



NRC NEWS

**UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, REGION II**

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NRC STAFF SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT ON DRAFT REPORT THAT FINDS HATCH LICENSE RENEWAL ENVIRONMENTALLY ACCEPTABLE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has reached the preliminary conclusion that there are no environmental impacts that would preclude renewal of the operating licenses for the two units at the Edwin I. Hatch Nuclear Plant in Appling County, Georgia.

The information is contained in a draft environmental impact statement on the proposed license renewal. The statement is open for public comment until January 24, 2001, and will also be the subject of public meetings December 12 in Vidalia, Georgia.

The NRC has been reviewing the application for extension of the Hatch licenses since Southern Nuclear Operating Company, which operates the plants, filed it in March. Under NRC regulations, the original operating license for a nuclear power plant is issued for up to 40 years. The license may be renewed for up to an additional 20 years if NRC requirements are met. The current operating licenses for Hatch will expire on August 6, 2014, for Unit 1 and June 13, 2018, for Unit 2.

The possible environmental effects of an additional 20 years of nuclear plant operation are described in the NRC's Generic Environmental Impact Statement, or GEIS (NUREG-1437). The NRC issues a site-specific supplement to the GEIS on each plant requesting license renewal to address the potential environmental impacts. Issues specific to Hatch are addressed in Supplement 4, which was published in draft form earlier this month. The NRC staff's preliminary recommendation is that the Commission determine that the adverse environmental impacts of license renewal for the two units at Hatch are not so great that preserving the option of license renewal for energy-planning decision makers would be unreasonable.

On Tuesday, December 12, the NRC staff will hold two similar meetings to obtain comments on the draft environmental impact statement, which reviews potential environmental effects of renewing the operating licenses of the Hatch units for an additional 20 years. The meetings will be held at the Tattnall Auditorium at Southeastern Technical Institute from 1:30 - 4:30 in the afternoon, and from 7 - 10 in the evening, or until all interested people have an opportunity to speak.

The two sessions will begin with identical overviews, including a discussion by NRC staff and its contractors of the contents of the draft supplement to the GEIS. The meeting will then be opened for public comment.

For planning purposes, interested parties are encouraged to pre-register to attend or to present oral comments at the December 12 meeting by contacting Andrew Kugler by telephone at (800) 368-5642, extension 2828, or by Internet at hatcheis@nrc.gov by December 7. Interested parties may also register before each session to make comments. Individual comments may be limited to accommodate all speakers.

Written comments on the draft supplement to the GEIS will also be considered by NRC staff. Comments should be submitted either by mail to the Chief, Rules and Directives Branch, Division of Administrative Services, Mail stop T-6 D 59, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001, or by Internet to hatcheis@nrc.gov.

The draft supplement to the GEIS, along with other related documents, is available electronically for public inspection in the NRC Public Document Room at NRC headquarters, One White Flint North, 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland; or electronically on the Internet at <http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/NUREGS/SR1437/S4/index.html>. In addition, the Appling County Library, located at 242 East Parker Street in Baxley, Georgia, has agreed to make the draft supplement to the GEIS available for public inspection.

At the conclusion of the public comment period on January 24, 2001, the NRC staff will consider and address the comments provided and issue a final supplement to the GEIS. That supplement will contain a recommendation regarding the environmental acceptability for license renewal.

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