



414 Nicollet Mall  
Minneapolis, MN 55401

January 21, 2021

—Via Electronic Filing—

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

RE: RESPONSE TO COMPLAINT  
BLAZING STAR 1 WIND ENERGY PROJECT  
DOCKET NO. IP-6961/WS-16-686

Dear Mr. Seuffert:

Northern States Power Company, doing business as Xcel Energy (Company), respectfully submits this response to a complaint received from Ron Weverka on the Blazing Star 1 Wind Farm in Lincoln County, Minnesota. Xcel Energy first received a complaint from the Weverkas regarding sound levels at their residence during operational testing of Turbine T-90 in March 2020 prior to the wind facility's transition to commercial operations. Operations staff met with the Weverkas on site the morning of March 9, 2020, and since that time Xcel Energy has taken the following steps:

- 1) Shut down T-90 for 12 hours every day from 7:00pm to 7:00am from March 2020 to November 2020, and at the Weverka's request 6:00pm to 6:00am since November 2020 to present day.
- 2) Performed noise monitoring and commissioned a third-party noise study at the Weverka residence, with results provided in reports completed in July 2020 (Xcel Energy) and November 2020 (RSG). These reports were shared with the Weverkas, and with Staff, and were filed to the Docket on January 13, 2021.
- 3) Provided monthly updates on the Docket, consistent with the Complaint Handling Procedures associated with the Site Permit, on how the Company has maintained compliance with the noise standard while conducting on-site studies to gain more information.

The results of the July 2020 monitoring were based on in-field measurements taken in April and May 2020 by Xcel Energy personnel. This report showed total noise levels to be below 50 dBA 1-hour  $L_{50}$  while T-90 was in operation during daytime hours. However, the report was based on limited data due to climactic conditions during the testing period, and due to all measurements being taken during daytime hours. The report recommended further study.

Xcel Energy hired a third party noise consultant to design a study to gain a larger sample size of measurements. This second noise study captured measurements from twenty-one days in September 2020, including days T-90 was operated during nighttime hours specifically to measure noise. During this study, four nighttime hours were identified as above 50 dBA; one occurring during turbine operation and the others when the turbine was off, indicating high background noise levels. No exceedances of the daytime noise standard occurred during this testing period. This information is documented in the November 23, 2020 Report.

Site Permit Section 4.3, states “The wind turbine towers shall be placed such that the Permittee shall, at all times, comply with noise standards established by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency as of the date of this permit and at all appropriate locations. The noise standards are found in Minnesota Rules Chapter 7030. Turbine operation shall be modified or turbines shall be removed from service if necessary to comply with these noise standards...”

Due to the confirmed exceedance, and the potential for additional exceedances, Xcel Energy will continue to curtail T-90 operations from 6:00pm to 6:00am each day until an understanding can be reached on how to avoid any exceedances of the nighttime noise standard.

Xcel Energy has detailed in its Site Permit Application, and other documents on the record, operational methods to reduce noise, as well as noise abatement measures available at the Weverka residence. Xcel Energy will coordinate with the Department of Commerce, per their recommendation, on what specific noise mitigation measures will be implemented to assure compliance with the noise standard and the Site Permit, and provide that information to the Commission and its Staff for review. Also, as Department staff notes, the September study was designed to measure total noise at the Weverka residence. Xcel Energy will therefore undertake additional analysis to ascertain turbine-only noise for T-90.

We have electronically filed this document with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, and copies have been served on the parties on the attached service list. Please contact Bria Shea at [bria.e.shea@xcelenergy.com](mailto:bria.e.shea@xcelenergy.com) or (612) 330-6064 or Pamela Gibbs at [pamela.k.gibbs@xcelenergy.com](mailto:pamela.k.gibbs@xcelenergy.com) or (612) 330-2889 if you have any questions regarding this filing.

Sincerely,

/s/

BRIA E. SHEA  
DIRECTOR, REGULATORY AND STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

cc: Service List

## CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Mustafa Adam, hereby certify that I have this day served copies of the foregoing document on the attached list of persons.

xx by depositing a true and correct copy thereof, properly enveloped with postage paid in the United States mail at Minneapolis, Minnesota

xx electronic filing

**Docket No. IP-6961/WS-16-686**

Dated this 21st day of January 2021

/s/

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Mustafa Adam  
Regulatory Administrator

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Christina	Brusven	cbrusven@fredlaw.com	Fredrikson Byron	200 S 6th St Ste 4000 Minneapolis, MN 554021425	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-686_WS-16-686
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_16-686_WS-16-686
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_16-686_WS-16-686
STACY	KOTCH EGSTAD	Stacy.Kotch@state.mn.us	MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION	395 John Ireland Blvd. St. Paul, MN 55155	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-686_WS-16-686
Stacey	Karels	skarels@local563.org	Mankato Area Bldg & Construction Trades Council	310 McKinzie St Mankato, MN 56001	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-686_WS-16-686
Ryan	Long	ryan.j.long@xcelenergy.com	Xcel Energy	414 Nicollet Mall 401 8th Floor Minneapolis, MN 55401	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-686_WS-16-686
Carol A.	Overland	overland@legalectric.org	Legalelectric - Overland Law Office	1110 West Avenue Red Wing, MN 55066	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-686_WS-16-686
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_16-686_WS-16-686
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_16-686_WS-16-686
Lynnette	Sweet	Regulatory.records@xcelenergy.com	Xcel Energy	414 Nicollet Mall FL 7 Minneapolis, MN 554011993	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-686_WS-16-686

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Cynthia	Warzecha	cynthia.warzecha@state.mn.us	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	500 Lafayette Road Box 25 St Paul, Minnesota 55155-4040	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_16-686_WS-16-686