



Public Service Commission

NEWS RELEASE
Jan. 27, 2023

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PSC Receives More Than 1,000 Consumer Contacts in 2022

BISMARCK, ND – The North Dakota Public Service Commission (PSC) today reported that the agency received more than 1,000 consumer contacts in 2022. These contacts include informal complaints against regulated entities, public input submitted as part of an open case, referrals to other agencies and/or requests for information.

“One of our priorities at the Commission is to hear from the public and consumers. Hearing from the public is essential to providing input in the development of effective rules, regulations, and decisions we make,” said Commissioner Sheri Haugen-Hoffart, who holds the Consumer Affairs portfolio. “The system we have in place is very effective in dealing with the day-to-day issues and concerns that arise, so we can respond accordingly. We are grateful for those who attend our public hearings and encourage future participation.”

Informal complaints are received and processed regarding utilities the Commission regulates, including certain aspects of telephone service, natural gas providers, and the three investor-owned electric companies in the state: Xcel, Otter Tail and MDU. Of the 1,027 contacts, 85 (8%) were informal complaints against public utility companies regulated by the Commission. Informal complaint numbers overall were slightly higher for 2022 than the previous year. The most frequent reasons for complaints are billing issues, disconnects and phone outages. The most common billing complaints include customers wanting to investigate if their bill is correct, higher than normal bills, and payment plans to avoid disconnections.

In addition to recording complaints and concerns, the Commission also receives public input for cases being considered by the Commission. Public input is most often received for siting cases where the Commission is looking at permitting new transmission projects like pipelines, electric transmission lines and wind farms or for rate cases. The comments can be either in support or opposition of the project. Due to ongoing COVID-19 concerns throughout the year, the Commission continued to use a variety of different methods to ensure everyone the ability to comment on projects, including accepting written comments and the ability for the public to call into hearings via telephone to provide comments. In 2022 there were 178 public input contacts recorded or 17 percent of the total contacts. Public input was submitted for a variety of different cases throughout the year including wind projects, the Summit Carbon Solutions pipeline project and Xcel’s natural gas rate case.

"This Commission takes public input seriously," said Commission Chair Randy Christmann. "It provides us with the information we need to make the best possible decisions, so we urge North Dakotans to contact us."

The PSC reinstated a Consumer Affairs Portfolio in 2014, which provides additional focus on consumer issues and complaints and on improving communication with the public through traditional public information channels, public meetings and social media. This is the ninth annual public contact report issued showing data and trends related to complaints and input received by the Commission. The Commission launched a new public comment tracking system in January 2020 that allows more flexibility to record comments from the public and generate statistics and reports.

"Listening to and serving the public is literally in our name," said Commissioner Julie Fedorchak. "Our staff works hard to address questions from the public and help simplify complicated utility matters. Likewise, public input has a direct impact on our decisions and helps ensure that they address, as much as possible, the concerns of North Dakota citizens."

When a complaint is received, a PSC staff member works as a liaison between the consumer and the company to resolve the problem within the jurisdiction of the Commission. Often, the complaint is outside of the Commission's jurisdiction and needs to be referred to another agency or the caller simply needs information. These calls are recorded as "referrals." The Commission recorded 224 referrals in 2022.

This report does not include any docketed information that is part of formal cases before the Commission. During the 2019-21 biennium, there were 930 formal cases filed with the Commission.

The North Dakota Public Service Commission is a constitutionally created state agency with authority to permit, site and regulate certain business activities in the state including electric and gas utilities, telecommunications companies, power plants, electric transmission lines, pipelines, railroads, auctioneers, commercial weighing devices, pipeline safety and coal mine reclamation. For more information, contact the Public Service Commission at (701) 328-2400 or www.psc.nd.gov.

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Note to the Media: A summary sheet for the 2022 consumer contact report is included on the next page.

2022 Consumer Contact Report Summary by Jurisdiction

(Includes informal complaints, public input, information requests,
general comments and offsite referrals)

Jurisdiction	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Abandoned Mine Lands	5	5	23	10	5
Auction	2	1	51	84	83
Common Pipeline Carrier	0	26,088 ¹	19	1	0
Damage Prevention	0	0	0	0	4
Electric Utility	161	228	316 ²	230	84
Gas Utility	29	9	14	249	134
Grain	9	11	14	0	0
Railroad Safety	13	35	17	25	26
Reclamation	0	0	2	11	0
Siting	4	5	22	8	86 ³
Telecommunications	44	37	51	34	37
Weights & Measures	14	8	96	167	344 ⁴
Offsite Referral	209	212	194	211	224
Total	490	26639	819	1030	1027

¹26,086 Petition signatures for DAPL Emmons Co. Pump Station Project

²162 Northern Divide Wind Project-Public Input

³47 Related to Summit Carbon Solutions Pipeline project

⁴187 Related to Notices of Noncompliance

Informal Complaints (Public Utilities)

Regulated Entity	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
CenturyLink Communications, LLC	33	37	28	27	36
Dakota Natural Gas	0	0	0	1	0
Montana-Dakota Utilities Co.	19	12	16	11	12
Otter Tail Power Company	14	38	7	7	4
Xcel Energy Inc.	34	17	13	26	33
Total	100	104	64	72	85