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NRC CONSIDERS REQUEST TO RELEASE CLEANED-UP AREA  
AT JEFFERSON PROVING GROUND FOR UNRESTRICTED USE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is considering a request from the U.S. Army to release a portion of the Jefferson Proving Ground in Madison, Indiana, for unrestricted use, following cleanup of contamination to levels below current NRC decommissioning maximums.

Using its NRC license, the Army tested depleted uranium projectiles and munitions at Jefferson from 1983 to 1994. The portion of the site for which the Army is requesting release is located south of the firing line.

The Commission is offering the public an opportunity for a hearing on this matter and on a request from the Army to transfer the license from the Jefferson Proving Ground to the Army Test and Evaluation Command in Aberdeen, Maryland. The Army ceased using the proving ground in Indiana as a test center for depleted uranium projectiles on September 30, 1994. It closed the base on September 30 of this year, as required by the Defense Authorization Amendment and Base Realignment and Closure Act of 1988.

The Army has disposed of the depleted uranium and material associated with the cleanup activities for the area south of the firing line at a licensed low-level waste burial site, and has submitted a report of its final radiological survey. The NRC conducted a confirmatory radiological survey. The data from the two surveys did not identify any radioactive material in excess of the current NRC decommissioning criteria for unrestricted use.

For the remaining radiologically contaminated portion--that is, the depleted uranium impact area located north of the firing line--the Army has requested an exemption from the requirement to clean up radioactive contamination to levels below the NRC's unrestricted release criteria for decommissioning, and has proposed restricted release appropriate for using the land as a wildlife refuge. The NRC is preparing a draft environmental impact statement on this proposal and other alternatives for decommissioning the remaining radiologically contaminated portion

of the base. NRC held a public meeting in Madison on April 26 to discuss the development of this statement.

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Anyone whose interest may be affected by the proposed release for unrestricted use of the area south of the firing line and transfer of the license and who wishes to request a hearing should file a written request by December 8. A Federal Register notice published on November 8 provides a list of required addressees for the request and describes specific information that should be contained in it.

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