216B.1694 INNOVATIVE ENERGY PROJECT.

Subdivision 1. **Definition.** For the purposes of this section, the term "innovative energy project" means a proposed energy-generation facility or group of facilities which may be located on up to three sites:

(1) that makes use of an innovative generation technology utilizing coal as a primary fuel in a highly efficient combined-cycle configuration with significantly reduced sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, particulate, and mercury emissions from those of traditional technologies;

(2) that the project developer or owner certifies is a project capable of offering a long-term supply contract at a hedged, predictable cost; and

(3) that is designated by the commissioner of Iron Range resources and rehabilitation as a project that is located in the taconite tax relief area on a site that has substantial real property with adequate infrastructure to support new or expanded development and that has received prior financial and other support from the board.

Subd. 2. **Regulatory incentives.** (a) An innovative energy project:

(1) is exempted from the requirements for a certificate of need under section 216B.243, for the generation facilities, and transmission infrastructure associated with the generation facilities, but is subject to all applicable environmental review and permitting procedures of chapter 216E;

(2) once permitted and constructed, is eligible to increase the capacity of the associated transmission facilities without additional state review upon filing notice with the commission;

(3) has the power of eminent domain, which shall be limited to the sites and routes approved by the Environmental Quality Board for the project facilities. The project shall be considered a utility as defined in section 216I.02, subdivision 19, for the limited purpose of section 216I.21. The project shall report any intent to exercise eminent domain authority to the board;

(4) shall, prior to the approval by the commission of any arrangement to build or expand a fossil-fuel-fired generation facility, or to enter into an agreement to purchase capacity or energy from such a facility for a term exceeding five years, be considered as a supply option for the generation facility, and the commission shall ensure such consideration and take any action with respect to such supply proposal that it deems to be in the best interest of ratepayers;

(5) shall make a good faith effort to secure funding from the United States Department of Energy and the United States Department of Agriculture to conduct a demonstration project at the facility for either geologic or terrestrial carbon sequestration projects to achieve reductions in facility emissions or carbon dioxide;

(6) shall be entitled to enter into a contract with a public utility that owns a nuclear generation facility in the state to provide 450 megawatts of base-load capacity and energy under a long-term contract, subject to the approval of the terms and conditions of the contract by the commission. The commission may approve, disapprove, amend, or modify the contract in making its public interest determination, taking into consideration the project's economic development benefits to the state; the use of abundant domestic fuel sources; the stability of the price of the output from the project; the project's potential to contribute to a transition to hydrogen as a fuel resource; and the emissions reductions achieved compared to other solid fuel base-load technologies; and

(7) shall be eligible for a grant from the renewable development account, subject to the approval of the entity administering that account, of $2,000,000 a year for five years for development and engineering costs, including those costs related to mercury-removal technology; thermal efficiency optimization and emission minimization; environmental impact statement preparation and licensing; development of hydrogen production capabilities; and fuel cell development and utilization.

(b) This subdivision does not apply to nor affect a proposal to add utility-owned resources that is pending on May 29, 2003, before the Public Utilities Commission or to competitive bid solicitations to provide capacity or energy that is scheduled to be on line by December 31, 2006.

Subd. 3. **Staging and permitting.** (a) A natural gas-fired plant that is located on one site designated as an innovative energy project site under subdivision 1, clause (3), is accorded the regulatory incentives granted to an innovative energy project under subdivision 2, clauses (1) to (3), and may exercise the authorities therein.

(b) Following issuance of a final state or federal environmental impact statement for an innovative energy project that was a subject of contested case proceedings before an administrative law judge:

(1) site and route permits and water appropriation approvals for an innovative energy project must also be deemed valid for a plant meeting the requirements of paragraph (a) and shall remain valid until the later of (i) four years from the date the final required state or federal preconstruction permit is issued or (ii) June 30, 2025; and

(2) no air, water, or other permit issued by a state agency that is necessary for constructing an innovative energy project may be the subject of contested case hearings, notwithstanding Minnesota Rules, parts 7000.1750 to 7000.2200.

History: *1Sp2003 c 11 art 4 s 1; 2011 c 97 s 16; 2012 c 187 art 1 s 34; 2017 c 94 art 7 s 15; art 10 s 10; 2024 c 126 art 7 s 14; 2024 c 127 art 43 s 14*