

## For Immediate Release

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### **PSC Approves MDU Natural Gas Conservation Program**

**HELENA, Mont.** – The Montana Public Service Commission voted today to continue a program aimed at conserving natural gas by providing energy audits and incentives for programmable thermostats, efficient boilers, and furnaces.

The 3-2 vote came after Montana-Dakota Utilities asked the PSC to approve \$503,875 over a three-year period, until March 2020. MDU serves 83,900 gas customers in eastern Montana.

“The evidence shows that by each of the cost-benefit tests that we use, MDU’s conservation programming has saved the consuming public more money than it has cost,” said Travis Kavulla, R-Great Falls, the PSC’s vice-chairman who represents Glendive, Sidney, and Wolf Point.

Other commissioners voiced disagreement about the utility’s involvement in energy efficiency programming. Commissioner Tony O’Donnell, R-Billings, said, “These are investments best left to the judgment of individual consumers. If they are cost-effective, there is nothing stopping a consumer from purchasing them.”

All commissioners voiced support for a more comprehensive re-evaluation of the program, and the PSC’s order includes direction to MDU to make a filing in two years which addresses the Commission’s concerns.

MDU’s program began in 2006, a time when natural gas was in short supply. Today, more efficient, cost effective drilling and completion techniques have led to an increase in gas production and lower prices for consumers. Changing circumstances prompted the Commission to take a second look at the program.

Chairman Brad Johnson, R- East Helena, Kavulla, and Commissioner Bob Lake, R-Hamilton, voted to approve continuing MDU’s program. O’Donnell and Commissioner Roger Koopman, R-Bozeman, voted against it.

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