



Rapids Power Reschedules Certificate of Need Prehearing Conference

(Grand Rapids, Minn.)--Rapids Power LLC has asked the Administrative Law Judge to reschedule the Certificate of Need pre hearing conference for later this spring. This request was made to enable Rapids Power to further engineer, review, and refine the project design, costs and economics of the energy-efficient co-generation facility it announced in September 2001.

Approval of a Certificate of Need for the project is a requirement of the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC). A pre-hearing conference on the certificate had been scheduled for January 16, 2002.

Rapids Power is a limited liability company owned by Minnesota Power subsidiary Rainy River Energy Corp. and Blandin Paper, a subsidiary of UPM-Kymmene of Helsinki, Finland.

Rapids Power will continue with the preparation of the site permit, which is scheduled to be submitted to the MPUC this March.

"We do not believe the rescheduling of the Certificate of Need pre-hearing conference will extend the permitting of the project, nor delay the beginning of construction in 2003," said Warren Candy, General Manager of the project.

If approved, the Rapids Power project will co-generate 225 megawatts of electricity and all the process heat requirements for Blandin Paper using state-of-the-art circulating fluidized bed combustion technology.

The statements contained in this release and statements that Rapids Power LLC may make orally in connection with this release that are not historical facts, are forward-looking statements. Actual results may differ materially from those projected in the forward-looking statements. These forward-looking statements involve risks and uncertainties and investors are directed to the risks discussed in documents filed by Minnesota Power's parent company, ALLETE, with the Securities and Exchange Commission.