

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

RE: Reply Comments for Xcel Energy's 2020-2034 "Upper Midwest Integrated Resource Plan"
Docket #E002/RP-19-368

To Executive Secretary Seuffert, Commissioners, and Commission Staff -

We, the undersigned "Community Energy Justice Commenters" respectfully submit the following Reply Comments into the record of Docket #19-368. This gathering of community-based organizations has been ongoing since late October of 2020 on a bi-weekly basis to align around key concerns and directives for Xcel and for the Commission's evaluation of Xcel's plan. On May 28th, our gathering of organizations requested a direct meeting with Xcel representatives and on June 18th we shared these same priorities, with some small edits, with the Company verbally and again in writing.

We have been informed that today, June 25th, Xcel submitted amendments to the plan including the removal of the Sherco gas plant along with a handful of other amendments. The removal of Sherco is a large and important response to the overwhelming evidence and community opposition against the proposed new plant. While this is cause for relief that the Company does not plan to spend Minnesotans' money on an unwise large-scale gas plant - unwise in economic, health, pollution, and existential terms - we remain concerned about the possibility that this gives way to Xcel viewing new small-scale gas power plants again as the primary alternative - locking-in the costs and damages new fossil gas infrastructure (both the plants and the supply pipelines).

If given the opportunity by the Commission, we would likely submit additional comments responding to the changes, however, the length of delays to date are also of concern to the speed of action. With the little time we have had to review the other amendments from the Company, **we believe that the vast majority of our concerns have been left unaddressed and we ask that regardless of additional comment periods these concerns be registered and acted on as such.**

Our Top 3 Priorities for Xcel's 2020-2034 IRP

1. **Prioritize local, distributed renewables, efficiency, and energy storage** to equitably build community wealth, deepen energy affordability, and alleviate health burdens, all of which will begin to redress the cost and environmental racism currently inflicted by the energy system with substantial responsibility held within Xcel
2. **No perpetuation of dirty energy**, which disproportionately pollutes and extracts wealth from working class communities and communities of color both in Minnesota and the national and international sites of fuel extraction
3. **Create clear mechanisms and metrics for accountability to ensure the public interest is protected, and that benefits equitably accrue to local communities from our energy system**

Detailed Supporting Requests & Points for Our Top 3 Priorities:

#1: Prioritize local distributed renewables, efficiency, and energy storage

Specific directives for this IRP:

- **Carve out at least 25% of solar¹ for this 15-year planning period to be produced by rooftop and community-scale renewables that are locally-owned by Minnesotans** lowering energy bills and circulating any profits to individuals, communities, and small businesses in Minnesota.
- **Model energy efficiency as the highest priority,² least cost, equity-focused resource that it is:** Xcel's 2-2.5% annual energy savings commitment on energy efficiency is lower or only slightly above what the company is *already* doing at ~2.38% in 2019. The jobs from energy efficiency are local, well-paying jobs that cannot easily be outsourced or mechanized; the less energy we use the less infrastructure Minnesotans are on the hook to pay for (whether clean or dirty), which positively influences affordability in Minnesota and the health of the communities subject to energy extraction to power our communities. Xcel must map out to both the community and the Commission how it will pursue this update to this IRP and the next one, including any necessary steps such as switching modeling software, contractors, data/metrics gathering, and altering internal company assumptions and commitments.

Directives beyond the IRP essential for adequate implementation of IRP directives:

- To achieve the 25% carve out for local, community-level renewables, Xcel must also end its lobbying at the Capitol that slows, overcomplicates, and undervalues community solar and either remain neutral or defer to and support local community developers who seek access to the grid at fair, transparent cost including remove "trade secret" designation from needed information as well as allowing access to on-bill solar credits for local energy users.
- To have energy efficiency be the highest priority resource, Xcel must remove barriers to energy users' adoption in order to allow customers to rapidly and easily access efficiency programs and conservation tools: Xcel Minnesota should follow the lead of utilities across the country in reducing upfront cost, credit, and access to assistance barriers by committing to partner on the inclusive financing pilot proposed by Centerpoint Energy sharing its electric savings data, and to partner with St. Paul to follow suit and any other Xcel-served communities by launching an Xcel-based program; Xcel should match (or exceed) its spending on Low-Income efficiency programs with Non-Income-Based efficiency program spending.

#2: No perpetuation of dirty energy

Definitions:

- "dirty energy" is defined as nuclear, fossil gas, trash-burning, and coal

¹https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/energy-justice/pdfs/2021-5-12_600-Group-Letter-for-RES.pdf

² <https://ourfuture.energy/in-focus/the-energy-hierarchy/>

- “perpetuation of dirty energy” includes: 1) making plans for new dirty energy projects, 2) expanding existing power plants or renewing of licenses or Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) on dirty energy projects 3) keeping coal open beyond 2025.

Specific directives for this IRP:

- **Withdraw plans to construct a new fracked gas facility in Becker, Minnesota and the associated gas pipelines needed to supply the fuel.** The historic³ and present⁴ risk of volatile fuel prices for gas make it particularly concerning for an electric utility, which has many other options, to pursue this as a reliable fuel source for decades into the future. Further, it seems that Xcel’s sister business Xcel Colorado committed in the “2017 Colorado Energy Plan Fact Sheet” that ‘We are not building any new natural gas generation, reducing the risk of stranded costs.’ Why should Minnesotans bear this cost?
- **Do not renew the nuclear plant licenses for either Monticello or Prairie Island nuclear plants.** Both of these facilities are located on the banks of the Mississippi River - the drinking water for much of the Twin Cities and numerous downstream communities, many less well-resourced. The presence of these facilities amidst growing risks of flooding, overheating, and thin financial margins exacerbated by climate change⁵ makes nuclear an untenable power source that threatens the riparian rights of the Twin Cities and downstream communities. The Prairie Island Indian Community has long called for the removal of the radioactive waste that they have - without consent - been host and neighbor to for decades, while cask storage continued to expand. The perpetuation of nuclear power means a continued need for storage. *No community should play host to this*, and Xcel’s power plants have already locked in at least multiple thousands of years of that risk. Lastly, the extraction of uranium poses a third environmental injustice - the sites of uranium extraction globally disproportionately fall on indigenous lands - the Diné⁶, Cree⁷, Havasupai⁸, Ngadjuri, Wilyakali, Mirarr, and Tjiwarl⁹ people are some of the many communities fighting uranium extraction to feed the US’ demand, which has the largest number of reactors in the world and makes up ~30% of the global demand for uranium for nuclear power¹⁰.
- Do not plan for nor commit to renewals of licenses for trash burners owned by Xcel nor to renew Power Purchase Agreements for trash burners that Xcel buys electricity from. Communities in Minnesota have been fighting the expansion, creation and ongoing harm of the trash burners since they were first proposed¹¹. The toxic ash and residue *still end up in*

³ <https://capital.com/natural-gas-price-history>

⁴ <https://www.kare11.com/article/money/natural-gas-price-hikes-passed-to-customers/89-0f6e40b4-7534-4550-8fb4-7a0e7536318d>

⁵ <https://www.utilitydive.com/news/for-nuclear-plants-operating-on-thin-margins-growing-climate-risks-prompt/584883/>

⁶ <https://www.eli.org/vibrant-environment-blog/ongoing-battle-fighting-impacts-uranium-mining-southwestern-indigenous-communities>

⁷ <https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/cree-nation-of-eeyou-istchee-affirms-its-continuing-steadfast-opposition-to-uranium-mining-development-within-its-territory-of-eeyou-istchee-817277626.html>

⁸ <https://www.hcn.org/articles/indigenous-affairs-mining-uranium-mining-threatens-our-home-the-grand-canyon>

⁹ <https://www.ejatlus.org/print/a-decade-long-battle-against-yeelirrie-uranium-mine-led-by-tjiwarl-women-australia>

¹⁰ https://www.oecd-neo.org/upload/docs/application/pdf/2020-12/7555_uranium_-_resources_production_and_demand_2020_web.pdf

¹¹ <https://sahanjournal.com/climate/herc-garbage-burner-minneapolis-climate-action-plan/>

landfills and the emissions locally include a toxic cocktail including nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxides for surrounding neighborhoods.¹²

- Shut down all 4 coal-fired power units - King; and Sherco 1, 2, & 3 - by 2025 at the latest, as it costs Minnesotans more financially to keep it running than to shut them down now (and certainly is much more costly to keep them open in respect to health and climate cost) as shown plainly by multiple intervenors' modeling including ratepayer advocate CUB Minnesota.¹³

Directives beyond the IRP needed for consistent implementation of IRP directives:

- Remove marketing funding and logo from joint promotions of trash burning as an innovative solution that have appeared on airport trash cans and likely other venues
- Use Xcel lobbying dollars at the state legislature to remove trash burning from the definition of "Renewables" and from the definition of "Biomass" in the Renewable Portfolio Standard.¹⁴

#3: Create clear mechanisms and metrics for accountability to ensure equitable benefits to local communities

Definitions:

- **Public Interest:**
 - a. **The public interest extends beyond financial interest** and includes: robust, interdependent local economies and small businesses that are representative of the community; environmental health in water, air, and soil; decision-making power and agency over all aspects of our futures; access to wealth and profits of production and labor of energy industries in Minnesota; dignified workplaces representative of the community at all levels of management; a climate that will sustain the lives of communities and future generations;
 - b. **The public's financial interests** are not adequately represented by the existing cost-effectiveness tests that externalize costs onto our bodies, local economies, and great, great, great, grandchildren;
- **Affordability:**
 - a. **The energy affordability that Xcel is bound to preserve under state law is contextual** - affordability must match the income and access to wealth of the household and neighborhood not simply state median income or federal poverty guidelines;
- **Equity:**
 - a. **Equitable benefits to local communities** does not mean charity or short term jobs but rather long-term community wealth building, decision-making power, freedom

¹² https://www.no-burn.org/wp-content/uploads/Pollution-Health_final-Nov-14-2019.pdf

¹³ <https://cubminnesota.org/the-consumers-plan-1-billion-savings-with-cleaner-energy-for-xcel-customers/>

¹⁴ <https://programs.dsireusa.org/system/program/detail/2401>

from disproportionate environmental pollution, and equitable benefits from in the savings, profits, and business opportunities in Minnesota's energy

Specific directives for this IRP:

- **Protect the “public interest” as Xcel is bound to do by virtue of being a public-utility and ensure equitable benefits come to local communities served** (see definition above of the public interest)
- **Solicit “local community energy plans” and “climate action plans” from the communities that Xcel serves to use as directives to the Company for how communities want to produce, benefit from, and mitigate risks from energy.** Let Xcel's long-term planning flow from that process - not the other way around. For planned infrastructure, seek *active consent*¹⁵ from communities in which Xcel plans to extract and produce energy from, and provide resources for communities to build out “local community energy plans” on their own terms that will guide the Company
- **Do not initiate or engage in settlement agreements that are not open and on the record, and that all impacted communities have been invited to.**
- **Reparation and remediation for harm done in the following host plant communities.** Reparation and remediation does not include the existing provision of jobs or tax revenue that allowed the siting of these facilities (and many of those resources did not accrue to the people harmed particularly in the case of a + b below). Reparation and remediation should be *determined by a process run by those communities not Xcel, the PUC, or the State, which may include out of state EJ communities impacted by Xcel Minnesota's resource decisions:*
 - a. North Minneapolis - HERC trash burner
 - b. Prairie Island Indian Community - radioactive waste storage from nuclear plant
 - c. Others as requested by the communities in Becker, Monticello, Bayport, Red Wing, and others.
- **Commit to cutting contracts with the HERC incinerator** early or at the latest in 2024
- **Create clear workforce goals and benchmarks for Xcel's internal and external workforce** as follows: 1) internal workforce - transitioning it from ~86-93% white to representative of the communities they serve 2) external workforce - supporting predominantly white and male unions to train, hire, and support BIPOC Minnesotans within the unions and include and pursue contracting with small businesses and worker-owned businesses that have other robust metrics for fair labor practices and are majority BIPOC or from other marginalized identities.

We appreciate the opportunity to share these priorities with the Commission, and look forward to relationship-building and action from both Xcel and the Commission on these critically important issues to our communities and the public interest of Minnesota. Good intentions are not enough to defend the public interest nor achieve equitable outcomes - Minnesotans who have borne the brunt of the impact and the seen little benefits will know they have been heard through material, observable change to both process and outcome.

¹⁵ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/4401/text>

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