January 22, 2021

## VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

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

## Re: Reply Comments of Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation

In the Matter of the Petition of Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation for Approval of Natural Gas Extension Project (NGEP) Rider True-Up for 2019, Rider Revenue Deficiency for 2021, and Revised Surcharge Factors Docket No. G011/M-20-420

Dear Mr. Seuffert:
On April 13, 2020, Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation ("MERC" or the "Company") filed a Petition with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (the "Commission") requesting approval to recover a portion of the Company's 2021 Rochester Natural Gas Extension Project ("Rochester Project") costs through MERC's Natural Gas Extension Project ("NGEP") rider, adjusted to account for the 2019 NGEP true-up and for differences between the 2018 actual Rochester Project capital expenditures and MERC's capital estimates used in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563 in accordance with the Commission's order in that docket, through updated NGEP Rider surcharge rates effective January 1, 2021.

On January 8, 2021, the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources (the "Department") filed Comments addressing the Company's Petition. In its Comments, the Department recommends that the Commission allow MERC to implement an NGEP rider surcharge effective for service rendered beginning with the first billing month after the Commission's final order with modifications, and requests that the Company provide additional information in Reply Comments related to (1) estimated Rochester Project area specific property tax data, (2) the Company's calculation of offsetting revenues and weather-normalized sales, and (3) updated NGEP rider surcharge rates based on weather-normalized 2019 sales or the most recent weather normalized calendar year data available. ${ }^{1}$

MERC thanks the Department for its review and comments and submits these Reply Comments to respond to the Department's recommendations and requests for additional information.

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## 1. Department Adjustments to 2021 NGEP Rider Recovery Proposal

As discussed in the Department's Comments, MERC filed its 2021 NGEP Rider Petition in this docket in April 2020, approximately five months before the Commission issued its Order on the Company's 2020 NGEP Rider in Docket No. G011/M-19-608 on September 21, 2020. As a result, MERC's Petition did not incorporate the Commission's final determinations from Docket No. G011/M-19-608. In response to Department Information Request No. 1, ${ }^{2}$ the Company provided updated data and NGEP rider surcharge rate calculations based on the Commission's decisions in Docket No. G011/M-19-608. In its Comments, the Department recommends a number of adjustments based on the Commission's September 21, 2020 Order, which the Company incorporated in response to discovery and which are discussed below. Additionally, the Department recommends additional adjustments to reduce MERC's 2021 NGEP rider eligible revenue deficiency. The Company responds to these recommended adjustments below.

## A. Property Taxes - Rate Base Adjustment and Rochester Project-Specific True-Up

First, the Department proposes that MERC reduce its NGEP rate base for property taxes to reflect the lag between when 2021 NGEP rates are collected and when 2021 property taxes will be paid. While MERC continues to believe such rate base reduction is not appropriate in the context of the NGEP rider where the Company is only recovering 33 percent of its annual revenue requirements over 12 months and where the NGEP surcharge rates are not being implemented until well into each forecast year, ${ }^{3}$ MERC accepts the adjustment as consistent with the Commission's September 21, 2020, Order in Docket No. G011/M-19-608. This adjustment was reflected in MERC's response to Department Information Request No. $1^{4}$ and results in a reduction to 2021 forecasted rate base of $\$ 597,394$ and a reduction to the NGEPeligible revenue requirement of $\$ 18,510$.

Additionally, the Department requests that the Company provide updated specific Rochester Project property tax information and corresponding updated NGEP rider surcharge values, consistent with the Commission's September 21, 2020, Order, ${ }^{5}$ which required that MERC include an estimate of property taxes for the specific area of the Rochester Project in its next NGEP rider petition. ${ }^{6}$

As reflected in MERC's response to Department Information Request No. 1, MERC revised its 2019 NGEP true-up model in accordance with the Commission's Order in Docket No. G011/M-19-608, to calculate project area-specific property tax for 2019, based on conversations with the Department. ${ }^{7}$ MERC developed this 2019 Rochester Project-specific property tax expense

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calculation for 2019 property taxes through the following steps, as shown in Attachment B to these Reply Comments:

1. First, MERC identified the specific parcels where Rochester Project upgrades were placed into service through December 31, 2018 (the period for which 2019 property taxes are assessed). As shown in Attachment B to these Reply Comments, two parcels (99.17.02.900137 in Salem and 99.09.03.900103 in Marion) had Rochester Project upgrades through December 31, 2018.
2. Second, MERC identified the total cost of Rochester Project upgrades for each parcel identified in step 1 above.
3. Third, MERC identified the total cost of all utility property in service on each of the identified parcels as of December 31, 2018.
4. Fourth, MERC calculated the percentage of total property attributable to the Rochester Project upgrades for each parcel.
5. Fifth, MERC applied the relevant percentage calculated in step 4 to the total tax bill for each respective parcel to arrive at the Rochester Project-specific property tax for that parcel.
6. Finally, MERC combined the Rochester Project-specific property tax calculated in step 5 for each parcel to determine the total estimated Rochester Project-specific tax. As shown in Attachment B, this yields the 2019 Rochester Project-specific property tax of \$129,522.

As reflected in Attachment A to these Reply Comments, this update results in actual 2019 incremental property tax expense of $\$ 115,522 .{ }^{8}$

To forecast 2021 Rochester Project-specific property tax expense, ${ }^{9}$ MERC has estimated the value of the Rochester Project property based on its forecasted costs and the projected net operating income related to the Rochester Project through 2020. ${ }^{10}$ This process effectively values the Rochester Project property as if it were its own standalone utility, although the property will ultimately be valued as part of MERC's overall system. This forecasting methodology provides estimated Rochester Project area-specific property taxes for 2021. The Company will true-up 2021 property taxes with the 2021 NGEP rider true-up to be filed in 2022 based on the process discussed above. ${ }^{11}$

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## B. Legal Regulatory Costs

As discussed in the Company's Petition, consistent with Minn. Stat. § 216B. 1638 (the "NGEP Statute"), which authorizes rider recovery for any incremental operations and maintenance ("O\&M") costs, MERC included a portion of its actual incremental 2019 O\&M expense associated with the Rochester Project NGEP rider in the true-up reconciliation. The included incremental O\&M expense is related to outside legal regulatory costs for filings, regulatory proceedings, discovery, and approval of MERC's 2019 NGEP rider in Docket No. G011/M-18182. As explained in the Company's Petition, inclusion of a portion of outside regulatory expense associated with the NGEP rider proceedings in the true-up reconciliation is reasonable and consistent with the NGEP Statute, as these costs are incremental, are not currently being recovered in the Company's base rates approved in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563, and are based on the actual O\&M expense incurred related to the NGEP rider. MERC also included a portion of forecasted incremental O\&M expense based on the amount of actual incremental O\&M expense related to the 2019 rider filing and regulatory proceeding and will account for differences in the actual incremental 2021 O\&M through the annual true-up reconciliation.

The Department objects to MERC's proposed recovery of a portion of its incremental legal regulatory costs, arguing that "[a]lthough MERC may not explicitly include these costs in O\&M base rates, the Company's claim that these are incremental costs is not valid." ${ }^{12}$ The Department focuses its conclusion on the fact that the legal regulatory costs related to the NGEP rider were not unforeseen at the time rates were set in the Company's last general rate case (Docket No. G011/GR-17-563).

Contrary to the Department's objections, the legal regulatory costs proposed for recovery through the Company's NGEP rider are incremental, are based on actual costs incurred by the Company, and are reasonable and prudently incurred. And while the foreseeability of such costs at the time of MERC's last rate case would not alter the conclusion that these costs are incremental, MERC also responds that these costs were not, in fact, foreseeable at the time the Company filed its last rate case in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563.

The NGEP Statute is clear - the revenue deficiency for a natural gas extension project recovered through a rider must include "the currently authorized rate of return, incremental income taxes, incremental property taxes, incremental depreciation expenses, and any incremental operation and maintenance costs." ${ }^{13}$ The question for the Commission therefore is whether the proposed O\&M expense is incremental, which MERC has demonstrated that it is. The Department's focus on whether the legal regulatory costs associated with the NGEP Rider were foreseen at the time of MERC's last rate case is a red herring. ${ }^{14}$ The fact that MERC theoretically could have proposed a known and measurable adjustment to its O\&M expense in its last rate case based on plans to file NGEP rider petitions is irrelevant since the Company did not include such an adjustment. Instead, MERC's authorized O\&M included for recovery in

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current base rates was set, as proposed by the Department, based on actual 2017 O\&M expense. ${ }^{15}$ Further, even if the Company was aware that it would file annual NGEP rider petitions, MERC did not and could not have known the level of complexity of such filings and therefore could not have forecasted the legal regulatory expense that would be incurred. Thus, while the foreseeability of these incremental costs at the time of MERC's last rate case filing is not relevant to the question of whether they are recoverable, the Department's premise that these costs were foreseeable is also not accurate. ${ }^{16}$

As explained in MERC's initial Petition, " $[t]$ he incremental O\&M costs that MERC has included in its true-up reconciliation were not included in the Company's last rate case test year expense, nor would these types of expenses be included in MERC's O\&M expense in current rates." ${ }^{17}$ In its past rate cases, MERC has included costs related to legal expense and agency assessments for routine regulatory filings but has not included any adjustment for unique filings like the NGEP rider. As the Department recognizes in its Comments, MERC submitted its first request for NGEP rider recovery in Docket No. G011/M-18-182 on February 28, 2018; ${ }^{18}$ as such, the legal regulatory costs associated with the NGEP rider were not included in 2017 O\&M and are therefore not included in current base rates. Further, MERC's 2019 NGEP rider filed in February 2018 was not approved until June 2019, sixteen months after the Company's initial filing - the Department's suggestion that such a proceeding is similar to the Company's routine regulatory filings is unsupported.

The Department also argues that recovery of a portion of incremental legal regulatory costs as proposed should be disallowed on the basis that the legal and regulatory fees associated with the 2019 NGEP rider filing are likely associated with "litigating an issue that was decided in a previous regulatory docket." ${ }^{19}$ The Department's suggestion that the legal regulatory costs that were incurred are unreasonable or imprudent is also unsupported.

The Department appears to suggest that a "significant amount" of the legal regulatory costs were incurred to support MERC's position in Docket No. G011/M-18-182 that the 33 percent statutory cap on recovery applied to the overall costs of the natural gas project, rather than the annual revenue requirement as recommended by the Department. The Department further suggests that because the Commission ultimately adopted the Department's interpretation, the Company's arguments were inappropriate and as such, any costs incurred in making those arguments are imprudent. This conclusion is contrary to the language of the Commission's decision in Docket No. G011/M-18-182, which reflects the Commission's agreement with the Company that the NGEP Statute is ambiguous, and also reflects a conclusion that MERC's proposed interpretation of that statute was reasonable; however, the Department's interpretation

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was found to be more reasonable. As reflected in the Commission's June 18, 2019, Order Approving NGEP Rider Surcharge with Modifications,

After hearing the arguments of the parties on rider recovery under the NGEP statute, the Commission agrees that the NGEP statute is ambiguous. However, after weighing the two interpretations of the statute, the Commission concludes that the Department's legal interpretation of the NGEP statute is more reasonable, and will result in more just and reasonable rates for ratepayers. ${ }^{20}$

While MERC recognizes that the Commission adopted the Department's interpretation of the NGEP Statute in Docket No. G011/M-18-182, the Company's positions in that proceeding were not frivolous, unreasonable, or unsupported. Rather, MERC provided practical support for its interpretation of the statutory cap as consistent with the language of the NGEP Statute and the Commission's Order in Docket No. G011/M-15-895. ${ }^{21}$

Finally, the Department's contention that allowing recovery of legal regulatory costs as proposed by the Company would incent utilities to make "inappropriate or superfluous regulatory filings in the hopes of receiving future cost recovery"22 is illogical. First, the incremental legal regulatory costs proposed for inclusion in the 2019 rider true-up reflect a portion of the actual costs that the Company incurred for outside counsel expense. Similarly, the forecasted incremental O\&M proposed for recovery in the 2021 NGEP rider is based on actual costs incurred with respect to MERC's previous NGEP rider and will be subject to true up based on actual costs in 2021. The Department's suggestion that the Company would have any opportunity to obtain a windfall by being allowed to recover a portion of its actual incurred and legitimate costs is simply unsupported. Further, under the Company's proposal and consistent with the Commission's prior decisions, MERC will not recover the full amount of its actually incurred legal regulatory costs, let alone anything over and above such actual costs. Rather, the Company will recover only 33 percent of the actual incremental O\&M costs incurred. This is equal to $\$ 13,408$ of the $\$ 40,632$ in incremental legal regulatory costs that were actually incurred in 2019 and forecasted for 2021. The Department's suggestion that the Company would over-recover by being allowed to recover only a portion of the actual costs incurred is irrational. Further, because these costs are O\&M expense, to the extent they are incurred outside of a rate case test year, the Company will not have any opportunity to recover the remaining 67 percent through future base rates or any other mechanism.

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MERC continues to support recovery of 33 percent of its actual incremental O\&M expense incurred in 2019 through the 2019 NGEP rider true-up, as well as recovery of 33 percent of forecasted 2021 legal regulatory costs subject to future true up as reasonable and consistent with the NGEP Statute.

## C. Offsetting Revenues

As discussed in MERC's Petition,
Sales growth through 2018 was already recognized in the 2018 rate case. However, MERC expects to recognize additional incremental sales growth in the Rochester area, as reflected in MERC's forecast in Docket No. G011/M-15-895. Additional 2021 margin revenues of approximately $\$ 811,877$ are forecast to be realized as a result of the Rochester area sales growth for the period 2019 through 2021. ${ }^{23}$ Therefore, MERC subtracted the incremental revenue from the 2021 costs, leaving a revenue deficiency of $\$ 3,023,928$ for 2021. ${ }^{24}$

Additionally, MERC calculated actual incremental sales and margin growth in the Rochester area in 2019 to determine the 2019 true-up reconciliation associated with offsetting revenues. In particular, MERC calculated the difference between the approved 2018 Rochester area sales consistent with the sales forecast submitted in Docket No. G011/M-15-895 and actual 2019 weather-normalized sales in the Rochester Project area to determine the incremental sales growth and associated offsetting revenues collected in 2019.

While MERC experienced sales growth in customer counts in 2019 as well as an overall increase in sales volumes in the Rochester area, actual sales revenues for 2019 were lower than 2018 baseline revenues. Overall Residential sales volumes and associated use per customer in 2019 was lower than the 2018 forecasted level, resulting in lower Residential sales margin revenues. Additionally, 2019 Firm Class 1 customer counts, sales, and use per customer were lower than the 2018 forecasted level, resulting in lower margin revenues. In total, the difference between the 2018 forecasted Rochester area revenues and actual margin revenues was a reduction in revenues of $\$ 318,548 .{ }^{25}$

In response to Department inquiries during discovery, MERC provided extensive discussion and details regarding the Company's calculation of offsetting revenues for both the 2021 NGEP forecast and the 2019 true-up. ${ }^{26}$ This discussion included detailed explanation regarding the change in presentation for MERC's offsetting revenue calculations as between the Company's 2020 NGEP rider filing in Docket No. G011/M-19-608 and this docket, which was driven by

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MERC's implementation of new customer rate classes effective July 1, 2019, as approved in the Company's rate case in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563.

In its Comments, the Department acknowledged that this additional information was helpful in understanding the Company's rationale for presenting a new method for offsetting revenues but identified questions and concerns. These were with respect to (1) MERC's use of 15-year data in its 2020 NGEP filing, (2) differences in the offsetting revenues between MERC's approved 2020 NGEP rider and this filing, and (3) MERC's weather normalization methodology. ${ }^{27}$ MERC addresses each Department concern and request for information below.

## i. Weather Normalized Sales Data

The Department, in its Comments, states that it agrees with the Company's decision in this docket to use weather-normalized sales based on 20-year weather data. ${ }^{28}$ However, the Department expresses concern that the Company utilized 15-year data in its previouslyapproved 2020 NGEP rider filing, as the use of 15 -year data to weather normalize sales in that docket resulted in an inconsistency between base sales and adjusted actual sales used to forecast offsetting revenues. The Department requests that the Company address this issue and the calculation of offsetting revenues included in its 2020 NGEP rider surcharge in reply comments. ${ }^{29}$

As a preliminary matter, MERC notes that the Department's concern regarding the Company's prior use of a 15-year weather normalization assumption in the 2020 NGEP docket has no impact on the 2021 revenue requirement or the 2019 true-up as proposed in this docket. While the Company agrees with the Department that use of a 20 -year weather normalization assumption is more appropriate for the offsetting revenue calculation, the use of the 15-year weather data for the 2020 NGEP rider has no impact on this docket, as the Company has used 20-year data to weather normalize sales in this docket.

In MERC's 2020 NGEP rider in Docket No. G011/M-19-608, in response to discovery, MERC provided an updated calculation of $\$ 626,362$ in offsetting revenues to reflect two years of forecasted Rochester area sales growth based on actual weather-normalized sales through September 2019 and forecasted sales through December 2019. As explained in MERC's supplemental response to Department Information Request No. 5, ${ }^{30}$ this updated offsetting revenue amount was inadvertently calculated based on a 15-year rather than 20-year normal weather variable.

When conducting the offsetting revenues calculation for the 2021 NGEP rider, this assumption was updated to utilize a 20-year weather normalization average period. This reflects an apples-to-apples comparison of the weather normalized actual data to the weather normalized forecasted data within the offsetting revenues calculation, as the 2018 baseline weather

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normalized forecasted data comes from the sales forecast approved in Docket No. G011/M-15895, which used a 20-year weather normalization assumption.

Ultimately, the impact of MERC's use of a 15-year rather than 20-year weather normalization assumption in the 2020 calculation is nominal and will be accounted for through the 2020 trueup to be filed in 2021. If the weather-normalized sales had been calculated using 20 -year normal weather rather than 15-year data, the forecasted offsetting revenue calculation would have been $\$ 625,493$ or $\$ 869$ lower than the forecasted offsetting revenues that were used to set 2020 NGEP rider surcharge rates.

Because the forecasted offsetting revenues used to set 2020 NGEP rider surcharge rates were higher than under the 20-year normal weather assumption, ratepayers are not being overcharged. Further, because 2020 NGEP rider surcharge rates were not implemented until November 2020, MERC likely will have under-recovered its actual NGEP-rider eligible costs in 2020. Finally, as explained in MERC's Petition in this docket, actual Rochester area revenues declined rather than increased in 2019 - in total, the difference between the 2018 forecasted Rochester area revenues and actual 2019 margin revenues was a reduction in revenues of $\$ 318,548 .{ }^{31}$ As a result, under current 2020 NGEP rider surcharge rates, customers are being charged lower NGEP surcharge rates based on a higher level of forecasted offsetting revenues.

These impacts can and should appropriately be addressed in the 2020 true-up to be filed in 2021 - not in this docket. As the Department agrees with MERC's determination of weathernormalized sales based on 20-year weather data in this 2021 NGEP rider docket, no adjustments are necessary in this proceeding. The impact of having used 15 -year weather data in the 2020 offsetting revenue forecast is nominal, does not impact the 2021 NGEP rider, and will be trued-up in 2021 to reflect 2020 weather data along with updates for actual weather normalized sales through 2020.

## ii. Weather Normalization Process

The Department requests that MERC fully review its weather-normalization process as it relates to offsetting revenues and provide a discussion in reply comments detailing all changes in methodology between the 2020 and 2021 NGEP Rider filings that impacted offsetting revenues. ${ }^{32}$

MERC responds that the Company made no changes to the weather-normalization methodology between the 2020 and 2021 NGEP rider filings with the exception of the 15 -year versus 20 -year normal weather assumption, as discussed above. As noted above, this change had a nominal impact on the 2020 offsetting revenue forecast when no other updates are made to that forecast (increase to 2020 forecasted offsetting revenue of $\$ 869$ ) and no impact to either the 2019 true-up offsetting revenues or the 2021 forecasted offsetting revenues, both of which were calculated using the 20-year normal weather assumption.

Additionally, while not related to the Company's weather normalization process, MERC's 2020 NGEP offsetting revenue calculation was based on nine months of weather-normalized actuals

[^8]for 2019 and three months of forecast sales, which reflected the data that was available at the time of the calculation. In contrast, MERC's 2021 offsetting revenue calculation utilizes the full 12 months of weather normalized actual sales for 2019. Use of a full year of actuals for the 2019 true-up and 2021 forecast is necessary and appropriate to reflect actual 2019 sales and revenues. ${ }^{33}$

The only other difference in the methodology used to calculate offsetting revenues between MERC's 2020 NGEP rider and 2021 NGEP rider relates to the implementation of MERC's new rate classes effective with final rates in July 2019. In MERC's 2020 NGEP rider, Docket No. G011/M-19-608, MERC's offsetting revenues forecast utilized the Company's historic rate classifications and also forecasted revenues by customer class at a high level. For example, all transportation sales and customers were assumed to be class 3 and all interruptible sales and customers were assumed to be class 2. While this approach reflected a reasonable forecast of offsetting revenues, MERC's 2019 offsetting revenue true-up and 2021 forecasted offsetting revenue calculations are significantly more precise. MERC's 2021 offsetting revenue and 2019 true-up calculations separate sales and customer count growth for each customer classification under MERC's current rate class structure as approved by the Commission in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563. This change results in a more accurate offsetting revenue calculation by applying the currently-approved rates to each customer class' sales and customer counts.

Finally, as discussed in MERC's supplemental response to Department Information Request No. 5, ${ }^{34}$ MERC's 2020 offsetting revenue calculation was based on year-end customer counts while MERC's 2019 offsetting revenue true-up and 2021 offsetting revenue forecast incorporate monthly customer counts to accurately reflect the customer class changes implemented in July 2019.

For example, with the implementation of MERC's new rate schedules in July 2019, a total of 12 customers were reclassified to Firm Class 3. Prior to July 2019, there had been zero customers because the Firm Class 3 rate schedule did not exist. While 2019 year-end customer count for Firm Class 3 is 12, those customers and the associated revenues were only present during July - Dec 2019. As a result, it is inaccurate to utilize the old display format, which assumes each month's customer counts are identical to the year-end customer counts. In this example, using the old display format assumes 12 Firm Class 3 customers for each month during 2019, when in fact, those customers were only charged Firm Class 3 rates for 6 months of 2019. The result of assuming year-end customer counts throughout 2019 is an over-estimation of offsetting revenues. ${ }^{35}$

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This results in a more accurate calculation of actual 2019 offsetting revenues, because it accurately reflects the revenues realized as a result of 2019 customers and sales, including customer class changes that occurred in 2019.

As discussed in MERC's supplemental response to Department Information Request No. 5, ${ }^{36}$ this change has no impact on the calculation of MERC's 2021 offsetting revenues, as the 2021 calculation is utilizing forecasted customer counts. ${ }^{37}$ Thus, regardless of whether the old or new calculation is used, the forecasted 2021 offsetting revenues are the same - \$811,877.

For the 2019 true-up, utilizing the more detailed customer rates and monthly customer counts to calculate offsetting revenues results in 2019 offsetting revenues of (\$318,548). In contrast, using the less detailed forecasting methodology that was applied for the 2020 offsetting revenue forecast and assuming year-end customer counts, results in a 2019 offsetting revenue true-up calculation of $(\$ 171,462)$ or $\$ 147,086$ greater offsetting revenues. However, as discussed in MERC's supplemental response to Department Information Request No. 5, as well as MERC's initial petition, the 2019 NGEP rider true-up calculation as proposed by the Company does not change regardless of whether MERC's more accurate calculation of offsetting revenues is utilized or not, because both computations show a decrease in offsetting revenues for 2019. Rather than include the $(\$ 318,548)$ decrease in offsetting revenues, which would increase the under-collection for 2019 by $\$ 105,121$, MERC instead included $\$ 0$ as offsetting revenues in the 2019 NGEP true-up, thereby foregoing the under-recovered offsetting revenues. ${ }^{38}$

MERC's 2019 offsetting revenue true-up and 2021 forecasted offsetting revenues as proposed reflect the most accurate actual 2019 offsetting revenues and forecasted 2021 offsetting revenues associated with Rochester area sales and customer growth. These calculations are inclusive of actual weather-normalized 2019 sales based on a 20-year normal weather assumption and actual and forecasted sales and customer counts for each current rate classification.

## iii. Regression Results

The Department also notes "that there are, at least, two possible regression analyses that could have been used to determine this weather-normalization process." The Department requests that MERC identify what regression results, including all supporting information, it used to weather normalize sales in this docket. ${ }^{39}$

MERC responds that it does not use a regression-based method for weather normalization and therefore does not have regression results to provide in response to the Department's request. Instead, the Company uses a ratio method for weather normalization. This is the same

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methodology the Company has used in its rate case filings. ${ }^{40}$ This ratio method is illustrated in Table 1 below for 2017 Residential sales. The actual weather variable is a daily actual heatingdegree day ("HDD") 65 degrees Fahrenheit ("HDD65") based on 24-hour average temperature, and the normal weather variable is the 20-year normal HDD65. Baseload sales are equal to the lowest sales of the summer months.

## Table 1. Illustration of Weather Normalization Process Based on 20-Year Normal Weather

|  |  | Residential |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Calculation | Component | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | 2017 |
| (1) | Calendar Sales | 6,797,602 | 5,479,960 | 4,373,194 | 3,670,373 | 2,176,027 | 1,181,484 | 771,029 | 690,643 | 755,956 | 900,171 | 2,797,777 | 4,568,628 | 34,162,844 |
| (2) | Baseload Sales | 690,643 | 690,643 | 690,643 | 690,643 | 690,643 | 690,643 | 690,643 | 690,643 | 690,643 | 690,643 | 690,643 | 690,643 | 8,287,715 |
| $\begin{gathered} \text { (3) } \\ (1)-(2) \end{gathered}$ | Weather-Sensitive Sales | 6,106,959 | 4,789,317 | 3,682,551 | 2,979,730 | 1,485,384 | 490,841 | 80,386 | 0 | 65,314 | 209,529 | 2,107,134 | 3,877,985 | 25,875,129 |
| (4) | Actual Weather | 1,420 | 1,031 | 1,048 | 505 | 287 | 33 | 2 | 46 | 118 | 487 | 960 | 1,453 | 7,388 |
| (5) | Normal Weather 20-year Normal | 1,524 | 1,277 | 1,018 | 551 | 245 | 49 | 10 | 24 | 149 | 502 | 873 | 1,373 | 7,596 |
| $\begin{gathered} (6) \\ (5) /(4) *(3)+(2) \end{gathered}$ | Weather-Normalized Sales | 7,247,191 | 6,626,282 | 4,269,992 | 3,947,359 | 1,961,336 | 1,412,402 | 1,032,516 | 690,643 | 773,416 | 906,827 | 2,606,266 | 4,355,491 | 35,829,721 |

## iv. $\quad 2019$ Offsetting Revenue True-Up

As explained in MERC's Petition, "[b]ecause MERC experienced a reduction in revenue rather than an increase in 2019, MERC has included offsetting revenues equal to $\$ 0$ in the true-up reconciliation." ${ }^{41}$ In its Comments, the Department states that the under-collection of revenues of $\$ 318,548$ in 2019, as calculated by the Company, should be included in the true-up of revenues. ${ }^{42}$ MERC does not object to the Department's proposal to include these undercollected offsetting revenues in the true-up calculation; however, as discussed below, MERC disagrees with the Department's recommendation for an additional true-up to 2018 revenues.

## D. 2018 True-Up Adjustments

Consistent with the Commission's Order in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563, MERC has included adjustments to account for actual 2018 Rochester Project capital expenditures and costs through its 2019 NGEP rider true-up, which is the Company's first NGEP rider true-up. As explained in detail in MERC's April 13, 2020, Petition, and further discussed in response to Department Information Request No. 4 in this docket, ${ }^{43}$ the Company has accounted for a trueup to the 2018 actual depreciation expense and property tax expense relative to authorized expense in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563, as shown in Exhibit C. Additionally, MERC has trued up rate base to 2018 actuals in both its 2020 NGEP rider in Docket No. G011/M-19-608 and in

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the 2019 true-up, such that the incremental rate base calculation accounts for differences between 2018 and 2019 forecasts and actuals and are captured in the true up.

In its Comments, the Department questions the timing of the 2018 true-up adjustments ${ }^{44}$ and proposes that two additional adjustments - one to rate base and another to reflect 2018 offsetting revenues - are appropriate. Because MERC has already fully accounted for the trueup to rate base to reflect the difference between forecasted and actual 2018 Rochester Project rate base additions, the additional adjustment proposed by the Department is inappropriate and would result in a duplicative reduction. Additionally, the Department's proposal to include an additional adjustment related to 2018 offsetting revenues is unsupported and inconsistent with the Commission's decision in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563.

## i. Commission Decision Requiring 2018 True-Up

In MERC's 2018 rate case, Commission staff, in briefing papers, recommended requiring MERC to include any difference between its 2018 actual Rochester Project capital expenditures and the capital forecasts approved in base rates. ${ }^{45}$ As reflected in the Commission's Order, "MERC preferred that the Commission take no action, but recommended a clarification to the requirement if the Commission were to adopt it." ${ }^{46}$ In particular, MERC proposed that the difference be addressed in its future rider true-up calculation, rather than as an adjustment to its forecasted NGEP rider, so that actual 2018 Rochester Project capital expenditures would be known and could be accounted for through the true up. ${ }^{47}$ Ultimately, the Commission adopted staff's recommendation with the Company's clarification as to timing. As reflected in the Commission's Order:

Because recovery for the Rochester Project is authorized both in base rates and through the NGEP rider, there is a ready mechanism to ensure just and reasonable rates overall even if base rates turn out to be based on an overestimate of actual Project costs. The Commission will therefore require that MERC include any difference between the 2018 actual Rochester Project capital expenditures and MERC's capital estimates used in this docket in its upcoming NGEP Rider as a true-up with MERC's NGEP rider true-up calculation. The true up will ensure that an overestimate of

[^12]projected costs built into base rates can be corrected-for. This will protect ratepayers if the Rochester Project capital expenses do not meet projected test-year amounts. ${ }^{48}$

In Docket No. G011/M-19-608, MERC's 2020 NGEP rider, MERC addressed the Commission's Order from Docket No. G011/GR-17-563, stating that "[c]onsistent with the Commission's Order in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563, MERC will true-up for 2018 actual Rochester Project costs within its 2019 true-up to be filed in 2020. In order to avoid the need for a subsequent true up to the 2020 NGEP to account for 2018 actuals, MERC has calculated the 2020 NGEP revenue requirement based on 2018 actuals." ${ }^{49}$

MERC therefore calculated the 2020 forecasted NGEP revenue requirement using 2018 actuals as the starting basis, to avoid the need for a subsequent true-up of the 2020 NGEP rider for 2018 actuals.

In its Petition in this Docket, the Company explained its calculations to account for the 2018 true-up as follows:
(1) First, with respect to depreciation expense, MERC has calculated the difference between the Rochester Project depreciation expense from Docket No. G011/GR-17-563, and actual depreciation expense based on monthly plant in service by plant FERC account and depreciation rates in effect in 2018, as authorized in Docket No. G011/D-17-442. This results in underrecovered annual depreciation expense of $\$ 4,468$.
(2) Second, with respect to property tax expense, MERC calculated the difference between the amount of property tax expense allocated to the forecasted 2018 Rochester Project in 2018 in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563 and the updated 2018 property tax expense estimate based on actual 2018 plant in service and the average of the actual rates applied by the townships where the Rochester Project facilities were installed. This true-up calculation of property tax expense reflects actual 2018 installed plant and more accurately estimated tax rates for 2018. This true-up results in under-recovered expense of $\$ 56,574$.

[^13](3) Finally, with respect to the return on Rochester Project rate base, by using the Rochester Project rate base value included in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563 as the basis and adjusting for rate base through 2019 including removals, MERC has trued up for differences in the 2018 forecasted rate base as filed and approved in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563 and actual 2018 rate base, in accordance with the Commission's December 26, 2018, Order. This true-up is captured in the overall 2019 true-up for return on incremental rate base as discussed above.

By accounting for these adjustments in the true-up reconciliation and accounting for them as an adjustment to 2021 NGEP recoveries, MERC is complying with the Commission's December 26, 2018, Findings of Fact, Conclusions, and Order in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563. ${ }^{50}$

## i. Timing of 2018 True-Up

First, with respect to the timing of the 2018 true-up, the Department notes that "it is unclear whether the Commission's 2017 rate case Order allows for the Company's proposed 2018 true up adjustment because the Order explicitly references recovery in a previous NGEP rider filing." ${ }^{51}$ This is not accurate. As discussed above, the Commission's December 26, 2018, Findings of Fact, Conclusions, and Order in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563 very clearly anticipated that the 2018 capital expenditure true-up would occur "as a true-up with MERC's NGEP rider true-up calculation." ${ }^{52}$ Such timing was approved based on the Company's recommended clarifications. As the Petition submitted in this Docket on April 13, 2020, reflects the first NGEP rider true-up filed by the Company, there was no earlier or alternative opportunity for the Company to have trued up the difference between the 2018 actual Rochester Project capital expenditures and MERC's capital estimates "in its NGEP rider true-up calculation."53 The Department's suggestion that the timing of the 2018-true-up adjustment is in any way inconsistent with the Commission's December 26, 2018, Order in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563 is mistaken.

## ii. Rate Base Adjustment

In its Comments, the Department states "it is unclear whether MERC's claimed method accurately accounts for the difference between forecasted and actual 2018 rate base values. . . . [R]ate base, depreciation, and property taxes appear to be treated in the same

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## Mr. Will Seuffert

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manner; as such, the Department concludes that an adjustment to rate base is necessary."54 The Department recommends an adjustment to reduce MERC's rate base in its 2019 true-up by $\$ 2,350,510$ - the difference between the amount of Rochester Project costs included in rate base in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563 and the Company's actual Rochester Project rate base additions in 2018. ${ }^{55}$

Contrary to the Department's assertions, however, MERC has included a true-up for rate base to reflect the difference between the amount of Rochester Project costs included in rate base in the Company's authorized base rates and actual 2018 Rochester Project rate base additions. Indeed, MERC's rate base adjustment is for the identical amount the Department has proposed is appropriate. ${ }^{56}$ As a result, the Department's recommended adjustment would result in a second, duplicate reduction and is therefore unnecessary.

As shown in MERC's response to Department Information Request No. 1, and as described in detail in the Company's Petition and in the Company's response to Department Information Request No. $4,{ }^{57}$ MERC calculated actual incremental 2019 rate base as the difference between the 2018 authorized Rochester Project Rate Base and actual rate base through 2019, thereby trueing up rate base to reflect the difference between what was authorized in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563 and what was actually placed in service in 2018 in accordance with the Commission's Order in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563.

An additional adjustment for 2018 to true-up rate base is not needed because the plant balances are accumulative, and the balances portrayed for 2019 in both the 2019 NGEP true-up and the 2021 NGEP rider are already inclusive of 2018 actual plant investment. ${ }^{58}$ Therefore, the 2018 actuals "true-up" is already included in the Over/Under recovery line of the 2021 revenue requirement, and to also include 2018 actuals as the basis for computing the 2021 revenue requirement (i.e. replacing the column "2018 Rate Case" with 2018 actuals) would "double-count" 2018 actuals in the revenue requirement calculation.

Table 2 below illustrates the impact of the adjustment included in MERC's 2019 true-up:
Table 2. MERC's True-Up to 2018 Rate Base
MERC's As Filed 2019 Actual NGEP Rate $\quad$ \$7,046,094 Base ${ }^{59}$

[^15]| 2019 NGEP Rate Base Without 2018 Rate <br> Base True Up | $\$ 9,396,604$ |
| :--- | :--- |
| Difference - Resulting Reduction to Rate <br> Base | $\$ 2,350,510$ (matches to Department <br> recommended rate base reduction ) |$|$| Revenue Requirement Impact | $\$ 72,830$ reduction to 2019 revenue <br> requirement (matches to Department <br> recommended adjustment) |
| :--- | :--- |

As shown in Table 2, MERC's adjustment to rate base in the amount of $\$ 2,350,510$ is identical to the rate base adjustment recommended by the Department. Further, the resulting reduction to the revenue requirement of $\$ 72,830$ is identical to the reduction as proposed by the Department. As such, no further adjustments are necessary to reflect the 2018 true-up to rate base.

MERC notes, for illustration, that if the Department prefers to show the rate base reduction as a line item, as reflected in Attachment 6 to the Department's Comments, it would be necessary to remove the adjustment to the 2018 authorized rate base (instead using actual 2018 rate base) to avoid double counting the adjustment, as follows. The result under either methodology, however, should be the same, as illustrated in Table 3 below.

[^16]Table 3. Illustration of Alternative Rate Base Adjustment Presentation

| Line | Description | Reference | 2018 Rate Case |  | 2019 Forecast |  | $\begin{gathered} \text { Forecasted NGEP } \\ 2019 \end{gathered}$ |  | 2018 Rate Case |  | 2019Actual |  | Actual NGEP 2019 <br> ** Adjusted DOC R $001{ }^{\text {º }}$ |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 1 | Deproclaton Expence |  | \$ | 109,441 | \$ | 371,221 | \$ | 261,780 | \$ | 109,441 | \$ | 282,365 | \$ | 172,924 |
| 2 | 2018 True U p Depreclation Expense Adjustment |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | \$ | 4,A68 | \$ | 4,468 |
| 3 | Property Tax Experse |  | \$ | 14,000 | \$ | 345,000 | \$ | 331,000 | \$ | 14,000 | \$ | 129,522 | \$ | 115,522 |
| 4 | 2008 True U p Property Tar Expence Adjustment |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | \$ | 36,574 | \$ | 36,574 |
| 5 | IncronmmlosM Expms |  | \$ |  | \$ |  | \$ | , | \$ | , | \$ | 40,532 | \$ | 40,532 |
| 6 | Rate Buse | Note (1) | \$ | 11,382,768 | \$ | 20,913,764 | \$ | 9,530,996 | \$ | 9,032,258 | \$ | 18,428,862 | \$ | 9,395,504 |
|  | Rate Bose Adjustment (2018 actusl is forcest) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | \$ | (2,350,510) |
| 7 | ADIT Prorasion Adjustment |  | \$ | 1 | \$ | , | \$ | , | \$ | , | \$ | , | \$ | , |
| 8 | Adjusted Rate Bue | Note (1) | \$ | 11,382,768 | \$ | 20,913,764 | \$ | 9,530,995 | \$ | 9,032,238 | \$ | 18,428,862 | \$ | 7,045,094 |
| 9 | Rate of Retum | Note (2) |  |  |  |  |  | 6.8342\% |  | 6.8342\% |  | 66971\% |  | 66971\% |
| 10 | Earningson Rate Base | Une $8 \times$ Une9 |  |  |  |  | \$ | 6356,133 | \$ | 621,799 | \$ | 1,234,199 | \$ | 471,884 |
| 11 | Grose Revonue Conversion Factor | Note (3) |  |  |  |  |  | 1.402 |  | 1.402 |  | 1.402 |  | 1.402 |
| 12 | Pcturn on Rate Buse | Une $10 \times$ Une 11 |  |  |  |  | \$ | 919,898 | \$ | 871,762 | \$ | 1,730,347 | \$ | 661,381 |
| 13 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 14 | Total Revenue Requirament | Sumpluine 1 through Une 6) + Une 13 |  |  |  |  | \$ | 1,512,679 |  |  |  |  | \$ | 1,051,702 |
| 15 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 15 | Offretting Project Revenue | Note (4) |  |  |  |  | \$ | 297,561 |  |  |  |  | \$ |  |
| 17 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 18 | Project Revenue Deficiency | Une 14 less line 16 |  |  |  |  | \$ | 1,215,118 |  |  |  |  | \$ | 1,051,702 |
| 19 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 20 | 33 percent of project revenue defidency |  |  |  |  |  | \$ | 400,989 |  |  |  |  | \$ | 347,052 |
| 21 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 22 | 2019 Rider Revenue Collocted |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | \$ | 141520 |
| 2324 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | ** Total Adjus tment: Over/(Under) Collection - to be collected within the 2021 NGEP Rider |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## iii. 2018 Offsetting Revenue

Finally, the Department proposes that MERC be required to true-up 2018 revenues from its base rates to account for offsetting revenues, ${ }^{63}$ arguing that "[i]f the related revenue side is not considered, then the true-up creates an uneven distribution where the Company benefits fully from the true-up while ratepayers are not protected in an instance where weather normalized sales and revenues exceed those included in base rates." ${ }^{64}$ Contrary to the Department's suggestion, as discussed above, the 2018 capital cost true-up included in compliance with the Commission's Order in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563 does benefit ratepayers by reducing the 2019 true-up and 2021 NGEP rider recovery amount.

In any given year, sales may be higher or lower than an approved sales forecast, due to a variety of factors from weather to conservation to customer growth. Such fluctuations are to be expected with respect to forecasted test-year sales. While MERC's Commission-approved revenue decoupling provides an approved mechanism whereby MERC's revenues are decoupled from sales, subject to certain limitations, the Commission has not approved any general sales or revenue true-up for the Company's base rates. Nor has the Commission approved or required that the Company true-up offsetting Rochester area revenues from the Company's base rates. The Commission's Order in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563 has no mention of true-up with respect to sales or revenues. Instead, that Order required MERC

[^17]"include any difference between the 2018 actual Rochester Project capital expenditures and MERC's capital estimates used in this docket." ${ }^{65}$

The Department's suggestion that the 2018 true-up should include a true-up for 2018 Rochester Project offsetting revenues is contrary to the Commission's Order in Docket No. G011/GR-17563, as well as the NGEP Statute, and would constitute impermissible retroactive ratemaking. ${ }^{66}$ The Commission's December 26, 2018, Order in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563 authorized the Company to increase its Minnesota jurisdictional revenues by $\$ 3,100,635$ to produce total gross revenue of $\$ 251,272,242$ in the test year ending December 31, 2018. As noted above, the Commission's Order was clear and unambiguous, expressly limiting the required NGEP rider true-up to "any difference between the 2018 actual Rochester Project capital expenditures and MERC's capital estimates used in this docket." Neither the Department, nor any other party, proposed to incorporate a true-up to 2018 Rochester area revenues as part of MERC's NGEP rider. Although the Commission perhaps could have included such a true-up requirement at the time it approved the Company's rates, it did not do so and cannot now require that a refund based on such difference be included as part of the NGEP rider true-up.

While MERC has appropriately included an offset for incremental revenues in the NGEP rider consistent with the NGEP Statute, such provision is not applicable to base rate recovery of project costs. MERC did not have an NGEP rider in effect in 2018 and therefore the true-up for 2018 Rochester Project costs is limited to the Commission's Order Point in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563. As the Order language expressly requires true-up only with respect to capital expenditures, the Department's suggestion that a requirement to true-up for offsetting revenues would be inconsistent with the Commission's order and would constitute impermissible retroactive ratemaking.

## 2. Proposed Rate Design and Direct Connect Surcharge Rate

In its Comments, the Department concluded that MERC's proposed rate design and apportionment of revenue responsibility, apart from the Company's proposal to apply a nominal surcharge rate to Direct Connect customers, is reasonable and consistent with the Commission's September 21, 2020, Order. ${ }^{67}$

With respect to the surcharge rate applicable to MERC's Direct Connect customers, the Department recommends that the Commission require MERC to apply the full NGEP rider surcharge, based on the Company's proposed apportionment of revenue responsibility. ${ }^{68}$ The Department bases its recommendation on both the Commission's decision in its September 21, 2020, Order in Docket No. G011/M-19-608, requiring MERC to apply the full 2020 NGEP rider

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## Mr. Will Seuffert

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Page 20
surcharge to all of its customers, including Direct Connect customers, ${ }^{69}$ as well as the Department's conclusion that a bypass risk does not exist for the Company's Direct Connect customers at the current rate or even at a significantly higher rate. ${ }^{70}$

At this time, MERC accepts the Department's proposal to allocate the NGEP rider revenue requirement to Direct Connect customers consistent with the Company's proposed apportionment of revenues. This approach is consistent with the Commission's decision in Docket No. G011/M-19-608.

While MERC and the Department are therefore in agreement regarding the appropriate rate design to be applied to the Company's 2021 NGEP rider, the Company does not agree with the Department's analysis regarding the bypass risk posed by Direct Connect customers for the same reasons detailed by the Company in Docket No. G011/M-19-608. ${ }^{71}$ The Department's analysis fails to accurately reflect the cost for Direct Connect customers to remain on MERC's system by omitting the base distribution and customer charges currently paid by those customers.

As the Commission recognized in its September 21, 2020, Order in Docket No. G011/M-19-608, "it is impossible to say with certainty whether certain Direct Connect customers will choose to bypass MERC at different cost levels."72 Given that Direct Connect customers are already paying base rates at or above their cost to bypass, MERC continues to caution that a real bypass risk does exists with respect to these customers. If one or more Direct Connect customer(s) bypasses MERC's systems, their contributions to overall system costs will necessarily be borne by MERC's other customers. While MERC accepts the Department's recommendation to allocate a portion of the NGEP revenue requirement consistent with the Company's proposed apportionment to Direct Connect customers, it is important to emphasize that the bypass risk remains an actual, significant concern.

## 3. 2020 Weather Normalized Sales

In its Comments, the Department notes that "in last year's NGEP filing, the Department expressed concern with MERC's forecasted sales for 2020 and argued that the use of weathernormalized actual sales for 2019 represented the most reasonable sales number to establish rates." ${ }^{73}$ MERC did not object to using 2019 actual weather-normalized sales to set the 2020

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NGEP rider surcharge rates and the Commission ultimately accepted the parties agreement to calculate 2020 NGEP rider rates based on 2019 actual weather-normalized sales. ${ }^{74}$

Consistent with the Commission's decision on MERC's 2020 NGEP rider in Docket No. G011/M-19-608 and the Department's recommendation in its Comments in this docket, MERC agrees to update its 2021 rider surcharge rates based on 2020 actual weather-normalized sales. However, MERC notes that 2020 weather-normalized sales are not available as of the filing of these Reply Comments. MERC has already provided updated NGEP rider surcharge calculations based on 2019 actual weather normalized sales, as reflected in the Company's response to Department Information Request No.1, ${ }^{75}$ and will provide updated NGEP rider surcharge rates based on 2020 actual weather-normalized sales when such sales are available, either in supplemental comments or in its compliance filing, ${ }^{76}$ depending on the timing of a Commission decision in this docket. ${ }^{77}$

## 4. Termination of 2021 NGEP Surcharge Rates

The Department concludes that MERC's proposal to terminate rider rates with the implementation of new NGEP rider surcharges or interim rates in a future rate case proceeding is reasonable, as this is the same termination method approved by the Commission in the last NGEP rider filing. ${ }^{78}$ Additionally, the Department states that it reviewed MERC's proposal to continue recovery of depreciation and return on rate base after the Rochester Project is completed and concludes that this proposal is not unreasonable and that the Department does not oppose this approach as long as depreciation recovery and return on rate base are rolled into rates in MERC's future general rate case and that the NGEP rider is suspended with the implementation of interim rates in a future general rate case. ${ }^{79}$ This issue is, therefore, resolved between the Department and the Company.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing, MERC respectfully requests that the Commission approve its 2021 NGEP Rider-eligible revenue deficiency of $\$ 1,184,928$, which incorporates the 2019 NGEP trueup and differences between the 2018 actual Rochester Project capital expenditures and

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January 22, 2021
Page 22
MERC's capital estimates used in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563 in accordance with the Commission's order in that docket, as reflected in Attachment A to these Reply Comments. Additionally, MERC requests that the Commission approve its proposed NGEP surcharge rate design by customer class as reflected in Attachment A to these Reply Comments with customer class surcharge rates based on 2020 actual weather-normalized sales and the removal of ADIT proration in the months that proceed implementation of the surcharge rates. The Company proposes to submit a compliance filing reflecting final surcharge rates to be effective on the first of the month after the Commission's final order in this proceeding and to continue until the Commission approves revised surcharge rates or implementation of interim rates in a future rate case proceeding.

Please contact me at (414) 221-4208 if you have any questions regarding the information in this filing. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,


Joylyn Hoffman Malueg
Project Specialist 3
Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation
cc: Service List

## Minnesota Department of Commerce 85 7th Place East | Suite 280 | St. Paul, MN 55101 <br> Information Request

Docket Number: G011/M-20-420
Requested From: Minnesota Energy Resources
Nonpublic $\boxtimes$ Public
Date of Request: 10/12/20
Response Due: 10/22/20
Type of Inquiry: General

SEND RESPONSE VIA EMAIL TO: Utility.Discovery@state.mn.us as well as the assigned analyst(s).
Assigned Analyst(s): Adam Heinen
Email Address(es): adam.heinen@state.mn.us
Phone Number(s): 651-539-1825

## ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS:

Each response must be submitted as a text searchable PDF, unless otherwise directed. Please include the docket number, request number, and respondent name and title on the answers. If your response contains Trade Secret data, please include a public copy.

## Request Number: 1

Topic:
Reference(s):

NGEP Rate Calculations
September 21, 2020 Commission Order, Docket No. G011/M-19-608

## Request:

Please provide updated data and NGEP rider surcharge rate calculation in the current docket based on the Commission's Order in Docket No. G011/M-19-608.

Please provide any supporting information in Microsoft Excel format with all links and formulae intact.

If this information has already been provided in initial petition or in response to an earlier DepartmentDER information request, please identify the specific cite(s) or Department-DER information request number(s).

## MERC Response:

Please see Attachment DOC IR 001_NGEP Rev Req 2019 True Up_Adjusted and Attachment DOC IR 001_NGEP Rev Req 2021_Adjusted.

Note that the following adjustments were made to the NGEP 2021 Revenue Requirement model based upon the Commission's Order in Docket No. G011/M-19-608:

- A rate base reduction equal to approximately 80 percent of the incremental amount of property tax between 2018 and 2021 to recognize the timing of property tax payments;
- Revenue apportionment based on MERC's approved method of revenue apportionment and rate design but including Direct Connect customers;

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## M) COMMERCE DEPARTMENT

## Minnesota Department of Commerce 85 7th Place East | Suite 280 | St. Paul, MN 55101 Information Request

Docket Number: G011/M-20-420
Requested From: Minnesota Energy Resources
$\square$ Nonpublic $\boxtimes$ Public
Date of Request: 10/12/20
Response Due: 10/22/20

Type of Inquiry: General

SEND RESPONSE VIA EMAIL TO: Utility.Discovery@state.mn.us as well as the assigned analyst(s).
Assigned Analyst(s): Adam Heinen
Email Address(es): adam.heinen@state.mn.us
Phone Number(s): 651-539-1825

## ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS:

Each response must be submitted as a text searchable PDF, unless otherwise directed. Please include the docket number, request number, and respondent name and title on the answers. If your response contains Trade Secret data, please include a public copy.

- Revenue apportionment based upon actual 2019 Weather Normalized sales. While MERC believes updating to use actual 2020 Weather Normalized sales for the 2021 NGEP (assuming such actual sales are available before implementation) would be consistent with the Commission's decision in Docket No. G011M-19-608 to use 2019 actual weather-normalized sales for the 2020 NGEP, 2020 Weather Normalized sales are not available at this time. MERC will provide 2020 Weather Normalized sales when available.

The Commission's Order in Docket No. G011/M-19-608 also adjusted the revenue requirement so that ADIT is not prorated for any of the months in 2020 that precede the month when the NGEP Rider is implemented. Because MERC has proposed implementation of the 2021 NGEP Rider surcharge rates effective January 1, 2021, no adjustment to remove ADIT proration from months in 2021 that proceed the month of implementation have been included in this response.

Note that no adjustment has been made to the NGEP 2021 model to adjust for 2020 depreciation rates, as MERC has not received an Order from the Commission approving MERC's proposed 2020 depreciation rates in Docket No. G011/D-20-515. Consistent with the Commission's Order in Docket No. G011/M-19-608, MERC will update the 2020 depreciation rates with its 2020 true-up.

Note that no adjustment was made to the NGEP 2021 model to adjust 2021 estimated property tax, as MERC is conducting the calculation of estimated property tax based upon NGEP property estimated to be placed in service for the forecast year.

Note that the following adjustment was made to the NGEP 2019 True-up model based upon the Commission's Order in Docket No. G011/M-19-608:

- Based upon conversations MERC had with the Department in April 2020, MERC has calculated a revised estimate of project area specific property tax for 2019.

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## M) <br> COMMERCE DEPARTMENT

## Minnesota Department of Commerce 85 7th Place East | Suite 280 | St. Paul, MN 55101 <br> Information Request

Docket Number: G011/M-20-420
$\square$ Nonpublic $\boxtimes$ Public
Requested From: Minnesota Energy Resources
Date of Request: 10/12/20
Response Due: 10/22/20
Type of Inquiry: General

SEND RESPONSE VIA EMAIL TO: Utility.Discovery@state.mn.us as well as the assigned analyst(s).
Assigned Analyst(s): Adam Heinen
Email Address(es): adam.heinen@state.mn.us
Phone Number(s): 651-539-1825

## ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS:

Each response must be submitted as a text searchable PDF, unless otherwise directed. Please include the docket number, request number, and respondent name and title on the answers. If your response contains Trade Secret data, please include a public copy.

Note that no adjustments were needed to the NGEP 2019 True-up model based upon the Commission's Order in Docket No. G011/M-19-608, for the following items:

- a Cash Working Capital rate base reduction is not necessary because the 2019 true-up reflects actual rate base additions and estimated actual project-specific property expense, therefore the situation of lead-lag does not exist in the true-up
- the ADIT proration value is zero in the true-up model, therefore adjusting ADIT such that it is not prorated for any month that precedes the month the NGEP rider is implemented is not necessary
- an update to reflect 2019 actual depreciation rates approved for use in the 2019 calendar year because MERC already applied approved 2019 depreciation rates as discussed in its Petition at 32-33.

To be completed by responder

Response Date: October 22, 2020
Response by: Joylyn Hoffman Malueg
Email Address: Joylyn.HoffmanMalueg@wecenergygroup.com
Phone Number: 414-221-4208

NGEP Rider 2021 Forecast
Revenue Requirement on NGEP


Notes
13-Month Average Net Plant value
Commission Authorized 2018 Rate Case
.
Docket No. G011/M-19-608, Order Point 1, Cash Working Capital adjustment for incremental Property Tax rate base between 2018 and 202
Adjusted based on MERC'' Response to DOC IR 001
Weather normalized 2019 sales

## Assumptions

Assumes no AFUDC, but a return on CWIP in Rate Base
Does not assume any Destination Medical Center CIAC
3 Removes contingency per Commission Order Approving NGEP Rider Surcharge with Modifications

2021 NGEP RIDER RATE DESIGN


|  | Month | Construction Expenditures | CWIP Balance | Plant In Service Balance | Accumulated Depreciation | Accumulated Deferred Tax | Rate Base | ADIT Proration Adjust (N/A for Actuals) | Adjusted Rate Base | Depreciation Expense | Property Tax | O\&M |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 2017 | Dec-17 | 885,551 | 3,289,954 | 2,378,421 | $(3,204)$ | $(39,304)$ | 5,625,867 | - | 5,625,867 | 3,204 | - |  |
| 2018 | Jan-18 | $(133,270)$ | 3,293,362 | 2,241,742 | $(12,325)$ | $(41,010)$ | 5,481,770 | - | 5,481,770 | 9,120 | 5,881 | - |
| 2018 | Feb-18 | 159,187 | 3,372,894 | 2,321,397 | $(20,915)$ | $(43,031)$ | 5,630,346 | - | 5,630,346 | 8,590 | 5,881 | - |
| 2018 | Mar-18 | 176,936 | 3,464,661 | 2,406,566 | $(29,814)$ | $(45,144)$ | 5,796,269 | - | 5,796,269 | 8,899 | 5,881 | - |
| 2018 | Apr-18 | 8,698 | 3,463,289 | 2,416,636 | $(39,043)$ | $(47,028)$ | 5,793,854 | - | 5,793,854 | 9,229 | 5,881 | - |
| 2018 | May-18 | 303,234 | 3,694,754 | 2,488,404 | $(11,308)$ | $(59,821)$ | 6,112,029 | - | 6,112,029 | 9,268 | 5,881 | - |
| 2018 | Jun-18 | 129,367 | 3,816,204 | 2,496,321 | $(20,849)$ | $(61,703)$ | 6,229,974 | - | 6,229,974 | 9,541 | 5,881 | - |
| 2018 | Jul-18 | 1,389,699 | 5,145,207 | 2,557,017 | $(30,421)$ | $(63,970)$ | 7,607,834 | - | 7,607,834 | 9,572 | 5,881 | - |
| 2018 | Aug-18 | 4,249,032 | 9,426,012 | 2,525,245 | $(39,020)$ | $(65,882)$ | 11,846,355 | - | 11,846,355 | 9,807 | 5,881 |  |
| 2018 | Sep-18 | 858,934 | 10,222,942 | 2,587,249 | $(48,703)$ | $(68,282)$ | 12,693,206 | - | 12,693,206 | 9,684 | 5,881 | - |
| 2018 | Oct-18 | 1,960,090 | 12,128,351 | 2,641,929 | $(8,028)$ | $(85,105)$ | 14,677,147 | - | 14,677,147 | 9,924 | 5,881 | - |
| 2018 | Nov-18 | 37,608 | 12,161,171 | 2,646,717 | $(18,156)$ | $(86,974)$ | 14,702,758 | - | 14,702,758 | 10,128 | 5,881 | - |
| 2018 | Dec-18 | 364,201 | 4,506,133 | 10,665,956 | $(24,278)$ | $(176,145)$ | 14,971,666 | - | 14,971,666 | 10,147 | 5,883 | - |
| 2019 | Jan-19 | 170,003 | 4,671,034 | 10,671,057 | $(42,181)$ | $(189,364)$ | 15,110,547 | - | 15,110,547 | 21,930 | 16,272 | 3,386 |
| 2019 | Feb-19 | 205,565 | 4,857,918 | 10,689,739 | $(64,119)$ | $(201,462)$ | 15,282,075 | - | 15,282,075 | 21,939 | 16,272 | 3,386 |
| 2019 | Mar-19 | 259,399 | 5,112,551 | 10,694,505 | $(82,067)$ | $(214,699)$ | 15,510,290 | - | 15,510,290 | 21,975 | 16,272 | 3,386 |
| 2019 | Apr-19 | 560,680 | 5,627,456 | 10,740,280 | $(100,559)$ | $(227,936)$ | 16,039,241 | - | 16,039,241 | 21,984 | 16,272 | 3,386 |
| 2019 | May-19 | 164,100 | 5,788,015 | 10,743,821 | $(122,616)$ | $(240,045)$ | 16,169,175 | - | 16,169,175 | 22,057 | 16,272 | 3,386 |
| 2019 | Jun-19 | 2,012,207 | 7,792,321 | 10,751,723 | $(125,884)$ | $(257,569)$ | 18,160,590 | - | 18,160,590 | 22,070 | 16,272 | 3,386 |
| 2019 | Jul-19 | 1,495,673 | 9,285,723 | 10,753,994 | $(147,966)$ | $(269,678)$ | 19,622,072 | - | 19,622,072 | 22,082 | 16,272 | 3,386 |
| 2019 | Aug-19 | 1,571,867 | 10,854,436 | 10,757,147 | $(170,051)$ | $(281,797)$ | 21,159,735 | - | 21,159,735 | 22,085 | 16,272 | 3,386 |
| 2019 | Sep-19 | 390,502 | 11,509,085 | 10,493,001 | $(192,144)$ | $(291,774)$ | 21,518,168 | - | 21,518,168 | 22,092 | 16,272 | 3,386 |
| 2019 | Oct-19 | 299,900 | 11,380,677 | 10,921,308 | $(213,857)$ | $(307,581)$ | 21,780,547 | - | 21,780,547 | 21,713 | 16,272 | 3,386 |
| 2019 | Nov-19 | 231,208 | 3,937,674 | 18,595,520 | $(236,213)$ | $(395,368)$ | 21,901,613 | - | 21,901,613 | 22,356 | 16,272 | 3,386 |
| 2019 | Dec-19 | 507,363 | 3,939,004 | 19,101,552 | $(276,295)$ | $(414,770)$ | 22,349,491 | - | 22,349,491 | 40,082 | 16,272 | 3,386 |
| 2020 | Jan-20 | $(32,063)$ | 3,906,942 | 19,101,552 | $(340,556)$ | $(427,783)$ | 22,240,154 | $(8,017)$ | 22,232,137 | 64,261 | 41,750 | - |
| 2020 | Feb-20 | 34,900 | 3,941,842 | 19,101,552 | $(404,818)$ | $(440,796)$ | 22,197,780 | $(14,543)$ | 22,183,237 | 64,261 | 41,750 | . |
| 2020 | Mar-20 | 46,100 | 3,987,942 | 19,101,552 | $(469,079)$ | $(453,809)$ | 22,166,605 | $(19,526)$ | 22,147,079 | 64,261 | 41,750 | - |
| 2020 | Apr-20 | 914,300 | 4,902,242 | 19,101,552 | $(533,341)$ | $(466,822)$ | 23,003,631 | $(22,992)$ | 22,980,639 | 64,261 | 41,750 | - |
| 2020 | May-20 | 382,300 | 5,284,542 | 19,101,552 | $(597,602)$ | $(479,835)$ | 23,308,657 | $(24,915)$ | 23,283,742 | 64,261 | 41,750 | - |
| 2020 | Jun-20 | 1,000,200 | 6,284,742 | 19,101,552 | $(661,863)$ | $(492,848)$ | 24,231,582 | $(25,321)$ | 24,206,261 | 64,261 | 41,750 | - |
| 2020 | Jul-20 | 1,162,200 | 7,446,942 | 19,101,552 | $(726,125)$ | $(505,861)$ | 25,316,508 | $(24,184)$ | 25,292,324 | 64,261 | 41,750 | - |
| 2020 | Aug-20 | 1,389,700 | 8,836,642 | 19,101,552 | $(790,386)$ | $(518,874)$ | 26,628,934 | $(21,503)$ | 26,607,430 | 64,261 | 41,750 | - |
| 2020 | Sep-20 | 1,372,600 | 10,209,242 | 19,101,552 | $(854,647)$ | $(531,887)$ | 27,924,259 | $(17,306)$ | 27,906,953 | 64,261 | 41,750 | - |
| 2020 | Oct-20 | 1,615,200 | 11,824,442 | 19,101,552 | $(918,909)$ | $(544,900)$ | 29,462,185 | $(11,565)$ | 29,450,620 | 64,261 | 41,750 | - |
| 2020 | Nov-20 | 110,483 | - | 31,036,477 | $(983,170)$ | $(675,513)$ | 29,377,794 | $(4,998)$ | 29,372,796 | 64,261 | 41,750 | - |
| 2020 | Dec-20 | 107,358 | - | 31,143,835 | $(1,066,649)$ | $(694,861)$ | 29,382,325 | 10,787 | 29,393,112 | 83,479 | 41,750 | - |
| 2021 | Jan-21 | 34,950 | 34,950 | 31,143,835 | $(1,150,354)$ | $(720,638)$ | 29,307,793 | $(15,875)$ | 29,291,918 | 83,705 | 64,000 | 3,386 |
| 2021 | Feb-21 | 35,950 | 70,900 | 31,143,835 | $(1,234,059)$ | $(746,423)$ | 29,234,254 | $(28,858)$ | 29,205,396 | 83,705 | 64,000 | 3,386 |
| 2021 | Mar-21 | 40,450 | 111,350 | 31,143,835 | $(1,317,764)$ | $(772,207)$ | 29,165,215 | $(38,784)$ | 29,126,430 | 83,705 | 64,000 | 3,386 |
| 2021 | Apr-21 | 1,688,275 | 1,799,625 | 31,143,835 | $(1,401,468)$ | $(797,992)$ | 30,744,000 | $(45,704)$ | 30,698,296 | 83,705 | 64,000 | 3,386 |
| 2021 | May-21 | 1,232,275 | 3,031,900 | 31,143,835 | $(1,485,173)$ | $(823,777)$ | 31,866,785 | $(49,566)$ | 31,817,219 | 83,705 | 64,000 | 3,386 |
| 2021 | Jun-21 | 1,758,275 | 4,790,175 | 31,143,835 | $(1,568,878)$ | $(849,560)$ | 33,515,572 | $(50,424)$ | 33,465,149 | 83,705 | 64,000 | 3,386 |
| 2021 | Jul-21 | 1,846,100 | 6,636,275 | 31,143,835 | $(1,652,583)$ | $(875,344)$ | 35,252,183 | $(48,223)$ | 35,203,960 | 83,705 | 64,000 | 3,386 |
| 2021 | Aug-21 | 1,811,100 | 8,447,375 | 31,143,835 | $(1,736,288)$ | $(901,128)$ | 36,953,794 | $(42,965)$ | 36,910,830 | 83,705 | 64,000 | 3,386 |
| 2021 | Sep-21 | 1,793,100 | 10,240,475 | 31,143,835 | $(1,819,993)$ | $(926,913)$ | 38,637,405 | $(34,701)$ | 38,602,704 | 83,705 | 64,000 | 3,386 |
| 2021 | Oct-21 | 533,775 | 10,774,250 | 31,143,835 | $(1,903,698)$ | $(952,698)$ | 39,061,690 | $(23,379)$ | 39,038,310 | 83,705 | 64,000 | 3,386 |
| 2021 | Nov-21 | 254,108 | - | 42,172,194 | $(1,987,402)$ | $(1,087,149)$ | 39,097,642 | $(9,908)$ | 39,087,734 | 83,705 | 64,000 | 3,386 |
| 2021 | 21 | 26,1 | - | 42,198,302 | (2,098,11 | (1,115,3 | 38,984 | 13,732 | 38,998, | 110,716 | 64,000 |  |






## NGEP Rider 2019 True-up

## Revenue Requirement on NGEP



## Notes

13-Month Average Net Plant value
2 Commission Authorized 2018 Rate Case
32018 Rate Case Adjusted for Tax Reform
4 Represents incremental customers and sales growth related specifically to the Rochester project at approved rates from the 2018 rate case

## Assumptions

1 Assumes no AFUDC, but a return on CWIP in Rate Base
2 Does not assume any Destination Medical Center CIAC
3 Removes contingency per Commission Order Approving NGEP Rider Surcharge with Modifications




|  |  |  |  |  |  | micv | ADITCV | ADITPV |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  |  | MN Tax Rate |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | mN Apport | onment factor | 0.989671 | 0.988671 |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | M ITax Rate |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Apport | Fator | 000542 | 0.000542 |  |  |  |  |
| Tax Resere | Accum Sch M | Aoli fed | Aoli state | Total Aoit | ADIT Expense |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | - |  |  | - | - | - | - |  |
|  | - |  |  | - | - | - | - |  |
|  | - |  |  | - | - | - | - |  |
|  | . | . |  | . | - | . | . |  |
|  | - | . | - | . | - | . | . |  |
| (300.54.799) | (300.54.799) | ${ }^{(63,115.0)}$ | ${ }^{(23,036.00)}$ | ${ }^{(88,151.00)}$ | 86,151.00 | - | - | (88, 515.00) |
| (1348,77.08) | (136,754.21] | (70,79.00) | (25,81.00) (28,9300) | (19,530.00) |  |  |  |  |
|  | (1373,049,07) 40930980 | $(78,341.00)$ $(85,95.00$ |  |  | 10,40400 10,99400 | 7.15 37.01 | 3.00 15.00 | ${ }^{(106,937.00)}(117.343 .00)$ |
| (494,251.73) | (446,091.63) | (93,6880.0) | (34,191.00) | (127,871.00) | 10,543.00 | 72.61 | 30.00 | (127,901.00) |
| ${ }^{(542,679.26)}$ | ${ }^{4882,395.61)}$ | (101,304.00) | (36,97.00) | (138,277.00) | 10,406.00 | 177.29 | 72.00 | (138,899.00) |
| $\left.{ }^{(5991,235909}\right)$ |  | (108,59500) | ${ }^{(33,767.00)}$ | (128,726.00) | 10,449.00 | ${ }^{276.11}$ | ${ }^{114.00}$ | (124884.0.00) |
| (639,754,77) | (555,211.90) | (116,596.00) | (42,54.00) | (159,250.00) | 10,424.00 | ${ }^{389.77}$ | ${ }^{161.00}$ | (159,311.1.0) |
| (688,267.08) | (591.585.26) | (124,234.00) | (45, 324.00) | (169,576.00) | 10,426.00 | 50.84 | ${ }^{209.00}$ | (169,785.00) |
| (729,088.21) | (620,266,21) | (130,257.00) | (47,540.00) | (177,997.00) | ${ }^{8,221.00}$ | ${ }^{627.15}$ | ${ }^{259.00}$ | (178,056.00) |
| (790,087.04) | (669,528,53) | (120.603.00) | (51,315.00) | (191,918.00) | 14,121.00 | ${ }^{33979}$ | ${ }^{140.00}$ | (192,58.00) |
|  |  | $\xrightarrow{(182,487.00)}(1818,84.00)$ |  | $\xrightarrow{(249,089.00)}$ | 57.171 .00 12.84000 | - $\begin{array}{r}\text { 69,4.82 } \\ 8.15989\end{array}$ | ${ }_{\text {3,369.00 }}^{287.00}$ | (2993.37.00) (265.2880) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |



Tax Resene
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aditpv




9,411.00) (12,58





MERC
NGEP Tracker
2019

|  |  | Billed Revenue |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Month | Residential | Commercial/Industrial (Firm and Interruptible) | Transportation | Total | Revenue <br> Requirement ** | Cumulative Tracker Balance |
| Jan-18 | - | - | - | - | 3,023 | 3,023 |
| Feb-18 | - | - | - | - | 2,822 | 5,846 |
| Mar-18 | - | - | - | - | 2,859 | 8,705 |
| Apr-18 | - | - | - | - | 2,890 | 11,595 |
| May-18 | - | - | - | - | 2,825 | 14,420 |
| Jun-18 | - | - | - | - | 2,797 | 17,218 |
| Jul-18 | - | - | - | - | 2,625 | 19,843 |
| Aug-18 | - | - | - | - | 2,494 | 22,337 |
| Sep-18 | - | - | - | - | 2,245 | 24,582 |
| Oct-18 | - | - | - | - | 2,116 | 26,698 |
| Nov-18 | - | - | - | - | $(1,478)$ | 25,220 |
| Dec-18 | - | - | - | - | $(5,076)$ | 20,144 |
| Jan-19 | - | - | - | - | 33,144 | 53,287 |
| Feb-19 | - | - | - | - | 32,975 | 86,262 |
| Mar-19 | - | - | - | - | 39,932 | 126,194 |
| Apr-19 | - | - | - | - | 32,553 | 158,746 |
| May-19 | - | - | - | - | 28,609 | 187,356 |
| Jun-19 | - | - | - | - | 24,676 | 212,032 |
| Jul-19 | - | - | - | - | 25,430 | 237,462 |
| Aug-19 | 422 | 782 | 8 | 1,212 | 24,617 | 260,867 |
| Sep-19 | 1,710 | 2,038 | 20,875 | 24,623 | 24,034 | 260,278 |
| Oct-19 | 2,888 | 3,043 | 19,266 | 25,197 | 20,283 | 255,364 |
| Nov-19 | 9,893 | 9,142 | 22,954 | 41,989 | 16,963 | 230,338 |
| Dec-19 | 13,411 | 11,649 | 23,439 | 48,499 | 21,315 | 203,155 |
| TOTALS | 28,324 | 26,654 | 86,542 | 141,520 | 344,674 |  |

** Note - Represents a depiction of the monthly calculation of Revenue Requirements, based upon current Rate of Return and Gross Conversion factor applied against the previous month's ending Rate Base balance, and taking into account any applicable Offsetting Revenues and 33\% allowed revenue deficiency. This monthly calculation is performed in order to compute a Tracker Balance each month. This monthly calculation of Revenue Requirement will not tie to the computation of Revenue Requirements based upon a 13-month average.

|  | Parcel | Property | 12/31/17 Cost | Additions | Retirements | December 31, 2018 Total Cost | 2019 <br> Apportioned Market Value Per MNDOR | Rochester Project <br> Property Cost <br> (December 31, 2018) | Rochester Project \% of Total | Property Taxes per Bill | Estimated Project Related Property Taxes Paid 2020 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Salem | 99.17.02.900137 | Gas Dist | 168,724 | 8,014,581 | 58,185 | 8,125,120 | 4,123,702 | 8,014,581 | 0.986395423 | 127,362 | 125,629 |
|  |  | Other | 5,570 | 0 | 655 | 4,915 | 2,494 |  | 0 | 127,362 | 0 |
| Marion | 99.09.03.900103 | Gas Dist | 1,675,195 | 36,187 | 5,660 | 1,705,722 | 865,697 | 9,074 | 0.005319706 | 67,900 | 361 |
|  |  | Other | 3,278,753 | 171,044 | 161,178 | 3,288,619 | 1,669,056 | 171,044 | 0.052011008 | 67,900 | 3,532 |
|  |  |  | 5,128,242 | 8,221,812 | 225,678 | 13,124,376 | 6,660,949 | 8,194,700 |  | 195,262 | 129,522 |

OLMSTED COUNTY Property Records and Revenue 151 4th Street S.E.
P.O. Box 95

Rochester, MN 55903-0095
(507)328-7636
www.co.olmsted.mn.us

Tax Payer:
Property ID: PP 99.17.02.900137
MINNESOTA ENERGY RESOURCES
PO BOX 19001
GREEN BAY WI 54307-9001

Property Description:

\$\$\$ You may be eligible for one or even two refunds to reduce your property tax. Read the back of this statement to find out how to apply.

| TaX Detail for Your Property: |
| :--- | ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: |
| Taxes Payable Year: |

## PAYABLE 2020 2nd HALF PAYMENT STUB TO AVOID PENALTY PAY ON OR BEFORE Property ID: PP 99.17.02.900137

Tax Payer:

MINNESOTA ENERGY RESOURCES
PO BOX 19001
GREEN BAY WI 54307-9001

If your address has changed please check this box and show the change on the back of this stub

Total Property Tax: \$
127,362.00
Second half Due: \$
0.00

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
Olmsted County PRL
P.O. Box 95

Rochester, MN 55903-0095

No Receipt sent. Your cancelled check is proof of payment. Do not send postdated checks or cash. $\$ 30$ fee for returned payments.

## PAYABLE 2020 1st HALF PAYMENT STUB TO AVOID PENALTY PAY ON OR BEFORE MAY 15, 2020 Property ID: PP 99.17.02.900137 <br> Tax Payer:

MINNESOTA ENERGY RESOURCES
PO BOX 19001
GREEN BAY WI 54307-9001

PLEASE READ THE BACK OF THIS STATEMENT FOR IMPORTANT
If your address has changed please check this box and show the change on the back of this stub

Total Property Tax: \$ 127,362.00 First half Due: \$ 127,362.00

## MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:

Olmsted County PRL
P.O. Box 95

Rochester, MN 55903-0095
\$\$\$ REFUNDS
Even if you did not qualify in previous years, you may qualify for one or even two refunds from the State of Minnesota based on your 2020 Property Taxes.
you owned and occupied this property on January 2, 2020 as your homestead, you may qualify Dacket No.bGoldfM-20-42 the following refunds: Attachment B to Reply Comments

1. You may be eligible for a refund if your taxes exceed certain income-based thresholds, and your total household Page 3 income is less than $\$ 100,780$
2. If you also owned and occupied this property on January 2, 2019 as your homestead, you may be eligible for a refund if your property taxes increased by more than 12 percent and at least $\$ 100$ over last year. If you need Form M1PR and instructions:

## Senior Citizens Property Tax Deferra

The Senior Citizen Deferral Program was established to help senior citizens having difficulty paying property taxes. This deferral program allows senior citizens to leverage the equity in their home, providing two primary advantages:

1. It limits the annual out-of-pocket payment for property taxes to 3 percent of total household income, and
2. It provides predictability. The amount you pay will not change for as long as you participate in this program.

To be eligible, you must be 1) at least 65 years old, 2 ) with a household income of $\$ 60,000$ or less, and 3 ) have lived in your home for at least 15 years. While in this program, you will only have to pay taxes equal to 3 percent of your net income, with the remaining tax paid by a low interest loan by the State of Minnesota. This is not a tax forgiveness program - the unpaid tax along with accumulated interest will become a lien on the property for future satisfaction, such as upon a sale or disposition of the estate. To receive a fact sheet and application, please call: (651) 556-6088.
Penalty for Late Payment of Property Tax
If you pay your first half and second half property tax after the due dates, a penalty will be added to your tax. The later you pay, the greater the penalty you must pay. The table below shows the penalty you will pay if your property taxes are not paid before the date shown.

|  | 2020 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 2021 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Property Type: |  | $\begin{aligned} & \bar{E} \\ & \stackrel{\rightharpoonup}{0} \end{aligned}$ | $\bar{y}$ | $\underset{\sim}{x}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \stackrel{్}{=} \\ & = \end{aligned}$ | $$ | O | $\xrightarrow[3]{2}$ | 2 2 2 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { ت} \\ & \stackrel{\circ}{\circ} \end{aligned}$ | - |
| $\begin{array}{\|r\|} \hline \text { Homesteads and Cabins } \\ \text { 1st half } \\ \text { 2nd half } \\ \text { Both Unpaid } \\ \hline \end{array}$ | 2\% | 4\% | 5\% | 6\% | 7\% | 8\% | $\begin{aligned} & 8 \% \\ & \mathbf{2 \%} \\ & 5 \% \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 8 \% \\ & 4 \% \\ & 6 \% \end{aligned}$ |  | $\begin{gathered} 8 \% \\ 5 \% \\ 6.5 \% \end{gathered}$ | $\begin{gathered} 10 \% \\ 7 \% \\ 8.5 \% \end{gathered}$ |
| Agricultural Homesteads 1st half 2nd half Both Unpaid | 2\% | 4\% | 5\% | 6\% | 7\% | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | $\begin{aligned} & 8 \% \\ & \mathbf{2 \%} \\ & \mathbf{5 \%} \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 8 \% \\ & 4 \% \\ & 6 \% \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{gathered} 10 \% \\ 6 \% \\ 8 \% \end{gathered}$ |
| Nonhomesteads <br> 1st half <br> 2nd half <br> Both Unpaid | 4\% | 8\% | 9\% | 10\% | 11\% | 12\% | $\begin{array}{r} 12 \% \\ 4 \% \\ 8 \% \end{array}$ | $\begin{array}{r} 12 \% \\ 8 \% \\ 10 \% \\ \hline \end{array}$ |  | $\begin{gathered} 12 \% \\ 9 \% \\ 10.5 \% \end{gathered}$ | $\begin{array}{r} 14 \% \\ 11 \% \\ 12.5 \% \end{array}$ |
| Agricultural Nonhomesteads <br> 1st half <br> 2nd half <br> Both Unpaid | 4\% | 8\% | 9\% | 10\% | 11\% | 12\% | 12\% | 12\% | $\begin{gathered} 12 \% \\ 4 \% \\ 8 \% \end{gathered}$ | $\begin{array}{r} 12 \% \\ 8 \% \\ 10 \% \end{array}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 14 \% \\ & 10 \% \\ & 12 \% \end{aligned}$ |
| Personal Property: | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% |
| Manufactured Homes <br> 1st half <br> 2nd half |  |  |  |  | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | $\begin{aligned} & 8 \% \\ & 8 \% \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 8\% } \\ & 8 \% \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 8 \% \\ & 8 \% \end{aligned}$ |

Personal Property Located on Leased Government-owned Land: Taxes may be paid in two installments due at the same time as real property taxes. These taxes are subject to the same penalty schedule and penalty rates as real property taxes. All other personal property taxes are due in full on or before May 15, 2020.

Note to manufactured homeowners: The title to your manufactured home cannot be transferred unless all current year and delinquent personal property taxes are paid at the time of transfer

When you send in or present a check to make your payment, you authorize Olmsted County to initiate an electronic funds transfer from your bank account for the amount of your check. Please note, when your check is converted to an electronic fund transfer, your check will not be returned to your bank and funds may be withdrawn your checking account the same day we receive payment. Please call(507)328-7680 if you do not want check to be converted to an electronic funds transfer.

If your check, bankcard (debit or credit) charge, or other instrument or electronic transfer transaction used to pay us is dishonored, refused or returned for any reason, we reserve the right to electronically debit your account for the amount of the attempted payment, plus a processing fee up to amount allowable by law. Your bank account may be debited as early as the same day such initial payment is dishonored, refused or returned.

ADDRESS CORRECTION
NEW ADDRESS
NAME
STREET
ADDRESS $\qquad$
CITY

STATE $\qquad$ ZIP CODE $\qquad$
TAX PAYER ID: $\qquad$

ADDRESS CORRECTION
NEW ADDRESS
NAME
STREET
ADDRESS $\qquad$
CITY $\qquad$
STATE $\square$ ZIP CODE $\qquad$
TAX PAYER ID:

IMPORTANT: ON THE PROPERTY DESCRIBED HEREON, CHECK YOUR STATEMENTS TO SEE THAT ALL YOUR PROPERTY IS INCLUDED. (WE ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY PARCEL OMITTED.) THIS DOCUMENT IS NOT VALID AS A RECEIPT OF PAYMENT FOR YOUR PROPERTY TAXES UNTIL YOUR CHECK HAS CLEARED THE BANK.

PAYMENT- Payment must be in U.S. dollars by money order of draft from a U.S. bank or U.S. branch. Draft must have bank's coded transit number along bottom edge. Payments not meeting these requirements cannot be accepted sine substantial collection fees will be charges by the banks involved.

OLMSTED COUNTY Property Records and Revenue 151 4th Street S.E. P.O. Box 95

Rochester, MN 55903-0095
(507)328-7636
www.co.olmsted.mn.us

Tax Payer:
Property ID: PP 99.09.03.900103
MINNESOTA ENERGY RESOURCES
PO BOX 19001
GREEN BAY WI 54307-9001

Property Description:


## PAYABLE 2020 2nd HALF PAYMENT STUB TO AVOID PENALTY PAY ON OR BEFORE Property ID: PP 99.09.03.900103

Tax Payer:

MINNESOTA ENERGY RESOURCES
PO BOX 19001
GREEN BAY WI 54307-9001

If your address has changed please check this box and show the change on the back of this stub

Total Property Tax: \$
67,900.00
Second half Due: \$
0.00

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
Olmsted County PRL
P.O. Box 95

Rochester, MN 55903-0095

No Receipt sent. Your cancelled check is proof of payment. Do not send postdated checks or cash. $\$ 30$ fee for returned payments.

PAYABLE 2020 1st HALF PAYMENT STUB
TO AVOID PENALTY PAY ON OR BEFORE MAY 15, 2020
Property ID: PP 99.09 .03 .900103
Tax Payer:

MINNESOTA ENERGY RESOURCES
PO BOX 19001
GREEN BAY WI 54307-9001

PLEASE READ THE BACK OF THIS STATEMENT FOR IMPORTANT
If your address has changed please check this box and show the change on the back of this stub
Total Property Tax: \$ 67,900.00
First half Due: \$ 67,900.00

## MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:

Olmsted County PRL
P.O. Box 95

Rochester, MN 55903-0095
\$\$\$ REFUNDS
Even if you did not qualify in previous years, you may qualify for one or even two refunds from the State of Minnesota based on your 2020 Property Taxes.
you owned and occupied this property on January 2, 2020 as your homestead, you may qualify Dacket No.bGoldfM-20-42 the following refunds: Attachment B to Reply Comments 1. You may be eligible for a refund if your taxes exceed certain income-based thresholds, and your total household Page 5 income is less than $\$ 100,780$.
2. If you also owned and occupied this property on January 2, 2019 as your homestead, you may be eligible for a refund if your property taxes increased by more than 12 percent and at least $\$ 100$ over last year. If you need Form M1PR and instructions:

## Senior Citizens Property Tax Deferra

The Senior Citizen Deferral Program was established to help senior citizens having difficulty paying property taxes. This deferral program allows senior citizens to leverage the equity in their home, providing two primary advantages:

1. It limits the annual out-of-pocket payment for property taxes to 3 percent of total household income, and
2. It provides predictability. The amount you pay will not change for as long as you participate in this program.

To be eligible, you must be 1) at least 65 years old, 2 ) with a household income of $\$ 60,000$ or less, and 3 ) have lived in your home for at least 15 years. While in this program, you will only have to pay taxes equal to 3 percent of your net income, with the remaining tax paid by a low interest loan by the State of Minnesota. This is not a tax forgiveness program - the unpaid tax along with accumulated interest will become a lien on the property for future satisfaction, such as upon a sale or disposition of the estate. To receive a fact sheet and application, please call: (651) 556-6088.
Penalty for Late Payment of Property Tax
If you pay your first half and second half property tax after the due dates, a penalty will be added to your tax. The later you pay, the greater the penalty you must pay. The table below shows the penalty you will pay if your property taxes are not paid before the date shown.

|  | 2020 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 2021 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Property Type: | $\begin{aligned} & \text { ? } \\ & \stackrel{y}{2} \\ & 2 \\ & \hline \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \bar{E} \\ & 0 \\ & \hline 0 \end{aligned}$ | $\stackrel{\Xi}{E}$ |  | $\begin{aligned} & \hline \pi_{0}^{0} \\ & \hline \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 0 \\ & \dot{3} \end{aligned}$ | - | $\xrightarrow[3]{2}$ | 2 8 3 | - | N |
| $\begin{array}{r} \hline \text { Homesteads and Cabins } \\ \text { 1st half } \\ \text { 2nd half } \\ \text { Both Unpaid } \\ \hline \end{array}$ | 2\% | 4\% | 5\% | 6\% | 7\% | 8\% | $\begin{aligned} & 8 \% \\ & \mathbf{2 \%} \\ & 5 \% \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 8 \% \\ & 4 \% \\ & 6 \% \end{aligned}$ |  | $\begin{gathered} 8 \% \\ 5 \% \\ 6.5 \% \end{gathered}$ | $\begin{gathered} 10 \% \\ 7 \% \\ 8.5 \% \end{gathered}$ |
| Agricultural Homesteads 1st half 2nd half Both Unpaid | 2\% | 4\% | 5\% | 6\% | 7\% | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | $\begin{aligned} & 8 \% \\ & \mathbf{2 \%} \\ & 5 \% \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 8 \% \\ & 4 \% \\ & 6 \% \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{gathered} 10 \% \\ 6 \% \\ 8 \% \end{gathered}$ |
| Nonhomesteads <br>  <br> 1st half <br> 2nd half <br> Both Unpaid | 4\% | 8\% | 9\% | 10\% | 11\% | 12\% | $\begin{gathered} 12 \% \\ 4 \% \\ 8 \% \end{gathered}$ | $\begin{array}{r} 12 \% \\ 8 \% \\ 10 \% \end{array}$ |  | $\begin{array}{r} 12 \% \\ 9 \% \\ 10.5 \% \end{array}$ | $\begin{array}{r} 14 \% \\ 11 \% \\ 12.5 \% \end{array}$ |
| Agricultural Nonhomesteads 1st half 2nd half Both Unpaid | 4\% | 8\% | 9\% | 10\% | 11\% | 12\% | 12\% | 12\% | $\begin{array}{r} 12 \% \\ 4 \% \\ 8 \% \\ \hline \end{array}$ | $\begin{gathered} 12 \% \\ 8 \% \\ 10 \% \end{gathered}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 14 \% \\ & 10 \% \\ & 12 \% \end{aligned}$ |
| Personal Property: | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% |
| Manufactured Homes <br> 1st half <br> 2nd half |  |  |  |  | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | 8\% | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 8\% } \\ & \text { 8\% } \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 8\% } \\ & 8 \% \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 8\% } \\ & 8 \% \end{aligned}$ |

Personal Property Located on Leased Government-owned Land: Taxes may be paid in two installments due at the same time as real property taxes. These taxes are subject to the same penalty schedule and penalty rates as real property taxes. All other personal property taxes are due in full on or before May 15, 2020.

Note to manufactured homeowners: The title to your manufactured home cannot be transferred unless all current year and delinquent personal property taxes are paid at the time of transfer

When you send in or present a check to make your payment, you authorize Olmsted County to initiate an electronic funds transfer from your bank account for the amount of your check. Please note, when your check is converted to an electronic fund transfer, your check will not be returned to your bank and funds may be withdrawn your checking account the same day we receive payment. Please call(507)328-7680 if you do not want check to be converted to an electronic funds transfer.

If your check, bankcard (debit or credit) charge, or other instrument or electronic transfer transaction used to pay us is dishonored, refused or returned for any reason, we reserve the right to electronically debit your account for the amount of the attempted payment, plus a processing fee up to amount allowable by law. Your bank account may be debited as early as the same day such initial payment is dishonored, refused or returned.

ADDRESS CORRECTION
NEW ADDRESS
NAME
STREET
ADDRESS $\qquad$
CITY

STATE $\qquad$ ZIP CODE $\qquad$
TAX PAYER ID: $\qquad$

ADDRESS CORRECTION
NEW ADDRESS
NAME
STREET
ADDRESS $\qquad$
CITY $\qquad$
STATE $\square$ ZIP CODE $\qquad$
TAX PAYER ID:

IMPORTANT: ON THE PROPERTY DESCRIBED HEREON, CHECK YOUR STATEMENTS TO SEE THAT ALL YOUR PROPERTY IS INCLUDED. (WE ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY PARCEL OMITTED.) THIS DOCUMENT IS NOT VALID AS A RECEIPT OF PAYMENT FOR YOUR PROPERTY TAXES UNTIL YOUR CHECK HAS CLEARED THE BANK.

PAYMENT- Payment must be in U.S. dollars by money order of draft from a U.S. bank or U.S. branch. Draft must have bank's coded transit number along bottom edge. Payments not meeting these requirements cannot be accepted sine substantial collection fees will be charges by the banks involved.

## M) COMMERCE DEPARTMENT

## Minnesota Department of Commerce 85 7th Place East | Suite 280 | St. Paul, MN 55101 <br> Information Request

Docket Number: G011/M-20-420
Requested From: Minnesota Energy Resources

Nonpublic $\triangle$ Public
Date of Request: 10/23/2020
Response Due: 11/2/2020

Type of Inquiry: General

SEND RESPONSE VIA EMAIL TO: Utility.Discovery@state.mn.us as well as the assigned analyst(s).
Assigned Analyst(s): Adam Heinen
Email Address(es): adam.heinen@state.mn.us
Phone Number(s): 651-539-1825

## ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS:

Each response must be submitted as a text searchable PDF, unless otherwise directed. Please include the docket number, request number, and respondent name and title on the answers. If your response contains Trade Secret data, please include a public copy.

| Request Number: | $\mathbf{4}$ |
| :--- | :--- |
| Topic: | NGEP Rate Calculations |
| Reference(s): | Click or tap here to enter text. |

## Request:

Please fully explain why MERC changed its 2018 Rate case expense and rate base items between Docket No. 19608 and the current docket.

If this information has already been provided in initial petition or in response to an earlier DepartmentDER information request, please identify the specific cite(s) or Department-DER information request number(s).

## MERC Response:

Docket No. 19-608 was MERC's 2020 NGEP Rider petition. It was comprised of a revenue requirement for the forecasted 2020 year. At page 11 of MERC's Initial Petition in Docket No. 19-608, MERC states:

In Docket No. G011/GR-17-563, the Commission authorized recovery of MERC's Rochester Phase II costs through the 2018 test year based on 2017 actual rate base additions and the 2018 projected 13-month average additions to rate base. Additionally, in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563, the Commission required that MERC include any difference between the 2018 actual Rochester Project capital expenditures and MERC's capital estimates used in that docket in its NGEP Rider as

[^23]
# Minnesota Department of Commerce 85 7th Place East | Suite 280 | St. Paul, MN 55101 <br> Information Request 

Docket Number: G011/M-20-420
Requested From: Minnesota Energy Resources

Nonpublic $\boxtimes$ Public
Date of Request: 10/23/2020
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> a true-up with MERC's NGEP rider true-up calculation. The true-up will ensure that an overestimate of projected costs built into base rates can be corrected-for. Consistent with the Commission's Order in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563, MERC will true-up for 2018 actual Rochester Project costs within its 2019 true-up to be filed in [calendar year] 2020 . In order to avoid the need for a subsequent true up to the 2020 NGEP to account for 2018 actuals, MERC has calculated the 2020 NGEP revenue requirement based on 2018 actuals.

On page 1 of Exhibit B in MERC's Initial Petition in Docket No. 19-608, which shows the 2020 Revenue Requirement for the NGEP Rider, the values in the column " 2018 Rate Case" are representative of 2018 actuals, and correspond to MERC's statement at page 11 of the Initial Petition. Note that Docket No. 19608 was a forecasted 2020 year, and 2019 would present the first calendar year where a true-up in the NGEP rider would occur. Therefore the revenue requirements calculation for 2020 NGEP in Docket No. 19-608 did not include a line item for Over/Under recovery of actual costs; as stated at Page 11 of MERC's Initial Petition, true-up would occur with its 2019 true-up, which was to be filed in calendar year 2020. MERC did calculate the 2020 forecasted NGEP revenue requirement using 2018 actuals as the starting basis, to avoid the need for a subsequent true-up on the 2020 NGEP for 2018 actuals.

Docket No. 20-420 is MERC's 2021 NGEP Rider petition. It is comprised of a forecasted 2021 year, and a true-up of 2019 NGEP. The revenue requirements calculation for 2021 NGEP differs from Docket No. 19608 in that an Over/Under recovery of actual costs is included as a line item, which is inclusive of both 2019 actuals and 2018 actuals. MERC provides a detailed discussion of the accounting for the differences between the 2018 actual Rochester Project capital expenditures and the capital forecast used to set base rates in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563, at pages 36-37 of the Company's Petition in this docket.

[^24]
## M) COMMERCE DEPARTMENT

# Minnesota Department of Commerce 85 7th Place East | Suite 280 | St. Paul, MN 55101 <br> Information Request 

Docket Number: G011/M-20-420
Requested From: Minnesota Energy Resources

Nonpublic $\boxtimes$ Public
Date of Request: 10/23/2020
Response Due: 11/2/2020

Type of Inquiry: General

SEND RESPONSE VIA EMAIL TO: Utility.Discovery@state.mn.us as well as the assigned analyst(s).
Assigned Analyst(s): Adam Heinen
Email Address(es): adam.heinen@state.mn.us
Phone Number(s): 651-539-1825

## ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS:

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(1) First, with respect to depreciation expense, MERC has calculated the difference between the Rochester Project depreciation expense from Docket No. G011/GR-17-563, and actual depreciation expense based on monthly plant in service by plant FERC account and depreciation rates in effect in 2018, as authorized in Docket No. G011/D-17-442. This results in under-recovered annual depreciation expense of $\$ 4,468$.
(2) Second, with respect to property tax expense, MERC calculated the difference between the amount of property tax expense allocated to the forecasted 2018 Rochester Project in 2018 in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563 and the updated 2018 property tax expense estimate based on actual 2018 plant in service and the average of the actual rates applied by the townships where the Rochester Project facilities were installed. This true-up calculation of property tax expense reflects actual 2018 installed plant and more accurately estimated tax rates for 2018. This true-up results in under-recovered expense of $\$ 56,574$.
(3) Finally, with respect to the return on Rochester Project rate base, by using the Rochester Project rate base value included in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563 as the basis and adjusting for rate base through 2019 including removals, MERC has trued up for differences in the 2018 forecasted rate base as filed and approved in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563 and actual 2018 rate base, in accordance with the Commission's December 26, 2018, Order. This true-up is captured in the overall 2019 true-up for return on incremental rate base as discussed above.

By accounting for these adjustments in the true-up reconciliation and accounting for them as an adjustment to 2021 NGEP recoveries, MERC is complying with the

To be completed by responder
Response Date: October 30, 2020
Response by: Joylyn Hoffman Malueg
Email Address: Joylyn.HoffmanMalueg@wecenergygroup.com
Phone Number: 414-221-4208

## M) COMMERCE DEPARTMENT

# Minnesota Department of Commerce 85 7th Place East | Suite 280 | St. Paul, MN 55101 <br> Information Request 

Docket Number: G011/M-20-420
Requested From: Minnesota Energy Resources
Date of Request: 10/23/2020
Response Due: 11/2/2020
Type of Inquiry: General

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Commission's December 26, 2018, Findings of Fact, Conclusions, and Order in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563.

As a result,

- The over/under recovery for year 2019 is represented by the difference between Forecasted 2019 NGEP (which was computed on the basis of 2019 Forecast to 2018 Rate Case) to Actual 2019 NGEP (which is computed on the basis of 2019 Actuals to 2018 Rate Case)
- The over/under recovery for year 2018 is represented by the difference between 2018 Actual Rochester expenditures and 2018 Rochester recovery via MERC's rate case Docket G011/GR-17563).

At page 1 and 2 of MERC's Filing Letter in Docket No. 20-420, MERC states:
"Through this filing, MERC seeks approval to recover its 2021 NGEP-eligible revenue requirement...adjusted to account for the 2019 NGEP true-up based on actual 2019 costs and revenues and to account for differences between the 2018 actual Rochester Project capital expenditures and MERC's capital estimates used in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563" [emphasis added]

Again, the Over/Under recovery line item is inclusive of both 2018 and 2019 actuals. Page 1 of Exhibit B in MERC's Initial Petition in Docket No. 20-420, the column "2018 Rate Case" is representative of the 2018 Rochester recovery via MERC's rate case Docket G011/GR-17-563. Therefore the 2018 actuals "true-up" is already included in the Over/Under recovery line of the 2021 revenue requirement, and to also include 2018 actuals as the basis for computing the 2021 revenue requirement (i.e. replacing the column "2018 Rate Case" with 2018 actuals) would "double-count" 2018 actuals in the revenue requirement calculation.

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## ก』 COMMERCE

# Minnesota Department of Commerce 85 7th Place East | Suite 280 | St. Paul, MN 55101 <br> Information Request 

Docket Number: G011/M-20-420
Requested From: Minnesota Energy Resources

Nonpublic $\boxtimes$ Public
Date of Request: 10/23/2020
Response Due: 11/2/2020

Type of Inquiry: General

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[^26][^27]In the Matter of the Petition of Minnesota
Energy Resources Corporation for Approval of Natural Gas Extension Project (NGEP)
Rider True-Up for 2019, Rider Revenue
Deficiency for 2021, and Revised Surcharge Factors

## CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Colleen T. Sipiorski, hereby certify that on the 22th day of January, 2021, on behalf of Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation (MERC) I electronically filed a true and correct copy of the enclosed Reply Comments on www.edockets.state.mn.us. Said documents were also served via U.S. mail and electronic service as designated on the attached service lists.

Dated this 22th day of January, 2021.
/s/ Colleen T. Sipiorski
Colleen T. Sipiorski

| First Name | Last Name | Email | Company Name | Address | Delivery Method | View Trade Secret | Service List Name |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Michael | Ahern | ahern.michael@dorsey.co m | Dorsey \& Whitney, LLP | 50 S 6th St Ste 1500 <br> Minneapolis, <br> MN <br> 554021498 | Electronic Service | No | OFF_SL_20-420_M-20-420 |
| Generic Notice | Commerce Attorneys | commerce.attorneys@ag.st ate.mn.us | Office of the Attorney General-DOC | 445 Minnesota Street Suite 1400 <br> St. Paul, <br> MN <br> 55101 | Electronic Service | Yes | OFF_SL_20-420_M-20-420 |
| Sharon | Ferguson | sharon.ferguson@state.mn us | Department of Commerce | 85 7th Place E Ste 280 <br> Saint Paul, <br> MN <br> 551012198 | Electronic Service | No | OFF_SL_20-420_M-20-420 |
| Daryll | Fuentes | dfuentes@usg.com | USG Corporation | 550 W Adams St <br> Chicago, IL 60661 | Electronic Service | No | OFF_SL_20-420_M-20-420 |
| Joylyn C | Hoffman Malueg | Joylyn.hoffmanmalueg@we cenergygroup.com | Minnesota Energy Resources | 2685 145th St W <br> Rosemount, MN <br> 55068 | Electronic Service | Yes | OFF_SL_20-420_M-20-420 |
| Brian | Meloy | brian.meloy@stinson.com | STINSON LLP | $\begin{aligned} & 50 \text { S 6th St Ste } 2600 \\ & \text { Minneapolis, } \\ & \text { MN } \\ & 55402 \end{aligned}$ | Electronic Service | No | OFF_SL_20-420_M-20-420 |
| Andrew | Moratzka | andrew.moratzka@stoel.co m | Stoel Rives LLP | 33 South Sixth St Ste 4200 <br> Minneapolis, MN <br> 55402 | Electronic Service | No | OFF_SL_20-420_M-20-420 |
| Catherine | Phillips | Catherine.Phillips@wecene rgygroup.com | Minnesota Energy Resources | 231 West Michigan St <br> Milwaukee, <br> WI <br> 53203 | Electronic Service | Yes | OFF_SL_20-420_M-20-420 |
| Generic Notice | Residential Utilities Division | residential.utilities@ag.stat e.mn.us | Office of the Attorney General-RUD | 1400 BRM Tower 445 Minnesota St St. Paul, MN 551012131 | Electronic Service | Yes | OFF_SL_20-420_M-20-420 |
| Elizabeth | Schmiesing | eschmiesing@winthrop.co <br> m | Winthrop \& Weinstine, P.A. | 225 South Sixth Street <br> Suite 3500 <br> Minneapolis, <br> MN <br> 55402 | Electronic Service | No | OFF_SL_20-420_M-20-420 |


| First Name | Last Name | Email | Company Name | Address | Delivery Method | View Trade Secret | Service List Name |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Will | Seuffert | Will.Seuffert@state.mn.us | Public Utilities Commission | 121 7th PI E Ste 350 <br> Saint Paul, <br> MN <br> 55101 | Electronic Service | Yes | OFF_SL_20-420_M-20-420 |
| Colleen | Sipiorski | Colleen.Sipiorski@wecener gygroup.com | Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation | 700 North Adams St <br> Green Bay, <br> WI <br> 54307 | Electronic Service | Yes | OFF_SL_20-420_M-20-420 |
| Richard | Stasik | richard.stasik@wecenergyg roup.com | Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation (HOLDING) | 231 West Michigan St P321 <br> Milwaukee, <br> WI <br> 53203 | Electronic Service | Yes | OFF_SL_20-420_M-20-420 |
| Kristin | Stastny | kstastny@taftlaw.com | Taft Stettinius \& Hollister LLP | 2200 IDS Center 80 South 8th St Minneapolis, MN 55402 | Electronic Service | Yes | OFF_SL_20-420_M-20-420 |
| Eric | Swanson | eswanson@winthrop.com | Winthrop \& Weinstine | 225 S 6th St Ste 3500 <br> Capella Tower <br> Minneapolis, <br> MN <br> 554024629 | Electronic Service | No | OFF_SL_20-420_M-20-420 |
| Tina E | Wuyts | tina.wuyts@wecenergygrou p.com | Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation | PO Box 19001 700 N Adams St Green Bay, WI 54307-9001 | Electronic Service | Yes | OFF_SL_20-420_M-20-420 |


[^0]:    ${ }^{1}$ Department Comments at 28.

[^1]:    ${ }^{2}$ See Department Comments at 12, Attachment 2.
    ${ }^{3}$ For example, MERC's 2020 NGEP Rider surcharge rates were not implemented until November 2020.
    ${ }^{4}$ Included as Attachment A to these Reply Comments.
    ${ }^{5}$ Department Comments at 12.
    ${ }^{6}$ In the Matter of Minn. Energy Res. Corp.'s 2020 Rochester Nat. Gas Extension Project Rider, Docket No. G011/M-19-608, Order Approving NGEP Surcharge with Modifications at 9 (Sept. 21, 2020).
    ${ }^{7}$ See Attachment A to these Reply Comments.

[^2]:    ${ }^{8}$ This is a reduction of $\$ 65,750$ in property tax expense from MERC's Initial Petition true-up filing, which reduces the 2019 true-up adjustment by $\$ 21,694$. MERC reflected this update to Rochester Projectspecific property taxes in its response to Department Information Request No. 1, along with other updates as discussed in that response, to reflect the Commission's determinations in its September 21, 2020, Order in Docket No. G011/M-19-608.
    ${ }^{9} 2021$ property taxes payable in 2022 based on 2020 assessed values.
    ${ }^{10}$ MERC Petition at 33.
    ${ }^{11}$ The true-up calculation can only be completed once MERC has an actual tax bill for the parcels where the property is located.

[^3]:    ${ }^{12}$ Department Comments at 14.
    ${ }^{13}$ Minn. Stat. § 216B.1638, subd. 3(d) (emphasis added).
    ${ }^{14}$ Department Comments at 14 ("[The Commission’s May 5, 2017 Order in Docket No. G011/M-15-895] issued approximately five months before the company filed its 2017 general rate case; as such, MERC had ample time to incorporate these legal and regulatory costs into base rates if the Company believed they would be unusual or extraordinary.").

[^4]:    ${ }^{15}$ In the Matter of the Application of Minn. Energy Res. Corp. for Auth. to Increase Rates for Nat. Gas Serv. in Minn., Docket No. G011/GR-17-563, Findings of Fact, Conclusions, and Order at 7-8 (Dec. 26, 2018).
    ${ }^{16}$ The fact that MERC could foresee some level of costs would be incurred does not equate to knowing what specific costs would be.
    ${ }^{17}$ MERC Petition at 34.
    ${ }^{18}$ See Department Comments at 2.
    ${ }^{19}$ See Department Comments at 14.

[^5]:    ${ }^{20}$ In the Matter of the Petition of Minn. Energy Res. Corp. for Approval of a Nat. Gas Extension Project (NGEP) Cost Rider Surcharge for the Recovery of 2019 Rochester Project Costs, Docket No. G011/M-18182, Order Approving NGEP RIder Surcharge with Modifications at 6 (June 18, 2019) (emphasis added).
    ${ }^{21}$ In the Matter of the Petition of Minn. Energy Res. Corp. for Approval of a Nat. Gas Extension Project (NGEP) Cost Rider Surcharge for the Recovery of 2019 Rochester Project Costs, Docket No. G011/M-18182, MERC Reply Comments at 2-3 (June 8, 2018) (discussing specific language from the Commission's Order Approving Rochester Project and Granting Rider Recovery with Conditions in Docket No. G011/M-15-895).
    ${ }^{22}$ Department Comments at 14 .

[^6]:    ${ }^{23}$ Based on actual 2019 sales and forecasted 2020 and 2021 sales growth.
    ${ }^{24}$ MERC Petition at 18-19.
    ${ }^{25}$ MERC Petition at 37-38.
    ${ }^{26}$ See Department Comments at Attachment 7 (MERC's Response to Department Information Request No. 5).

[^7]:    ${ }^{27}$ Department Comments at 20-22.
    ${ }^{28}$ Department Comments at 20.
    ${ }^{29}$ Department Comments at 20.
    ${ }^{30}$ See Department Comments at Attachment 7, page 6.

[^8]:    ${ }^{31}$ MERC Petition at 37-38.
    ${ }^{32}$ Department Comments at 20-21.

[^9]:    ${ }^{33}$ Actual 2019 weather-normalized sales were 386,836 Dth lower than the forecasted weather-normalized sales used to forecast 2020 offsetting revenues in Docket No. G011/M-19-608. If a full 12 months of actual weather normalized sales had been available to calculate the 2020 offsetting revenue forecast, the offsetting revenues would have been reduced by $\$ 76,055$. 2020 actual offsetting revenues will be trued up in the Company's 2020 NGEP true-up to be filed in 2021.
    ${ }^{34}$ Included as Attachment 7 to the Department's Comments.
    ${ }^{35}$ Department Comments at Attachment 7, page 5.

[^10]:    ${ }^{36}$ Included as Attachment 7 to the Department's Comments.
    ${ }^{37}$ Forecasted customer counts assume each month's customer counts are identical to year-end customer counts, making this change to the calculation of offsetting revenues is irrelevant in a forecast period.
    ${ }^{38}$ As discussed below, the Department recommends including the under-recovered offsetting revenues in the 2019 true-up calculations. While MERC does not object to this approach, the Company does not agree with the Department's other recommended adjustment to offsetting revenues.
    ${ }^{39}$ Department Comments at 21.

[^11]:    40 In the Matter of the Application of Minn. Energy Res. Corp. for Auth. to Increase Rates for Nat. Gas Serv. in Minn., Docket No. G011/GR-17-563, Direct Testimony and Schedules of Matthew R. Czervionke at 19 (Oct. 13, 2017).
    ${ }^{41}$ MERC Petition at 38.
    ${ }^{42}$ Department Comments at 21.
    ${ }^{43}$ Included as Attachment C to these Reply Comments.

[^12]:    ${ }^{44}$ Department Comments at 16. However, the Department ultimately concludes that MERC's timing is reasonable, stating that "[a]lthough the Company's requested true-up adjustment occurs two filings after the 2017 Rate Case Order was issued, the Department is unclear if a strict application of the Commission's Order, namely, tying recovery to the 2019 NGEP rider filing, follows from the general expectations and intent of the true-up factor."
    ${ }^{45}$ In the Matter of the Application of Minn. Energy Res. Corp. for Auth. to Increase Rates for Nat. Gas Serv. in Minn., Docket No. G011/GR-17-563, Commission Staff Briefing Papers Volume 1 at 69 (Oct. 31, 2018).
    ${ }^{46}$ In the Matter of the Application of Minn. Energy Res. Corp. for Auth. to Increase Rates for Nat. Gas Serv. in Minn., Docket No. G011/GR-17-563, Findings of Fact, Conclusions, and Order at 17 (Dec. 26, 2018).
    ${ }^{47}$ In the Matter of the Application of Minn. Energy Res. Corp. for Auth. to Increase Rates for Nat. Gas Serv. in Minn., Docket No. G011/GR-17-563, Preferred and Revised/Additional Decision Options of Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation at 3 (Nov. 5, 2018).

[^13]:    ${ }^{48}$ In the Matter of the Application of Minn. Energy Res. Corp. for Auth. to Increase Rates for Nat. Gas Serv. in Minn., Docket No. G011/GR-17-563, Findings of Fact, Conclusions, and Order at 18 (Dec. 26, 2018).

    49 In the Matter of Minn. Energy Res. Corp.'s 2020 Rochester Nat. Gas Extension Project Rider, Docket No. G011/M-19-608, PETITION at 11 (Sept. 30, 2019). To avoid the need for a subsequent true up to the 2020 NGEP to account for 2018 actuals, MERC also calculated the 2020 NGEP revenue requirement based on 2018 actuals. As reflected in MERC's 2020 NGEP rider, as approved by the Commission in Docket No. G011/M-19-608, MERC did calculate, to customers' benefit, the 2020 forecast NGEP revenue requirement using 2018 actuals as the starting basis to avoid the need for a subsequent true-up on the 2020 NGEP rider for 2018 actuals.

[^14]:    ${ }^{50}$ MERC Petition at 36-37.
    ${ }^{51}$ Department Comments at 17. Ultimately, the Department appears to conclude that the timing of the 2018 true-up in this filing is "not unreasonable." However, the Department devotes substantial time and discussion to questioning whether the timing of the true-up is, in fact, in accordance with the Commission's order.
    ${ }^{52}$ In the Matter of the Application of Minn. Energy Res. Corp. for Auth. to Increase Rates for Nat. Gas Serv. in Minn., Docket No. G011/GR-17-563, FINDINgs of FACT, Conclusions, AND ORDER at 18 (Dec. 26, 2018).
    ${ }^{53} \mathrm{ld}$.

[^15]:    ${ }^{54}$ Department Comments at 16.
    ${ }^{55}$ See Department Comments at Attachment 6.
    ${ }^{56}$ As discussed below, the Department's recommended rate base reduction results in a reduction to the 2019 true up of $\$ 72,830$ - this is the exact same reduction to the 2019 true up that MERC already included.
    ${ }^{57}$ Attachment C to these Reply Comments.
    ${ }^{58}$ See MERC Petition at Exhibit B, page 1 (the column "2018 Rate Case" is representative of the 2018 Rochester recovery via MERC's last rate case in Docket No. G011/GR-17-563).
    ${ }^{59}$ See Exhibit C to MERC's Initial Petition and MERC's Response to Department Information Request No. 1.

[^16]:    ${ }^{60}$ See Department Comments at 16 ("The Department reviewed information provided in the 2020 NGEP rider filing, Docket No. G011/M-19-608, and notes that actual rate base for 2018 was $\$ 9,032,258$.").
    ${ }^{61}$ See Department Comments at 16 and Attachment 6 ("The Department reviewed information provided in the 2020 NGEP rider filing, Docket No. G011/M-19-608, and notes that actual rate base for 2018 was $\$ 9,032,258$, which means that the Company over-stated Rochester Project related rate base by $\$ 2,350,510$ because $\$ 11,382,768$ in Rochester rate base was included in base rates.").
    ${ }^{62}$ As shown in Attachment 6 to the Department's Comments, the impact of the Department's adjustment to reduce rate base by $\$ 2,350,510$ is $\$ 72,830$. The Department's Attachment 6 reflects two adjustments from MERC's response to Department Information Request No. 1, which calculated a total 2019 true-up of $\$ 205,542$ - (1) removal of legal regulatory costs of $\$ 40,632$ or $\$ 13,408$ from the NGEP revenue requirement and (2) a reduction to rate base of $\$ 2,350,510$. The Department's recommended 2019 trueup is $\$ 119,303$, which is $\$ 86,239$ less than MERC's calculation of $\$ 205,542$, of which $\$ 13,408$ is attributable to the Department's legal regulatory cost adjustment and $\$ 72,831$ is attributable to the Department's proposed rate base reduction.

[^17]:    ${ }^{63}$ According to the Department, "it appears that weather-normalized, actual revenue in the Rochester Area for 2018 was approximately $\$ 1,117,546$ greater than revenues included in base rates. If the Commission seeks to have symmetry in the Company's true up for 2018, then this over-collection of revenue should be returned to ratepayers." Department Comments at 21.
    ${ }^{64}$ Department Comments at 21.

[^18]:    ${ }^{65}$ In the Matter of the Application of Minn. Energy Res. Corp. for Auth. to Increase Rates for Nat. Gas Serv. in Minn., Docket No. G011/GR-17-563, FIndings of FAct, Conclusions, AND ORDER at 18 (Dec. 26, 2018).
    ${ }^{66}$ See Minn. Stat. § 216B.23; Peoples Nat. Gas Co. v. Minn. Pub. Utils. Comm'n, 369 N.W.2d 530, 533
    (Minn. 1985) ("[T]he Public Utility Act expressly prohibits retroactive ratemaking.").
    ${ }^{67}$ Department Comments at 11-12.
    ${ }^{68}$ Department Comments at 11.

[^19]:    ${ }^{69}$ In the Matter of Minn. Energy Res. Corp. 's 2020 Rochester Nat. Gas Extension Project Rider, Docket No. G011/M-19-608, Order Approving NGEP Rider Surcharge with Modifications at 8 (Sept. 21, 2020).
    ${ }^{70}$ Department Comments at 10.
    ${ }^{71}$ See In the Matter of the Petition of Minn. Energy Res. Corp. for Approval of 2020 Nat. Gas Extension Project Rider Revenue Deficiency and Revised Surcharge Factors, Docket No. G011/M-19-608, REPLY Comments of Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation at 8-13 (Feb. 28, 2020), Additional Reply Comments of Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation at 4-5 (Apr. 30, 2020).
    ${ }^{72}$ In the Matter of Minn. Energy Res. Corp.'s 2020 Rochester Nat. Gas Extension Project Rider, Docket No. G011/M-19-608, Order Approving NGEP Rider Surcharge with Modifications at 8 (Sept. 21, 2020).
    ${ }^{73}$ Department Comments at 22.

[^20]:    ${ }^{74}$ In the Matter of the Petition of Minn. Energy Res. Corp. for Approval of 2020 Nat. Gas Extension Project Rider Revenue Deficiency and Revised Surcharge Factors, Docket No. G011/M-19-608, Order Approving NGEP Rider Surcharge with Modifications at 3-4 (Sept. 21, 2020).
    ${ }^{75}$ See Department Comments at Attachment 2.
    ${ }^{76}$ The Department recommends that MERC file a compliance filing after the Commission's order adjusting its revenue requirement so that accumulated deferred income taxes are not prorated for any of the months in 2021 that proceed the month when the NGEP rider surcharge rates are implemented.
    ${ }^{77}$ The Company anticipates 2020 actual weather-normalized sales data will be available sometime in February 2021.
    ${ }^{78}$ Department Comments at 18.
    ${ }^{79}$ Department Comments at 19. Despite accepting the Company's proposed treatment of ongoing Rochester Project costs, the Department asserts that MERC has been unclear and has changed its proposals between NGEP rider filings. To the contrary, however, the issue of ongoing NGEP rider recovery beyond 2020 has not previously been discussed by the Company, as MERC's last NGEP rider filing was only for recovery of forecasted costs through 2020. The Department's suggestion that MERC has been inconsistent or unclear regarding its plans for future NGEP rider recovery is unsupported.

[^21]:    To be completed by responder
    Response Date: October 22, 2020
    Response by: Joylyn Hoffman Malueg
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    Phone Number: 414-221-4208

[^22]:    To be completed by responder
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[^26]:    Further documentation of the true-up of 2018 actuals to 2018 rate case expense and rate base items can be found in Docket No. 20-420, Exhibit C, page 2. Also shown on page 2 of Exhibit $C$ is the computation of 2019 rate base and expense, confirming that the return on 2019 balances and expenses are computed properly by excluding the return and expense recovery already received for 2018 via base rates from G011/GR-17-563. Please also see MERC's response to DOC IR 003, which provides an electronic version of Exhibit C.

[^27]:    To be completed by responder
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