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March 22, 2006

VIA EMAIL AND REGULAR MAIL

Mr. John Smith, Esq.
South Dakota Public Utilities Commission
500 East Capitol
Pierre, South Dakota 57501

Re: In the Matter of Big Stone Unit II et al.
Case No. EL05-022

Dear Mr. Smith:

I write on behalf of Otter Tail Power Company and the other Co-Owners of the proposed Big Stone Unit II. We want to bring to your attention and those on the service list a scheduling issue that recently surfaced.

Based on discussions by the Western Area Power Administration and their consultants, it appears that a CD containing the draft federal Environmental Impact Statement being prepared by Western under the National Energy Policy Act for the Big Stone Unit II project will not be available to the public until April 17 at the earliest, April 21 at the latest, with publication in the Federal Register now scheduled for April 28. This is essentially a three-week delay from the expected draft EIS availability/publication.

As you know, the latest Scheduling Order (January 18, 2006) proscribes that Intervenors' and Staff's Direct Testimony is due April 28. Because the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, et al., Staff, and likely other parties had anticipated on reviewing the draft EIS before filing Direct Testimony, however, Applicants recognize that the time between when the draft EIS will now be available (April 17/21) and the date for Direct Testimony (April 28) provides parties with an insufficient amount of time.

Accordingly, after working through some dates internally, and having discussed the matter with Ms. Beth Goodpaster, counsel for MCEA, et al., the Applicants suggest the following adjustments to the hearing schedule.

2/18 Scheduling Order[1]	Proposed New Date	Topic
April 28	May 19	Intervenor/Staff Direct
May 19	June 9	All Parties' Rebuttal
May 30	N/A	Leave for Sur-rebuttal
N/A	June 19	Sur-rebuttal
June 7, 8, or 9	June 21	Pre-Hearing Conference
June 26-30	June 26-30	Hearing, Pierre

A few clarifying remarks. At the March 1 Pre-Pre-Hearing Conference, the Hearing Examiner concluded that any party wishing to file sur-rebuttal testimony would be required to seek and obtain leave *before* being allowed to file such testimony. At the March 1 Pre-Hearing, the parties agreed on May 30 as the deadline for filing leave. While it required the party wishing to file sur-rebuttal testimony to take the extra step of preparing the motion, the Hearing Examiner to rule, etc., the Applicants believed it an appropriate safeguard against unnecessary or otherwise inappropriate testimony. Given the fact that Western will not have the draft EIS available until April 17/21, however, the Applicants have concluded, and have discussed the matter with MCEA, et al., that such a pre-filing motion (and related hearing on the motion) is impractical given the tight schedule. Instead, the Applicants propose that any party that wishes to file sur-rebuttal testimony should just go ahead and do so. Parties that wish to object on relevancy, scope or other grounds can also do so, and the Hearing Examiner could rule on the objection at the (proposed) June 21 Pre-Hearing Conference or otherwise prior to the June 26 hearing.

Under no circumstance do the Applicants wish, or otherwise believe it necessary, to move the June 26-30 hearing dates (originally scheduled for June 6-9 but changed as part of the March 1 Pre-Hearing Conference).

Other than MCEA, et al., the Applicants have not discussed these proposed changes with any other party. Based on my conversation with Ms. Goodpaster, my impression is that she agreed the changes are reasonable, but I assured her that I would provide all parties with the benefit of this letter.

I intend to follow-up with a phone call to you after you have had an opportunity to discuss this matter with appropriate Commission personnel and decide upon an appropriate course of action. The Applicants are certainly open to the idea of a short Pre-Hearing Conference call to discuss this and related matters. We wanted to present this information to

[1] As amended by the proposed dates all parties and Staff reached agreement on as part of the March 1, 2006 Pre-hearing Conference. A scheduling order stemming from the March 1, 2006 remains forthcoming.

you before a scheduling order from the March 1 Pre-Hearing Conference is issued.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. Please feel free to call me at any time (number provided above) or Messrs. Thomas Welk or Christopher Madsen at (605) 336-2424.

Very truly yours,

LINDQUIST & VENNUM P.L.L.P.

Todd J. Guerrero

TJG/kas

c: Attached Service List (attached to hard copy only)