



**MISSISSIPPI PARK  
CONNECTION**  
*Discover your river*

November 17, 2017

Daniel P. Wolf, Executive Secretary  
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission  
121 7th PI E #350  
St Paul, MN 55101

Via electronic filing: [dan.wolf@state.mn.us](mailto:dan.wolf@state.mn.us)

Re: In the Matter of Xcel Energy's Renewable Development Fund (RDF) Annual Report, Tracker Account True-up, and Request for 2018 Rider Factor, PUC Docket Number: E- 002/ M-17-712

Dear Mr. Wolf:

As Executive Director of Mississippi Park Connection, I am keenly interested in riverfront development in Minneapolis. Our unique partnership with the National Park Service inspires us to work with the community to ensure positive future for the river and the national park, the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.

Crown Hydro received a grant from the Renewable Development Fund 16 years ago. The project has long been opposed by the city and many other partners in the community. In the years since the grant was awarded, the Minneapolis central riverfront has undergone dramatic change and the St. Anthony Falls have become the vibrant centerpiece of a revitalized riverfront. I urge the Commission to review and terminate the grant contract because the project is incompatible with plans to repurpose the lock and dam facility as a world-class visitor and interpretive center.

For the past two years, we have partnered with the National Park Service to operate a visitor center at the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam. During two summers, we have served 36,000 visitors at the site. Residents and visitors from all over the world come to experience the wonder of the falls and marvel at the architecture of the lock. In September, we partnered with local artists to present "Illuminate the Lock," a series of art projections using the lock walls as a canvas. Please see the attached presentation to get a sense of how this facility has a bright future as a center for civic engagement.

In 2014, just in advance of the St. Anthony Falls Upper Lock being closed to commercial navigation, the lock was highlighted in the Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Master Plan, which states that the Park Board should “collaborate with partner agencies to create a visitor’s center on the lock and dam structure.” In the Meet Minneapolis tourism master plan, Destination Transformation 2030, the site was identified as the site for Goal 3, to “build an iconic visitors center on downtown’s Central Riverfront,” with the express purpose to “activate the Mississippi River as the heart of Minneapolis’ tourism experience” and “use public and private investment to integrate the riverfront into the city.” And the Minneapolis Downtown Council, in Goal 7 of its Intersections: Downtown 2025 plan, identifies the riverfront as the focal point for creating a “world class destination” for the city, calling for a “central gathering point to orient a visitor and [be] the key attraction at the water’s edge.” The plan recognizes the iconic Stone Arch Bridge (which abuts the lock) as having a major impact on visitation, with over 2.5 million visitors last year. It also identifies St. Anthony Falls as our singular natural wonder – the only waterfall on the Mississippi River, which is one of the great rivers of the world. The 2025 plan envisions our Minneapolis waterfront experience rising to the stature of “Baltimore’s Inner Harbor, Seattle’s Pike Place Market, San Antonio’s Riverwalk or San Francisco’s Embarcadero.” Each of these plans was the product of meaningful community engagement, and represents the vision of my constituents: citizens, riverfront organizations, the business community, and the tourism industry. When the grant was awarded 16 years ago, the Crown proposal was already out of sync with our community’s vision for the redevelopment of the Riverfront. Its failure to make progress on site approval and permitting is hardly surprising given the conflict it has with the uses occurring and planned. It is incumbent on the PUC, given this legislation, to give this project its full and serious attention and to call for grant termination to allow a reallocation of these RDF monies to a more appropriate use. That was the intent of the law and should be the Commission’s instruction to Xcel. Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katie Nyberg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Katie Nyberg  
Executive Director