



May 17, 2021

Public Advisor
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Place East, Suite 350
St. Paul, MN 55101
Publicadvisor.puc@state.mn.us

Consumer Affairs Office
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Place East, Suite 350
St. Paul MN 55101
consumer.puc@state.mn.us

RE: PUC Docket Numbers

- E-002/GS-21-191 (Site Permit)
- E-002/TL-21-190 (Route Permit for East 345 kV Transmission Line)
- E-002/TL-21-189 (Route Permit for West 345 kV Transmission Line)
- E002/M-20-891 (Xcel Energy's Petition for Approval of the Sherco Solar Project)

Dear Public Advisor,

I am writing to demonstrate support for the Xcel Energy Sherco Solar Project on behalf of R.D. Offutt (RDO) Farms. RDO is family-owned and operated, and we've been responsibly farming potatoes for more than 50 years in Minnesota. Together with our partners, we operate 10 farms across 15 counties.

Since our beginning, RDO has been committed to using science-driven, sustainable practices to ensure our farm's productivity today and well into the future. During our long history, we've witnessed the climate continuously changing, and as farmers, we've been continuously adapting. As such, RDO has implemented a variety of measures over the years:

- Increasing our average crop rotation schedule to promote healthier and more productive soils. Over the past five growing seasons, we've increased our average crop rotation to planting potatoes every four years.
- Planting as many cover crops as possible each year. In 2020, we planted 12,600 acres of cover crops.
- Increasing our use of organic fertilizer. During the past three growing seasons, we've doubled our organic fertilizer usage, which fortifies the soil and improves water retention.
- Planting trees and pollinator habitats. We've made a commitment to plant 20,000 trees and 200 acres of pollinator habitat each year.

When Xcel Energy sought RDO's interest in the Sherco Solar Project due to the location of our farm in Becker Township, Minn., we recognized the project as another opportunity to increase our sustainability efforts by supporting Minnesota's clean energy economy.

RDO had many discussions with Xcel about which acres of our farmland could be included in the project. We offered noncontiguous acreage further north of Sherco that is less productive than the land Xcel sought, but learned the necessity of proximity to the project's transmission lines.

Ultimately, RDO agreed to participate in the project, investing 1,500 acres of highly productive, irrigated farmland to be converted to host solar panels. Upon completion, Xcel will provide 460 megawatts of carbon-free, renewable energy to its customers, enough to power about 100,000 homes annually.

While we are proud to support and participate in the project, it is not without consequence. Due to our participation, RDO will cap 16 wells and remove 14 center-pivot irrigation systems across 1,500 acres. In an average four-year rotation, approximately 375 acres/year will be taken out of production. These acres produce 200,000 hundredweight of potatoes annually. We look forward to working with Minnesota state agencies to explore solutions to replace these acres.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our support for the Xcel Energy Sherco Project. We have had a positive experience working with staff from Xcel. We look forward to participating in this project and to the benefits it will bring to Sherburne County and Minnesota residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Keith McGovern', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Keith McGovern
R.D. Offutt Farms President