



Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

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PSC allocates additional \$46 million to rural Wisconsin

MADISON- Building on Governor Walker’s announcement to authorize an additional \$35.5 million in broadband expansion efforts today, the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin has added up to \$26 million in rural energy efficiency programs designed to encourage broadband expansion in rural Wisconsin.

In order to address an inequity and lack of outreach to the rural areas of the state that have been paying into the Focus program but not receiving their proportionate share of benefits, Commissioners have authorized up to \$20 million of Focus incentives put towards a proposed request for proposal (RFP) to develop a hub-and-spoke anaerobic digester system, and up to \$26 million in new rural programs that incorporate broadband and energy efficiency.

Commissioners also allocated \$8.6 million to renewable energy incentives to homeowners and businesses adding renewable energy systems in 2017 and 2018.

Governor Walker has directed an inter-agency workgroup to explore how biodigesters can produce renewable biogas that can be sold to replace natural gas while processing manure to a farm that can improve water quality and produce other agricultural products.

“Per Governor Walker’s instructions to collaborate with DNR and DATCP, we can add value to the renewable energy benefits of digesters by ensuring they are part of a holistic response that helps address groundwater, surface water and drinking water issues,” said Chair Ellen Nowak. “We have been clear about what our piece of this project can be, and I look forward to private-sector participation that will move this innovative solution forward.”

“This is an exciting new opportunity, with money that is currently available to us, that will not only allow increased access to Focus incentives in rural areas but can strengthen the diversity of our energy portfolio,” said Commissioner Mike Huebsch.

“We have developed the parameters today that encourage flexibility,” said Commissioner Montgomery. “In addition to producing renewable energy, this can be one of the tools to help address some of the challenges around water quality.”

Governor Walker has instructed the inter-agency working group to continue to prepare the proposed RFP with the intention of releasing it in January, 2017.

The Commission then directed Focus on Energy to work with internet service providers to co-market energy efficiency products with internet services.

“There is a strong connection between broadband and technology improving energy efficiency,” said Commissioner Huebsch. “We’re trying to keep pace with an industry that can generate significant savings for the program.”

“This is about realizing that increased investment in broadband spurs investment in devices that assist in energy management and improving the communication between customers and their utility,” said Chair Nowak. “Expanding the reach of Focus energy efficiency products while also encouraging the expansion of broadband is a win-win for rural Wisconsin.”

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