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Minnesota Power dedicates solar project on Iron Range as company moves EnergyForward

Duluth, Minn. — Minnesota Power today celebrated a bright future for renewable solar energy with a ribbon-cutting at its recently completed Laskin Solar Project. It is the second of three projects totaling more than 20 megawatts that are part of the company's EnergyForward strategy to deliver carbon-free energy.

Laskin Solar's 5.6 megawatt array sits on about 25 acres of company-owned land on Colby Lake Road near Hoyt Lakes, Minnesota, and close to Minnesota Power's Laskin Energy Center. Energy from the solar project is feeding into the company's overall system and adding more solar energy to the electric grid that serves the company's 150,000 customers. Its output is expected to be about 9,300 megawatt-hours of energy annually, enough to power about 1,100 homes.

The project on the Iron Range is one of Minnesota Power's three accelerated solar investments totaling about \$40 million and approved by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission in 2021 to boost northeastern Minnesota's economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. The other two projects are the Jean Duluth Solar Project, a 1.6 megawatt array in Duluth that began producing energy late last year, and the Sylvan Solar Project, a 15.2 megawatt array in Sylvan Township near Brainerd, that is expected to be fully operational this summer.

The three solar projects add more renewable energy to Minnesota Power's already impressive energy mix. Minnesota Power is the first utility in the state to deliver 50% renewable energy with plans to be more than 70% renewable by 2030.

"These three solar projects, conceived during the height of the pandemic, reflect our commitment to the clean-energy transformation and to the region," said Bethany Owen, ALLETE chair, president and CEO. "The Laskin project, along with the arrays in Duluth and Sylvan Township, have always been about more than generating renewable energy – these projects support local construction jobs, local manufacturing and local communities. We believe investments in these solar projects are investments in the people, communities, industries, and businesses in our region -- building a truly sustainable future where everyone can thrive."

The Laskin Solar project created about 31 local union construction jobs and was constructed by local contractors Hunt Electric and Ulland Brothers. In addition, Minnesota Power contracted with Cambria County Association for the Blind and Handicapped to supply the cable support system for the solar arrays as part of its effort to promote diverse suppliers. The nonprofit organization in Ebensburg and Johnstown, Pennsylvania, employs nearly 300 people with disabilities.

The project's 14,820 solar panels were sourced from Heliene, which has a manufacturing facility in Mountain Iron, Minnesota. The bifacial panels can collect light directly from the sun or reflected off the ground or snow to produce electricity, and are mounted on single-axis trackers that rotate the panels to track the sun from east to west every day.



A crowd of supporters, including government officials, employees, labor representatives, and community members, were on hand to celebrate with the company.

“Thank you to the Minnesota Power team for your tremendous leadership in answering the call and helping Minnesota recover from the COVID pandemic in the best way possible, and to help envision and see the clean energy future that is really going to benefit all corners of Minnesota,” said Katie Sieben, chair of the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.

Dan Olson, business manager of LIUNA Laborers Local 1091, said, “Our members depend on Minnesota Power, and not just to keep the lights on in our homes. We also depend on you to power the mines, mills and other industries that keep our members working. As a labor union, it is our job to help prepare members for the energy jobs of the future, and to make sure those jobs are as good, and as available to local workers, as jobs in conventional energy. We can’t be successful without strong partnerships with developers, contractors and utilities like Minnesota Power.”

Minnesota state Rep. Dave Lislegard and Sen. Grant Hauschild also spoke in support of the project.

When the three solar projects are fully operational, Minnesota Power’s energy portfolio will have approximately 30 megawatts of solar energy, including the existing 10-megawatt solar array at Camp Ripley, the Minnesota National Guard Base near Little Falls.

Minnesota Power also has a community solar garden with a 40-kilowatt array in Duluth and purchases power from a 1-megawatt array in Wrenshall.

Minnesota Power is committed to providing opportunities for customers and communities to directly participate in a clean-energy future. The company’s customer solar rebate program has been in place since 2004, and its low-income solar program, the first of its kind in Minnesota, advances solar projects that benefit income-qualified customers and facilities that serve income-qualified customers.

Minnesota Power provides electric service within a 26,000-square-mile area in northeastern Minnesota, supporting comfort, security and quality of life for 150,000 customers, 14 municipalities and some of the largest industrial customers in the United States. More information can be found at 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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