

April 30, 2001

For more information, contact:

Gary Feland - 406-444-6166

Will Rosquist - 406-444-6359

PSC CONDITIONALLY COMMITS 10-MEGAWATT ELECTRICITY ALLOCATION FROM NEW POWER POOL TO GOLDEN SUNLIGHT MINE

The Montana Public Service Commission today made a conditional commitment to allocate to Golden Sunlight Mine an average ten megawatts of electricity from the electrical energy pool created by a new state law for the period from July 1 through September 30 of this year.

The PSC acted in response to an emergency request received last Friday from Golden Sunlight Mine in which mine general manager Doug Bailey said the allocation is necessary in order to continue operation of the mine, including the environmental and production systems, and preserve nearly 120 jobs that would otherwise be lost. According to Bailey, the mine's current power contract expires June 30 and, due to unaffordable electricity prices right now, Golden Sunlight will have to shut down if it is unable to obtain cheaper power.

The PSC committed to the ten-megawatt allocation contingent on the following:

- Consideration of comments from adversely affected persons. Within 20 days of the service date of a notice that will be issued by the PSC, adversely affected persons must file with the PSC written, valid objections to the allocation. If valid objections are filed, the PSC will provide reasonable due process, including an opportunity for a hearing, before granting the allocation. If there are no valid objections, the emergency allocation will stand.
- On or before July 1, there must be at least an average ten megawatts of electricity available for purchase from the electrical energy pool.
- Golden Sunlight will pay an electrical energy pool purchase price determined by the PSC. The PSC will establish the lowest possible nondiscriminatory purchase price that is sufficient to recover all electrical energy pool costs, including acquisition and utility administration costs.

Affected parties should submit their written objections to the Montana PSC, Attention Dennis Crawford, PO Box 202601-2601, Helena, MT 59620-2601.

The PSC's action is in accordance with House Bill 645, which was passed by the 2001 Legislature to create a power pool to provide affordable electricity to customers facing unaffordable market prices. House Bill 645 requires that the PSC implement the electrical energy pool on an urgent basis in a manner that provides relief as soon as possible to customers paying market prices. Before July 1, 2001, the PSC must establish the rates for sales to and purchases from the energy pool, and the rules and/or tariff terms and conditions under which the pool will be administered. The PSC expects that there will be at least 20 average megawatts of electricity available from the electrical energy pool on or before July 1.

###