

# Annual Report

August 1, 2014 - January 31, 2015



Fresh Energy

# PRACTICAL POLICY. BRIGHTER FUTURE.

# WHAT WE DO

Fresh Energy's overarching goal is to shape and drive progress toward a strong and prosperous Minnesota energy economy, and lead the Midwest's critical role in our nation's transition to highly efficient clean energy and transportation systems.

To accomplish this goal, we concentrate our efforts in the following six key areas: increasing renewable energy and energy efficiency; expanding transmission for renewables; improving transportation and the built environment in our communities; changing the narrative through increased coverage of key energy issues; retiring coal plants; and ultimately regulating and ratcheting down carbon pollution.

## **VISION**

An economy we thrive in and energy that ensures our well-being.

## **MISSION**

Shape and drive realistic, visionary energy policies that benefit all.



# DEAR FRIENDS OF FRESH ENERGY

Each year, Fresh Energy summarizes the hard work, achievements, and progress made over the past year. This year, the report will be slightly different—we have realigned our fiscal year so that planning and budgeting happen after changes in the policy landscape. Responsible stewardship of your investment in Fresh Energy's mission drives us to plan in the most strategic and efficient way.

The shift in the start of our fiscal year from July to February created a one-time shortened reporting period (seven months) to allow for the start of a new fiscal year on February 1, 2015. Still, the shorter time period left plenty of room to make significant progress.

Thank you for everything you do for Fresh Energy.



**Michael Noble**  
Executive Director





## UPDATING THE HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL COSTS OF BURNING COAL

A 1992 Minnesota law (for which Fresh Energy advocated) requires the Public Utilities Commission to use cost values in resource acquisition and planning decisions that reflect the real costs that pollution from electricity generation imposes on society. The pollution values Minnesota currently uses have not been updated in nearly 20 years, and in that time there have been substantial advances in the scientific understanding of the health and environmental damages caused by burning fossil fuels. In September, regulators at the Public Utilities Commission voted unanimously to move forward on Fresh Energy's petition asking it to update the real health and environmental costs to society. The result will be that Minnesota uses scientifically valid cost values in decisions about future investments in fossil fuel electricity.

## INCREASED CAPACITY FOR CLEAN ENERGY

Thanks to detailed comments from Fresh Energy on the value of transmission for new renewable energy resources, the Public Utilities Commission approved a key segment of a regional transmission line, the MVP 3. Fresh Energy also strengthened the coalition of Midwest nongovernmental organizations that understand the need for additional transmission capacity to meet the region's renewable energy goals and who also will actively support projects.

## CHANGING THE FRAME ON ENERGY

It was a major year for *Midwest Energy News*, with highlights including a grant from the MacArthur Foundation to expand the publication's influence and capacity, as well as acceptance into the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN), a national consortium of the nation's top nonprofit news outlets.



## STRONG LAUNCH SHOWS MINNESOTA GOT RULES RIGHT ON COMMUNITY SOLAR

In 2013, Fresh Energy helped to research, develop, and pass a community solar statute into law. In the past year, Fresh Energy has worked with the Public Utilities Commission to ensure strong market rules were adopted, and worked with media to inform and educate them about the program. In December, Xcel Energy announced it had received 427 applications totaling 420 megawatts of community solar gardens—a total greater than all similar programs in other states combined. Interest in the solar garden program shows that employers and community organizations are seeking ways to reduce their operating costs and contribute to building a better Minnesota.



## GROWTH FOR UTILITY-SCALE SOLAR

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission approved an innovative 100-megawatt proposal for utility-scale solar from Geronimo Energy. Thanks to the continued work by the Fresh Energy team to help develop a more competitive market for renewables, the project, nicknamed Aurora, beat natural gas on price alone. The Public Utilities Commission approved an additional 187 megawatts of utility-scale solar for Xcel.





## IMPROVED ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN BUILDINGS

Minnesota adopted a new residential building code in 2014, a standard that increases energy efficiency by roughly 20 percent for new homes. Fresh Energy worked diligently to bring key voices to the table and encourage adoption of the new code. Now, not only will the new code lead to lower utility bills, but Minnesota has also added ventilation requirements to balance moisture and bring in fresh air, improving comfort and air quality for homeowners.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The administrative law judge for a key rate case issued a positive set of recommendations that would limit fixed charges and align utility incentives to implement energy efficiency. After expansive input from Fresh Energy and key collaborators such as AARP, the judge recommended that the Public Utilities Commission reject Xcel's request to increase fixed charges, as well as take steps forward with both decoupling and inclining block rates —frameworks that would help make the utility a champion of energy efficiency.

## FINANCIAL REPORTING

Fresh Energy did not conduct an outside audit for the abbreviated, seven-month reporting period triggered by the change of Fresh Energy's fiscal year end from June 30 to January 31. Fresh Energy's Form 990-N for this period has been filed with the Internal Revenue Service and is available upon request. Fresh Energy's next full audit, covering financial activities from July 1, 2014 to January 31, 2016 will be available in July 2016.

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