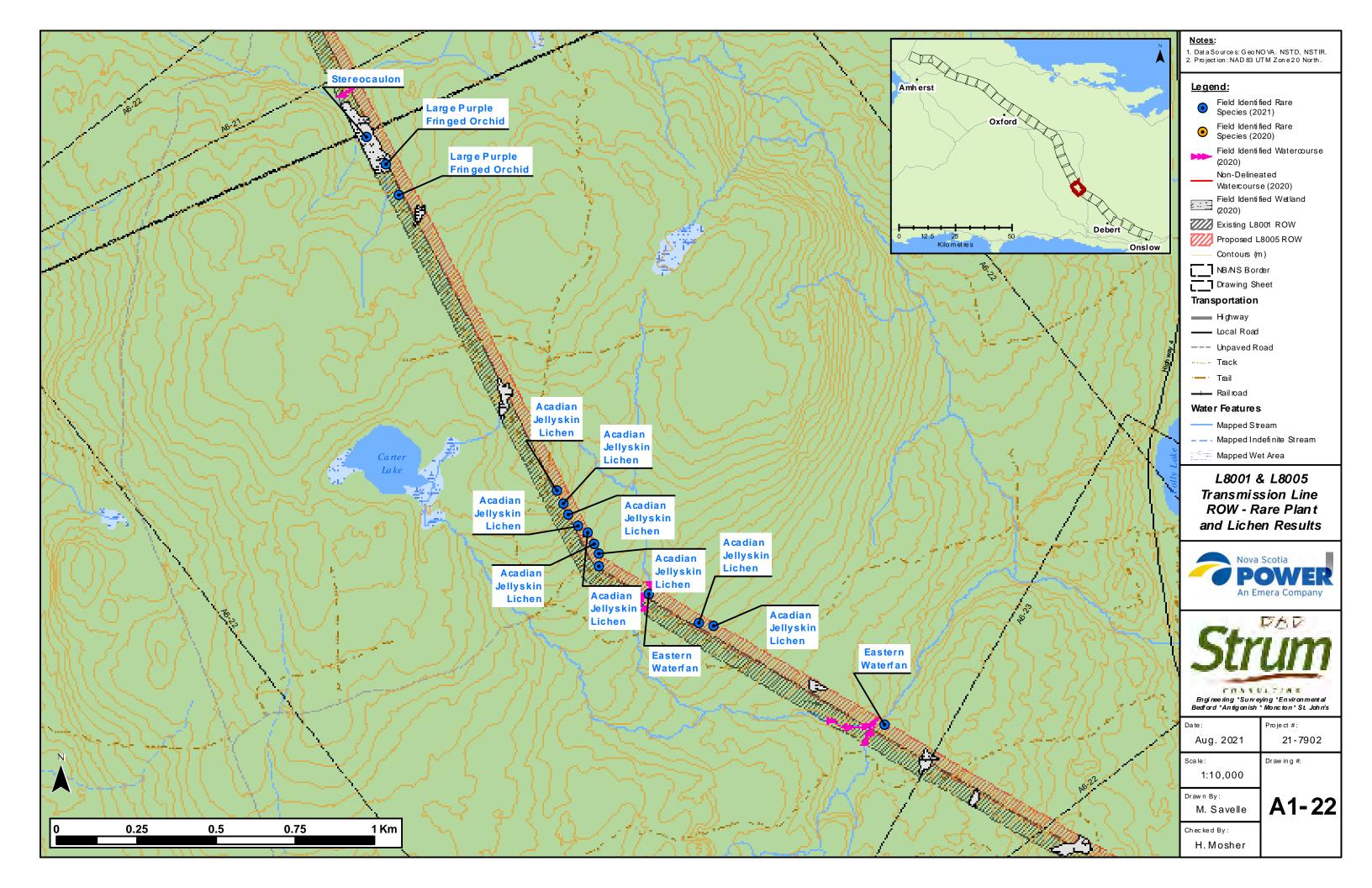


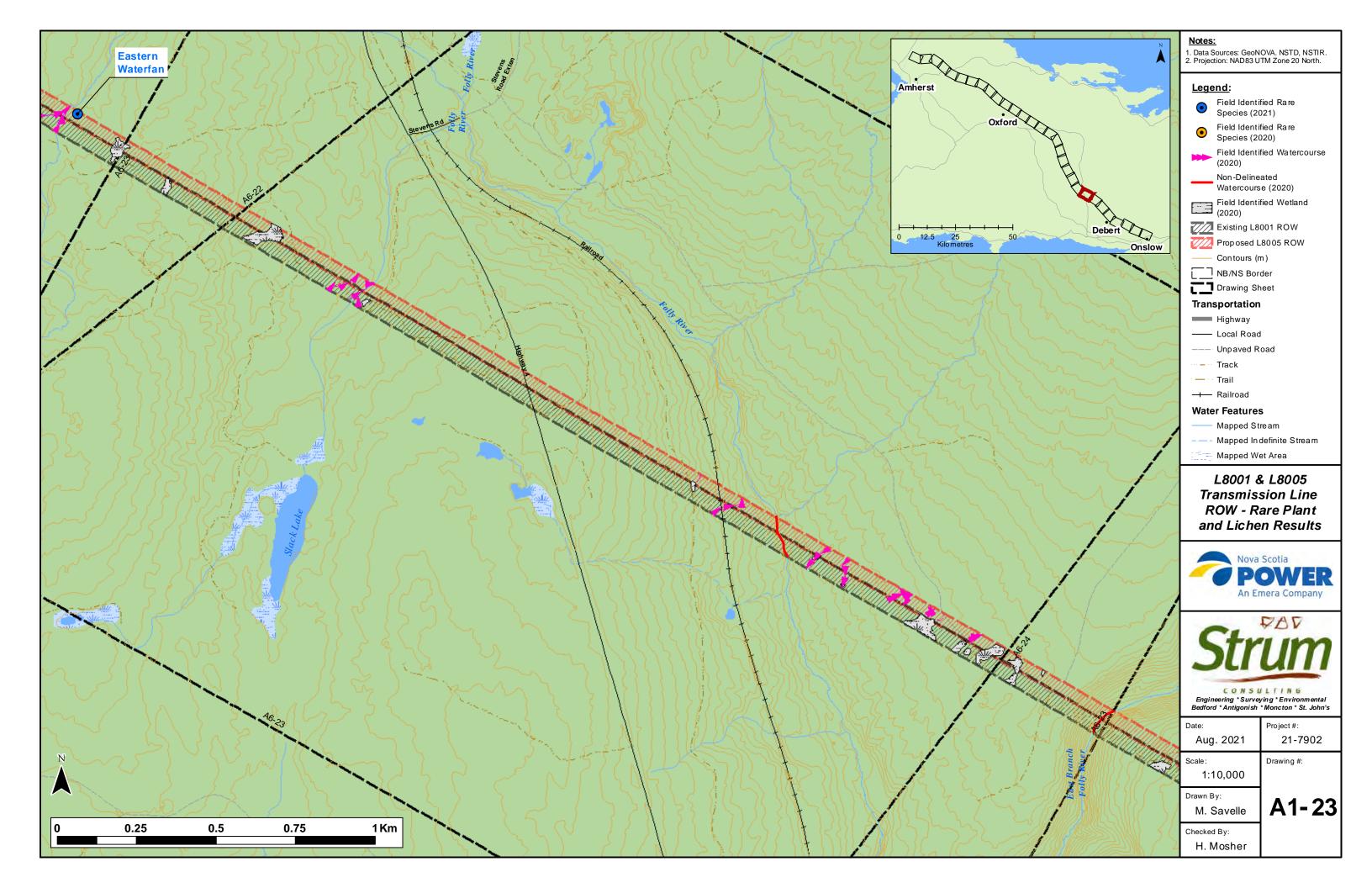


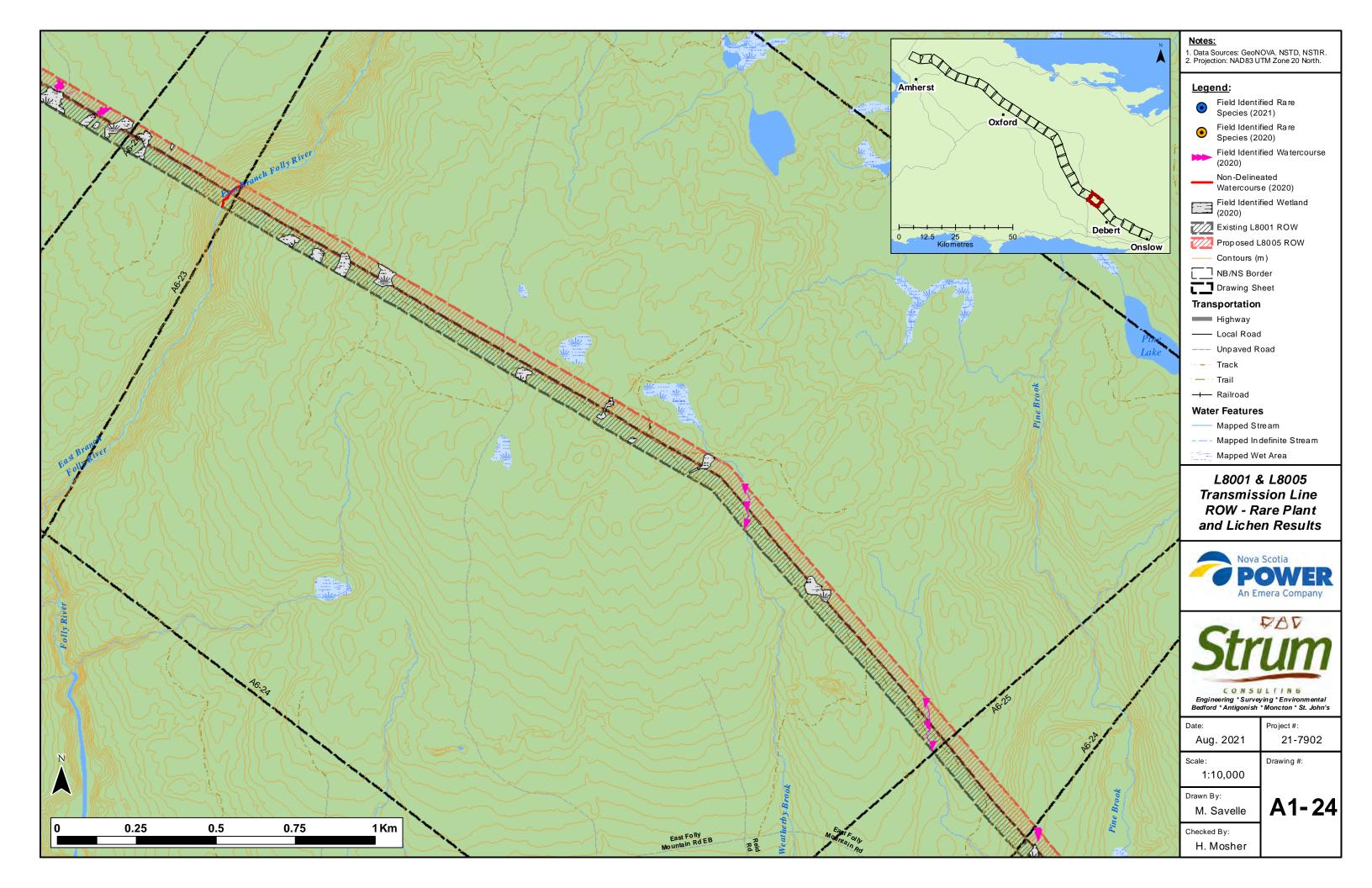


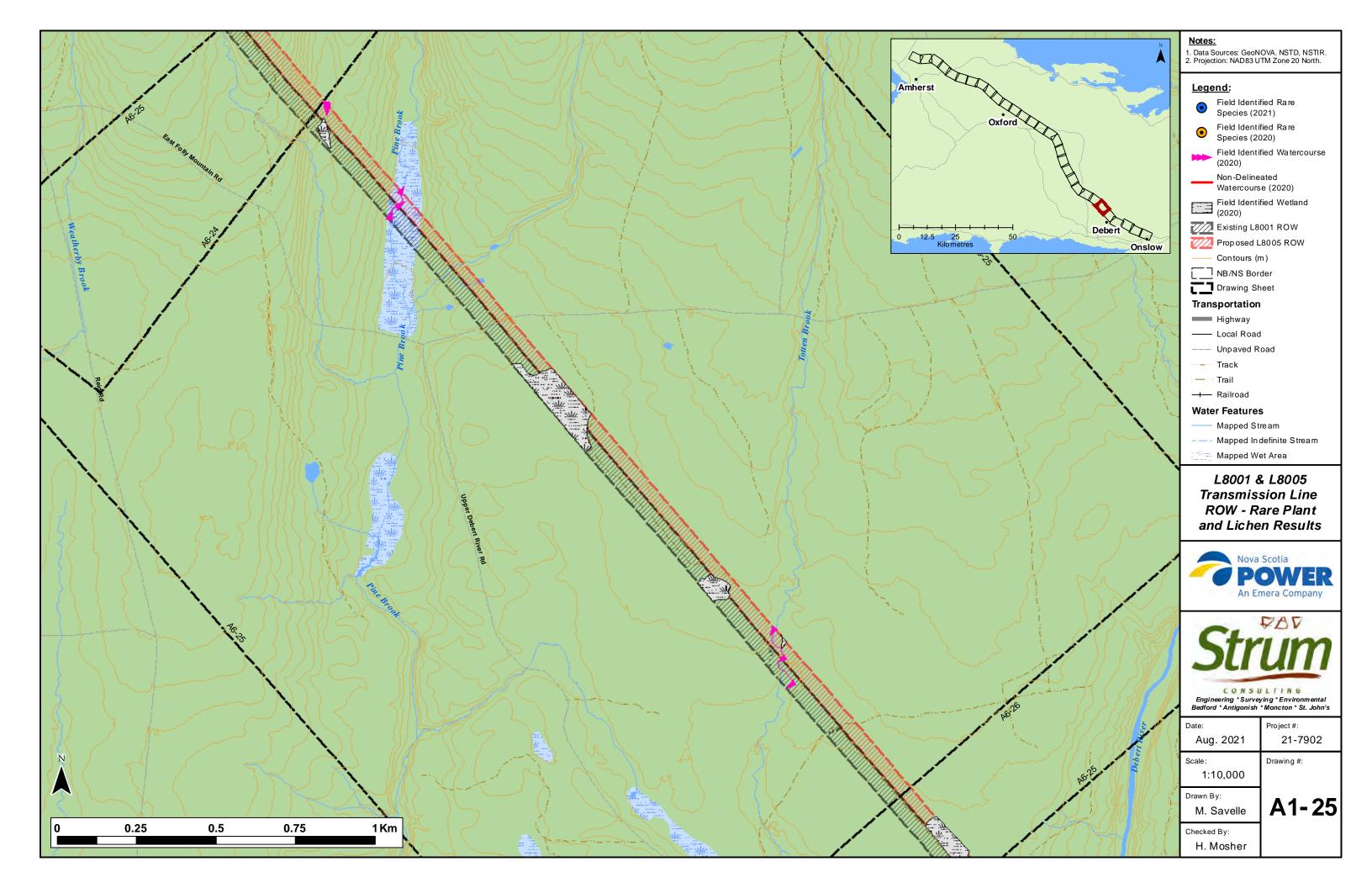


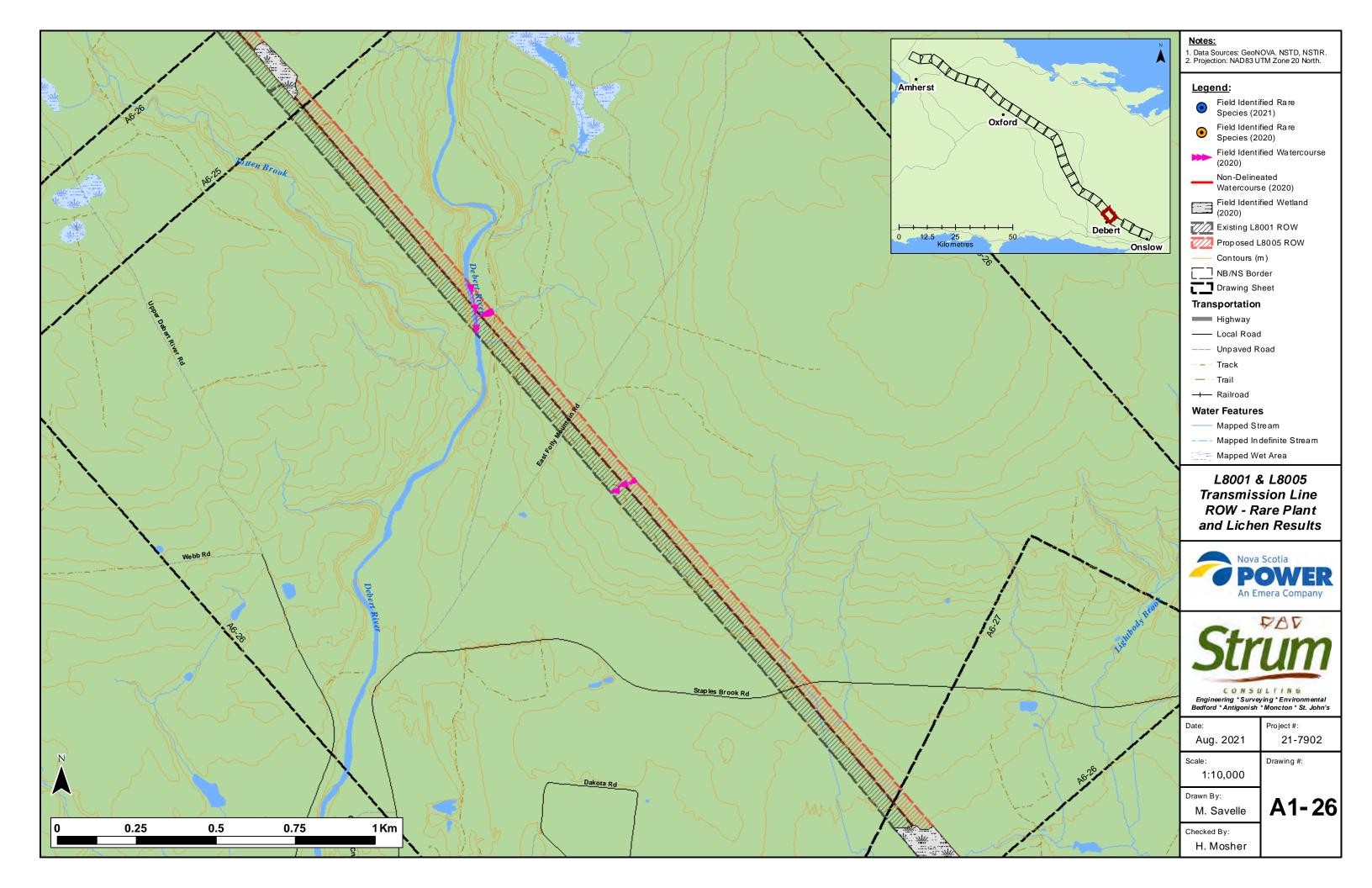


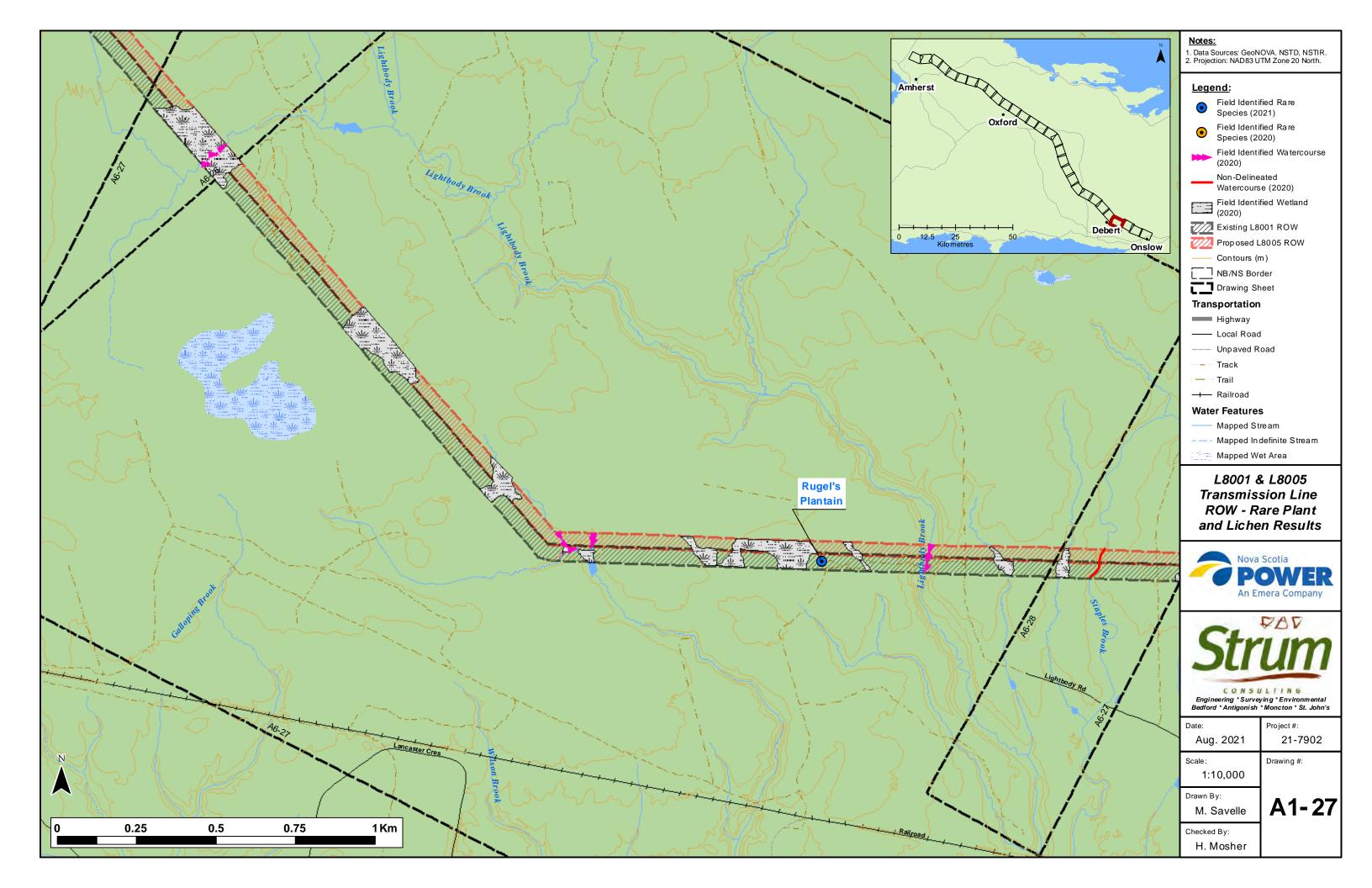


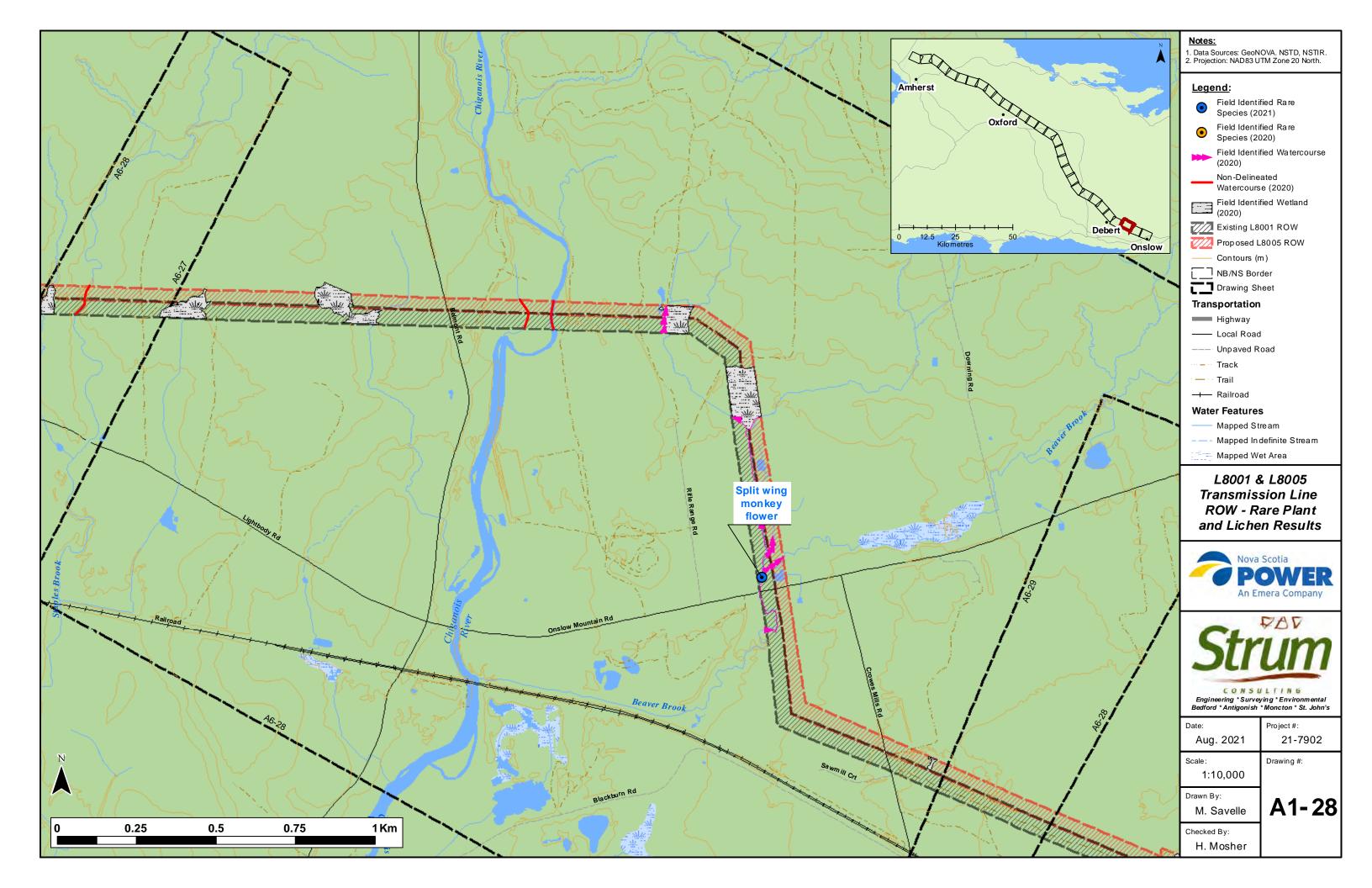


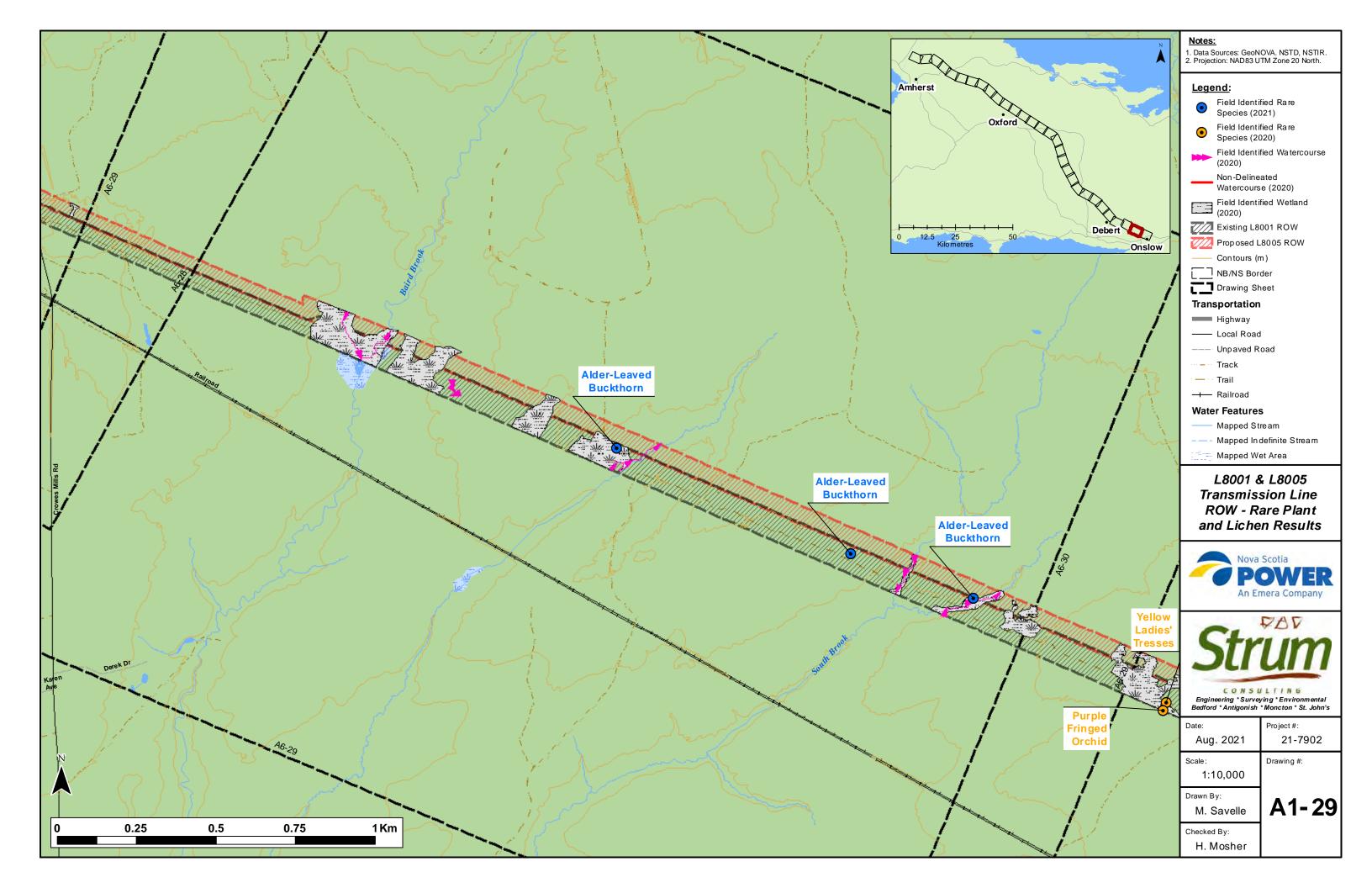


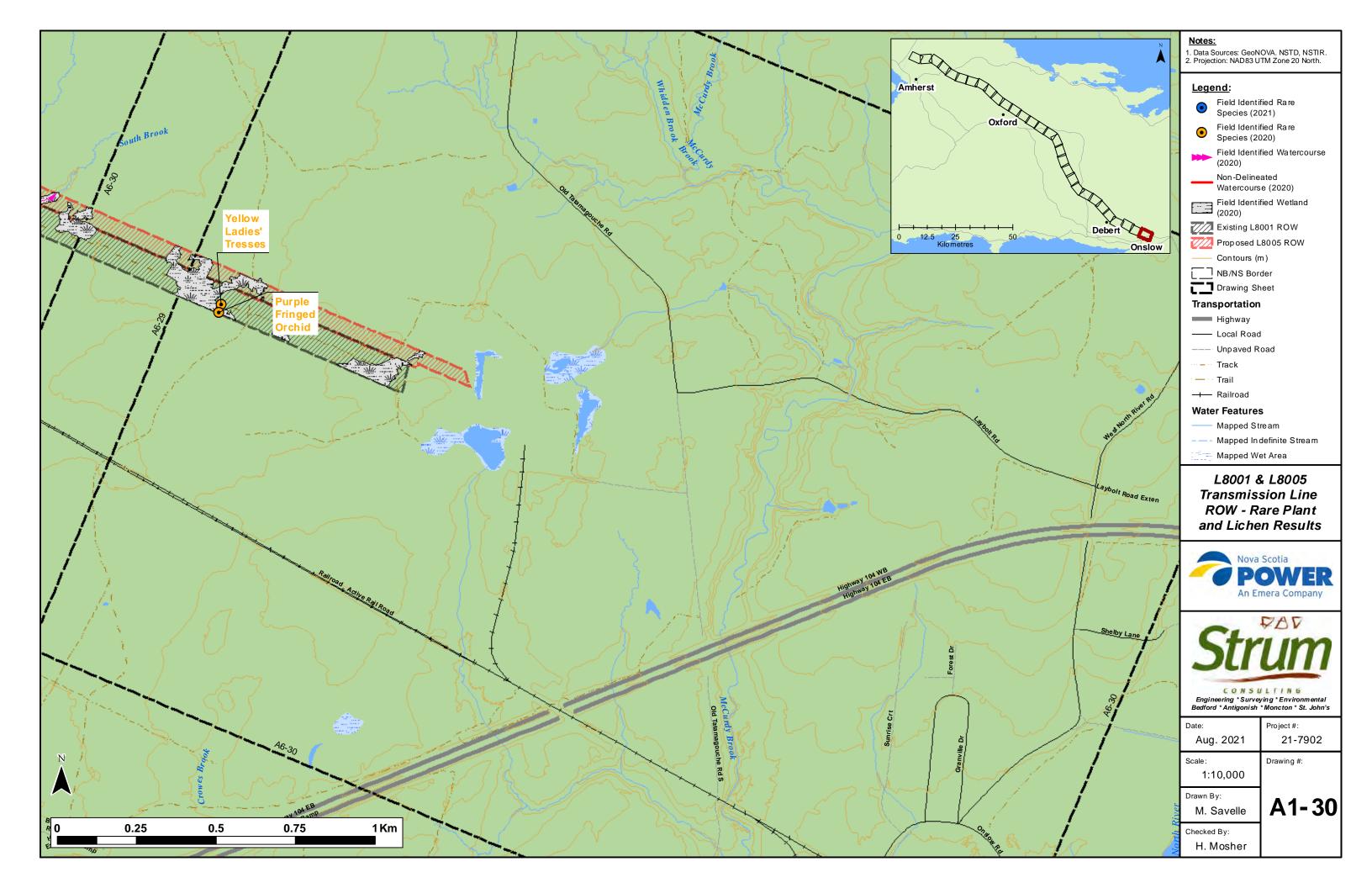












21-7902 NSPI Transmission Line Rare Plants and Lichens Geodatabase File Descriptions

Spatial Data File Descriptions

A description of the shapefiles and field names is presented below.

SHAPEFILES:

Dataset	Rare Plants and Lichens				
Feature Type	Point				
Location	21-7902_RarePlants_Lichen_20210806				
	Attribute Field Name	Description			
	FID	Unique ID			
	objectid	ID associated with Survey123 data collector			
	globalid	ID associated with Survey123 data collector			
	datetime	Date of data collection			
	field_Crew Strum field crew initials				
	species_co	Identifying species confidence: Low Medium High			
	notes	Field notes taken during survey			
	Easting	NAD83 UTM Zone 20 North Easting			
	Northing	NAD83 UTM Zone 20 North Northing			
	MAP_ID	ID based on south to north species ID			
	SPECIES	Species name (Latin or common); genus given if species name unknown			
	Pla_Lic	Plant or Lichen			

