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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE REGULATION
BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF MONTANA

IN THE MATTER OF NorthWestern Energy's:)
(1) Unreflected Gas Supply Cost Account Balance) REGULATORY DIVISION
For the 12-Month Period Ending June 30, 2013 and)
And Projected Gas Cost Tracking for the 12-Month)
Period Ending June 30, 2014;) DOCKET NO. D2013.5.34
(2) Gas Transportation Adjustment Clause (GTAC))
Balance as of April 20, 2013.)

**NorthWestern Energy's Motion to Defer Proceedings
and Consolidate this Docket with the
2014 Natural Gas Supply Tracker Docket**

COMES NOW NorthWestern Energy ("NorthWestern"), by and through its undersigned counsel, and moves the Montana Public Service Commission ("Commission") to defer the proceedings in this docket and consolidate this docket with the 2014 Natural Gas Supply Tracker

docket when it is filed by NorthWestern (“Motion”). NorthWestern provides the following support for its Motion.

I. Procedural Background

On May 31, 2013, NorthWestern filed its 2013 Application for (1) Approval of Unreflected Gas Supply Cost Account Balance for the 12-Month Period Ending June 30, 2013 and Projected Gas Cost Tracking for the 12-Month Period Ending June 30, 2014 and Gas Transportation Adjustment Clause (GTAC) Balance as of April 30, 2013 (“Application”) with the Commission (Docket No. D2013.5.34). On July 18, 2013 NorthWestern filed Supplemental Testimony. On July 30, 2013, the Montana Consumer Counsel (“MCC”) filed a timely Petition For Intervention which was granted on August 2, 2013.

As part of its Application, NorthWestern requested interim rates. On June 26, 2013 the Commission issued Order No. 7282 which granted NorthWestern’s request for interim rates. On September 24, 2013 the Commission issued Procedural Order No. 7282a, which established February 26, 2014 as the hearing date for the Application.

On December 19, 2013, the Commission filed a Notice of Additional Issue (“Notice”) directing NorthWestern to respond to Commission Findings of Fact paragraphs 40-79 in Order No. 7219h in Docket No. D2012.5.49, an Electricity Supply Cost tracker docket. The Notice also suspended the procedural schedule which was to be modified in a separate notice. There has been no modification notice issued to date.

The Commission, the MCC and NorthWestern have all engaged in discovery in this docket, and MCC has filed the testimony of George L. Donkin.

II. Discussion and Request

A Commission -approved approved tariff and Commission orders permit NorthWestern to file an annual natural gas supply tracker filing. These annual filings reflect rate treatment for the balance in NorthWestern's Natural Gas Supply Deferred Cost Account for the previous 12-month period and reflect the projected load, supply and related natural gas costs for the future 12-month period. With this Motion NorthWestern requests that the Commission defer this docket and consolidate it with the 2014 Natural Gas Tracker. That filing will be made in May of this year. NorthWestern believes at this point that consolidation would allow for the most efficient processing of this docket and would facilitate administrative economy. Further, NorthWestern has confirmed that MCC does not object to this Motion.

Although much discovery has been completed on the initial Application, no testimony has been filed on the Additional Issue identified by the Commission on December 19, 2013. This Additional Issue is directly related to NorthWestern's Petition for Judicial Review of Order No. 7219h with the Second Judicial District Court in Butte. Less than three months remain before NorthWestern must file its next natural gas supply tracker. During this time, NorthWestern will be preparing its annual supply tracker filings (propane, electricity, and natural gas) for 2014. Also, during this time, NorthWestern will be reviewing and possibly engaging in discovery on intervenor testimony, preparing and filing rebuttal testimony, responding to discovery on rebuttal testimony, and possibly dealing with additional issues in Docket No. D2013.12.85, the docket that involves NorthWestern's request to purchase and operate PPL Montana's hydroelectric facilities ("Hydros docket").¹ Therefore, NorthWestern believes that the Commission's, the parties', and its own time and resources would be best spent processing this Application

¹ The parties to this docket (D2013.5.34) are also parties in the Hydro docket.

simultaneously with the 2014 Natural Gas Tracker. This will facilitate administrative efficiency and should help the Commission manage its contested case agenda.

The Commission has recognized the efficiency of processing two similar dockets in past proceedings by consolidating prior electricity supply tracker filings. *See, e.g.*, Notice of Commission Action, Docket No. D2006.5.66 (July 2, 2007) (consolidating the electric tracker Docket No. D2006.5.66 with electric tracker Docket No. D2007.5.46); *see also* Notice of Commission Action, Docket No. D2008.5.45 (June 19, 2009) (consolidating the electric tracker Docket No. D2008.5.45 with electric tracker Docket No. D2009.5.62).

Finally, neither the Commission nor the parties will be prejudiced by granting NorthWestern's Motion since they will still have an opportunity to fully participate in the remainder of the processing of the Application. In addition, customers are not harmed by granting NorthWestern's Motion as any refunds on interim rates must include interest.

III. Conclusion

Based on the foregoing, NorthWestern hereby requests that the Commission defer the proceedings in this docket and consolidate this docket with the 2014 Natural Gas Tracker that will be filed in May of 2014.

Respectfully submitted this the 14th day of March, 2014.

NORTHWESTERN ENERGY

By: _____



Ross Richardson

Al Brogan

Attorneys for NorthWestern Energy

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that a true and correct copy of NorthWestern Energy's Motion to Defer Proceedings and Consolidate this Docket, Docket No. D2013.5.34 with the 2014 Natural Gas Supply Tracker will be hand delivered to the Montana Public Service Commission and Montana Consumer Counsel and also e-filed with the Montana Public Service Commission. It will also be served upon the following persons by, postage prepaid via first class mail, as follows:

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DATED this 14th day of March 2014.


