

BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Beverly Jones Heydinger
David C. Boyd
J. Dennis O'Brien
Phyllis A. Reha
Betsy Wergin

Chair
Commissioner
Commissioner
Commissioner
Commissioner

In the Matter of Establishing Digital Service
Area Maps Showing the Boundaries of the
Assigned Service Area of Each Electric Utility
in Minnesota

ISSUE DATE: December 3, 2012

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ORDER TO CONTINUE INFORMAL
PROCESS OF UPDATING DIGITAL
SERVICE AREA MAP

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

In 1974, the Minnesota Legislature determined that the orderly development of economical statewide electric service required granting electric utilities exclusive service rights within designated service areas:

It is hereby declared to be in the public interest that, in order to encourage the development of coordinated statewide electric service at retail, to eliminate or avoid unnecessary duplication of electric utility facilities, and to promote economical, efficient, and adequate electric service to the public, the state of Minnesota shall be divided into geographic service areas within which a specified electric utility shall provide electric service to customers on an exclusive basis.

Minn. Stat. § 216B.37.

The Commission was required to establish assigned service areas for all electric utilities by April 12, 1975, and to prepare official service area maps showing the boundaries of the service areas established. To expedite this process, the statute encouraged utilities to reach agreements on service area boundaries and to submit them to the Commission for approval. Minn. Stat. § 216B.39, subd. 4.

Since 1975, the original boundaries have been adjusted from time to time to reflect changes in service territory. Over time, these adjustments have made parts of the official service area maps difficult to read.

In 2004, in collaboration with the Department of Commerce and the Minnesota Geospatial Information Office (MnGeo), the Commission began the process of making the electric service area maps available in a digital format through an interactive website. MnGeo developed the digital map, receiving and incorporating corrections submitted by the utilities.

On September 14, 2012, the Commission issued a notice seeking comments on whether it should adopt the digital map as the official electric utility service area map under section 216B.39 without prejudice.

The Commission received comments from the Dakota Electric Association, Austin Utilities, People's Energy Cooperative, the Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association, Xcel Energy, Interstate Power and Light Company, Tri-County Electric Cooperative, the Shakopee Public Utilities Commission, and the City of Lake Crystal.

On November 8, 2012, the matter came before the Commission.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The electric utilities generally supported the Commission's effort to digitize the electric utility service area maps. However, many have not yet completed a review of their service area boundaries. For example, Xcel Energy stated that it had yet to review 320 of the 735 maps that MnGeo asked it to examine. Xcel expected to complete its review by early 2013.

A representative of MnGeo appeared before the Commission and stated that May 1, 2013 would be a reasonable date by which to complete the process. The Commission concurs and will therefore direct the parties to continue the current informal process of confirming and correcting the digital service map boundaries until May 1, 2013.

As soon as practicable after May 1, 2013, the Commission will take further action to declare the digital map the official map required under Minnesota Statutes section 216B.39 without prejudice to any utility.

ORDER

1. The parties are directed to continue the current informal process to confirm and correct the digital service area map. The utilities shall continue to submit corrections and agreed-upon confirmations to MnGeo until May 1, 2013.

2. This Order shall become effective immediately.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION

Burl W. Haar
Executive Secretary



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