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## **PSC approves plan to power AI data center with gas plants, bringing 1,200 MW of new, dirty power to southeast Wisconsin**

Today the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) approved We Energies' proposal to spend nearly \$1.5 billion on two new gas plants to serve demand largely driven by Microsoft's AI data center in Mt. Pleasant. We Energies plans to operate the plants in the communities of Oak Creek and the Town of Paris for the **next 30 years**.

The expensive fossil fuel projects will be a windfall for We Energies shareholders but come at the expense of Wisconsin communities. Shareholders earn about a 12.5% profit on construction projects, and gas plants are far more expensive than solar or wind projects per megawatt of energy they produce.

"This is an enormous amount of expensive, harmful fossil fuel energy, largely to serve a single large user. Companies like We Energies are using the data center boom as an excuse to cash-in by building outdated, dirty power plants," says Clean Wisconsin attorney Brett Korte. "The health and climate harms of these plants are undisputed."

We Energies refused to pursue energy efficiency and demand response programs, which are the cheapest ways to meet growing demand. The company also chose not to invest in clean energy sources like wind and solar with batteries to meet the needs of the data center.

"We know that wind and solar, paired with battery storage, can deliver the power Wisconsin needs safely and for less money," Korte says.

### **Here's what it means for Wisconsin:**

Burning methane at the plants will release hundreds of tons of ozone-causing nitrogen oxides and deadly particulate matter every year. That's in addition to releases of lead, carbon monoxide, and volatile organic compounds. This pollution will cause an estimated **\$80-127 million in health costs** for the state every year and due to

increased incidences of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases like asthma and heart attacks.

Methane is also a potent greenhouse gas, with 80 times more warming power than carbon over a 20-year timespan. The plants will push Wisconsin further from its clean energy goals as the window to make meaningful progress against climate change is closing.

Clean Wisconsin submitted testimony in the PSC case demonstrating that We Energies' plan to double-down on fossil fuels with a massive gas build-out is unnecessary. Instead, the company could source much of the power it claims to need through efficiency and demand response programs along with more reliance on wind and battery storage systems.

### **More gas plant cases on the horizon**

The We Energies gas plant cases could be the first in a series of new fossil fuel plant proposals headed to the PSC for approval as more AI data centers are welcomed in the state. Korte warns that planning for those data centers needs to be happening now.

"The expansion of tech companies in Wisconsin and across the country may bring welcome economic investments, but that cannot come at the expense of our communities and our environment," Korte says. "There are ways to ensure these energy-intensive projects are supplied by resources that clean up our outdated and unhealthy energy system, provide resilience to the grid, and support good paying, forward-looking jobs. Wisconsin utilities and regulators need to do better."

Clean Wisconsin will carefully review the Commission's order when it is issued in the coming weeks and consider next steps in this fight against new fossil fuel infrastructure.