

ENERGY MATTERS



FRESH ENERGY IN PARIS FOR HISTORIC CLIMATE AGREEMENT

BY J. DRAKE HAMILTON

At the end of last year, 195 countries at the Paris Climate Summit agreed to the first-ever global agreement to cut carbon. The agreement reflects the momentum that cities, companies, countries, and civil society groups have built since the first international climate conference in 1992.

For two and a half weeks I was in Paris to meet with delegates and leaders from across the world to talk about Minnesota's successful clean energy policies and how others can use similar policies to cut carbon. I was particularly honored to speak at a press conference hosted by the U.S. Climate Action Network to provide analysis of President Obama's remarks to the 154 heads of state together under one roof.

The landmark agreement was made possible, in part, by the business community. Businesses delivered a compelling package of support for ambitious action. Minnesota in particular presented strong private sector commitments, from Minnesota-based Cargill, General Mills, Target, and Best Buy – as well as commitments from Xcel Energy, the fourth largest utility in the country, to cut carbon in its Minnesota operations 60 percent by 2030.

The United States brought significant carbon reduction commitments (already in U.S. law) to Paris, including a doubling of fuel-economy standards for automobiles (to 54.5 mpg by 2025) and the Clean Power Plan, which requires 32 percent reductions in carbon from power plants by 2030. Immediately after Paris, the U.S. Congress extended wind and solar tax credits that will accelerate our shift to clean energy.

* J. Drake Hamilton pictured above: middle photo on left / in sidebar: far right

After I met with Secretary of State John Kerry and his negotiating team, it was clear to me that these commitments made all the difference in reaching this universal agreement.

Moving forward, leading states like Minnesota need to push harder and faster to achieve carbon reductions that grow our economy. Timing is essential: we know that global emissions must peak as soon as possible and then decline even faster. It's up to leading economies to demonstrate that we can achieve net-zero emissions.



the world's governments agreed to universal, legally binding, ambitious goals to tackle climate change, including:

- Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit temperature increase to no more than 1.5°C.
- Reducing net greenhouse gas emissions to zero in the second half of this century.
- Requiring that nations update and increase their climate commitments every five years.

As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon noted at the end of the climate talks, "Markets now have the clear signal they need to unleash the full force of human ingenuity and scale up investments that will generate low emissions and resilient growth."



It has never been a more exciting time for Minnesota leadership on energy, both internationally and in our local communities. Fresh Energy has been working hard to drive progress toward a clean energy economy, taking actions that are closing coal plants, expanding access to solar energy, creating more energy efficient buildings, and more.

We know you count on Fresh Energy to provide independent, expert energy policy leadership – and explain the complex issues involved in securing progress. With this new version of our newsletter, Fresh Energy will be connecting with you each season to provide the latest updates on our work at the vanguard of the dynamic field of clean energy.

As your nonprofit energy champion, Fresh Energy depends on your steadfast support as we work to create a thriving clean energy economy in Minnesota. I encourage you to let us know your thoughts, ideas, and questions as we continue to work together to achieve more progress in 2016.

Thank you for all your support. I hope you enjoy this new edition of Energy Matters!

email: noble@fresh-energy.org
twitter: @nobleideas

XCEL'S COMMUNITY SOLAR TURNS ONE YEAR OLD

BY HOLLY LAHD AND ALLEN GLECKNER

It's now been one year since Xcel Energy launched its community solar program, receiving hundreds of proposals for solar gardens in the first week. As the lead architect of the bill that created the program, Fresh Energy is excited about community solar because it allows individuals and organizations to benefit from the advantages of solar energy regardless of whether they have a solar-friendly roof. They simply subscribe to a shared solar garden and receive a credit on their electricity bill for the electricity the solar arrays generate.

As more customers learn about community solar, interest has grown from individuals, low income nonprofits, colleges, public agencies, rural cities, businesses, and churches – with applications bottlenecking with Xcel. With more than 1,500 applications in the system, there are only 46 applications (totaling roughly 43 megawatts) with signed agreements with Xcel to begin construction and 800 applications at 175 project sites that are somewhere in the process of being reviewed for interconnection to the electric grid.

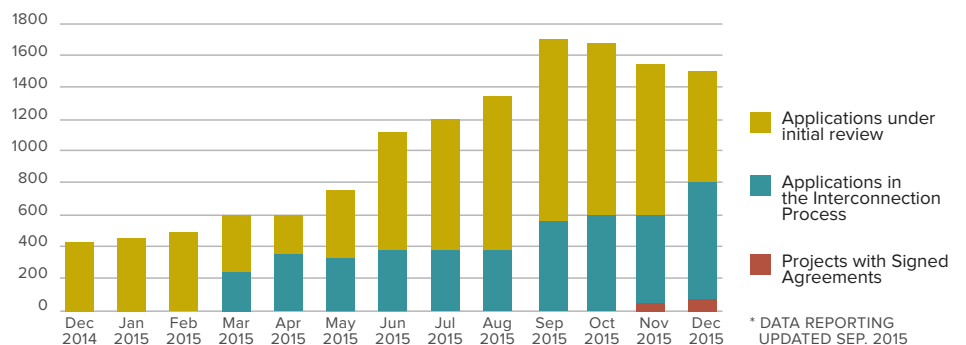
This pace will need to pick up not only for Xcel to meet state interconnection standards, but also to meet its own public goals of connecting more than 250 megawatts of solar by the end of 2016 (enough to power 41,000 homes).

1500
APPLICATIONS
under initial review

800
APPLICATIONS
in interconnection process

46
APPLICATIONS
with signed agreements

XCEL ENERGY'S MN COMMUNITY SOLAR APPLICATIONS



NEXT KEY STEP FOR COMMUNITY SOLAR GARDENS

We agree that anything less than 250 megawatts would be a huge missed opportunity. The next key step toward exceeding 250 megawatts is this coming April, when the Public Utilities Commission will invite public comments on proposed changes for future community solar garden project applications. Fresh Energy is working to ensure that the program includes:

- Increased access to low and moderate income customers.
- A transition to the sustainable Value of Solar rate.
- Improved rules for the electric grid.
- Guidelines that are consistent and clear for customers and businesses.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE AND OTHER STORIES AT
FRESH-ENERGY.ORG

“MASSIVE” WIN FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY

Shocking most analysts and advocates, Congress extended tax credits for wind energy by five years and for solar energy by seven years. Fresh Energy examines how it will impact clean energy markets.

NEW TOOL FOR LOW INCOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The Clean Energy Incentive Program (CEIP) is a provision in the Clean Power Plan that awards allowances to states for early action to invest in renewable energy, such as wind and solar, as well as low income energy efficiency projects. Fresh Energy is urging the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to include participation in the CEIP in Minnesota's State Implementation Plan through five targeted recommendations.

SCHOOLS SAVE MONEY, CUT ENERGY WASTE

For many public schools, deciding to track their energy performance is fairly straightforward. As Steve Lund, energy manager for Albert Lea Area Schools explained, “after staff, utilities are your next biggest cost.” Those big energy bills also present a big opportunity to find some real savings.

FRESH ENERGY + PLUGINCONNECT

Fresh Energy and PlugInConnect are launching a special partnership focused on creating a more robust market for renewable energy fueled electric vehicles and plugin hybrid electric vehicles throughout Minnesota. Jukka Kukkonen, the founder of PlugInConnect, will be providing extensive auto industry experience to complement Fresh Energy's depth of policy and regulatory expertise.

THANK YOU TO OUR RECENT POWER CIRCLE DONORS

Donna W. Allan and Bill Mahlum, An anonymous fund of The Minneapolis Foundation, Birchwood Financial Partners, David Chizek, MD, Amy Skoczlas Cole and Jason Cole, Community Energy, Inc, Mike and Sharon Conley, David and Kitty Crosby, Ned Crosby and Patricia Benn, D+R International, Christine and Loren Danielson, Davies-Sommer Family Fund of the Minneapolis Foundation, Charles Dayton and Sara Evans, John and Susan Dunlop, Alan and Lollie Eidsness, Becky Erdahl, Cody and Laura Fleischfresser, Iberdrola Renewables, Kathleen Jones, Jim Ladner, David and Sarah Lilja, Lucy and Bob Mitchell-The Longview Foundation, Richard and Janet Neville, Michael and Patsy Noble, Nancy Pfund, Power Over Time, Prairie Restorations Inc., Raj Rajan, Melissa Rappaport Schifman and James Schifman, Cheryl Appeldorn and Thomas Schnettler, Gary and Mary Ann Schokmiller, Robert Secor, Lang Family Foundation, Steven Leuthold Family Foundation, SunEdison, The John Larsen Foundation, James Uttley, Steve Wilson and Mary Shedd, Kate Wolford and Ed Reilly, Medora Woods

Join Dr. Rajan in supporting Fresh Energy by contacting individual giving director
Meggie LaValley at
Lavalley@Fresh-Energy.org



A PERSONAL AND PRAGMATIC PASSION FOR CLEAN ENERGY

Raj Rajan, Ph.D., has made an impact since he joined Fresh Energy in 2014 as both a board member and Power Circle donor.

The vice president and global sustainability technical leader for Ecolab, Raj is a local leader in energy sustainability and understands the economic value in clean energy and investments. With family members still recovering from a devastating flood that hit his hometown of Chennai, India in December, Raj also sees the big picture in our international concern for climate change.



“The whole subject of energy goes beyond greenhouse gas emissions – it's about water, public health, and safety. I like to think about it holistically, and Fresh Energy has a unique, big picture approach that is always driving their work.”

-Dr. Raj Rajan



The Historic Hamm Building
408 St. Peter Street, Suite 220
St. Paul, MN 55102

Fresh Energy is your nonprofit energy champion. Look inside for the latest news.

FEATURE EVENT | WINTER 2016

FULLY CHARGED

CAN MINNESOTA TRANSITION TO ELECTRIC BUSES?



YOU'RE INVITED!

Join Fresh Energy for a conversation with two leading experts about expanding electric buses in Minnesota – to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, clean up the air, and provide reliable, affordable, and equitable public transportation to benefit all communities.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30

7:00 - 8:30 am

TOWN AND COUNTRY CLUB
300 N. MISSISSIPPI RIVER BLVD.
ST. PAUL, MN 55104

LEARN MORE + REGISTER AT:
FRESH-ENERGY.ORG/POWERPAIRINGS



MATT HORTON is the vice president of sales and marketing at Proterra, the leading manufacturer of electric vehicles for the transit industry.



SHAWNTERA HARDY serves as the deputy chief of staff for Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton.