

November 20, 2023

Will Seuffert
Executive Secretary
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Place East, Suite 350
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101-2147

RE: **Comments of the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources**
Docket No. G002/MR-23-412

Dear Mr. Seuffert:

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

A Petition by Northern States Power Company d/b/a Xcel Energy (Xcel Energy or the Company) for Approval of a New Base Cost of Gas for Interim Rates.

The Petition was filed on November 1, 2023 by Amber R. Hedlund, Manager, Regulatory Project Management for Xcel Energy

The Department recommends that the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) **approve as modified herein** Xcel Energy's base cost of gas filing and is available to answer any questions the Commission may have.

Sincerely,

/s/LOUISE MILTICH
Assistant Commissioner of Regulatory Analysis

/s/ SACHIN SHAH
Rates Analyst

LM/SS/ar
Attachment



Before the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission

Comments of the Minnesota Department of Commerce Division of Energy Resources

Docket No. G002/MR-23-412

I. INTRODUCTION

Northern States Power Company, doing business as Xcel Energy (Xcel Energy or the Company), requests that the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) approve a new base cost of gas (BCOG) to coincide with the proposed January 1, 2024 implementation of interim rates as requested in its general rate case, Docket No. G002/GR-23-413 (Docket 23-413). Xcel Energy filed its general rate case on November 1, 2023, the same day as its BCOG Petition. The Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources' (Department) analysis of Xcel Energy's Petition is presented below.

II. DEPARTMENT'S ANALYSIS

Minnesota Rule part 7825.2700, subpart 2, requires a utility to petition for a new base cost of gas, submitted as a miscellaneous rate change, to coincide with the implementation of interim rates during a general rate proceeding. This Rule requires that "The base cost of gas must separately state the commodity base cost and the demand base cost components for each class." Through its review of Xcel Energy's Petition, and for the Petition's consistency with the calculations in the general rate case, the Department concludes that the Company has complied with these requirements through its Volume 3 – Required Information, Volume 4 – Test Year Workpapers, and Company witness testimonies, exhibits, and associated schedules of Benjamin C Halama (Exhibit ____ (BCH-1), Christopher J. Barthol (Exhibit ____ (CJB-1), and Michelle M. Terwilliger (Exhibit ____ (MMT-1), in its rate case filing¹; and through its supporting data and calculations provided in Attachments A through C in the Petition. (Also See Department Attachment 1). The Department discusses Xcel Energy's demand and commodity costs separately below.

A. DEMAND GAS COSTS

The Department reviewed Xcel Energy's Petition for consistency with the calculations in the rate case. The Department's analysis indicates that the information is generally consistent between the rate case and the base cost of gas filing.² Xcel Energy calculated its demand cost of gas based on the demand entitlement units filed on November 1, 2022 in Docket No. G002/M-22-429 and that were approved by the Commission on November 15, 2023.

¹ See the Company's response to Department Information Request (IR) No. 7, included as Department Attachment 1.

² In the petition at Attachment B, the total demand costs are approximately \$79,684,016 and in the rate case for example in Direct Testimony of Michelle M. Terwilliger, Exhibit ____ (MMT-1), Schedule 5, the total demand costs embedded in the calculations are approximately \$79,684,016, resulting in no difference.

The Department notes that the demand costs are based on the interstate pipeline rates of Northern Natural Gas (Northern or NNG), Viking Gas Transmission (VGT), Great Lakes Gas Transmission (GLGT), ANR Storage Company (ANRS) and Williston Basin Interstate Pipeline Transmission (WBI).

The Department notes that the Company has also used the design-day and associated jurisdictional allocations from the Company's most recent information from its demand entitlement filing in Docket No. G002/M-23-361 (Docket 23-361) filed on August 1, 2023 and supplemented on November 1, 2023. The Department will file its comments in Docket 23-361 at a later date.³ The Company provides a description of the system demand cost calculation on pages 1 through 3 of its Petition.

Finally, in its review of demand costs, the Department found no inconsistencies between the sales forecast reported in the rate case filing and that which was presented in the base cost of gas Petition.

In CenterPoint's BCOG filing in Docket No. G008//MR-17-591, Commission Staff in the August 25, 2017 Staff Briefing Papers, on page 3 stated the following:⁴

Staff points out that commodity gas costs, although recovered dollar for dollar, is a component of total revenue and total revenue is either a component or the "driver" for various test year estimates such as bad debt expense, late payment fees and storage costs. For instance, proposed test year bad debt expense is calculated as 0.96% of firm revenue; therefore, a 10% fluctuation (\$43.645 million) in commodity gas costs would impact bad debt expense by \$419,000.

The Commission has required companies during the proceedings, to provide updated BCOG information reflecting changes in commodity and demand costs.⁵

Thus, the Department recommends that Xcel Energy provide updated cost of gas information in this proceeding and in its companion general rate case. The Department recommends that the Commission require Xcel Energy to work with both Commission and Department Staff to determine the appropriate timing for providing this information and whether the update(s) to the information should be applied to Xcel Energy's BCOG and reflected in the accompanying general rate case. The update(s) should be filed in both this docket and in the general rate case Docket 23-413. Additionally, when the Company files its final base cost of gas pursuant to Minn. R. 7825.2700, subp. 2, the cost of gas in that filing should equal the cost of gas approved for use in the general rate case.⁶

³ See the Company's response to Department IR No. 5 included as Department Attachment 1.

⁴ The staff briefing papers are available in eDockets in Docket No. G008/MR-17-591, Document ID 20178-135004-01.

⁵ See for example, the Commission's *December 5, 2017 Order Setting New Base Cost of Gas for Interim Rate Period* in Docket No. G011/MR-17-564, *September 29, 2017 Order Setting New Base Cost of Gas* in Docket No. G008/MR-17-591, and *December 18, 2019 Order Setting New Base Cost of Gas* in Docket No. G008/MR-19-525, respectively.

⁶ Minn. R. pt. 7825.2700, subp. 2, states in part: "A new base gas cost must also be part of the rate design compliance filing submitted as a result of a general rate proceeding."

B. COMMODITY GAS COSTS

Xcel Energy estimated its commodity costs based on “a combination of market indicators such as [New York Mercantile Exchange] NYMEX and various long-term price forecasts published by highly respected, industry-leading sources such as Wood Mackenzie, and S&P Global. The forecast is NYMEX based for the first few years, and then it transitions into blending the NYMEX curve with the three vendor forecasts to develop a composite forecast.”⁷

The Department compared these estimated commodity cost rates to current NYMEX market expectations and concludes that, currently, the rate estimates are appropriate.

After estimating commodity costs for its customers, Xcel Energy calculated the estimated Weighted Average Cost of Gas (WACOG) for each customer class.⁸ Xcel Energy calculated its total gas cost recovery amount by multiplying monthly test-year sales amounts by the monthly projected WACOG price, resulting in no difference.⁹ Xcel Energy expects total 2024 commodity costs to be \$270,750,197.¹⁰

C. TOTAL GAS COSTS

When Xcel Energy’s proposed demand gas costs (\$79,684,016) and commodity cost of gas (\$270,750,197) are added together, the resulting total gas costs are approximately \$350,434,213.¹¹ The Department notes that the Company’s response to IR No. 7 (included as Department Attachment 1) referenced where gas costs are included in its rate case filings. Based on the rate case exhibits and required filing, and the work papers noted earlier up above, the 2024 gas costs reported are \$350,434,213, resulting in no difference between the rate case and base cost of gas Petition. The Department concludes that the total gas costs are acceptable.

D. TARIFFS

Xcel Energy provided its proposed updated tariff sheets in both clean and redlined versions as Attachment D to the Petition. The Department reviewed the proposed tariff sheets and concludes that the proposed changes correctly update the base cost of gas values in accordance with the calculations contained in Attachments A through C of the Petition. As a result, both the clean and redlined versions of the tariff sheets are acceptable.

⁷ See the Company’s response to Department IR No. 6 included as Department Attachment 1.

⁸ Petition Attachment A pages 1-3.

⁹ See Xcel Energy’s rate case filing in Docket 23-413, Direct Testimony of Michelle M. Terwilliger, Exhibit ____ (MMT-1), Schedule 5. The total commodity costs are approximately \$270,750,197 and in the Petition Attachment A they are approximately \$270,750,197 resulting no difference.

¹⁰ Petition Attachment A pages 1-2.

¹¹ Petition Attachments A and B.

III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on its review of the Company's Petition, the Department recommends that the Commission approve Xcel Energy's BCOG filing as modified herein with the following additional recommendations.

The Department recommends that the Commission require that Xcel Energy:

- provide updated cost of gas information in this proceeding and in its companion general rate case; and
- work with both Commission and Department Staff to determine the appropriate timing for providing this information and whether the update(s) to the information should be applied to Xcel Energy's BCOG and reflected in the accompanying general rate case. The update(s) should be filed in both this docket and in the general rate case Docket 23-413.

- ☐ Not-Public Document – Not For Public Disclosure
☐ Public Document – Not-Public Data Has Been Excised
☒ Public Document

Xcel Energy Information Request No. 5
Docket No.: G002/MR-23-412
Response To: Minnesota Department of Commerce
Requestor: Sachin Shah
Date Received: November 3, 2023

Question:

Reference(s): In the Matter of the Application of Northern States Power Co., d/b/a Xcel Energy., (Xcel or Company) for Authority to Increase Rates for Natural Gas Service (Docket No. G002/GR-23-413) and the Company's November 1, 2023 Base Cost of Gas Filing.

A. What Demand Entitlement Petition did the Company reference and use in its calculation of the proposed system demand costs?

If this information has already been provided in the application or in response to an earlier information request (IR), please identify the specific cite(s) or IR number(s).

Response:

The Company began with the Demand Entitlements reported in our Supplemental Changes to Contract Demand (CD) Entitlements filed November 1, 2022 in Docket No. G002/M-22-429. We included updates for 2023 that were known at the time the Base Cost of Gas filing was put together. Differences between the Base Cost of Gas filed in the current docket, and Company's CD Entitlements filed August 1, 2023 and supplemented November 1, 2023 in Docket No. G002/M-23-361 are related to timing differences between the periods, contract expirations not yet renewed and future entitlements not yet included in the timeframe of a CD Entitlement filing. In addition, the CD Entitlement filing does not include balancing services or storage capacity reservation costs.

Preparer: Justin Holstein
Title: Manager
Department: Gas Resource Planning
Telephone: 303-571-2750
Date: November 7, 2023

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☐ Public Document

Xcel Energy	Information Request No.	6
Docket No.:	G002/MR-23-412	
Response To:	Minnesota Department of Commerce	
Requestor:	Sachin Shah	
Date Received:	November 3, 2023	

Question:

Reference(s): In the Matter of the Application of Northern States Power Co., d/b/a Xcel Energy., (Xcel or Company) for Authority to Increase Rates for Natural Gas Service (Docket No. G002/GR-23-413) and the Company's November 1, 2023 Base Cost of Gas Filing.

For the proposed commodity gas costs, please identify and provide the specific prices indices, hubs, and publications, for example Wood Mackenzie, IHS Markit, S&P Global, NYMEX et cetera used by the Company in a Microsoft Excel executable format (*.xlsx) with all links and formulae intact. If any of these links target an outside file, please provide all such additional files.

If this information has already been provided in the application or in response to an earlier information request (IR), please identify the specific cite(s) or IR number(s).

Response:

The Company uses a combination of market indicators such as NYMEX and various long-term price forecasts published by highly respected, industry-leading sources such as Wood Mackenzie and S&P Global. The forecast is NYMEX based for the first few years, and then it transitions into blending the NYMEX curve with the vendor forecasts to develop a composite forecast. The Company used the following weightings for each component at various time intervals: Balance of the year plus two years is 100% NYMEX, years 3 and beyond is a simple average of 25 percent NYMEX, 37.5 percent Wood Mackenzie, and 37.5 percent S&P Global.

The indices included in the proposed commodity gas costs are for the Chicago City Gate, NNG Ventura, NNG Demarc, Emerson, and ANR Oklahoma. Please see Attachment A to this response for the specific prices.

Attachment A to this response is considered trade secret information as defined under Minn. Stat. § 13.37. As such, this data is protected from public disclosure and has

been marked accordingly. Xcel Energy makes extensive efforts to maintain the secrecy of this information. This information is not available outside the Company except to other parties involved in contracts and to regulatory agencies under the confidentiality provisions of state or federal law, as evidenced by the non-disclosure provisions in the contracts.

Preparer: Justin Holstein
Title: Manager
Department: Gas Resource Planning
Telephone: 303-571-2750
Date: November 7, 2023

PUBLIC DOCUMENT
NOT-PUBLIC DATA HAS BEEN EXCISED
Trade Secret Data Shaded.

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Docket No. G002/MR-23-412
DOC IR No. 6
Attachment A - Page 2 of 2

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Xcel Energy Information Request No. 7
Docket No.: G002/MR-23-412
Response To: Minnesota Department of Commerce
Requestor: Sachin Shah
Date Received: November 3, 2023

Question:

Reference(s): In the Matter of the Application of Northern States Power Co., d/b/a Xcel Energy., (Xcel or Company) for Authority to Increase Rates for Natural Gas Service (Docket No. G002/GR-23-413) and the Company's November 1, 2023 Base Cost of Gas Filing.

Please identify how and where, the information from the BCOG Petition is used in the Company's corresponding general rate case AND please also provide the specific cite(s).

In addition, whenever acronyms are used in the data given in response to all the parts above, please provide an explanation of all acronyms used AND also provide a brief but complete explanation of the source of each data series that is provided

If this information has already been provided in the application or in response to an earlier information request (IR), please identify the specific cite(s) or IR number(s).

Response:

The information from the BCOG Petition is allocated to the Minnesota gas jurisdiction in the Cost of Service Study (COSS) in Docket No. G002/GR-23-413. This can be found in the following:

- Exhibit (BCH-1), Schedule 3, Page 2, Lines 53
- Exhibit (BCH-1), Schedule 4, Line 3
- Exhibit (BCH-1), Schedule 8, Line 7
- Exhibit (BCH-1), Schedule 11, Line 10
- Vol 3 II 4.A. Jurisdictional Statement of Operating Income, Page 1 and 2, Line 8;
- Vol 3 II 4.B. Ttl Utility and Juris Op Income Statement, Page 1 and 2, Lines 8;

- Vol 3 II 4.D. Operating Income Statement Adjustments_1, Page 1 and 2, Lines 9;
- Vol 4 II 2024 Test Year Cost of Service (COSS), Page 2
- Vol 4 V Base O&M O1-1 O&M by Functional Group, Page 1
- Vol 4 V Base O&M O1-2 O&M Labor Non-Labor, Page 1 and 3
- Vol 4 V Base O&M O1-3 O&M Jurisdictional Allocation, Page 1 and 4
- Vol 4 V Base O&M O2 Base Cost of Gas

The information from the BCOG Petition is included in the Class Cost of Service Study (CCOSS) in Docket No. G002/GR-23-413, in the following places:

- Vol 3 II 6.C 2022 CCOSS, Page 1, Line 22;
- Vol 3 II 6.C 2022 CCOSS, Page 5, Lines 18 and 19;
- Exhibit (CJB-1), Schedule 3, Page 1, Line 22; and
- Exhibit (CJB-1), Schedule 3, Page 5, Lines 18 and 19

The information from the BCOG Petition is allocated to revenues in the Rate Design in Docket No. G002/GR-23-413. This can be found in the following:

- Vol 3 II 6.A TY Operating Revenue Summary Comparison, Page 1, Present and Proposed Revenues (embedded)
- Vol 3 II 6.B TY Operating Revenue Detailed Comparison, Pages 2-5, Gas Supply Charge and Present and Proposed Revenue for each Customer Class
- Vol 2C 6 of 6 Terwilliger Rate Design, Exhibit (MMT-1):
 - Table 1, Lines 15-23 (embedded),
 - Page 8, Lines 12-15,
 - Table 2, Lines 15-22, Avg-Bill Present Rates and Avg-Bill Proposed Rates (embedded),
 - Schedule 3, Lines 23-25,
 - Schedule 4, Present Revenue, CCOSS Responsibility, Increase without Design Change, and Proposed Revenue (embedded),
 - Schedule 5, Page 1 Present and Proposed Revenue (embedded),
 - Schedule 5, Pages 2-5, Gas Supply Charge and Total Present and Proposed Revenue by Customer Class,
 - Schedule 6, Proposed Cost of Gas (\$/Therm) and Total Commodity Rate (\$/Therm),
 - Schedule 7, Total Present Revenues (embedded),
 - Schedule 8, Pages 1-3, Present and Proposed Billing by Customer Class and Present and Proposed Rate Average Cost of Gas by Customer Class (embedded).

Preparer:	Chris Barthol	Michelle Terwilliger
Title:	Rate Consultant	Pricing Consultant
Department:	Regulatory	
Telephone:	612-321-3237	612-330-5843

Preparer:	Mary Pope
Title:	Principal Rate Analyst
Department:	Revenue Requirements
Telephone:	612-330-6574
Date:	November 7, 2023

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. G002/MR-23-412

Dated this **20th** day of **November 2023**

/s/Sharon Ferguson

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Kristine	Anderson	kanderson@greatermngas.com	Greater Minnesota Gas, Inc.& Greater MN Transmission, LLC	1900 Cardinal Lane PO Box 798 Faribault, MN 55021	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Mara	Ascherman	mara.k.ascherman@xcelenergy.com	Xcel Energy	414 Nicollet Mall Fl 5 Minneapolis, MN 55401	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Gail	Baranko	gail.baranko@xcelenergy.com	Xcel Energy	414 Nicollet Mall 7th Floor Minneapolis, MN 55401	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Allen	Barr	allen.barr@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-DIC	445 Minnesota St Ste 1400 Saint Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Kristin	Berkland	kristin.berkland@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-RUD	445 Minnesota Street Bremer Tower, Suite 1400 St. Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Elizabeth	Brama	ebrama@taftlaw.com	Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP	2200 IDS Center 80 South 8th Street Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Robert S.	Carney, Jr.			4232 Colfax Ave. S. Minneapolis, MN 55409	Paper Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
John	Coffman	john@johncoffman.net	AARP	871 Tuxedo Blvd. St, Louis, MO 63119-2044	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Generic Notice	Commerce Attorneys	commerce.attorneys@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-DIC	445 Minnesota Street Suite 1400 St. Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
George	Crocker	gwllc@nawo.org	North American Water Office	5093 Keats Avenue Lake Elmo, MN 55042	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Richard	Dornfeld	Richard.Dornfeld@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-DOC	Minnesota Attorney General's Office 445 Minnesota Street, Suite 1800 Saint Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Brian	Edstrom	briane@cupminnesota.org	Citizens Utility Board of Minnesota	332 Minnesota St Ste W1360 Saint Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Rebecca	Eilers	rebecca.d.eilers@xcelenergy.com	Xcel Energy	414 Nicollet Mall - 401 7th Floor Minneapolis, MN 55401	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
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_23-412_MR-23-412
Edward	Garvey	garveyed@aol.com	Residence	32 Lawton St Saint Paul, MN 55102	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Edward	Garvey	edward.garvey@AESLconsulting.com	AESL Consulting	32 Lawton St Saint Paul, MN 55102-2617	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Todd J.	Guerrero	todd.guerrero@kutakrock.com	Kutak Rock LLP	Suite 1750 220 South Sixth Street Minneapolis, MN 554021425	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Matthew B	Harris	matt.b.harris@xcelenergy.com	XCEL ENERGY	401 Nicollet Mall FL 8 Minneapolis, MN 55401	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Annete	Henkel	mui@mutilityinvestors.org	Minnesota Utility Investors	413 Wacouta Street #230 St.Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Valerie	Herring	vherring@taftlaw.com	Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP	2200 IDS Center 80 S. Eighth Street Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Katherine	Hinderlie	katherine.hinderlie@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-DOC	445 Minnesota St Suite 1400 St. Paul, MN 55101-2134	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Michael	Hoppe	lu23@ibew23.org	Local Union 23, I.B.E.W.	445 Etna Street Ste. 61 St. Paul, MN 55106	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Richard	Johnson	Rick.Johnson@lawmoss.com	Moss & Barnett	150 S. 5th Street Suite 1200 Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Sarah	Johnson Phillips	sarah.phillips@stoel.com	Stoel Rives LLP	33 South Sixth Street Suite 4200 Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Michael	Kaphing	michael.w.kaphing@xcenergy.com	Xcel Energy	414 Nicollet Mall (401-8th Floor) Minneapolis, MN 55401	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Kyle R.	Kroll	kkroll@winthrop.com	Winthrop & Weinstine, P.A.	225 South Sixth Street Suite 3500 Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Nicolle	Kupser	nkupser@greatermngas.com	Greater Minnesota Gas, Inc. & Greater MN Transmission, LLC	1900 Cardinal Ln PO Box 798 Faribault, MN 55021	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Peder	Larson	plarson@larkinhoffman.com	Larkin Hoffman Daly & Lindgren, Ltd.	8300 Norman Center Drive Suite 1000 Bloomington, MN 55437	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Annie	Levenson Falk	annielf@cubminnesota.org	Citizens Utility Board of Minnesota	332 Minnesota Street, Suite W1360 St. Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Eric	Lipman	eric.lipman@state.mn.us	Office of Administrative Hearings	PO Box 64620 St. Paul, MN 551640620	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Peter E.	Madsen	pmadsen@taftlaw.com	Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP	2200 IDS Center 80 South 8th Street Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Pam	Marshall	pam@energycents.org	Energy CENTS Coalition	823 E 7th St St Paul, MN 55106	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Mary	Martinka	mary.a.martinka@xcelenergy.com	Xcel Energy Inc	414 Nicollet Mall 7th Floor Minneapolis, MN 55401	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Greg	Merz	greg.merz@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-DOC	445 Minnesota Street Suite 1400 St. Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Joseph	Meyer	joseph.meyer@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-RUD	Bremer Tower, Suite 1400 445 Minnesota Street St Paul, MN 55101-2131	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Judge Kimberly	Middendorf	kimberly.middendorf@state.mn.us	Office of Administrative Hearings	PO Box 64620 Saint Paul, MN 55164-0620	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
David	Moeller	dmoeller@allete.com	Minnesota Power	30 W Superior St Duluth, MN 558022093	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Andrew	Moratzka	andrew.moratzka@stoel.com	Steel Rives LLP	33 South Sixth St Ste 4200 Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Travis	Murray	travis.murray@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-RUD	445 Minnesota St Ste 1400 Saint Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
David	Niles	david.niles@avantenergy.com	Minnesota Municipal Power Agency	220 South Sixth Street Suite 1300 Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
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_23-412_MR-23-412
Greg	Palmer	gpalmer@greatermngas.com	Greater Minnesota Gas, Inc. & Greater MN Transmission, LLC	1900 Cardinal Ln PO Box 798 Faribault, MN 55021	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Catherine	Phillips	Catherine.Phillips@wecenergygroup.com	Minnesota Energy Resources	231 West Michigan St Milwaukee, WI 53203	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
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_23-412_MR-23-412
Joseph L	Sathe	jsathe@kennedy-graven.com	Kennedy & Graven, Chartered	150 S 5th St Ste 700 Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Elizabeth	Schmiesing	eschmiesing@winthrop.com	Winthrop & Weinstine, P.A.	225 South Sixth Street Suite 3500 Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Christine	Schwartz	Regulatory.records@xcelenergy.com	Xcel Energy	414 Nicollet Mall FL 7 Minneapolis, MN 554011993	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
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_23-412_MR-23-412
Janet	Shaddix Elling	jshaddix@janetshaddix.com	Shaddix And Associates	7400 Lyndale Ave S Ste 190 Richfield, MN 55423	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Kristin	Stastny	kstastny@taftlaw.com	Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP	2200 IDS Center 80 South 8th St Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
James M	Strommen	jstrommen@kennedy-graven.com	Kennedy & Graven, Chartered	150 S 5th St Ste 700 Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Eric	Swanson	eswanson@winthrop.com	Winthrop & Weinstine	225 S 6th St Ste 3500 Capella Tower Minneapolis, MN 554024629	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Amelia	VoHS	avohs@mncenter.org	Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy	1919 University Avenue West Suite 515 St. Paul, MN 55104	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412
Joseph	Windler	jwindler@winthrop.com	Winthrop & Weinstine	225 South Sixth Street, Suite 3500 Minneapolis, MN 55402	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-412_MR-23-412