

July 1, 2020

Will Seuffert  
Executive Secretary  
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission  
121 7<sup>th</sup> Place East, Suite 350  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55101-2147

RE: **Comments of the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources**  
Docket Nos. E015/RP-15-690, E015/M-17-568, and E015/GR-16-664

Dear Mr. Seuffert:

Attached are the Comments of the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources (Department), in the following matters:

Minnesota Power's 2015 Integrated Resource Plan.  
Minnesota Power's Petition for Approval of the *EnergyForward* Resource Package.  
The Application of Minnesota Power for Authority to Increase Rates for Electric Utility Service in Minnesota.

The Petition was filed on May 29, 2020 by:

Jennifer J. Peterson  
Manager – Regulatory Strategy & Policy  
Minnesota Power  
30 West Superior Street  
Duluth, MN 55802-2093

The Department recommends that the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) **approve the Petition with conditions**. The Department is available to answer any questions that the Commission may have.

Sincerely,

/s/ STEVE RAKOW  
Analyst Coordinator

SR/ar  
Attachment



## Before the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission

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### Comments of the Minnesota Department of Commerce Division of Energy Resources

Docket Nos. E015/RP-15-690, E015/M-17-568, and E015/GR-16-664

#### I. INTRODUCTION

Minnesota Power, a public utility operating division of ALLETE, Inc.'s (MP or the Company) last Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) was approved with modifications by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission's (Commission) *Order Approving Resource Plan with Modifications* on July 18, 2016 in Docket No. E015/RP-15-690, including a requirement for MP to file its next IRP on February 1, 2018.

On June 8, 2017 MP's *Request of Minnesota Power for an Extension to File Its Next Integrated Resource Plan to Address Wind, Solar, and Gas Resource Package* (Docket No. E015/RP-15-690) requested that the Commission delay the next IRP by at least one year, to approximately February 2019 or even longer as dictated by the Commission's overall schedule and workload. The request was to accommodate full consideration of MP's Nemadji Trail Energy Center proposal. In response, the June 30, 2017 comments of the Minnesota Department of Commerce (Department) recommended that the Commission approve an October 1, 2019 filing date for MP's next IRP. On September 17, 2017 the Commission's *Order Referring Gas Plant for Contested Case Proceedings, and Notice and Order for Hearings* in Docket Nos. E015/RP-15-690 and E015/AI-17-568 approved an extension to file the Company's next IRP on October 1, 2019.

On January 24, 2019 the Commission's *Order Approving Affiliated-Interest Agreements with Conditions* (Docket No. E015/AI-17-568), in light of the additional analysis required, approved October 1, 2020 as the deadline for Minnesota Power to file its next IRP.

On May 29, 2020 MP filed a petition requesting a six month extension for submitting the next IRP from October 1, 2020 to April 1, 2021.

On June 4, 2020 the Commission issued its *Notice of Comment Period* (Notice) establishing July 1, 2020 as the due date for comments. The Notice stated that the issue open for comment is "Should the Commission grant Minnesota Power's request for a six month extension to file its next Integrated Resource Plan, Baseload Retirement Study, and Securitization Plan, from October 1, 2020 to April 1, 2021?"

## II. DEPARTMENT ANALYSIS

### A. GOVERNING STATUTES AND RULES

Minnesota Statutes § 216B.2421 subd. 2 (a) states that “A utility shall file a resource plan with the Commission periodically in accordance with rules adopted by the Commission.” Minnesota Rules part 7843.0300 subp. 2 requires an IRP filing every two years. Subpart 1 of the same rule part indicates that the procedures prescribed by Minnesota Rules parts 7830.0100 to 7830.4400 apply to resource plan filings. However, Minnesota Rules chapter 7830 (Practice and Procedure) has been repealed. The Department understands that Minnesota Rules chapter 7829 (Utility Proceeding, Practice, Procedure) applies instead. Minnesota Rules part 7829.1275 allows the Commission to vary time periods “on its own motion or at the request of a person for good cause shown.”

### B. DEPARTMENT ANALYSIS

MP’s request cites the following reasons as supporting the six-month extension:

- “gain further insight into the pandemic’s [COVID-19] impact on customers’ energy needs and the region’s interconnected natural resources-based economy;”
- “In accordance with the Governor’s orders, Minnesota Power has postponed all in-person stakeholder meetings. A six month extension would allow the Company time to do the important work of hearing from all interested stakeholders;”
- “With the MPUC approval of this [EnergyForward] package, Minnesota Power remains on track in implementing its EnergyForward strategy to increase the percentage of energy generated from renewable sources for customers and reducing carbon, and will exceed 50 percent in 2021;
- “Minnesota Power has also initiated an internal investigation into the operating requirements and impacts of utilizing economic dispatch at each Boswell unit. Minnesota Power will continue to evaluate these operating scenarios and report on all conditions and aspects observed in its December 1, 2020 update and April IRP filing.”
- “Minnesota Power has been working diligently to on-board EnCompass in preparation for the IRP analysis. This requested six month extension will give Minnesota Power additional time to refine, set-up, and address any IRP modeling issues the Company encounters.”

In addition, the Company proposes to mitigate the impact of the requested delay in filing the IRP by filing the following items on December 1, 2020 as an interim update:

1. an update of Minnesota Power's customer operations;
  2. an interim report on stakeholder engagement done to date and additional engagement planned prior to the April 1, 2021 filing date;
  3. a high-level overview of securitization learnings to date;
  4. IRP modeling assumptions that resulted from the stakeholder modeling subgroup process;
- and

5. an interim report on the operating requirements and impacts of utilizing economic dispatch at each Boswell unit given impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the grid and MISO energy market.

Overall, the Department agrees with MP's explanations regarding the benefits of delaying filing the IRP and the ability of an interim update to mitigate the risks of delay. The Department notes that MP's most recent Annual Forecast Report under Minnesota Rules chapter 7610, filed July 17, 2019 in Docket No. E999/PR-19-11 provided a load and capability table. The only system capacity deficits are between winter 2022 and summer 2024. These projected deficits are relatively small and in the very near future, such that their resolution would be difficult to address as an IRP issue; it can be addressed through short-term, bilateral contracts.

To enable Commission oversight of MP's reliability situation, the Department recommends that the Commission add to MP's proposed December 1, 2020 interim update a load and capability report and a progress report regarding the on-going, Commission-approved additions to the Company's resource portfolio.

### **III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Department recommends that the Commission approve MP's Petition and add to MP's proposed December 1, 2020 interim update a load and capability report and a progress report regarding the on-going, Commission-approved additions to the Company's resource portfolio.

/ar

## **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I, Sharon Ferguson, hereby certify that I have this day, served copies of the following document on the attached list of persons by electronic filing, certified mail, e-mail, or by depositing a true and correct copy thereof properly enveloped with postage paid in the United States Mail at St. Paul, Minnesota.

**Minnesota Department of Commerce**

**Comments**

**Docket No. E015/RP-15-690, E015/M-17-568, and E015/GR-16-664**

Dated this **1<sup>st</sup>** day of **June 2020**

**/s/Sharon Ferguson**

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Christopher	Anderson	canderson@allete.com	Minnesota Power	30 W Superior St  Duluth, MN 558022191	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Lori	Andresen	info@sosbluewaters.org	Save Our Sky Blue Waters	P.O. Box 3661  Duluth, Minnesota 55803	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Peter	Beithon	pbeithon@otpc.com	Otter Tail Power Company	P.O. Box 496 215 South Cascade Street Fergus Falls, MN 565380496	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Sundra	Bender	sundra.bender@state.mn.us	Public Utilities Commission	121 7th Place East Suite 350 Saint Paul, MN 55101-2147	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Sara	Bergan	sebergan@stoel.com	Stoel Rives LLP	33 South Sixth Street Suite 4200 Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
David F.	Boehm	dboehm@bkllawfirm.com	Boehm, Kurtz & Lowry	36 E 7th St Ste 1510  Cincinnati, OH 45202	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Elizabeth	Brama	ebrama@taftlaw.com	Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP	2200 IDS Center 80 South 8th Street Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Jon	Brekke	jbrekke@greenergy.com	Great River Energy	12300 Elm Creek Boulevard  Maple Grove, MN 553694718	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Christina	Brusven	cbrusven@fredlaw.com	Fredrikson Byron	200 S 6th St Ste 4000  Minneapolis, MN 554021425	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Michael J.	Bull	mbull@mncee.org	Center for Energy and Environment	212 Third Ave N Ste 560  Minneapolis, MN 55401	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
David	Cartella	David.Cartella@cliffsnr.com	Cliffs Natural Resources Inc.	200 Public Square Ste 3300  Cleveland, OH 44114-2315	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Greg	Chandler	greg.chandler@upm.com	UPM Blandin Paper	115 SW First St  Grand Rapids, MN 55744	Paper Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Steve W.	Chriss	Stephen.chriss@walmart.com	Wal-Mart	2001 SE 10th St.  Bentonville, AR 72716-5530	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Generic Notice	Commerce Attorneys	commerce.attorneys@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-DOC	445 Minnesota Street Suite 1400  St. Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Lisa	Daniels	lisadaniels@windustry.org	Windustry	201 Ridgewood Ave  Minneapolis, MN 55403	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Ron	Elwood	relwood@mnlsap.org	Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid	2324 University Ave Ste 101  Saint Paul, MN 55114	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Sharon	Ferguson	sharon.ferguson@state.mn.us	Department of Commerce	85 7th Place E Ste 280  Saint Paul, MN 551012198	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Edward	Garvey	garveyed@aol.com	Residence	32 Lawton St  Saint Paul, MN 55102	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
John R.	Gasele	jpgasele@fryberger.com	Fryberger Buchanan Smith & Frederick PA	700 Lonsdale Building 302 W Superior St Ste 700 Duluth, MN 55802	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Bruce	Gerhardson	bgerhardson@otpco.com	Otter Tail Power Company	PO Box 496 215 S Cascade St Fergus Falls, MN 565380496	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Barbara	Gervais	toftemn@boreal.org	Town of Tofte	P O Box 2293 7240 Tofte Park Road Tofte, MN 55615	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
J Drake	Hamilton	hamilton@fresh-energy.org	Fresh Energy	408 St Peter St  Saint Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Robert	Harding	robert.harding@state.mn.us	Public Utilities Commission	Suite 350 121 7th Place East  St. Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Annete	Henkel	mui@mutilityinvestors.org	Minnesota Utility Investors	413 Wacouta Street #230 St.Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Shane	Henriksen	shane.henriksen@enbridge.com	Enbridge Energy Company, Inc.	1409 Hammond Ave FL 2  Superior, WI 54880	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Valerie	Herring	vherring@taftlaw.com	Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP	2200 IDS Center 80 S. Eighth Street Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Lori	Hoyum	lhoyum@mnpower.com	Minnesota Power	30 West Superior Street  Duluth, MN 55802	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
James	Jarvi	N/A	Minnesota Ore Operations - U S Steel	P O Box 417  Mountain Iron, MN 55768	Paper Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Alan	Jenkins	aj@jenkinsatlaw.com	Jenkins at Law	2950 Yellowtail Ave.  Marathon, FL 33050	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case



First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Kelsey	Johnson	info@taconite.org	Iron Mining Association	324 West Superior St Ste 502  Duluth, MN 55802	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Richard	Johnson	Rick.Johnson@lawmoss.com	Moss & Barnett	150 S. 5th Street Suite 1200 Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Sarah	Johnson Phillips	sarah.phillips@stoel.com	Stoel Rives LLP	33 South Sixth Street Suite 4200 Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Travis	Kolari	N/A	Keetac	PO Box 217  Keewatin, MN 55753	Paper Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Michael	Krikava	mkrikava@taftlaw.com	Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP	2200 IDS Center 80 S 8th St Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Ganesh	Krishnan	ganesh.krishnan@state.mn.us	Public Utilities Commission	Suite 350121 7th Place East  St. Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Becky	Lammi	cityclerk@ci.aurora.mn.us	City of Aurora	16 W 2nd Ave N PO Box 160 Aurora, MN 55705	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
David	Langmo	david.langmo@sappi.com	Sappi North America	P O Box 511 2201 Avenue B Cloquet, MN 55720	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Douglas	Larson	dlarson@dakotaelectric.com	Dakota Electric Association	4300 220th St W  Farmington, MN 55024	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Emily	Larson	eLarson@duluthmn.gov	City of Duluth	411 W 1st St Rm 403  Duluth, MN 55802	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
James D.	Larson	james.larson@avantenergy.com	Avant Energy Services	220 S 6th St Ste 1300  Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Annie	Levenson Falk	annief@cupminnesota.org	Citizens Utility Board of Minnesota	332 Minnesota Street, Suite W1360  St. Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
LeRoger	Lind	llind@yahoo.com	Save Lake Superior Association	P.O. Box 101  Two Harbors, MN 55616	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Eric	Lindberg	elindberg@mncenter.org	Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy	1919 University Avenue West Suite 515 Saint Paul, MN 55104-3435	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Patrick	Loupin	PatrickLoupin@Packaging Corp.com	Packaging Corporation of America	PO Box 990050  Boise, ID 83799-0050	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Susan	Ludwig	sludwig@mnpower.com	Minnesota Power	30 West Superior Street  Duluth, MN 55802	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Kavita	Maini	kmains@wi.rr.com	KM Energy Consulting, LLC	961 N Lost Woods Rd  Oconomowoc, WI 53066	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Sarah	Manchester	sarah.manchester@sappi.com	Sappi North American	255 State Street Floor 4 Boston, MA 02109-2617	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Tony	Mancuso	mancusot@stlouiscountymn.gov	Saint Louis County Property Mgmt Dept	Duluth Courthouse 100 N 5th Ave W Rm 515 Duluth, MN 55802-1209	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Pam	Marshall	pam@energycents.org	Energy CENTS Coalition	823 7th St E  St. Paul, MN 55106	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Keith	Matzdorf	keith.matzdorf@sappi.com	Sappi Fine Paper North America	PO Box 511 2201 Avenue B Cloquet, MN 55720	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Daryl	Maxwell	dmaxwell@hydro.mb.ca	Manitoba Hydro	360 Portage Ave FL 16 PO Box 815, Station Main Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 2P4  Canada	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Matthew	McClincy	MMcClincy@usg.com	USG	35 Arch Street  Clouquet, MN 55720	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Craig	McDonnell	Craig.McDonnell@state.mn.us	MN Pollution Control Agency	520 Lafayette Road  St. Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Natalie	McIntire	natalie.mcintire@gmail.com	Wind on the Wires	570 Asbury St Ste 201  Saint Paul, MN 55104-1850	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
David	Moeller	dmoeller@allete.com	Minnesota Power	30 W Superior St  Duluth, MN 558022093	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Andrew	Moratzka	andrew.moratzka@stoel.com	Stoel Rives LLP	33 South Sixth St Ste 4200  Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
James	Mortenson	james.mortenson@state.mn.us	Office of Administrative Hearings	PO BOX 64620  St. Paul, MN 55164-0620	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
David	Niles	david.niles@avantenergy.com	Minnesota Municipal Power Agency	220 South Sixth Street Suite 1300 Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Michael	Noble	noble@fresh-energy.org	Fresh Energy	Hamm Bldg., Suite 220 408 St. Peter Street St. Paul, MN 55102	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Rolf	Nordstrom	rnordstrom@gpsid.net	Great Plains Institute	2801 21ST AVE S STE 220  Minneapolis, MN 55407-1229	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Kate	O'Connell	kate.oconnell@state.mn.us	Department of Commerce	Suite 50085 Seventh Place East  St. Paul, MN 551012198	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Kevin	O'Grady	kevin.ograde@state.mn.us	Public Utilities Commission	Suite 350 121 7th Place East St. Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Christopher J.	Oppitz	N/A	-	110 1/2 1ST ST E  Park Rapids, MN 56470-1695	Paper Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Elanne	Palcich	epalcich@cpinternet.com	Save Our Sky Blue Waters	P.O. Box 3661  Duluth, MN 55803	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Max	Peters	maxp@cohasset-mn.com	City of Cohasset	305 NW First Ave  Cohasset, MN 55721	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Jennifer	Peterson	jjpeterson@mnpower.com	Minnesota Power	30 West Superior Street  Duluth, MN 55802	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
William	Phillips	wphillips@aarp.org	AARP	30 E. 7th St Suite 1200  St. Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Marcia	Podratz	mpodratz@mnpower.com	Minnesota Power	30 W Superior S  Duluth, MN 55802	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Tolaver	Rapp	Tolaver.Rapp@cliffsnr.com	Cliffs Natural Resources	200 Public Square Suite 3400 Cleveland, OH 441142318	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Generic Notice	Residential Utilities Division	residential.utilities@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-RUD	1400 BRM Tower 445 Minnesota St St. Paul, MN 551012131	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Kevin	Reuther	kreuther@mncenter.org	MN Center for Environmental Advocacy	26 E Exchange St, Ste 206  St. Paul, MN 551011667	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Ralph	Riberich	rriberich@uss.com	United States Steel Corp	600 Grant St Ste 2028  Pittsburgh, PA 15219	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Buddy	Robinson	buddy@citizensfed.org	Minnesota Citizens Federation NE	2110 W. 1st Street  Duluth, MN 55806	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Santi	Romani	N/A	United Taconite	PO Box 180  Eveleth, MN 55734	Paper Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Susan	Romans	sromans@allete.com	Minnesota Power	30 West Superior Street Legal Dept Duluth, MN 55802	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Richard	Savelkoul	rsavelkoul@martinsquires.com	Martin & Squires, P.A.	332 Minnesota Street Ste W2750  St. Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Thomas	Scharff	thomas.scharff@versoco.com	Verso Corp	600 High Street  Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Larry L.	Schedin	Larry@LLSResources.com	LLS Resources, LLC	332 Minnesota St, Ste W1390  St. Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Ann	Schweiger	ann.schwieger@state.mn.us	Public Utilities Commission	121 7th Place East Suite 350 St. Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Will	Seuffert	Will.Seuffert@state.mn.us	Public Utilities Commission	121 7th Pl E Ste 350  Saint Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Janet	Shaddix Elling	jshaddix@janetshaddix.com	Shaddix And Associates	7400 Lyndale Ave S Ste 190  Richfield, MN 55423	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Doug	Shoemaker	dougs@charter.net	Minnesota Renewable Energy	2928 5th Ave S  Minneapolis, MN 55408	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Brett	Skyles	Brett.Skyles@co.itasca.mn.us	Itasca County	123 NE Fourth Street  Grand Rapids, MN 557442600	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
James M	Strommen	jstrommen@kennedy-graven.com	Kennedy & Graven, Chartered	200 S 6th St Ste 470  Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Eric	Swanson	eswanson@winthrop.com	Winthrop & Weinstine	225 S 6th St Ste 3500 Capella Tower Minneapolis, MN 554024629	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Lynnette	Sweet	Regulatory.records@xcele nergy.com	Xcel Energy	414 Nicollet Mall FL 7  Minneapolis, MN 554011993	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Robert	Tammen	bobtammen@frontiernet.ne t	Wetland Action Group	PO Box 398  Soudan, MN 55782	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Jim	Tieberg	jtieberg@polymetmining.co m	PolyMet Mining, Inc.	PO Box 475 County Highway 666 Hoyt Lakes, MN 55750	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Jessica	Tritsch	jessica.tritsch@sierraclub.o rg	Sierra Club	2327 E Franklin Ave  Minneapolis, MN 55406	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Karen	Turnboom	karen.turnboom@versoco.c om	Verso Corporation	100 Central Avenue  Duluth, MN 55807	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Kodi	Verhalen	kverhalen@taftlaw.com	Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP	80 S 8th St Ste 2200  Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Kevin	Walli	kwalli@fryberger.com	Fryberger, Buchanan, Smith & Frederick	380 St. Peter St Ste 710  St. Paul, MN 55102	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case
Scott	Zahorik	scott.zahorik@aeoa.org	Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency	702 S. 3rd Avenue  Virginia, MN 55792	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-664_PUC Official Service List General Rate Case

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Christopher	Anderson	canderson@allete.com	Minnesota Power	30 W Superior St  Duluth, MN 558022191	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_15-690_Official
Laura	Bishop	Laura.Bishop@state.mn.us	MN Pollution Control Agency	520 Lafayette Rd  Saint Paul, MN 55155	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-690_Official
Jon	Brekke	jbrekke@grenergy.com	Great River Energy	12300 Elm Creek Boulevard  Maple Grove, MN 553694718	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-690_Official
Christina	Brusven	cbrusven@fredlaw.com	Fredrikson Byron	200 S 6th St Ste 4000  Minneapolis, MN 554021425	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-690_Official
Generic Notice	Commerce Attorneys	commerce.attorneys@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-DOC	445 Minnesota Street Suite 1400  St. Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_15-690_Official
Riley	Conlin	riley.conlin@stoel.com	Stoel Rives LLP	33 S. 6th Street Suite 4200 Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-690_Official
Sharon	Ferguson	sharon.ferguson@state.mn.us	Department of Commerce	85 7th Place E Ste 280  Saint Paul, MN 551012198	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-690_Official
Edward	Garvey	garveyed@aol.com	Residence	32 Lawton St  Saint Paul, MN 55102	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-690_Official
Barbara	Gervais	toftemn@boreal.org	Town of Tofte	P O Box 2293 7240 Tofte Park Road Tofte, MN 55615	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-690_Official
Lori	Hoyum	lhoyum@mnpower.com	Minnesota Power	30 West Superior Street  Duluth, MN 55802	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-690_Official



First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Sarah	Johnson Phillips	sarah.phillips@stoel.com	Stoel Rives LLP	33 South Sixth Street Suite 4200 Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-690_Official
Michael	Krikava	mkrikava@taftlaw.com	Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP	2200 IDS Center 80 S 8th St Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-690_Official
Becky	Lammi	cityclerk@ci.aurora.mn.us	City of Aurora	16 W 2nd Ave N PO Box 160 Aurora, MN 55705	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-690_Official
Pam	Marshall	pam@energycents.org	Energy CENTS Coalition	823 7th St E  St. Paul, MN 55106	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-690_Official
Daryl	Maxwell	dmaxwell@hydro.mb.ca	Manitoba Hydro	360 Portage Ave FL 16 PO Box 815, Station Main Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 2P4  Canada	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-690_Official
Marion Ann	McKeever	N/A	Satellites Country Inn	9436 W Hwy 61  Schroeder, MN 55613	Paper Service	No	OFF_SL_15-690_Official
David	Moeller	dmoeller@allete.com	Minnesota Power	30 W Superior St  Duluth, MN 558022093	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_15-690_Official
Andrew	Moratzka	andrew.moratzka@stoel.com	Stoel Rives LLP	33 South Sixth St Ste 4200  Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-690_Official
David	Niles	david.niles@avantenergy.com	Minnesota Municipal Power Agency	220 South Sixth Street Suite 1300 Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-690_Official

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Samantha	Norris	samanthanorris@alliantenergy.com	Interstate Power and Light Company	200 1st Street SE PO Box 351  Cedar Rapids, IA 524060351	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-690_Official
Generic Notice	Residential Utilities Division	residential.utilities@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-RUD	1400 BRM Tower 445 Minnesota St St. Paul, MN 551012131	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_15-690_Official
Will	Seuffert	Will.Seuffert@state.mn.us	Public Utilities Commission	121 7th Pl E Ste 350  Saint Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_15-690_Official
Eric	Swanson	eswanson@winthrop.com	Winthrop & Weinstine	225 S 6th St Ste 3500 Capella Tower Minneapolis, MN 554024629	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_15-690_Official

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Christopher	Anderson	canderson@allete.com	Minnesota Power	30 W Superior St  Duluth, MN 558022191	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Sara	Bergan	sebergan@stoel.com	Stoel Rives LLP	33 South Sixth Street Suite 4200 Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Carolyn	Berninger	cberninger@mncenter.org	Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy	26 E Exchange St Ste 206  Saint Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Laura	Bishop	Laura.Bishop@state.mn.us	MN Pollution Control Agency	520 Lafayette Rd  Saint Paul, MN 55155	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Paul	Blackburn	paul@honorearth.org		PO Box 63  Callaway, MN 56521	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Elizabeth	Brama	ebrama@taftlaw.com	Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP	2200 IDS Center 80 South 8th Street Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Jon	Brekke	jbrekke@greenergy.com	Great River Energy	12300 Elm Creek Boulevard  Maple Grove, MN 553694718	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Christina	Brusven	cbrusven@fredlaw.com	Fredrikson Byron	200 S 6th St Ste 4000  Minneapolis, MN 554021425	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Generic Notice	Commerce Attorneys	commerce.attorneys@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-DOC	445 Minnesota Street Suite 1400  St. Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Bret	Eknes	bret.eknes@state.mn.us	Public Utilities Commission	Suite 350 121 7th Place East St. Paul, MN 551012147	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official

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Sharon	Ferguson	sharon.ferguson@state.mn.us	Department of Commerce	85 7th Place E Ste 280  Saint Paul, MN 551012198	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Edward	Garvey	garveyed@aol.com	Residence	32 Lawton St  Saint Paul, MN 55102	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Barbara	Gervais	toftemn@boreal.org	Town of Tofte	P O Box 2293 7240 Tofte Park Road Tofte, MN 55615	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Sarah	Johnson Phillips	sarah.phillips@stoel.com	Stoel Rives LLP	33 South Sixth Street Suite 4200 Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Michael	Krikava	mkrikava@taftlaw.com	Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP	2200 IDS Center 80 S 8th St Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Becky	Lammi	cityclerk@ci.aurora.mn.us	City of Aurora	16 W 2nd Ave N PO Box 160 Aurora, MN 55705	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
James D.	Larson	james.larson@avantenergy.com	Avant Energy Services	220 S 6th St Ste 1300  Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Douglas	Larson	dlarson@dakotaelectric.com	Dakota Electric Association	4300 220th St W  Farmington, MN 55024	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Eric	Lindberg	elindberg@mncenter.org	Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy	1919 University Avenue West  Suite 515 Saint Paul, MN 55104-3435	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Susan	Ludwig	sludwig@mnpower.com	Minnesota Power	30 West Superior Street  Duluth, MN 55802	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official

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Pam	Marshall	pam@energycents.org	Energy CENTS Coalition	823 7th St E  St. Paul, MN 55106	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Daryl	Maxwell	dmaxwell@hydro.mb.ca	Manitoba Hydro	360 Portage Ave FL 16 PO Box 815, Station Main Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 2P4  Canada	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Marion Ann	McKeever	N/A	Satellites Country Inn	9436 W Hwy 61  Schroeder, MN 55613	Paper Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Jennifer	Mersing	jennifer.mersing@stoel.com	Stoel Rives LLP	600 University St Ste 3600  Seattle, WA 98101	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
David	Moeller	dmoeller@allete.com	Minnesota Power	30 W Superior St  Duluth, MN 558022093	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Andrew	Moratzka	andrew.moratzka@stoel.com	Stoel Rives LLP	33 South Sixth St Ste 4200  Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
David	Niles	david.niles@avantenergy.com	Minnesota Municipal Power Agency	220 South Sixth Street Suite 1300 Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Samantha	Norris	samanthanorris@alliantenergy.com	Interstate Power and Light Company	200 1st Street SE PO Box 351  Cedar Rapids, IA 524060351	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Jennifer	Peterson	jjpeterson@mnpower.com	Minnesota Power	30 West Superior Street  Duluth, MN 55802	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official

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Susan	Romans	sromans@allete.com	Minnesota Power	30 West Superior Street Legal Dept Duulth, MN 55802	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Thomas	Scharff	thomas.scharff@versoco.com	Verso Corp	600 High Street  Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Will	Seuffert	Will.Seuffert@state.mn.us	Public Utilities Commission	121 7th PI E Ste 350  Saint Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Janet	Shaddix Elling	jshaddix@janetshaddix.com	Shaddix And Associates	7400 Lyndale Ave S Ste 190  Richfield, MN 55423	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Sean	Stalpes	sean.stalpes@state.mn.us	Public Utilities Commission	121 E. 7th Place, Suite 350  Saint Paul, MN 55101-2147	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Kristin	Stastny	kstastny@taftlaw.com	Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP	2200 IDS Center 80 South 8th St Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Eric	Swanson	eswanson@winthrop.com	Winthrop & Weinstine	225 S 6th St Ste 3500 Capella Tower Minneapolis, MN 554024629	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official
Laurie	Williams	laurie.williams@sierraclub.org	Sierra Club	Environmental Law Program 1536 Wynkoop St Ste 200 Denver, CO 80202	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_17-568_PUC Official