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RTO Insider

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CAISO/West News

CAISO Approves $3B Transmission Plan

By Hudson Sangree

The CAISO Board of Governors approved a 10-year *transmission plan* Thursday that far exceeds the estimated cost of any similar plan in recent years, its price driven by the proliferation of renewable resources, predicted load growth and the state's reliability concerns.

"The need for new generation over the next 10 years has escalated rapidly, driving an accelerated pace for new transmission development in this and future planning cycles," Neil Millar, CAISO vice president of infrastructure and operations planning, wrote in a *memo* to the board.

CAISO identified the need for 23 transmission projects with an estimated cost of $2.96 billion — nearly 14 times more than the $217 million average over the past five years, Millar noted.

The next highest year, 2018/19, saw a need for $644 million in transmission projects. Other years were far less. CAISO found the state needed $5 million in transmission projects last year, $142 million of projects in 2019/20, $271 million in 2017/18 and $24 million in 2016/17.

The ISO adopts a 10-year transmission plan every year, but the forecasted need often varies dramatically based on circumstances. The 2020/21 transmission plan, for example, envisioned adding 1,000 MW of new resources per year. This year's plan estimates a need for 2,700 MW per year, while next year's plan could boost that figure to 4,000 MW, CAISO said.

To explain the increase, CAISO cited an "accelerated pace of resource development" based on decarbonization efforts and the planned electrification of the transportation sector, which state planners expect to drive up demand. California has a goal of 100% clean energy by 2045 and a mandate that all new passenger vehicles sold in the state be electric or zero-emission vehicles by 2035.

Reliability was also an issue. CAISO said the state will need generation and transmission development because of the potential for reduced imports from other Western states and high peak loads on hot summer evenings. Both factors contributed to the rolling blackouts of August 2020 and CAISO's re-examination of its reliability risks.

CAISO also cited the need to replace several aging gas plants and Pacific Gas and Electric's Diablo Canyon, the state's last nuclear power plant. All are slated to retire in the next few years.

"The transmission system will need to be expanded, upgraded and reinforced to access and integrate these resources, as well accommodate the expected resurgence in electricity consumption as transportation and other industries electrify to reduce their carbon impact," the plan said.

Sixteen projects, with an estimated price tag of $1.4 billion, are needed to meet load growth and the state fleet's transition to renewable resources, CAISO said. They include two HVDC projects to serve Silicon Valley and the city of San Jose. Six policy-driven transmission projects, totaling $1.5 billion, are necessary to meet the generation requirements established by the California Public Utilities Commission's renewable portfolio standards, the ISO said.

The plan will guide implementation, including initiating a competitive solicitation process for four high-voltage projects, the ISO said in a news release.

"Approval of the plan also sets in motion contractual agreements and cost recovery for transmission upgrades through ISO transmission rates," it said.

The 10-year plan follows CAISO's release on Jan. 31 of a first-of-its-kind 20-year transmission outlook. The outlook predicted a need for $30.5 billion of new high-voltage lines to transport wind power long distances across the West and to carry solar, offshore wind and geothermal power from in-state California generators to urban load pockets. (See *CAISO Sees $30B Need for Tx Development*.)

"While the 10-year plan is required by the ISO's federal tariff and identifies specific projects for construction, the longer outlook is designed to provide a framework and longer-term vision for the system's future transmission needs without recommending specific projects for approval," CAISO said. "Together, the two documents will help map the short-term, intermediate and long-term milestones of the clean-energy transition, enabling rigorous and efficient planning coordination and creating the most cost-effective and durable transmission infrastructure to serve generations to come." ■

FERC Rejects PG&E Bid to Raise Profits

Utility Argued Return on Equity Should Consider Wildfire Risks

By Hudson Sangree

FERC on Thursday shot down the latest attempt by Pacific Gas and Electric to significantly increase its return on equity based on the utility's risks associated with wildfires and California's transition to renewable energy (*ER16-2320*).

PG&E had asked FERC to retroactively increase its ROE from 9.13% to 13.29% in its transmission owner tariff for 2017-18. The utility said it needed larger profits to entice investors wary of the state's inverse condemnation laws, which hold utilities strictly liable for wildfires ignited by their equipment.

It also contended the state's ambitious environmental goals saddle it with cost-recovery risks associated with planning and operating a safe and reliable grid.

FERC, however, said the basis for PG&E's ROE was a six-month test case in 2017 that ended prior to the utility's equipment sparking the highly destructive wine country fires of October 2017. A series of catastrophic blazes ignited by PG&E equipment followed in each of the next four years, including the state's deadliest wildfire, the Camp Fire, in November 2018, and its second largest wildfire, the nearly 1 million-acre Dixie Fire, last summer.

PG&E argued the wildfires put it in a high-risk category and justified an increased ROE. The California Public Utilities Commission and others opposed the move because of the potential cost impact on customers. They proposed a rate of less than 9%.

FERC concluded that PG&E was an average-risk utility during the 2017 test period and said its stock price and credit ratings declined dramatically only after the wine country fires and subsequent blazes.

"The October 2017 wildfires and resulting financial consequences and credit rating downgrades for PG&E occurred subsequent to the test period, such that we will not consider them in determining PG&E's risk profile," it said.

The commission applied its revised methodology for calculating ROE from Opinion 569-A issued in May 2020 and two related opinions. It ruled an "appropriate" ROE for PG&E was 9.26% based mainly on its risk profile prior to the wine country fires.

Dissents

Commissioner James Danly dissented from what he called the "common-sense defying outcome" in the case.

"In my view, it simply is not credible that PG&E faced the same risks as any other 'average' utility in light of rampant wildfires, California's inverse condemnation laws (which require PG&E to compensate landowners for fire damage), and a host of other risks unique to a utility attempting to survive in California's challenging legal and regulatory environment, in 2017 and since," Danly wrote.

The inverse condemnation laws helped drive PG&E into bankruptcy in January 2019 after the Camp Fire, which killed 85 people and leveled the town of Paradise, he said.

FERC's decision "underscores a fundamental concern I have with the commission's convoluted ROE precedent and policy," Danly said. "We have created a Rube Goldberg machine that ultimately can be manipulated into supporting any ROE a majority of commissioners favors at a given moment."

Commissioner Allison Clements dissented in part but for different reasons. She agreed with the majority's decision that PG&E was an average-risk utility during the test period, and said FERC had correctly applied the commission's ROE policy established in *Opinion 569-A*.

"However, I dissent in part from today's order because of my continuing concerns with the current ROE policy, which I believe applies a flawed methodology that does not adequately protect consumers and does not yield just and reasonable rates," Clements said.

Not wanting to repeat herself, she referred readers to her May 2021 dissent in Opinion 575 (*ER13-1508-001*), in which FERC applied the methodology it had adopted for MISO transmission owners in Opinion 569-A a year before.

In that case Clements said the methodology, including the "risk premium model" applied by FERC to ROE calculations, failed to protect consumers. (See *FERC Reduces Entergy's Return on Equity*.)

"The order of magnitude of transmission investment required to achieve [decarbonization, resilience and replacement of aged infrastructure] is unprecedented, which translates into a massive opportunity for utilities and transmission developers," she wrote in Opinion 575. "But the value proposition for consumers is in no small part dependent on this commission's rigorous scrutiny of the rates charged for transmission service, of which ROE is a central component."

"Given this context, I believe the commission must revisit its existing ROE policy," Clements said. "I appreciate that this policy has been unsettled for years, a state that increases investment uncertainty and extends litigation.

"To be sure, I share the goal of a stable ROE policy that will speed rate proceedings and allow for timely ROE updates as market conditions change," she said. "But we should not double down on the desire for near-term stability to strong detriment of consumer protection, and I worry our current ROE policy does just that." ■

PG&E sought a high ROE based on its financial risks from destructive wildfires, such as last year's Dixie Fire. | *U.S. Forest Service*

CAISO/West News

FERC Upholds CAISO Wheel-through Rules

Rejects Arizona Challenge and Approves 2-Year Extension

By Hudson Sangree

FERC last week upheld its June 2021 finding that CAISO's temporary wheel-through restrictions do not violate open-access transmission principles and approved a two-year extension of the provisions, but it urged the ISO to find a better long-term solution quickly.

In doing so, FERC rejected a rehearing request by the Arizona Corporation Commission and a coalition of Arizona utilities, including Arizona Public Service and Salt River Project, which continued to press their case that CAISO's rules are discriminatory (*ER21-1790*).

The wheeling rules were part of a CAISO package of changes meant to promote summer reliability following the rolling blackouts and energy emergencies of summer 2020.

The rules reprioritized wheel-throughs so that transfers between the Northwest and Southwest could no longer take precedence over capacity needed to serve CAISO native load. Non-CAISO entities would have to apply at least 45 days in advance to designate high-priority wheel-throughs needed for reliability, giving the wheels equal standing with CAISO native load.

Utilities in the Southwest, dependent on Pacific Northwest electricity imported through CAISO's grid each summer, were displeased. FERC, however, found the provisions acceptable. (See *FERC OKs CAISO Wheel-through Restrictions*.)

It reiterated that stance in its decision March 15.

"We continue to find that the scheduling priorities implemented in the interim tariff revisions result in a just and reasonable interim solution that is consistent with open-access policies, including the native load priority principles first articulated in Order No. 888 and reconfirmed in Order No. 890," FERC wrote.

"These interim tariff revisions were designed to enable CAISO to maintain reliability in the summer of 2021 and strike a reasonable balance between 'the transmission provider's need to meet its native load obligations and the need of other entities to obtain service to meet their own obligations,'" it said.

Before the revisions, wheel-through transactions could receive scheduling priority higher than CAISO's native load requirements, FERC noted.

The provisions "adjust scheduling priorities to protect native load by giving resource adequacy imports a scheduling priority equivalent to priority wheeling-through transactions and higher than non-priority wheeling-through transactions," it said.

FERC acknowledged, however, that stakeholders remain "deeply divided" over the changes and said the challenging parties had reconveyed their "serious concerns with CAISO's approach to implementing a native load priority."

"The Federal Power Act does not require the commission to determine that a proposal is the best solution, only a reasonable one," FERC said. "Therefore, we sustain the result in [our] June 2021 order as a just and reasonable interim solution for allocating transmission capacity fairly among users when the system is constrained.

"Nevertheless, in light of the interim tariff revisions' potential impacts on neighboring balancing authority areas and parties' ongoing concerns, we expect CAISO to work with stakeholders to design and file a just and reasonable and not unduly discretionary or preferential long-term solution as expeditiously as possible."

In a related order (*ER22-906*), the commission accepted CAISO's decision to extend the wheeling provisions for two more years through May 2024. The rules were originally scheduled to expire June 1 of this year. (See *CAISO Extends Wheel-through Rules*.)

"We find that extending the interim tariff revisions is just and reasonable and will provide certainty regarding the rules for wheeling-through transactions, while CAISO and stakeholders develop a long-term solution that will clearly delineate rights across CAISO's transmission system," FERC said.

The commission warned CAISO, however, that its findings were based on the rule changes being "interim," not "indefinite," and repeated its call for a quick resolution between the ISO and affected parties.

The commission also instructed CAISO to file quarterly reports updating it on its progress.

"In these filings, CAISO must describe any long-term alternative solutions being considered in the stakeholder process, explain any potential impediments to implementing any particular solution and provide an updated schedule for finalizing a proposal," it said. ■

West news from our other channels

CARB to Replenish Zero-emission Truck Fund with $430M

NetZero Insider

Winners and Losers Among Wash. Climate Bills

NetZero Insider

After Bills Fail, NM Reforestation Program Looks for Funding

NetZero Insider

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ERCOT News

ERCOT: Sufficient Resources to Meet Spring Demand

ERCOT has sufficient installed generating capacity to serve peak demand under normal system conditions this spring, according to the seasonal assessment of resource adequacy (SARA) released last week.

The Texas grid operator is forecasting demand to top out at 64.7 GW, based on expected spring peak weather conditions. It expects to have 94.4 GW of resource capacity available for the spring season (March-May).

Staff has projected a 52.5% capacity planning reserve margin (PRM) for the spring that covers resource outages, lower-than-expected renewable output, and higher-than-expected customer demand. The PRM is not the same as operating reserve measures that focus on actual available capacity during real-time and hour-ahead operating periods.

The *SARA report* includes 14 reserve capacity risk scenarios developed according to varying load-forecast values and resource-availability parameters, divided into two separate periods: the March and April peak maintenance season and the May peak demand month. The scenarios are based on historical data, known changes expected in the near-term or reasonable assumptions regarding potential future events.

Wind blades sit after being unloaded from a ship on the Gulf Coast, soon to add to ERCOT's wind power. | © RTO Insider LLC

ERCOT has added 31 wind, solar and energy storage projects since November, with just over 1 GW of expected capacity contribution during peak demand. An additional 367 MW of planned gas-fired and wind resources are also expected to be available for spring's peak demand.

The SARA report is intended to illustrate the range of resource adequacy outcomes that might occur and serves as a situational awareness tool for ERCOT's operational planning purposes.

As has been the case since last summer, the SARA was issued in a *market notice* and without an accompanying media briefing. ■

— Tom Kleckner

ISO-NE News

Renewable Groups Challenge Gas ‘Preference’ in ISO-NE Rules

By Sam Mintz

Fore River Energy Center in Weymouth, Mass. | *Calpine*

Two renewable energy industry groups are asking federal regulators to address what they say are unfair preferences given to gas-powered generators in ISO-NE.

In a *Section 206 complaint* filed with FERC last week, RENEW Northeast and the American Clean Power Association wrote that ISO-NE’s rules and practices around capacity accreditation and operating reserve designation don’t adequately take into account the uncertainty of natural gas supply in the region, particularly in winter.

The undue preference, they say, harms almost every other type of generation resource in the region.

The complaint says that ISO-NE’s capacity accreditation for gas-only resources is an “outlier,” in that the grid operator treats them as equivalent to resources with dedicated, on-site fuel supplies despite “known uncertainties with fuel availability for gas-only resources in winter peak conditions” — the well-established pipeline constraints that have been in play in New England for years.

ISO-NE’s qualified capacity rating for a gas generator is based on a test that only confirms the physical ability of the resource to convert fuel into energy, and not its access to that fuel.

“Gas-only resources receive an undue preference by being treated the same way for capacity accreditation as generators with known, dedicated fuel supplies, in spite of uncertainties about the ability of gas-only generators to obtain gas supply in peak winter conditions,” the complaint says.

The groups also contend that the grid operator’s operating reserve designation involves similar undue preferences, because gas-only resources are again unique in that they’re not required to prove the availability of fuel.

“A gas-only resource that cannot find gas is the same as a wind resource without wind or a solar resource without sun,” said RENEW executive director Francis Pullaro. “There is no justification to treat gas-only resources in a different manner.”

ISO-NE spokesperson Matt Kakley said the grid operator is reviewing the filing, noting that the RTO has already started a stakeholder process to improve its capacity accreditation. In its *2022 work plan*, the RTO says it is aiming to find methodologies to “appropriately accredit resource contributions to resource adequacy as the resource mix transforms,” with a tentative plan to have a filing to FERC by the end of the year.

The primary method under discussion for doing so is effective load-carrying capability (ELCC).

“A commitment by ISO-NE to timely take steps through ELCC implementation to set winter capacity ratings for gas-only resources consistent with the level that could be fueled on a cold winter day would be a positive step,” the renewable groups wrote in their complaint.

Winter weather has been in sharp focus for ISO-NE and the New England states this year, after last year’s energy crisis in Texas and an increase in extreme weather. (See *As Climate Changes, Weather Becomes Obsession for New England Grid, State Officials*.) ■

ISO-NE News

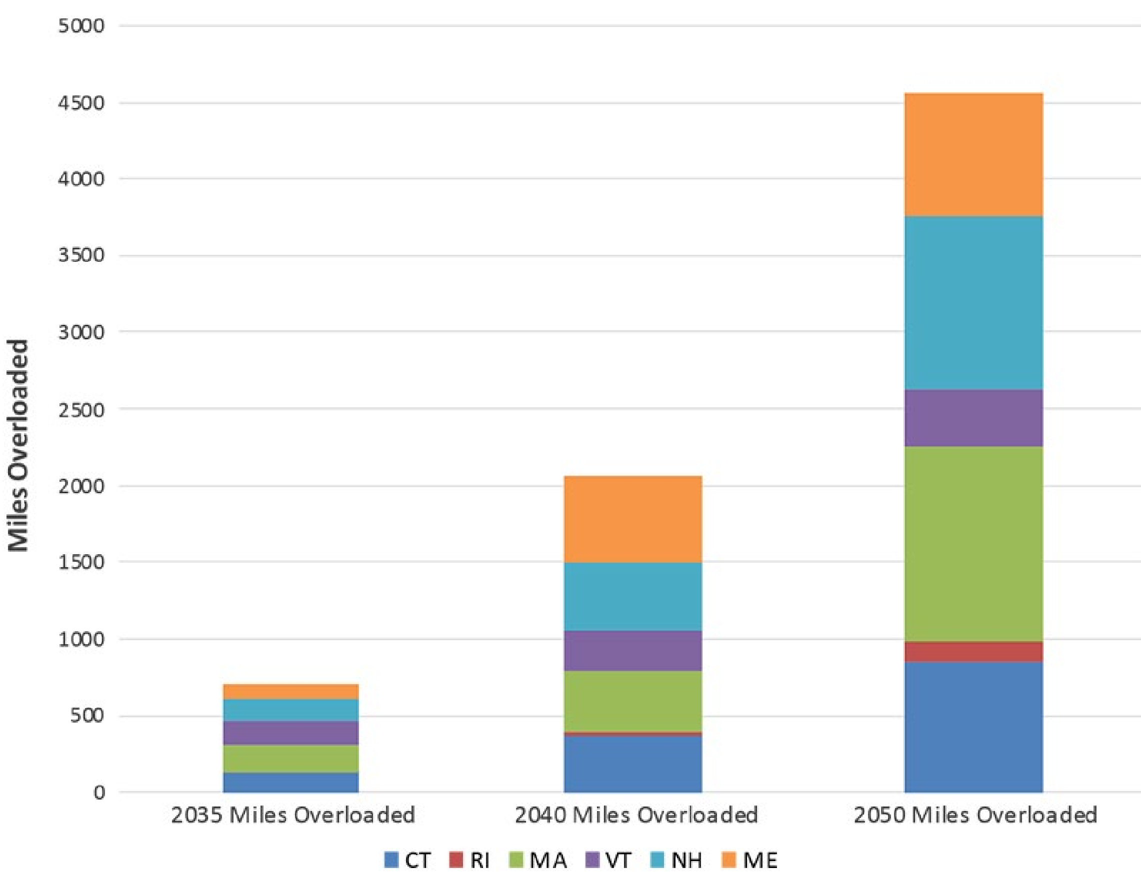
2050 Tx Study Finds Thousands of Miles of Overloads in ISO-NE

Multiple "paradigm shifts" in the way New England produces and consumes energy could lead to thousands of miles of overloaded transmission lines, according to the *preliminary results* of ISO-NE's 2050 Transmission Study.

The study, initiated by the grid operator in response to a request from the New England States Committee on Electricity for longer-term transmission planning, was designed to examine the next few decades as the region continues to ramp up its decarbonization efforts.

It found that as the region moves from a summer-peaking area to winter-peaking, increases its use of renewables and doubles peak power consumption, about half of its 9,000 miles of lines could be overloaded.

"Significant new transmission will be needed to reliably serve load under the assumptions analyzed in this study," ISO-NE said in its presentation to the Planning Advisory Committee on Wednesday.



Half of the transmission lines in New England could be overloaded by 2050, according to the preliminary results of a new ISO-NE study. | *ISO-NE*

The most challenging scenario is the 2050 winter peak, in which overloads are caused primarily by high heating load and a shortfall in supply requires new resources.

Regional discrepancies also pop up in the study. "The paths between north and south would need significant upgrades to transfer surplus generation in Northern NE to generation-deficient Southern NE," ISO-NE said. Other possible solutions include relocating large amounts of generation from north to south or putting more offshore wind in the southern part of the region.

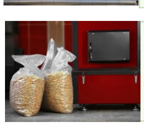
The RTO is planning to perform further analysis to determine if summer-only overloads can be solved by different solar resource distributions, and to develop possible transmission solutions. ■

— Sam Mintz

Northeast news from our other channels

National Grid Proposes 100% Fossil-free Gas System in Mass.

NetZero Insider



Vt. House Approves Bill to Create Clean Heat Standard

NetZero Insider

Conn. Lawmakers Revisit Need for Direct EV Sales Model

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MISO News

FERC Allows Quicker MISO Interconnection Queue Option

By Amanda Durish Cook

Construction of a DTE Energy solar farm in Michigan | *J. Ranck Electric*

FERC last week granted MISO's request to give generator interconnection customers an opportunity to reduce their time in the interconnection queue from more than 500 days to a single year.

In a letter order issued March 14, the commission said MISO could offer interconnection customers a faster finish time in return for proceeding without definitive network upgrade cost information (*ER22-661*).

The grid operator is hoping to whittle about 140 days from its generator interconnection process by cutting the days allotted for interconnection agreement negotiations and study and performing some study aspects simultaneously. (See *Shorter Interconnection Queue Coming, MISO Says*.)

Interconnection customers in the final phase of MISO's three-part definitive planning process will now have a choice to spend 60 days in the stage without waiting on a network upgrade facilities study before proceeding to generator interconnection agreement (GIA) negotiations. Their other options is to spend about 150 days in a holding pattern while they wait on a final upgrade report.

GIA negotiations will be condensed from about 150 days to around 108 days under MISO's plan.

FERC said the reductions stand to improve the interconnection queue's efficiency.

The commission said it was appropriate for MISO to offer "each interconnection customer a choice between a timelier path to GIA negotiations with less cost certainty or a less timely path with more cost certainty entering into GIA negotiations, based on its preferences."

FERC said generation developers that opt for the shorter path will do so with the "understanding that their assigned costs may be refined in the final interconnection facilities study report."

MISO has said shortening the queue timeline will help it better align network upgrade planning with its transmission expansion plan, which is conducted on an annual basis.

For years now, the RTO has placed an emphasis on accelerating hold times for generation waiting for system access in its interconnection queue. Last month, the queue held 133 GW of projects, comprising mostly renewable generation.

Some stakeholders have expressed concerns that MISO can accomplish its goal. They say the real slowdown lies in the RTO's notoriously time-consuming affected system analyses with its neighbors. Staff have said that if the new changes don't meaningfully shorten queue wait times, MISO will pursue additional changes. ■

MISO News

MISO Finalizes Plan for DER Market Participation in 2030

By Amanda Durish Cook

MISO is collecting a final round of stakeholder feedback before making a compliance filing under FERC Order 2222's directive requiring RTOs to open their wholesale markets to aggregations of distributed energy resources.

Stakeholders had until March 14 to submit written comments. The compliance filing is due April 18.

MISO will lean on its electric storage participation plan for DER aggregations, limiting them to a single pricing node. The aggregations must self-commit in the RTO's markets based on their own forecasts.

The grid operator last month set a 2030 completion date for DER aggregation's participation in its wholesale markets. MISO envisions registration being available in late 2029, with participation in energy and ancillary service markets offered by the end of 2030's first quarter. (See *MISO: DER Aggregations Must Wait Until 2030 for Market Participation*.)

Stakeholders have told MISO that eight years is too slow to comply with the order. Some of them have pointed out that substantial DER adoption could happen between now and 2030.

During a March 10 Market Subcommittee meeting, Deputy General Counsel Tim Caister said MISO must "get anchors in" before it's ready for Order 2222 compliance. He said it's not simply a matter of plugging DER participation into MISO's new market platform, but that registration and settlement systems need to be overhauled as well.

Staff and stakeholders have extended the DER task force until July 2023 to discuss post-compliance filing issues and provide MISO guidance on other DER issues. The grid operator has long said that Order 2222 compliance will not be the only market offering for DERs.

Task force lead Tricia DeBleeckere, a Minnesota Public Utilities Commission staffer, said upcoming meetings will probably become more stakeholder led. She said like the Order 2222 edict, MISO facilitates DER technologies, but members are the driving force behind their participation. ■

| © RTO Insider LLC

Midwest news from our other channels

Report: Michigan Needs 4 GW of Energy Storage

NetZero Insider

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MISO News

MISO Sees Chance of Emergencies This Spring

By Amanda Durish Cook

In a now-familiar refrain, MISO is warning stakeholders of possible maximum generation emergencies should high load and high outages collide this spring.

Under probable load scenarios with expected outages, MISO *expects* to have:

- 99 GW of available capacity in March to cover an 88-GW peak demand estimate;
- 91 GW of available capacity in April to cover an 83-GW peak; and
- 101 GW of available capacity in May to cover a 91-GW peak.

However, the RTO said should elevated load and excessive outages enter the picture, it could find itself declaring an emergency to access its emergency-only resources in April and May. MISO said it doesn't see itself exhausting its 12 GW of load-modifying resources and operational reserves, even in the direst situations.

In a worst-case scenario, the grid operator would have just 79 GW of non-emergency capacity in April should demand reach 88 GW. Under the same scenario in May, MISO would have 95 GW of capacity to handle a 104-GW demand peak. In both cases, staff would be forced to access emergency supplies.

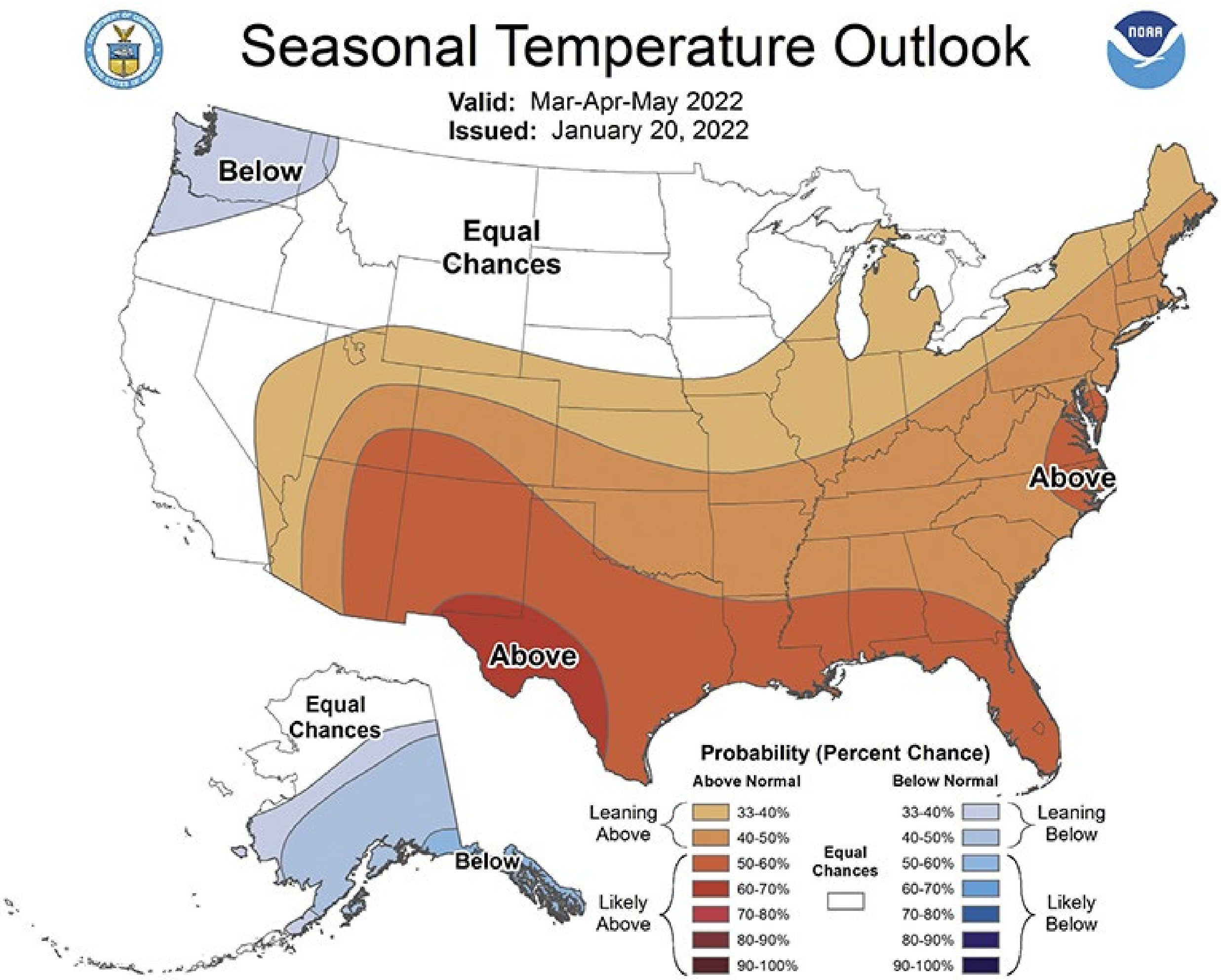
MISO set its all-time spring peak of 111 GW in May 2018.

Over the past five years, the RTO has experienced an average 36.3 GW of forced and planned outages during spring monthly peaks. It saw its highest on-peak spring outages at 54.2 GW in April 2019.

MISO did not alter this year's spring reliability outlook to include the loss of its firm contract path linking its Midwest and South regions through June 30. Staff said it wasn't necessary to factor the line loss into its forecasts because it was unlikely to cause any operational impacts. (See *MISO Midwest-South Transfer Service on Outage until July*.)

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicts higher-than-average temperatures for MISO South and a chance at higher temperatures across most of the Midwest, except for the northernmost portion of the footprint. NOAA also expects much of the Midwest to experience more precipitation than usual.

MISO ended winter without the serious reliability event it was steeling itself for. The grid operator had a 100.2-GW winter peak on Jan. 21, about 9 GW short of the all-time winter peak set in early 2014 during a polar vortex. ■



The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's spring prediction | *NOAA*

MISO News

MISO Moves to Disband Stakeholder Loss of Load Group

By Amanda Durish Cook

MISO last week said it intends to sunset its longstanding stakeholder group dedicated to the grid operator's loss-of-load expectation calculations.

The RTO would like to retire the stakeholder-led Loss of Load Expectation Working Group (LOLEWG) at the end of the year and fold its work into the Resource Adequacy Subcommittee (RASC), MISO's Lynn Hecker told stakeholders during a LOLEWG teleconference Wednesday.

The LOLEWG is more than a decade old and helps prepare MISO's annual loss-of-load expectation study, which generates planning reserve margin requirements for load-serving entities, zonal reliability requirements, and zonal import and export capabilities. Those limits are used in MISO's capacity auction.

The sunset news comes as MISO is pursuing seasonal reliability targets as the footprint faces a more pronounced wintertime loss-of-load risk that could eventually top summertime risk. MISO's internal analysis shows that renewable penetration and electrification adoption will push the region to become exclusively winter peaking by 2035.

Clean Grid Alliance's Natalie McIntire said she was worried stakeholders might lose their forum to provide detailed input on such technical studies. She said she hoped loss-of-load topics wouldn't be glossed over in RASC meetings with MISO's new "post-only" agenda item format, in which the RTO publishes information but doesn't prepare a presentation.

"I think the idea of a technical work group is helpful, and I don't want to lose the … dialogue and discussion," McIntire said.

Hecker said that by sunsetting the working group, MISO would end duplicate loss-of-load conversations in both the LOLEWG and the RASC. MISO will reserve time for loss-of-load discussion in the RASC only if the subjects are deemed noteworthy, he said.

"The short answer is, 'it depends on the importance of the topic,'" Hecker said.

MISO's Carmel headquarters | © *RTO Insider LLC*

LOLEWG Chair James Peters asked if stakeholders could reconvene the working group if they think the RASC isn't adequately covering loss-of-load topics.

MISO customer relations said stakeholders, with approval from the stakeholder-led Steering Committee, could always create a new task team, working group or task force devoted to loss-of-load expectations.

The RTO will hold another discussion in July on possibly sunsetting the group by the end of 2022. ■

NYISO News

NYPSC Aims to Lessen Impact of Utility Bill Spikes

By Michael Kuser

The New York Public Service Commission on Wednesday heard updates on how the state's utilities are responding to the PSC chair's pleas to improve billing practices and customer outreach in the light of this winter's electric and gas bill surges on higher natural gas prices.

NYPSC Chair Rory Christian | *NYDPS*

"It bears pointing out that the price spikes we've recently seen are not something limited just to New Yorkers. This is a global issue, a national issue, and it's affecting everyone from Maine to California," PSC Chair Rory Christian said. "Customers already struggling with a global pandemic are now faced with rising inflation, rising energy costs, and concerns that the war in Ukraine could have far greater impacts in the near term and long term."

Christian said the PSC has instructed utilities to increase their outreach on the issue, adding that he's "optimistic" about the results of outreach efforts.

Christian wrote to Consolidated Edison on Feb. 11, directing the state's largest utility to increase communications and improve its billing mechanisms to reduce dramatic changes in commodity prices from month to month, an issue that exacerbated price volatility for their customers, some of whom saw their monthly bills go up by as much as 67% this winter (Case No. *22-00346*).

Revenue Strategies

The other major utilities — Con Ed subsidiary Orange and Rockland; National Grid; Avangrid subsidiaries NYSEG and RG&E; National Fuel; PSEG Long Island; and Central Hudson Gas and Electric — are reviewing their power purchasing to mitigate the risk of severe price volatility, retooling their consumer communications regarding anticipated bill increases, payment assistance plans and programs to reduce energy usage.

Con Edison filed an emergency tariff to fix its billing by the summer and said that its hedging practices include reconciling benefits in a future bill, which resulted in a bill credit for its customers beginning with Feb. 11 bills and continuing through March 14, said Tammy Mitchell, director of the Department of Public Service's Office of Electric, Gas and Water.

"While Con Edison customers experienced commodity price and bill volatility, the hedges that Con Edison entered into saved full-service mass market customers over $120 million this winter through the end of February compared to if they were simply subject to market prices," Mitchell said.

Due to the increases, the supply portion of a Con Ed customer bill jumped from 24% of the total bill in January to about 45% of the total bill in February, she said.

NYPSC Commissioner Diane Burman | *NYDPS*

Additional state directives on better outreach are not really the solution to price volatility, Commissioner Diane Burman said.

"We need to call out some other state officials who may not fully understand we can't just say that we have to educate consumers," Burman said. "I can tell you if I was a consumer who had my checking account or savings account getting an auto withdrawal, and I have overdraft, and then all of a sudden money was coming out that I didn't expect, I would be devastated. ... We have to do better as a commission in understanding that in real time and responding to that."

NYPSC Commissioner John Howard | *NYDPS*

Nearly 25% of a Con Ed customer's bill goes to the city of New York as general revenue, said Commissioner John Howard. He said that no one at the state or city level is addressing the issue.

"The state of New York today and the city council could do things immediately to provide immediate rate relief to customers," Howard said. "I believe they could even provide retroactive relief to customers if they take their own revenue requirements and deal with them appropriately."

Addressing advocates for converting Con Ed to a publicly owned company, Howard said such a change would not alter the fact that 25 cents on every dollar it collects goes to taxes, not to providing service.

"It's not just Con Ed, although it's the most gross example across our state," Howard said. "There are a variety of taxing jurisdictions — school districts, counties, cities — that put on extra taxes to their utility customers. They could take immediate action on their level to reduce bills."

Aric Rider and Tammy Mitchell, NYDPS | *NYDPS*

New Billing System Woes

The PSC also *approved* a third-party independent consulting company to audit the management and operations of Central Hudson's electric and gas operations and grid modernization efforts (Case No. *21-M-0541*).

For large electric and natural gas utilities such as Central Hudson, the law requires such audits at least once every five years.

In addition, state officials are reviewing the utility's response to a February storm that left more than 67,000 homes and businesses without power, and are investigating billing problems related to the company's recent upgrade to a new IT system that resulted in many customers not receiving timely monthly bills (Case No. *22-00497*)

Poughkeepsie-based Central Hudson serves about 309,000 electric customers and 84,000 natural gas customers in the mid-Hudson region.

The utility tripled its complaint resolution staffing relative to normal operations, stated it has identified the problems within its new customer information system and is working with its implementation vendor and software engineers to resolve the problems by early next month, said Aric Rider, deputy director of the Office of Consumer Services.

"Central Hudson acknowledges that approximately 7% of its customers, or 21,000 customers, mostly customers that are specially billed, are still facing billing difficulties," Rider said. ■

NYISO Business Issues Committee Briefs

Monthly Energy Prices up 123% Y-o-Y

NYISO locational-based marginal prices averaged $94.06/MWh in February, down from $134.79/MWh the previous month and higher than the $63.70/MWh average in February 2021, Rana Mukerji, senior vice president for market structures, said in delivering the monthly operations report to the Business Issues Committee on Wednesday.

Day-ahead and real-time load-weighted LBMPs came in lower compared to January.

Year-to-date monthly energy prices averaged $118.36/MWh, a 123% increase from $52.99/MWh a year ago, which Mukerji attributed to higher natural gas prices.

February's average sendout was 429 GWh/day, down from 451 GWh/day in January and 434 GWh/day a year earlier.

Transco Z6 hub natural gas prices averaged $6.17/MMBtu for the month, down from $11.15/MMBtu in January and up 18.3% year-over-year.

Distillate prices were up 64.5% year-over-year. Jet Kerosene Gulf Coast averaged $19.79/MMBtu, up from $17.96/MMBtu in January. Ultra Low Sulfur No. 2 Diesel NY Harbor averaged $20.46/MMBtu, up from $18.53/MMBtu in January.

February uplift decreased to -$1.73/MWh from -$1.50/MWh in January, and total uplift costs, including the ISO's cost of operations, came in higher than those in January.

The ISO's local reliability share dropped to 4 cents/MWh/MWh in February from 9 cents/MWh the previous month, while the statewide share dropped to -$1.77/MWh from -$1.59/MWh.

The Thunderstorm Alert cost in New York City was $2.98 because of some unusual thunderstorm activity in the month.

Real-time BPCG Eligibility Changes

The BIC recommended that the Management Committee approve tariff revisions that would change the provisions for real-time bid production cost guarantee (BPCG) payments.

BPCGs are paid as an incentive for resources directed to run by the ISO. In order to close a loophole whereby units may receive inappropriate real-time BPCG payments under certain circumstances, the new tariff language would add an exception to the eligibility criteria for units placed out-of-merit (OOM) for reliability, said Mark Buffaline, senior settlements analyst at the ISO.

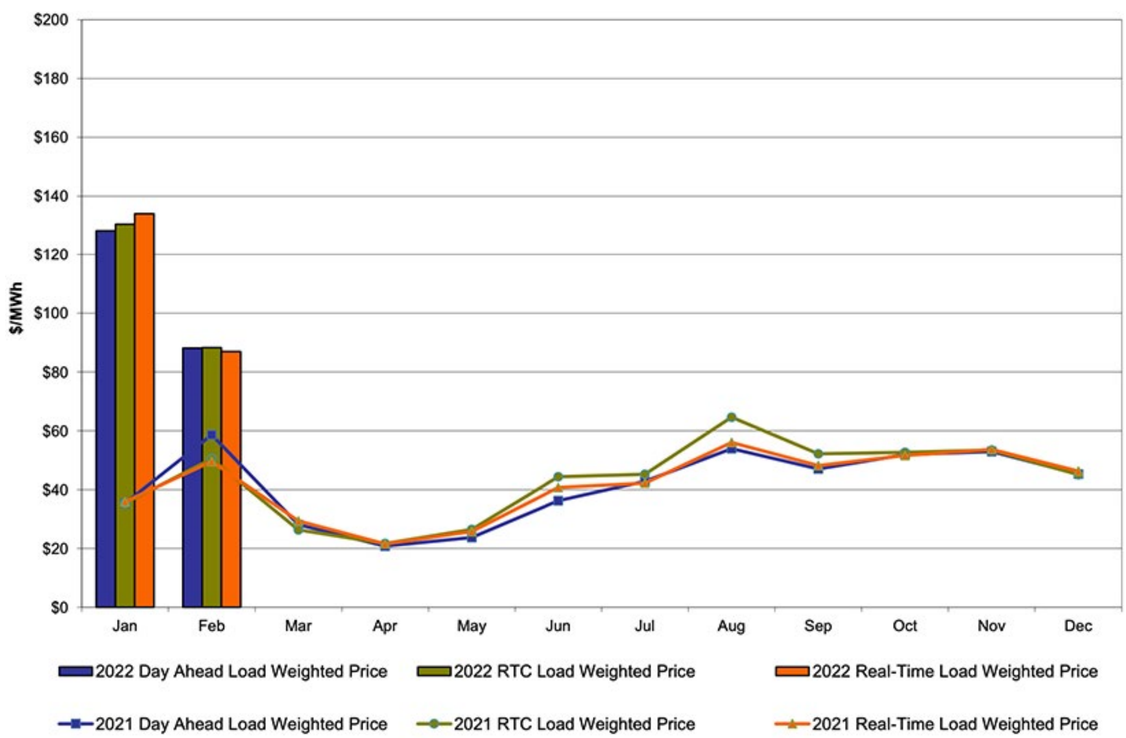
As an example, the ISO hypothesized a unit scheduled for energy in the day-ahead market (DAM) at 100 MW bidding self-committed fixed/flex in the real-time market with a self-schedule at 200 MW. That unit operating in real time at 200 MW aggravates any transmission constraint and would be placed OOM for reliability with a 140-MW upper operating limit (UOL).

"The unit receives RT BPCG for 40 MW, and by self-scheduling at 200 MW in real time, they have indicated that they want to be a price-taker for all output up to 200 MW," Buffaline said.

Units that bid self-committed fixed/flex at megawatt levels above the DAM energy schedule are generally ineligible for real-time BPCG, but by placing them out-of-merit for reliability, this makes them eligible for real-time BPCG, which supersedes the self-commitment ineligibility rule, he said.

"That is the discrepancy between the rules that we're plugging here," said Chris Brown, lead settlements analyst at NYISO. "So those costs representing that self-committed bid are no longer going to be eligible for a make-whole payment under this scenario with units out-of-merit for reliability." ■

— Michael Kuser



NYISO monthly average internal LBMPs 2021 - 2022 | *NYISO*

PJM News

PJM Officially Moving Forward on Return to Campus

By Michael Yoder

PJM is officially going ahead with its plan for in-person stakeholder meetings at the Valley Forge, Pa., campus beginning with the April Liaison Committee after more than two years of virtual meetings resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Asim Haque, PJM's vice president of state and member services, said the RTO is following a "phased approach" from April through July with most stakeholder meetings going in-person by June. All PJM meetings will continue to feature a remote attendance option for members.

"As pandemic restrictions nationally and in Pennsylvania are relaxed, PJM is proceeding with our previously announced campus reopening plans," Haque said in an email sent Thursday to stakeholders.

The first in-person meetings take place April 19 with the Liaison Committee meeting held on the PJM campus as part of the PJM Board of Managers meeting. The Liaison Committee runs from 3 to 5 p.m.

Haque said PJM is requesting members to register as soon as possible for the Liaison Committee meeting to have a clear count ahead of time for the number of stakeholders who will be at the campus.

The PJM Annual Meeting, which includes the board election and General Session, will take place May 17 at the campus. Meetings of the board with the Transmission Owners Agreement-Administrative Committee and the Public Interest & Environmental Organizations User Group are scheduled for May 18.

An in-person meeting of the Markets and Reliability Committee is scheduled for May 25.

Beginning in June, meetings for all standing committees and senior task forces will be held on campus. The meetings include the MRC, and Members, Planning, Market Implementation, Operating and Risk Management committees, along with the Capacity Capability, Electric Gas Coordination, Energy Price Formation, Modeling Generation, Resource Adequacy and the Regulation Market Design senior task forces.

PJM will hold the second part of the Annual Meeting's MC and General Session at a remote location that will include a "reception and leisure activities" from Oct. 24 to 26. Haque said the location for the remote Annual Meeting is still being decided.

In-person state and member training events started earlier this month in Baltimore for the 2022 PJM Operator Seminar. Two other upcoming member training events are scheduled, including March 28 to April 22, in Columbus, Ohio, and April 25 to May 13, on the PJM campus.

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Masks and Vaccinations

Haque said PJM will follow the masking guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Montgomery County Office of Public Health, which is currently at a low risk level for cases of COVID-19. Masking is optional and not required indoors at the low risk level.

PJM is maintaining its vaccination policy set in November, Haque said, mandating COVID-19 vaccines for its employees, contractors, vendors and stakeholders working at or attending meetings at campus or to attend RTO events on and off campus. (See *PJM to Mandate COVID-19 Vaccines*.)

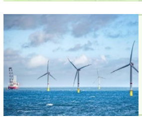
Haque said visitors will be required to be fully vaccinated "without exception" at the time of the event start date they are attending. He said booster shots are not required per CDC guidance.

Visitors are required to show proof of vaccination along with a valid government-issued ID upon arrival at the PJM event.

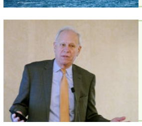
"I am looking forward to seeing each of you back at the PJM campus, and I want to again thank you for your patience, participation, goodwill and flexibility as we meet the challenges of these changing times," Haque said. ■

Mid-Atlantic news from our other channels

Youngkin Report RGGI a 'Direct Carbon Tax' on Va. Ratepayers NetZero Insider



NJ Awards $3.4M to Study the Marine Impact of Turbines NetZero Insider



Md. Senate Sets 2045 Net-Zero Target NetZero Insider

RTO Insider subscribers have access to two stories each monthly from *NetZero* and *ERO Insider*.

PJM MRC/MC Preview

Below is a summary of the consent agendas scheduled to be brought to a vote at the PJM Markets and Reliability Committee and Members Committee meetings Wednesday. Each item is listed by agenda number, description and projected time of discussion, followed by a summary of the issue and links to prior coverage in *RTO Insider*.

RTO Insider will be covering the discussions and votes. See next Tuesday's newsletter for a full report.

Markets and Reliability Committee

Consent Agenda (9:15-9:20)

B. Stakeholders will be asked to *endorse* proposed revisions to *Manual 12: Balancing Operations* resulting from a periodic review. The changes include attachment references and other minor revisions.

C. Stakeholders will be asked to *endorse* proposed revisions to *Manual 13: Emergency Operations* resulting from a periodic review. The changes include new columns with winter values for estimated peak load and estimated load reduction in the voltage reduction summary table.

D. Stakeholders will be asked to *endorse* proposed revisions to *Manual 18: PJM Capacity Market* to conform with several recent FERC orders, including those on the minimum offer price rule, the market seller offer cap and the removal of the 10% cost adder for the reference resource used to establish the variable resource requirement curve. (See "Manual 18 Revisions," *PJM MRC/MC Briefs: Feb. 24, 2022*.)

E. Stakeholders will be asked to *endorse* proposed revisions to *Manual 37: Reliability Coordination* resulting from a periodic review. The language would properly label Silver Run Electric as a transmission owner in Attachment A of the manual.

Endorsements (9:20-10:15)

1. Pseudo-modeled Combined Cycle Minimum Run Time Guidance (9:20-9:40)

Members will be asked to *endorse* a proposal that includes adding language to *Manual 11: Energy and Ancillary Services Market Operations* to address pseudo-modeled combined cycle minimum run time guidance. The proposed solution calls for adding language to Manual 11 to require market sellers to update the minimum run time of a pseudo-modeled unit to remove associated steam turbine start-up time included in the parameter limit when it's dispatched. (See "Minimum Run Time Guidance," *PJM MRC/MC Briefs: Feb. 24, 2022*.)

2. Capacity Capability Senior Task Force Sunset (9:40-9:50)

The committee will be asked to *endorse* the sunset of the Capacity Capability Senior Task Force. The task force was originally created in March 2020 to consider using effective load-carrying capability to set the capacity value of limited-duration resources such as battery storage. (See "CCSTF Sunset," *PJM MRC/MC Briefs: Feb. 24, 2022*.)

3. Max Emergency Changes (9:50-10:15)

Stakeholders will be asked to endorse an *issue charge* and proposed revisions to *Manual 13: Emergency Operations* addressing the extension of a temporary change to maximum emergency status for gas combustion turbines and steam generators. PJM made a temporary change to section 6.4 of Manual 13 in a "note" to modify the remaining hours under which a resource may be offered as maximum emergency generation. (See "Max Emergency Changes," *PJM MRC/MC Briefs: Feb. 24, 2022*.)

Members Committee

Endorsements (1:30-2:30)

1. FTR Credit Requirement (1:30-2:30)

Members will be asked to vote on several *motions* regarding revisions to PJM's *tariff* on financial transmission rights credit requirements stemming from FERC's recent rejection of the proposal to modify the calculation. The commission directed PJM to make an informal filing within 60 days of the date of the order to either show why its FTR credit requirement remains just and reasonable and not unduly discriminatory or preferential, or explain what tariff changes will remedy the commission's concerns. (See *FERC Rejects PJM's FTR Credit Requirement Proposal*.) ■

— Michael Yoder

Company News

Burke to Succeed Morgan as Vistra's CEO

By Tom Kleckner

Vistra *said* Monday that its board of directors has named 16-year company veteran Jim Burke as its next CEO effective Aug. 1, replacing Curt Morgan after a transition period.

The move is part of the company's formal succession planning process, Vistra said.

"I am incredibly honored and humbled to assume the responsibility of leading Vistra," said Burke, currently the Texas-based company's CFO. Vistra hopes to name his replacement before Aug. 1.

Burke joined Vistra when it was TXU Corp., under new CEO C. John Wilder's leadership, in 2005 following the company's international financial difficulties. In 2007, the company was bought by private equity investors in a $45 billion leveraged buyout and went private as Energy Future Holdings. It declared bankruptcy in 2014, eventually emerging as Vistra Energy in 2016.

Burke was CEO of TXU Energy, Vistra's retail company, until 2016, when he was named COO. He became CFO in December 2020. He was president and COO of Gexa Energy before joining TXU.

Vistra CFO Jim Burke | *Vistra*

CEO Curt Morgan is leaving Vistra after 37 years in the industry. | *© RTO Insider LLC*

Morgan has served as Vistra's CEO since 2016 and has a 37-year career in the power industry. He said in a statement that with the company having "created significant value for our shareholders, transformed our company … and firmly established Vistra as a leader in the country's energy transition, now is the right time for this leadership transition."

Vistra board Chair Scott Helm thanked Morgan for his leadership in helping grow the company into "one of the largest power producers and retailers in the United States."

"While achieving this tremendous growth, Vistra has also significantly reduced its carbon footprint by retiring coal-fueled power plants and is rapidly growing its zero-carbon portfolio [Vistra Zero], all while returning a substantial amount of capital to its financial stakeholders," Helm said.

Morgan will remain until next April as a special adviser to Burke and the board, a spokesperson said. ■

Company News

AEP Completes 1.5-GW Wind Energy Development

American Electric Power said Monday its Traverse Wind Energy Center, the last of three Oklahoma wind projects with a total capacity of 1.5 GW, is generating energy for customers in Arkansas, Louisiana and Oklahoma.

The 998-MW Traverse Center is the largest of the $2 billion North Central Energy Facilities' three wind farms. The Sundance Wind Energy Center (199 MW) and the Maverick Wind Energy Center (287 MW) began commercial operation in April and September of last year, respectively.

Collectively, the wind farms are among the world's largest wind facilities. AEP said they will save customers an estimated $3 billion in electricity costs over the next 30 years.

"The completion of the North Central Energy Facilities is a significant milestone in our efforts to provide clean, reliable power to our customers while saving them money," AEP CEO Nick Akins said in a *statement*.

AEP subsidiaries Southwestern Electric Power Co. and Public Service Company of Oklahoma have taken ownership of the three wind farms after Invenergy completed their development. Invenergy Services will provide operations and maintenance services as part of a 10-year agreement.

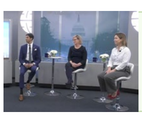
The Traverse Wind Energy Center | *Invenergy*

AEP is investing $8.2 billion in regulated renewables and nearly $25 billion through 2026 to modernize grid systems, improve reliability and resilience, and provide more emissions-free energy. It plans to add about 14.5 GW of wind and solar in its regulated states by 2030 as part of a goal to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. ■

— Tom Kleckner

National/Federal news from our other channels

NREL: Zero-emission MHDVs Will Hit Price Parity with Diesel by 2035



First Movers Coalition: Business Driving Decarbonization

Analysis: Infrastructure Bill Could Increase GHG Emissions

ERO Endorses Market-based Reliability Enhancements

Budget Mandates Cyber Reporting for Critical Infrastructure

NERC Report Suggests Greater UFLS Flexibility

RTO Insider subscribers have access to two stories each monthly from *NetZero* and *ERO Insider*.

Company Briefs

Energy Startup to Build Battery Factory in W.Va.

The energy startup SPARKZ last week said it plans to build an electric battery factory this year in West Virginia, although an exact location has yet to be decided.

Company CEO Sanjiv Malhotra said the batteries produced will be 100% cobalt-free, an effort to reduce the cost of U.S. lithium-ion battery production.

SPARKZ will partner with the United Mine Workers of America to recruit and train dislocated miners to be the factory's first production workers.

More: *The Associated Press*, *The Associated Press*

I&M Seeks Proposals for Solar, Wind Projects

Indiana Michigan Power last week said it is looking to add to its renewable portfolio and has issued a request for proposals (RFP) for facilities that will generate 800 MW of wind energy and 500 MW of solar power.

The RFP calls for solar projects within Indiana or Michigan, while wind projects can be in those states as well as Illinois or Ohio.

Bids are due April 21; the company plans to have contracts with developers by the end of the year.

More: *Inside Indiana Business*

Mercedes Opens Alabama EV Battery Plant

Mercedes-Benz last week announced it has opened a new electric vehicle battery factory near Tuscaloosa.

The plant will supply lithium-ion batteries for the EQS and EQE SUVs, which will be built for sale in the U.S. and for export.

The automaker opened the battery factory a few months before it plans to start making two all-electric SUVs at a plant in Tuscaloosa.

More: *The Associated Press*

Federal Briefs

Appeals Court Revives Key Climate Measure

The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals last week stayed a district judge's injunction against President Joe Biden's social cost of carbon, reinstating the metric used to measure the climate impacts of rulemakings and projects.

The panel rejected legal arguments made by Louisiana that the interim social cost of the carbon metric could cause them a real injury. The judges also rejected the argument that the states can demonstrate the SCC figures caused any injury or could be redressed via an injunction. The panel also took aim at the preliminary injunction issued by Judge James Cain of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Louisiana.

More: *POLITICO*

Biden Administration Approves More LNG Exports

The Energy Department last week said it will issue orders that expand the amount of liquified natural gas exports as Europe seeks to reduce its reliance on Russian gas.

The DOE said two authorizations it issued would give two facilities the ability to export an additional 720 million cubic feet per day of natural gas. In the first half of last year, the U.S. exported an average of 9.6 billion cubic feet per day.

Russia supplied 40% of Europe's natural gas last year.

More: *The Hill*, *The Associated Press*

FERC: In-person Meeting Waiver to End March 31

FERC on Friday announced it would not extend its blanket waiver for in-person meetings and obtaining documents past March 31.

The commission first instituted the waiver on April 2, 2020, amid the worsening COVID-19 pandemic. It cited improving conditions nationally and that many companies have already returned from telework to in-office work. It also noted it still retains the right to consider any case-specific waivers for extenuating circumstances after March 31.

More: *FERC*

SEC to Force Public Companies to Disclose GHG Emissions

The Securities and Exchange Commission last week said it plans to require all publicly traded companies to disclose their greenhouse gas emissions and the climate risks their businesses face.

Under the new rule the SEC is expected to propose, hundreds of businesses would be required to measure and disclose greenhouse gas emissions in a standardized way for the first time. The move could mark the most sweeping overhaul of corporate disclosure rules in more than a decade and could put the U.S. on closer footing with other countries set to begin mandated emissions reporting over the next three years.

Shareholders have been demanding more information about the risks that climate change could pose to their investments, arguing that mounting climate disasters and regulations could limit the growth of businesses that do not prepare for them. And while many firms already voluntarily share some details about their environmental impact, there are sometimes wide discrepancies in how they calculate the emissions.

More: *The Washington Post*

Spending Deal Undercuts Biden's UN Climate Pledge

The Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2022 bill that President Joe Biden signed last week provides about one-third of the money Congress wanted to spend on international climate programs.

In its budget request for 2022, the administration called for about $2.7 billion in international climate finance but in the end agreed to just $1.06 billion. The legislation undercuts Biden's pledge at the U.N. in September to increase climate financing for low-income nations and will place American negotiators at upcoming international climate talks on weaker footing with their foreign counterparts, experts said.

The bill eliminated funding for the Green Climate Fund, a U.N. project to help emerging economies prepare for and mitigate climate change, and cut funding for the Clean Technology Fund, which finances low-carbon projects. It reduced contributions to the United Framework Convention on Climate Change, which manages global efforts to fight climate change, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which studies the course of changing climate. It also cut money for a fund to carry out the goals of the Montreal Protocol to reduce emissions of ozone-depleting chemicals.

More: *Roll Call*

TVA Plans to Invest in Fossil Fuels

The Tennessee Valley Authority last week said it plans to invest more than $3.5 billion in new gas-burning electric plants despite President Biden's commitment to move away from fossil fuels.

In its deliberations about replacing coal-fired generators, the TVA board found that solar or other zero-emissions sources would be less dependable and more expensive than gas, said spokeswoman Catherine Butler.

Under current plans, TVA aims to build two gas-fired plants to replace retiring coal plants in Kingston and Cumberland, Tenn., as it looks to add about 5,000 MW of new gas capacity.

TVA currently generates only 3% of its electricity from solar and wind energy, with a goal of building to 10% by 2035.

More: *The New York Times*

State Briefs

COLORADO

PUC Rejects Xcel's Attempt to Extend Pueblo Coal Plant

The Public Utilities Commission last week rejected Xcel Energy's plan to extend the life of its Comanche 3 coal-fired power plant by 12 years.

All three commissioners voiced opposition to the deal, citing concerns over the plant's reliability, costs to consumers and concern that the agreement would preclude future commissions from revisiting the plant's closure date. The commissioners asked Xcel to do a more complete analysis of a 2029 closure.

The decision comes as the $1.3 billion, 750-MW unit has been shut down since January by equipment failures and has seen 700 days of unplanned shutdowns since it opened in 2010.

More: *The Colorado Sun*

INDIANA

CenterPoint to Suspend Disconnections Through May

CenterPoint Energy last week announced it will suspend disconnections through May 31 amid high natural gas bills.

The company warned customers last year that natural gas bills could almost double this winter. In January 2021, customers who used 100 therms a month paid an average of $74.65. By January 2022, that average cost had risen to $133.57.

More: *Evansville Courier & Press*

IOWA

MidAmerican Energy Seeks Approval to Study New Nuclear Plant Technology

MidAmerican Energy last week asked the Utilities Board for permission to launch a $3.9 billion Wind PRIME project that would include wind and solar projects, as well as a study of three "emerging and innovative carbon-free technologies": energy storage, carbon dioxide capture and small modular nuclear power generation.

"At this very early stage MidAmerican is simply asking the Iowa Utilities Board to authorize us to spend the necessary resources to study these three areas," company spokesman Geoff Greenwood said. "It's the first step in determining if any of them would be feasible. It is not a commitment to utilize one over another or any at all."

Nuclear energy hasn't been generated in the state since August 2020.

MidAmerican asked the board to decide by Oct. 31.

More: *The Gazette*

MARYLAND

Montgomery, PG Counties Pitch More Spending on Climate

Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich and Prince George's County Executive Angela D. Alsobrooks last week proposed annual budgets that would add investments in climate initiatives, among other things.

Part of Elrich's $6.3 billion budget would include $18.6 million for the county's green bank, which helps private institutions transition to clean energy.

Alsobrooks' $5 billion budget includes increased investments in efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change, including $95 million for a storm water management fund.

More: *The Washington Post*

NEBRASKA

NPPD, Entergy End Partnership on Cooper Nuclear Station

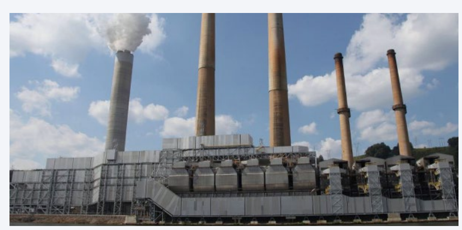
The Nebraska Public Power District and Entergy last week jointly announced that they would end their 19-year collaboration at Cooper Nuclear Station. NPPD will take over full operation of the plant.

NPPD owns the plant while Entergy had assisted in its management since 2003.

More: *Omaha World-Herald*

OHIO

Sammis Coal Plant to Close or be Sold by 2023



Energy Harbor last week announced plans to deactivate or sell the remaining units of its W.H. Sammis coal power plant by June 2023, five years earlier than previously expected.

The company said the move is part of its plan to become 100% carbon-free by the end of next year. It also announced it would sell or close its other coal plant, Pleasants Power Station in West Virginia, by the same time.

Energy Harbor closed four of the Sammis plant's seven units in 2020.

More: *Cleveland.com*

TENNESSEE

Memphis Council Calls on Mayor for 'Transparency' in Bidding

Three members of the Memphis City Council last week sent Mayor Jim Strickland a letter asking him to appoint the city's independent energy consultant to oversee Memphis, Light Gas and Water's bidding process on its electricity supply.

"The MLGW Division has received 27 responses to the above RFP. MLGW administration has undertaken to perform the proposals evaluation process without disclosure to the public," the letter said. "We agree with you that consideration of an alternative source of power for Memphis and Shelby County is a 'very important issue.' At this critical juncture in our history, it is imperative that the evaluation process has transparency. Therefore, we urge you to assign your independent energy consultant Enervision to participate in the proposals review process to provide a level of public scrutiny through your office. The citizens of Memphis and Shelby County deserve and expect a fair and transparent review of the proposals."

MLGW responded to the letter, saying it was following the bidding process the council approved.

More: *Memphis Commercial Appeal*

TEXAS

Weather Conditions Continue to Fuel Wildfires

Several wildfires continued to burn through the state over the weekend, fueled by unfavorable weather conditions, fire officials said.

Mary Leathers of the Texas A&M Forest Service said that wind gusts and warm temperatures were helping create optimal conditions for wildfires, adding that officials were staying "hypervigilant" about the weather. While Saturday's conditions brought a brief reprieve, winds and temperature picked up and the humidity level dropped on Sunday.

Two firefighters were injured while fighting the Big L fire.

More: *The New York Times*

VIRGINIA

Chickahominy Power Cancels Plans for Natural Gas Plant

Chickahominy Power last week announced it is terminating its plans for a 1,600-MW natural gas plant after six years of planning.

The company cited "opposition from outside interests and regulations" that "made it impossible to deliver natural gas to the site" and is relocating its efforts to West Virginia and Ohio.

Another natural gas plant known as C4GT that other developers planned to build a mile from the Chickahominy Power site was also canceled this July.

More: *Virginia Mercury*

Corporation Commission Approves 15 Duke Solar Projects

The State Corporation Commission last week approved Duke Energy's plan to construct as many as 15 solar projects.

Collectively, the projects will generate nearly 1,000 MW, with the largest individual projects including the 150-MW Walnut Solar project in King and Queen County and the 100-MW Dulles Solar project in Loudoun County.

Dominion said the projects will result in a monthly rate increase of about $1.13 for the average customer.

More: *The Associated Press*

James City County Approves Solar Farm

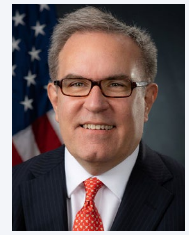
The James City County Board of Supervisors last week unanimously approved a special-use permit for a 3-MW solar farm.

The proposal came from Hexagon Energy, which said the farm is in line with the county's 2045 comprehensive plan to conserve rural lands.

Solar panels will sit on 26 acres for a minimum of 35 years. The company anticipates construction beginning in 2023 following state and federal permitting.

More: *The Virginia Gazette*

Wheeler to Serve as Adviser to Gov. Youngkin



Andrew Wheeler, EPA administrator under former President Donald Trump, will serve as a senior adviser to Gov. Glenn Youngkin after Senate Democrats rejected his appointment to a cabinet role.

Wheeler had been nominated to oversee environmental and other policy issues as secretary of the Department of Natural and Historic Resources. The Senate voted along party lines to reject his appointment in February.

More: *The Associated Press*

WEST VIRGINIA

Pleasants Power Station to Close Next Year

Energy Harbor last week announced it will close the coal-fired Pleasants Power Station next year despite lawmakers passing a tax break to keep the plant running.

The plant was slated to be shut down in 2018 after Allegheny Energy Supply decided to sell it to one of FirstEnergy's other subsidiaries, however the plan was rejected by FERC. The deactivation date was moved to 2022 before the state Legislature passed a $12.5 million tax break in 2019.

The plant, located along the Ohio River, has been online since 1979.

More: *The Parkersburg News and Sentinel*

WISCONSIN

PSC Approves $433M Solar-plus-storage Purchase

The Public Service Commission last week voted unanimously to allow Madison Gas and Electric and two subsidiaries of the WEC Energy Group, We Energies and Wisconsin Public Service Corp., to buy the Paris solar farm for $433 million.

The 200-MW plant will be coupled with a battery system that can deliver 110 MW for up to four hours. WEC said it needs the plant to replace some 1,600 MW of fossil fuel generation slated for retirement in the next two years, while MGE said it is the lowest-cost option to fill its needs as the company retires about 200 MW of coal-fired generation.

Consumer advocates argue that the utilities failed to show the purchase would benefit ratepayers or properly assess the risks associated with storage.

More: *La Crosse Tribune*

WYOMING

Duke Energy Still Investigating Collapse of Wind Turbine

Duke Energy last week said it is still investigation the cause of the collapse of one of its 262-foot wind turbines near Cheyenne in February.

Company spokesperson Valerie Patterson said the investigation is a detailed and deliberative process so officials will understand what happened, learn from the incident, and prevent it from happening again. After the investigation is completed, Duke will decide whether to repair or replace the turbine. No timeline for the process was given.

More: *Cowboy State Daily*