



October 19, 2023

Ms. Patricia Van Gerpen, Executive Director
South Dakota Public Utilities Commission
State Capitol Building
500 E. Capitol
Pierre, South Dakota 57501

Re: Refund Plan regarding Recovery of Manufactured Gas Plant Site Remediation Costs

Ms. Van Gerpen:

With this letter, NorthWestern Corporation doing business as NorthWestern Energy (“NorthWestern”) is filing with the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission (the “Commission”) an updated refund plan regarding its recovery of remediation costs related to the Aberdeen, South Dakota, Manufactured Gas Plant (“Aberdeen MGP”) site. NorthWestern respectfully requests Commission approval of the updated refund plan including the applicable rates per customer class as described below.

The proposed effective date for the updated refund plan is December 1, 2023.

1. Brief description of the updated refund plan:

The purpose of this filing is to update the customer refund credit rate related to the Aberdeen MGP site remediation. The original Aberdeen MGP refund plan was approved in Docket NG16-010 and began December 1, 2016. Based on October 2023 – December 2024 projected recoveries and expenses, NorthWestern desires to continue the Aberdeen MGP refund plan for an additional twelve months at the revised credit rates described in item 2 below. The refund will be administered via bill credits applicable from December 1, 2023 – November 30, 2024.

2. Reasons for the proposed refund plan:

As part of the Commission’s order approving the settlement stipulation agreement in Docket NG11-003, costs for the ongoing Aberdeen MGP site remediation were included in base rates with a requirement to separately track project expenses and recoveries and provide an annual tracker update to the Commission. Between the approval of NG11-003 and December 2016, actual expenditures for remediation were less than forecasted, resulting in a credit to customers of approximately \$4,700,000. NorthWestern began refunding this balance with the credit rates approved in NG16-010. NorthWestern has made annual filings with the Commission to update the refund credit rates in each year since the refund began. With two months remaining in the current refund plan, the over-recovered balance is \$295,468. NorthWestern has refunded approximately \$1.8 million in the first ten months of the current plan; however, actual remediation costs are lower than the amount recovered through the tracker.

Exhibit A of this filing shows the annual expenses, tracker recoveries, interest and refunds for December 2011 – September 2023.

Exhibit B shows the projected expenditures, tracker recoveries, refund amounts and interest by month through December 31, 2024. The exhibit uses NorthWestern’s budgeted volumes for October 2023 – December 2024. Under this proposed update to the Aberdeen MGP



refund plan, the projected recovered balance as of December 31, 2024, will be reduced to \$70,098.

Exhibit C shows the derivation of rates to be used to refund the excess tracker recovery. The refund amount requested for this updated plan is \$2,100,000. The refund amount of \$2,100,000 is allocated among customer classes, based on the original allocation of \$1,739,887 from NG11-003. The refund by customer class is divided by the volumes from the customer class to calculate the refund per therm rate. The proposed refund rates per customer class for the updated plan are as follows:

	2023 <u>Proposed</u>	2022 <u>Approved</u>
Rate 81 Residential	\$0.0429	\$0.0465
Rate 82 Small Commercial	\$0.0174	\$0.0195
Large Commercial Option A	\$0.0156	\$0.0172
Large Commercial Option B	\$0.0021	\$0.0026

NorthWestern is proposing a term of one year for the updated refund plan, ending November 30, 2024. The final refund amount will depend on actual natural gas volumes for December 1, 2023 – November 30, 2024. A true-up for the refund plan is not requested as the balance will continue to be tracked as described in Docket NG11-003. At the end of the refund period, NorthWestern will request approval to end the refund plan, extend the plan or file a new plan. Factors that may affect NorthWestern’s evaluation will include natural gas volumes sold over the next 12 months, the likelihood of an upcoming rate case, actual and future estimated cleanup costs and other relevant factors.

3. *Number of customers whose cost of service will be affected and annual changes in cost of service to such customers.*

This change will affect approximately 49,100 customers in South Dakota. An average residential customer using 64 therms per month will see a monthly refund of \$2.75 as compared to a monthly refund of \$2.98 under the current plan.

If NorthWestern’s updated Aberdeen MGP refund plan is approved by the Commission, customer notice will begin December 1, 2023, with the following message to be printed on customer bills:

“The SD Public Utilities Commission recently approved a refund plan for NorthWestern Energy natural gas customers for activities related to the Aberdeen Manufactured Gas Plant environmental remediation project. For a residential customer using an average of 64 therms, a refund of \$2.75 per month will be applied to your account. The monthly refund amount will vary based on actual usage. The refund is effective December 1, 2023 – November 30, 2024.”

Sincerely,

Jeff J. Decker
Regulatory Specialist
 jeff.decker@northwestern.com
 ☎ 605-353-8315