

Minnesota Environmental and Energy Update - March 11, 2011

Posted by [Eric F. Swanson](#) on March 11, 2011

Bill Introductions of Note

HF 908: A bill for an act relating to natural resources; modifying Wetland Conservation Act; amending Minnesota Statutes 2010, sections 103G.005, by adding a subdivision; 103G.2212; 103G.222, subdivision 3; 103G.2242, subdivisions 2a, 6, 7, 9, 12, 14, by adding a subdivision; 103G.2251; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 103G.

HF 931: A bill for an act relating to energy; requiring Legislative Energy Commission to examine issue of permanent storage of spent nuclear fuel produced by nuclear-powered electric generating plants.

HF 1025: A bill relating to utilities; requiring utility rates be based primarily on cost of service between and among consumer classes.

Bills on the Move

Coal fired energy took center stage again this week, with the House Commerce and Regulatory Reform Committee hearing HF 72, authored by Rep. Michael Beard (R-Shakopee), on Tuesday. The Senate Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications Committee heard the second round of testimony on the companion bill, SF 86, authored by Sen. Julie Rosen (R-Fairmont), also on Tuesday. These bills would repeal the ban on new electric generation facilities or contracts with electric energy providers that would lead to increased carbon dioxide emissions. The ban was enacted as part of the 2007 Next Generation Energy Act. Both Committees recommended approval by strong margins and the bills now await floor action.

On Thursday, the Senate Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications Committee recommended approval of SF 548, a bill giving the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) authority to approve multiyear rate plans for utilities. Both Xcel Energy and Deputy Commissioner of Commerce Bill Grant testified in support of the bill, authored by Sen. Michelle Benson (R-Ham Lake). The Committee removed a portion of the bill also allowing rate riders as an alternative to the multiyear rate plan. However, there continue to be some concerns being raised that the bill does not mandate a yearly earnings review as part of the multiyear rate plan process.

Finally, the conference committee on SF 4, the nuclear moratorium repeal authored by Majority Leader Amy Koch (R-Buffalo), met for the first time Friday morning to begin discussion of the

INSIDE THE MINNESOTA CAPITOL

Minnesota politics, regulatory agencies and state government news updates



bill. The Senate refused to concur with House language that added restrictions on reprocessing of nuclear waste. To date, the Governor has indicated that such a restriction is just one of several additional provisions that should be added to the bill.

New PUC Chair Appointed

Six term DFL Senator and long-time renewable energy and environmental advocate Ellen Anderson has been named by Gov. Dayton as the new PUC Chair. The PUC regulates three cornerstone service industries in Minnesota's economy – electricity, natural gas and telephone. This appointment came as a surprise to some as Gov. Dayton had previously stated he would not use current legislators to fill appointments. Senator Anderson's resignation will be effective March 20 and several prominent DFL names are already talking about seeking the seat.