



*Working to protect the Mississippi River  
and its watershed in the Twin Cities area.*

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December 14, 2017

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

VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

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:

Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) is a local non-profit community-based organization that works to protect and enhance the natural and cultural assets of the Mississippi River and its watershed in the Twin Cities. We have 1,800 active members, and more than 3,000 volunteers who care deeply about the river's unique resources. FMR has been an active and ongoing participant in planning for the future of the Minneapolis riverfront.

FMR agrees with other parties submitting comments who have noted that Crown Hydro received its Renewal Development Fund (RDF) grant in 2001 but has yet to find a location, secure necessary governmental approvals or begin construction of its project. Crown has failed to make progress, but the City of Minneapolis has moved forward with its plans for transformation of the riverfront. The potential negative impacts of the Crown project to environmental, cultural, scenic and recreational resources in and around the area would impede implementation of the community vision for the heart of Minneapolis at St. Anthony Falls.

The Minneapolis riverfront has undergone dramatic change. Decades of neglect and environmental damage inspired the community to convert a blighted area to a National Historic District, a National Park and a vibrant downtown neighborhood, with well over two billion dollars invested to date. The significance of this riverfront renaissance cannot be overstated, because today's residents and park users view the downtown riverfront in a radically different way than they did just a decade ago. What has not changed is the fact that St. Anthony Falls is at the heart of what this place means to people. But today the river stands for more than just power and prosperity; Minneapolitans also

expect the river to provide a mix of aesthetic beauty, cultural and recreational experiences, and environmental health.

Working in partnership with the Stop Carp Coalition, FMR played a lead role in advocating with Congress to close the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock in order to prevent the upstream spread of invasive Asian carp. When the lock closed in June 2015, the relatively short era of commercial navigation in Minneapolis came to an end. But closing the door on barges opened up new opportunities for public enjoyment of the river, including the long-planned-for redevelopment of the Upper Harbor Terminal, as well as the more recent exciting proposals to repurpose the lock as a Visitor and Interpretive Center.

FMR has worked with Friends of the Lock and Dam (FL&D) in the visioning of the Visitor and Interpretive Center and we strongly support their concept, "The Falls." This location adjacent to the Stone Arch Bridge and in the heart of the historic district presents a unique opportunity to create an iconic destination that would be a great place to tell the River story and dramatically increase the public's access to the River.

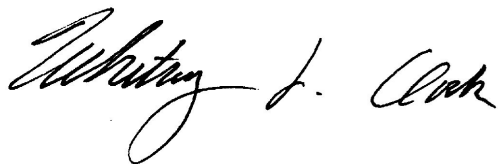
A project like "The Falls" has the potential to bring significant economic and cultural benefits to the City of Minneapolis for generations to come, whereas the Crown project's benefits are limited to providing less than 1% of the projected shortfall for electrical generating capacity in the next 10 years.

The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA)—our National Park on the Mississippi, is already a place to celebrate. But a new St. Anthony Lock Visitor Center could increase use enough to make MNRRA the most visited National Park in the Midwest (imagine, more than the Gateway Arch in St. Louis or Mt. Rushmore in South Dakota).

Viewed in the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Minneapolis riverfront, it is not surprising that Crown has been unable to find a site to construct its project in an area where it finds itself out of step with community goals and expectations. We urge the Public Utilities Commission to terminate the Crown RDF grant so that the funds can be reallocated to a more deserving project.

Thank you for the consideration of our comments. Please feel free to contact me, or Irene Jones, at 651-222-2193 if you have questions about Friends of the Mississippi River's comments on the RDF grant for the Crown Hydro project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Whitney L. Clark". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Whitney L. Clark  
Executive Director