



## **Renewables and storage provide reliable, cost-effective, clean energy future for Xcel Energy**

*Clean Energy Organizations file comments and analysis in support of Xcel's new Resource Plan but with new solar, wind, and battery storage as alternatives to new peaker gas plants.*

### **CONTACTS:**

Jo Olson, Fresh Energy, [olson@fresh-energy.org](mailto:olson@fresh-energy.org), (218) 290-6247

Sarah Horner, MCEA, [shorner@mncenter.org](mailto:shorner@mncenter.org), (612) 868-3024

Kelley Welf, Clean Grid Alliance, [kwelf@cleangridalliance.org](mailto:kwelf@cleangridalliance.org), (651) 644-3400, ext. 13

Megy Karydes, Union of Concerned Scientists, [megy@karydesconsulting.com](mailto:megy@karydesconsulting.com), (312) 560-2715

**SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA** -- On October 15, Clean Grid Alliance, Fresh Energy, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, and Union of Concerned Scientists (collectively the Clean Energy Organizations or CEOs) filed Supplemental Comments to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission in Xcel Energy's Integrated Resource Plan proceeding (Docket No. 19-368).

This supplemental comment period was launched when Xcel Energy changed its proposed resource plan, removing the 800 megawatt combined-cycle gas plant proposed to be built in Becker, Minnesota, in response to broad stakeholder opposition—including formal opposition by the CEOs and other parties, which showed that building new gas plants is not part of a cost-effective, reliable Xcel system. The CEOs commend Xcel for its willingness to change plans based on the evolving energy system and to continue to work towards its commitment to carbon-free electricity by 2050.

Xcel's new plan primarily replaces the proposed Becker combined-cycle gas plant with an innovative approach that uses wind and solar connected via transmission lines to the sites of retiring coal plants, in order to utilize existing grid connections. This approach both maximizes existing infrastructure and creates a near-term opportunity to add large amounts of carbon-free electricity generation.

However, Xcel's new plan also seeks the Public Utility Commission's approval for two new combustion turbine or "peaking" gas plants in southwest Minnesota and Fargo, North Dakota. These plants are not proposed to be built and running until the late 2020s. The CEOs' analysis in its filing shows that the two peaking plants are not the most cost-effective resource when compared to new wind, solar, and battery storage. The analysis found that the most economic, reliable resource plan for Xcel does not include any new fossil gas plants and that a combination of 450 megawatts of solar, 100 megawatts of wind, and 516 megawatts of battery storage are less costly than 800 megawatts of new peaking fossil gas plants. As a result, the CEOs filing supports Xcel's new plan and recommends the Commission approve it, but

recommends that the Commission not approve Xcel's proposed two new peaking plants in this proceeding because the utility has not adequately justified a need for them.

"Xcel has put forward a strong plan with wind and solar as its foundation that we hope to see approved, with the exception of two peaking gas plants in the late 2020s," said Allen Gleckner, lead director, clean electricity at Fresh Energy. "There's no need to lock-in a decision on those specific plants so early, especially when our analysis shows there are viable carbon-free alternatives and the energy landscape is evolving quickly."

"While Xcel has made commendable changes in their alternate plan and dropped the Sherco gas plant, they have not proven that the new gas peaking plants they are seeking are needed for reliability or stability, and therefore haven't met the public interest legal standard," said Ellen Anderson, climate program director for the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy. "We simply cannot afford to keep making unneeded and costly investments in fossil fuel while our climate crisis worsens."

"Xcel's focus on reusing existing grid connections for new renewable resources is just smart. And proposing a new transmission line from southwest Minnesota means being able to tap into some of the best wind and solar resources in the state of Minnesota, providing additional cost effective clean energy for Xcel ratepayers. It also opens up an area of the state for economic development and benefits to local communities that without the new transmission line would not happen," said Beth Soholt, Executive Director, Clean Grid Alliance.

"The climate and customers' wallets will benefit from Xcel's revised proposal," said James Gignac, senior Midwest energy analyst with the Union of Concerned Scientists. "Xcel should be commended for its effort to identify cleaner and more cost-effective solutions like solar and wind power and energy storage batteries. Xcel should continue that work before rushing toward approval of potentially unnecessary new gas peaking plants."

This is the final round of filings and public comment and brings to a close a multi-year input process. The CEOs anticipate the Commission will make a decision on Xcel's IRP in winter of 2022.

In 2018, Xcel Energy made a commitment to deliver 100% carbon-free electricity to its customers by the end of 2050 and this Integrated Resource Plan is a key way Xcel can make significant steps toward delivering on this ambitious goal while helping Minnesota meet its climate goals. The CEOs encourage other companies to follow Xcel's lead and accelerate work to transition to a carbon-free future.

###

**About Clean Grid Alliance (CGA):** Clean Grid Alliance's mission is to advance renewable energy in the Midwest. Launched in 2001, CGA has been an active stakeholder in the MISO process at the state and regional levels and a leading organization working on transforming state energy policy. CGA's membership includes industry representatives working in wind, solar and storage as well as environmental nonprofit organizations, public interest groups, clean energy advocates, farm groups, and businesses providing goods and services to the renewable energy industry who come together to reduce carbon and deliver a renewable energy future. Learn more at [cleangridalliance.org](http://cleangridalliance.org).

**About Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA)** MCEA works to enact and enforce smart environmental laws in Minnesota. With offices in St. Paul and Duluth and a team that includes some of the state's foremost environmental law and policy professionals, MCEA educates about issues and supports communities in their fight to protect their environment. MCEA is unique in Minnesota in its use of top legal expertise in the pursuit of environmental justice. For more information, visit [www.mncenter.org](http://www.mncenter.org)

**About Fresh Energy:** Fresh Energy's mission is to shape and drive bold policy solutions to achieve equitable carbon-neutral economies. Fresh Energy is speeding Minnesota's transition to a clean energy economy, which will ensure that our region enjoys good health, a vibrant economy, and thriving communities today and for generations to come. From putting Minnesota on the pathway to being a national renewable energy leader to promoting clean transportation options for our growing economy, Fresh Energy has been an essential partner in helping the region develop efficient, cost-effective, and inclusive energy programming. For more information, visit [www.fresh-energy.org](http://www.fresh-energy.org).

**About Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS):** The Union of Concerned Scientists puts rigorous, independent science to work to solve our planet's most pressing problems. Joining with people across the country, we combine technical analysis and effective advocacy to create innovative, practical solutions for a healthy, safe, and sustainable future. For more information, go to [www.ucsusa.org](http://www.ucsusa.org).