

For Immediate Release

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PSC Establishes Criteria for Net Metering Study

HELENA, Mont. – NorthWestern Energy will move forward with a proposed study of net-metering customers after receiving additional direction from state regulators this week.

The Montana Public Service Commission today voted unanimously to establish criteria for the study, which must be completed by April 1, 2018 in order to comply with a state law passed earlier this year.

HB 219, sponsored by Representative Zach Brown, D-Bozeman, required NorthWestern to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the costs and benefits associated with customer-generators. The law authorizes the Commission to establish minimum information requirements which must be included in the utility's study.

Chairman Brad Johnson, R-East-Helena, says the criteria established by the Commission will ensure that the study returns meaningful results.

"To find the answers you're looking for, you need to make sure that you are asking the right questions," he said.

The PSC's Notice directs NorthWestern to evaluate a long list of potential benefits and costs. These include benefits such as avoided energy and capacity the utility otherwise would have to buy, and costs such as integrating solar or wind energy onto the utility network.

"The law requires the Commission to focus solely on those factors that have a direct impact on the utility system and the provision of service to customers," said Vice-chairman Travis Kavulla, R-Great Falls. "Broader social benefits such as job growth associated with solar installations are outside the purview of the PSC, and will not be included in the study."

NorthWestern must submit its findings to the PSC as part of a general electric rate case, which the company intends to file in September of next year. The PSC will use the information from the study in order to determine whether a separate rate and classification of service is necessary for customer-generators

Those customers with interconnecting net-metering systems prior to commission action will be unaffected by future changes.

To view the full docket, visit: <http://bit.ly/2whNwbv>

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Made up of five elected commissioners, the PSC works to ensure that Montanans receive safe and reliable service from regulated public utilities while paying reasonable rates. Utilities regulated by the PSC generally include private investor-owned natural gas, electric, telephone, water, and sewer companies. In addition, the PSC regulates certain motor carriers, and oversees natural gas pipeline safety and intrastate railroad safety.