March 3, 2010

Matthew W. Sunseri, President and
Chief Executive Officer
Wolf Creek Nuclear Operating Corporation
P.O. Box 411
Burlington, KS  66839

SUBJECT:   ANNUAL ASSESSMENT LETTER – WOLF CREEK GENERATING STATION
(NRC INSPECTION REPORT 05000482/2010001)

Dear Mr. Sunseri:

On February 17, 2010, the NRC staff completed its performance review of Wolf Creek Generating Station. Our technical staff reviewed performance indicators for the most recent quarter and inspection results for the period from January 1 through December 31, 2009. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of our assessment of your safety performance during this period and our plans for future inspections at your facility.

This performance review and enclosed inspection plan do not include security information. A separate letter designated and marked as "Official Use Only--Security Information" will include the security cornerstone review and resultant inspection plan.

Overall, Wolf Creek Generating Station operated in a manner that preserved public health and safety and fully met all cornerstone objectives. Plant performance for the most recent quarter, as well as for the first three quarters of the assessment cycle, was within the Licensee Response column of the NRC’s Action Matrix, based on all inspection findings being classified as having very low safety significance (Green) and all performance indicators indicating performance at a level requiring no additional NRC oversight (Green). Therefore, we plan to conduct reactor oversight process baseline inspections at your facility. The staff will also be conducting Inspection Procedure 92723, “Follow Up Inspection for Three or More Severity Level IV Traditional Enforcement Violations in the Same Area in a 12-Month Period,” to follow up on four Severity Level IV violations in the traditional enforcement area of impeding the regulatory process.

In our 2008 midcycle assessment letter dated September 2, 2008, our 2008 end-of-cycle assessment letter dated March 4, 2009, and our 2009 midcycle assessment letter dated September 1, 2009, we identified a substantive cross-cutting issue in the area of problem identification and resolution. Our 2009 midcycle assessment letter closed themes in this area associated with an inadequate threshold for identifying problems [P.1(a)] and appropriateness of corrective actions [P.1(d)], but continued the cross-cutting issue based on a continuing theme with four findings associated with the thoroughness of problem evaluation [P.1(c)]. We stated that this substantive cross-cutting issue would remain open until we determined that your
corrective actions had resulted in improved performance. During public meetings with the NRC on October 21, 2008, July 1, 2009, and November 30, 2009, you informed us that you had completed a root cause analysis for noted deficiencies related to problem identification and resolution. You also informed us that you had implemented significant changes in improving the quality of problem evaluation including root cause evaluator training, conducting a management alignment seminar, and increasing management oversight of problem evaluation. We noted some improvement in this area through our inspection results at the 2009 midcycle assessment; however, we continued to identify findings associated with this theme during the second half of the assessment period, resulting in a total of twelve Green findings identified during this assessment period with this causal factor. Recent examples of these findings include: the failure to perform an adequate operability evaluation for the essential service water pumps; the failure to perform an operability evaluation for corroded essential service water piping, and the failure to properly evaluate conditions for reportability. Therefore, the substantive cross-cutting issue in problem identification and resolution associated with the thoroughness of problem evaluation [P.1(c)] will remain open until we determine through our inspections that corrective actions implemented in accordance with your improvement plan have resulted in improved performance in this area as demonstrated by no safety significant inspection findings and a notable reduction in the overall number of findings with this causal factor.

Of note, this is the fourth consecutive assessment with a substantive cross-cutting issue in problem identification and resolution associated with the thoroughness of problem evaluation. We understand that you have already scheduled a safety culture assessment to be completed in March 2010. We request that you conduct a public meeting in the vicinity of the site to discuss the results of this assessment. We are specifically interested in any weaknesses identified by the assessment, your planned corrective actions to address these weaknesses, and how you intend to apply the assessment results and corrective actions to improve overall station performance in problem identification and resolution. Finally, we also request you address your improvement efforts in problem identification and resolution during our annual end-of-cycle assessment meeting.

The enclosed inspection plan details the inspections, less those related to physical protection scheduled through June 30, 2011. The inspection plan is provided to allow for the resolution of any scheduling conflicts and personnel availability issues well in advance of inspector arrival onsite. Routine resident inspections are not listed due to their ongoing and continuous nature. The inspections in the last nine months of the inspection plan are tentative and may be revised at the mid-cycle review.

In accordance with 10 CFR 2.390 of the NRC's “Rules of Practice,” a copy of this letter and its enclosure will be made available electronically for public inspection in the NRC Public Document Room or from the Publicly Available Records (PARS) component of NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS). ADAMS is accessible from the NRC Web site at http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html (the Public Electronic Reading Room).
If circumstances arise which cause us to change this inspection plan, we will contact you to discuss the change as soon as possible. Please contact Mr. Geoffrey Miller at 817-860-8141 with any questions you may have regarding this letter or the inspection plan.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Dwight D. Chamberlain, Director
Division of Reactor Projects

Docket No.  50-482
License No.  NPF-42

Enclosure:  Wolf Creek Inspection / Activity Plan

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