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# NEWS

## Minnesota Power to triple solar energy portfolio to help spur region's economic recovery from COVID-19 pandemic

Duluth, Minn. — Minnesota Power is accelerating its plans for solar energy with an estimated \$40 million investment that emphasizes its commitment to customers, clean energy and communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The company announced its plan for approximately 20 megawatts of solar arrays in northern Minnesota in a filing today with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. The MPUC in May asked utilities to evaluate projects they could speed up as a way to kick-start local economies and put people back to work.

The three solar projects will also help meet the state of Minnesota's Solar Energy Standard more quickly and further advance Minnesota Power's EnergyForward strategy to bring more carbon-free energy to the company's customers and the region. When completed, Minnesota Power's energy portfolio will include approximately 30 megawatts of solar energy, including the existing 10-megawatt solar array at Camp Ripley, the Minnesota National Guard Base near Little Falls.

The package of projects and proposed locations include Minnesota Power's Laskin Energy Center, adjacent to the Laskin Energy Park in Hoyt Lakes, Minnesota; the company's Sylvan Hydro Station near Brainerd, Minnesota; and a site in the city of Duluth. Minnesota Power is working with Duluth city leaders to identify the eventual location. Together, the three projects will supply enough energy to power at least 4,000 homes.

"We believe Minnesota Power can and must play a strong role in the economic recovery of the communities where we live and work," said ALLETE President and CEO Bethany Owen. "Moving up the timetable of planned solar projects will boost the tax base of local economies, add solar panels from regional manufacturers when possible, and support local construction jobs. At the same time, we remain committed to providing safe, reliable and affordable power while meeting our plan for 50 percent renewable energy by 2021."

While details remain to be finalized, the three solar projects will leverage existing electrical infrastructure with the bulk of actual construction to get underway in 2021. In order to bring the projects online in 2021, Minnesota Power intends to move quickly on submitting requests for approval to the MPUC.

Minnesota Power also operates a community solar garden with 40-kilowatt array in Duluth and a 1,000-kilowatt array in Wrenshall, and continues to explore community solar options.



## **Other efforts to aid economic recovery**

As part of its efforts to help in Covid-19 recovery efforts, Minnesota Power is proposing changes to its business expansion incentive for new small businesses and existing small businesses looking to expand. Lowering the eligibility threshold to 250 kilowatts of new electric demand will make the discount program accessible to more small businesses.

Minnesota Power also is looking forward to working with customers on a potential mine truck electrification pilot. While policy-makers have focused on the electrification of transportation and buildings, electrification of industry is a key interest of Minnesota Power and its mining customers. The company is evaluating the potential for a pilot project that could include support for a site-specific analysis, replacement or retrofitting or a portion of an existing haul truck fleet, engineering and installation of the catenary system and substations, and service extension to the trolley line.

## **Supporting communities and customers during the pandemic**

Minnesota Power has a long history of supporting the communities it serves. The Minnesota Power Foundation recently donated \$100,000 to support four special COVID-19 response funds and a number of nonprofits on the front lines of the pandemic in areas served by Minnesota Power in northeastern Minnesota.

The company also has taken a number of steps to help its customers as the nation grapples with the pandemic, including:

- Proposing an early resolution of its 2019 rate review that was approved by the MPUC earlier this month. A resulting refund of \$12 million puts much-needed dollars back in the pockets of customers.
- Suspending disconnections and waiving late payment charges for residential and small-business customers.
- Assisting customers experiencing financial hardships with payment plans.
- Following Centers for Disease Control guidelines when entering a home or business for emergency-related services.

The safety of employees and customers is Minnesota Power's highest priority to help stop the spread of COVID-19. The company is following recommendations from the CDC and the state of Minnesota and taking a variety of precautions, including safety protocols for employees in the field and having employees who can work remotely do so, and closing its downtown Duluth headquarters to the public.

Minnesota Power provides electric service within a 26,000-square-mile area in northeastern Minnesota, supporting comfort, security and quality of life for 145,000 customers, 15 municipalities and some of the largest industrial customers in the United States. More information can be found at [www.mnpower.com](http://www.mnpower.com).

*The statements contained in this release and statements that ALLETE may make orally in connection with this release that are not historical facts, are forward-looking statements. Actual results may differ materially from those projected in the forward-looking statements. These forward-looking statements involve risks and uncertainties and investors are directed to the risks discussed in documents filed by ALLETE with the Securities and Exchange Commission.*

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