

Sierra Club Wisconsin: Clean energy groups appeal Superior, Wisconsin, gas power plant approval

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Sierra Club, MN Center for Environmental Advocacy, and Union of Concerned Scientists File Appeal

DULUTH, MN — Today, clean energy groups Sierra Club, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, and Union of Concerned Scientists appealed the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission's (PUC) approval to build the Nemadji Trail Energy Center gas power plant proposed for Superior, Wisconsin. The Minnesota PUC voted 3-2 to disregard an administrative law judge's recommendation that the Commission rule against the proposed plant, and then rejected the clean energy groups' request to reconsider the decision.

In July 2018, administrative law judge Jeanne M. Cochrane recommended that the Minnesota PUC deny Minnesota Power's request to build the gas power plant in Superior, finding that it was not "needed and reasonable." In October 2018, the Minnesota PUC voted 3-2 to approve the proposal against Judge's Cochran's recommendation. Last month, the Minnesota PUC refused to reconsider the decision, leading to today's appeal to the Minnesota Court of Appeals. In a separate

proceeding, the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin is also reviewing the proposal.

“Minnesota has the opportunity to be a world leader for the new clean energy economy, turning our vast renewable resources into jobs all over the state. At this critical moment for the climate, it doesn’t make sense to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to build a new fossil fuel power plant,” said **Kevin Lee, an attorney with the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy** representing the clean energy groups. “One judge already ruled that this is an unnecessary and unreasonable proposal, and we hope the Minnesota Court of Appeals agrees.”

“Minnesotans have been clear that they want 100-percent, carbon-free electricity and climate science doesn’t lie,” said **James Gignac, lead Midwest energy analyst for the Union of Concerned Scientists**. “Aside from the hard costs that will result in the building of this unnecessary gas power plant, including higher energy costs, communities will also be harmed by air pollution and other environmental challenges.”

“This fracked gas plant is still a bad deal for the Northland,” said **Jessica Tritsch, senior campaign representative at the Sierra Club**. “Fracked gas is expensive, unnecessary and risky. The proposed Nemadji Trail Energy Center would lock Minnesota Power customers into paying \$350 million for fossil fuels, when we need to be investing in common-sense energy efficiency, storage, and renewable, home-grown energy that costs less, creates more sustainable jobs and protects Minnesota’s environment.”

Large industrial customers (including mines and paper mills) and consumer groups have also opposed the construction of the new \$350 million gas fired power plant on the grounds that it is too expensive and will unnecessarily raise electrical rates for Minnesota Power customers.