



Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

AUG 20 1998

Mr. Thomas Essig, Acting Chief
Generic Issues and Environmental Project Branch
United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Nuclear Regulation
Mail Stop O10H5
Washington, DC 20555

Dear Mr. Essig:

Enclosed for your review is the Department of Energy's *Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Production of Tritium in a Commercial Light Water Reactor* [DOE/EIS-0288D]. The Department is responsible for supplying nuclear materials for strategic defense needs and for ensuring that the nuclear weapons stockpile remains safe and reliable for the foreseeable future. Tritium, a radioactive isotope of hydrogen, is an essential component of every nuclear weapon in the current and projected U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile. Unlike other materials used in nuclear weapons, tritium decays rapidly, at a rate of 5.5 percent per year. Accordingly, as long as the Nation relies on a nuclear deterrent, the tritium in each nuclear weapon must be replenished periodically. Currently, the U.S. nuclear weapons complex does not have the capability to produce the amounts of tritium required to support the Nation's stockpile.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) evaluates the environmental impacts associated with producing tritium at one or more of the following commercial light water reactors:

- (1) Watts Bar Nuclear Plant, Unit 1 (Spring City, Tennessee) 50-340
- (2) Sequoyah Nuclear Plant, Unit 1 (Soddy Daisy, Tennessee) 50-327
- (3) Sequoyah Nuclear Plant, Unit 2 (Soddy Daisy, Tennessee) 50-328
- (4) Bellefonte Nuclear Plant, Unit 1 (Hollywood, Alabama) 50-326
- (5) Bellefonte Nuclear Plant, Unit 2 (Hollywood, Alabama) 50-329

Specifically, this Draft EIS analyzes the potential environmental impacts associated with fabricating tritium-producing burnable absorber rods (TPBARs), transporting non-irradiated TPBARs from the fabrication facility to the reactor sites, irradiating TPBARs in the reactors, and transporting irradiated TPBARs from the reactors to a tritium extraction facility that would be established at the Savannah River Site.

The Department encourages members of Congress, American Indian Tribal Governments, the states of Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and Tennessee, local governments, other Federal agencies, and individuals to provide comments on the Draft EIS. Included with this letter is a comment form that may be used any time during the comment period from August 28, 1998, to October 27, 1998. The Department will consider all comments transmitted or postmarked by October 27, 1998, in preparing the Final EIS; later comments will be considered to the extent practicable.

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Rec'd w/ draft EIS at
DOE. EIS w/ NRC for review
purposes.

As part of the review period, the Department has scheduled three public meetings for the following dates and locations. Registration for the meetings will open at 6:15 p.m.; the meetings will begin at 7:00 p.m.

Draft EIS Meeting Schedule

October 1, 1998	North Augusta Community Center 495 Brookside Avenue North Augusta, SC 29842	(803) 441-4290
October 6, 1998	Northeast Alabama Community College Tom Bevell Lyceum 138 Alabama Highway 35 West Rainsville, AL 35986	(205) 638-7044
October 8, 1998	Rhea County High School Auditorium 405 Pierce Road Evansville, TN 37332	(423) 775-7821

Listed below are options for submitting comments on the Draft EIS:

- Attend public meetings and give comments directly to DOE officials or return the comment form to the registration desk
- Mail comments to: U.S. Department of Energy, Commercial Light Water Reactor Project Office, Attn: Mr. Stephen Sohinki, P.O. Box 44539, Washington, DC 20026-4539
- Fax comments to: 1-800-631-0612
- Call and leave comments via voicemail: 1-800-332-0801
- Submit comments via the website: <http://www.dp.doe.gov/dp-62>

Thank you for your interest in the Department's Tritium Supply Program.

Sincerely,



Carol M. Borgstrom
Director
Office of NEPA Policy and Assistance

Enclosures:

1. Draft EIS
2. Comment Form



The Department of Energy is interested in your comments on the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Production of Tritium in a Commercial Light Water Reactor*.

- attending public meetings and giving your comments directly to DOE officials
- returning this comment form to the registration desk at the meeting
- returning this comment form or other written comments to the address on the back
- faxing your comments to 1-800-631-0612
- commenting via the World Wide Web site: <http://www.dp.doe.gov/dp-62>
- calling toll-free and leaving your comments via voice mail, 1-800-332-0801

Comments:

Name: _____ (optional)
 Organization: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____
 Work phone: _____ Home phone: _____
 Fax: _____
 E-Mail Address: _____

Fold on lines and fasten with tape

Place
stamp
here

**U.S. Department of Energy
Commercial Light Water Reactor Project Office
Attn: Mr. Stephen Sohinki
P.O. Box 44539
Washington, D.C. 20026-4539**
