



April 2, 2015

VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

Burl W. Haar
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Place East, Suite 350
St. Paul, MN 55101

**Re: Comments
Community Solar Garden Program
Docket No. E002/M-13-867**

Dear Dr. Haar,

SunShare respectfully submits the attached *Comments by SunShare, LLC* in response to the Commission's March 13, 2015 Notice of Comment Period filed in the above-mentioned docket.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

s/ Ross Abbey
Ross Abbey

SunShare, LLC
Director of Business Development and
Government Affairs – Minnesota

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On behalf of SunShare, LLC

Cc: Appended Service List

STATE OF MINNESOTA
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Beverly Jones Heydinger	Chair
Nancy Lange	Commissioner
Dan Lipschultz	Commissioner
John Tuma	Commissioner
Betsy Wergin	Commissioner

April 2, 2015

**In the Matter of the Petition of Northern States
Power Company, dba Xcel Energy, for Approval of
Its Proposed Community Solar Garden Program**

Docket No. E002/M-13-867

COMMENTS BY SUNSHARE, LLC

SunShare, LLC respectfully submits these Comments in response to the Commission's March 13, 2015 Notice of Comment Period in this docket.

1) *Replies to Any Comments Filed in the Docket To-Date*

SunShare thanks the Commission for an additional opportunity to comment on the many topics raised by SunShare, Xcel Energy, the Office of the Attorney General, and other stakeholders over the last six weeks.

As in February, SunShare continues to request prompt Commission action to address many urgent outstanding issues with Xcel's implementation of its Community Solar Garden program, including but not limited to the issues reiterated below.¹ As stated in our May 2 Reply Comments, we believe that residential subscriber sales efforts are being hindered by uncertainty generated by these and other outstanding issues.²

- a. The Commission should issue an interim CSG interconnection order if needed to keep the program moving forward.³
- b. Xcel should not be able to unilaterally terminate CSG interconnection requests or "refer" them to MISO.⁴

¹ SunShare Feb. 24, 2015 Comments, 13-867, at 2 (urging prompt Commission action "to ensure the success of the CSG program and support the many small businesses like ours seeking to build Community Solar Gardens in 2015 based on the Commission's September 2014 Order.").

² May 2 Reply Comments, at 2 ("In our experience, residential customers typically expect near-term project construction and commissioning before they are willing to sign a Community Solar subscriber agreement. Yet it would be irresponsible to promise service dates for thousands of residential customers before we have more clarity on the outstanding issue related to CSG interconnection.")

³ SunShare Mar. 4, 2015 Comments at 4.

⁴ SunShare Feb. 24, 2015 Comments, 13-867, at 2-3.

We recognize and thank Xcel Energy for its March 4 commitment to continue to move projects through its Section 10 interconnection review process, regardless of whether interconnection applications may require transmission system impact reviews.⁵

- c. Xcel should coordinate with MISO regarding affected system studies and should only require such studies if they are actually justified from an engineering perspective.⁶

In recent weeks, Xcel has shown a willingness to discuss the potential outline of an Xcel-MISO process with SunShare and other stakeholders. We will notify the Commission if and when Xcel provides a workable, concrete solution regarding this concern.

- d. Xcel should develop a pre-screen or feasibility study process to improve the transparency and efficiency of the CSG interconnection process.⁷

In recent weeks, Xcel has suggested a possible way forward on this request. We will notify the Commission if and when Xcel provides a workable, concrete solution regarding this concern.

- e. CSG developers should be able to transfer a CSG site location once, as in Colorado, without Xcel revoking a project's completeness status (i.e., in response to Xcel's concerns regarding over-concentration).⁸
- f. Xcel should clarify when the Section 10 six-month validity clock starts and stops and to which categories of Section 10 application the six-month validity clock applies.⁹
- g. The Commission should reject Xcel's request for reconsideration of the CSG site definition rule, and, if any changes are made, should grandfather in co-located S*RC applications already received.¹⁰
- h. Xcel should not deny reasonable requests to assign deposit returns to third-party lenders.

In recent days, Xcel has engaged the S*RC Implementation Workgroup in a discussion regarding this issue.¹¹ We will notify the Commission if and when Xcel provides a workable, concrete solution regarding this concern.

Going forward, we believe there may also be a need to develop a structural solution (e.g., incentives and penalties) to encourage and allow for rapid interconnection of distributed solar.¹² As such, we welcome comments by the company and other stakeholders to achieve better alignment between Xcel Energy and applicants for Community Solar Garden interconnection.

⁵ Xcel Energy Mar. 4, 2015 Reply Comments, 13-867, at 12 ("CSG projects will remain in the Xcel Energy Section 10 interconnection review process, even where an interconnection application may require additional review for transmission system impacts by MISO.").

⁶ SunShare Feb. 24, 2015 Comments at 3.

⁷ SunShare Feb. 24, 2015 Comments at 4-5; SunShare Mar. 4 Reply Comments at 2.

⁸ SunShare Feb. 24, 2015 Comments at 5-6; SunShare Mar. 4 Reply Comments at 2.

⁹ SunShare Feb. 24, 2015 Comments at 6-7.

¹⁰ SunShare Feb. 24, 2015 Comments at 8.

¹¹ *Id.* at 6.

¹² See SunShare Feb. 24, 2015 Comments, 13-867, at 2.

2) Issues on Which the Commission Sought Comments in Its Notices Issued October 9, 2014 and January 28, 2015 in This Docket

SunShare provided in-depth comments on these rate-related matters in our March 2, 2015 Comments. We encouraged the Commission to preserve the higher bill-credit rate for residential customers to encourage CSG developers to sign up residential customers if it adopts a CSG VOS rate.¹³ The Commission could also use a VOS adder as a “fine-tuning knob” to guide project sizes and locations.¹⁴

We look forward to reviewing other stakeholders’ comments and providing additional information in our forthcoming Reply Comments.

3) Whether and When There Should Be a Transfer from the Applicable Retail Rate (ARR) to the Value of Solar (VOS) Rate as the Bill Credit for Community Solar Gardens (CSGs) and Whether an Adder is Necessary to Provide a Rate that Will Reasonably Allow for the Creation, Financing, and Accessibility of Solar Gardens

SunShare provided our initial comments on these issues in our March 2, 2015 Comments:

SunShare believes that the current CSG rate structure is working well, and that the Commission should retain this default rate structure for at least the first two years of Xcel’s new Solar*Rewards Community program. Given the significant number of unresolved implementation issues already facing S*RC program applicants, a rate transition in 2015 or the first half of 2016 would likely introduce additional financial complexity and business-transition costs that would be unhelpful during the program’s first 18 months.¹⁵

That said, we are looking forward to reviewing other stakeholders’ comments and submitting reply comments before the April 30 deadline.

Very truly yours,

/s/ Ross Abbey

Ross Abbey

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On behalf of SunShare, LLC

¹³ SunShare Mar. 2, 2015 Reply Comments, 13-867, at 2-3.

¹⁴ Note that the Commission is prevented by statute from charging a VOS lower than the ARR for at least three years after the Commission first approved the VOS methodology. SunShare Mar. 2, 2015 Reply Comments at 6, *citing* Minn. Stat. § 216B.164, subdivision 10.

¹⁵ SunShare Mar. 2, 2015 Reply Comments at 6.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Ross Abbey, hereby certify that on April 2, 2015, I served copies of the following document on the attached list of persons by electronic filing, certified mail, or by depositing a true and correct copy thereof properly enveloped with postage paid in the United States Mail at St. Paul, Minnesota.

Comments by SunShare LLC

Docket No. E002/M-13-867

Certified this 2nd day of April, 2015

s/ Ross Abbey

Ross Abbey

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On behalf of SunShare, LLC

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