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Subject: COMMENTS on DECOM GEIS

Attached as Ms WORD FILE. Please acknowledge receipt. Thank You and Happy New Year..Ray

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*New England Coalition on Nuclear Pollution*  
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December 31, 2001

Chief, Rules and Directives Branch  
Division of Administrative Services  
Mail Stop T 6 D 59  
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington, DC 20555-0001

**Re: NUREG – 0586 Draft Supplement 1, Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Decommissioning Nuclear Facilities, Draft Supplement Dealing With Decommissioning of Nuclear Power Reactors**

**Written Comments Prepared by Raymond Shadis on Behalf of the New England Coalition on Nuclear Pollution**

1. **Not Risk-Informed** - The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has applied extraordinary effort to risk-inform reactor oversight but, save for Appendix G of this report, has avoided translation of environmental impacts from dose based-language to risk-based language. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and most state agencies that set radiation exposure standards employ measures, limits, or goals expressed in terms of risk. NRC Radiological Site Release Criteria appear to yield a higher risk to the public than those risk levels acceptable to EPA under CERCLA. If this is so, then the GEIS should contain the comparisons (risk to risk, nuclear to chemical, one in ten thousand to one in a million) in plain language. The presentation of risk in Appendix G is unnecessarily obtuse and murky. It appears not to contain a comparison to permissible or target risks from non-radiological pollutants, which in all fairness, it should.

Appendix 1, Summary of Accidents For PWR and BWR Plants Undergoing Decommissioning Operations, Table 1-3 lists accidents considered in various individual plant evaluations but lists no potential consequences and no probabilities. So what good is this list except to show the random and will-nilly cafeteria approach to individual plants picking out and designing bounding accident scenarios? At one plant the limiting scenario is fuel handling accident; at another it is a fire in the low level waste storage building. Case in Point: No fire scenarios are listed for Maine Yankee under Table 1-3, yet recently a fire occurred in a low-level waste dewatering unit and burned a several hundred degrees for more than an hour. A local volunteer fire company approached the fire without respirators and without advice from radiation protection personnel. A GEIS should contain a comprehensive generic list of potential accidents (scenarios) together with probabilities and potential consequences.

Presenting licensee estimates of consequences without comment or qualification as in

Table 1-4, Highest Offsite Doses Calculated for Postulated Accidents in Licensing Basis Documents, provides an incomplete picture of real potential consequences. For example, Maine Yankee asserts that loss of spent fuel pool heat sink will result in the same offsite dose as a liquid waste spill, that of .23 REM. Other than a reference to another study, NRC does not bother to explain what sort of dose spent fuel pool drain down might result in if remedial action is not taken. As dose consequences can be rather large, the actual figures should be included in the GEIS.

- 2. Impact of Closure** -The draft supplement attempts to reflect the impact of plant closure on jobs, community tax revenues, and population. The impact of reactor shutdown a must be considered apart from decommissioning. The decision to shutdown, to lay-off workers, to devalue the plant for tax purposes and so on, is not automatically a decision to decommission the plant. It may be a shutdown for a long-term repair or upgrade period. Or it may be intended to mothball the facility with the decision to decommission or not delayed a decade or more. In any case, if workforce reduction at shutdown is a part of decommissioning, then workforce replenishment because of fuel storage or enforcement of administrative site release conditions should also be considered.

If decommissioning is to be risk-informed and the impacts of shut down are to be considered, then the cost and environmental and risk impacts of continued operation should also be compared. Maine Yankee shutdown rather than face the costs of steam generator replacement and correction of a host of safety defects, including system-wide cable separation issues, inadequate high energy line break protection, inadequate containment volume, marginal emergency diesel generator capacity, 95 percent of fire seals defective, undersized atmospheric steam dump valves, and on and on. Haddam Neck had similar problems. Just prior t the closure of Yankee Rowe, NRC staff was arguing internally about the sanity of permitting the plant to run one more fuel cycle with a badly embrittled reactor vessel.

If the costs of the decision to shutdown are included, then the cost of the immediate alternative, repair and continued operation, ought to be included as well as comparative environmental impact and comparative risk.

Table J-1 Impact of Plant Closure and Decommissioning at Nuclear Power Plants Currently Being Decommissioned includes three plants that have already passed from decommissioning to license termination. Maximum workforce and post termination workforce figures are scant, incorrect, misleading, and more or less, useless for the purpose of gaining usable information. Maine Yankee currently has more than 400 workers on site; not 295 as listed. Without a reference date, maximum workforce numbers mean what? During outages? During major repairs and retrofits? Of twenty-two plants listed, workforce figures are given for only seven.

Table J-2 Impact of Plant Closure and Decommissioning on Population Change shows no causal relationship between closure, decommissioning and population change. Of twenty-one plant locations listed, all save two show population increases in the host county following plant closure. Did Rainer County, Oregon increase its population by 16.5 percent as an impact of the Trojan Nuclear Plant shutdown? It is even harder to credit that the impact of the closure of 65 MWe Humbolt Bay is an increase in the population of

California of 25.8 percent. This may be the stupidest table ever presented in an NRC document.

Table J-3 Impact of Plant Closure and Decommissioning on Local Tax Revenues does not show any impacts of decommissioning activities on tax revenues therefore the table is incorrectly titled. There could be some small near term impact of decommissioning on tax revenues, for example, taxes levied on capital equipment purchased by local vendors working on decommissioning and taxes on spent fuel storage facilities.

No effort is made to determine if marketability of local homes is increased by nuclear plant close. Marketability would determine price and ultimately impact tax-base.

At sites considered for re-powering, no consideration is given to the tax worth of the re-powered site. Haddam Neck, for example, has applied for early partial site release so that the construction of a gas-fired plant may begin even before decommissioning is completed. Fort St. Vrain hosts a gas-fired plant. If impact of closure is to be considered in a GEIS on decommissioning, so then should reuse be considered.

In Maine, utility ratepayers are entitled to share in moneys recovered from the sale of plant components and commodities, such as pipe and cable, as well as real estate and unspent decommissioning funds. While not taxes, per se, these are funds or credits added to the general public revenue.

**3. Environmental Impacts** Section 4.3.8.2, Potential Radiological Impacts from Decommissioning Activities, fails to adequately consider the potential for decommissioning activities to spread or hide radiological contamination. The presumption is that accidents or mistakes will not take place, when experience at decommissioning plants shows that they do. The report fails to draw from this experience. For example, early in the decommissioning of one site and prior to complete radiological survey, a trench was dug across an impacted area to lay an electrical cable to power equipment no longer serviced through the plant. The trench was left open to the weather for a few days, then backfilled with loose material and thus could permit rainwater to carry contamination deeper and spread it further. Individually, such activities may not provide what are termed significant doses, but they have the potential to add incremental to the dose of future site occupants and overall risk and may violate ALARA principles. The potential environmental impacts of such activities should be evaluated. Incidents have occurred in which workers left the site with contaminated clothing and in which train car loads of class A waste were permitted to languish for weeks on a siding in a residential community. Although radiation levels in these instances were extremely low, the potential for greater exposures existed. Such scenarios should be considered, worst case, in preparing the GEIS.

Section 4.3.11.2 Potential Impacts of Decommissioning Activities on Cost correctly points out that there are many variables in decommissioning that affect cost; among them are the size and type of reactor, the extent of contamination, property taxes and so on. However the GEIS does no more than list these variables without any attempt to assign the weight which any of them contribute. The GEIS correctly points out that only three commercial power reactors have successfully completed decommissioning, but does not

say that they can hardly be considered typical of those plants under and entering decommissioning. Fort St. Vrain was a modest sized plant of oddball High Temperature Gas design and decommissioned on a fixed price, loss-leader price by a large manufacturing firm, Shoreham only ran the equivalent of one full power day, and Pathfinder was a 59MWe peanut of a plant. Thus it would be instructive to look at how costs are apportioned among today's more representative plants currently under decommissioning and from this base, knowing which are sensitive to scale and which are sensitive to choice, project final costs. These costs should be broken down and compared in the GEIS.

Section 4.3.16.2 Potential Impacts of Noise from Decommissioning Activities seems to deal with noise as significant only at hearing-loss levels, however the admission is made that noise can be annoying. It can also degrade the general environment, and the aesthetic environment, lead to sleep loss, diminished creativity, and lost sales of goods and property. Where decommissioning schedules require night work, large pneumatic hammers can be heard miles distant from the site. The GEIS should also consider noise from explosive demolition.

Table 4-6 Radiological Impacts of Transporting LLW to Offsite Disposal Facilities is something of a puzzle. Waste volumes and radiological impacts in the table are much greater for the SAFSTOR decommissioning option (45,000 cubic meters/ 78 person-rem) than for the DECON option ( 10,000 cubic meters/ 48 person-rem). Same plant, if you let the radiation dissipate with time, you wind up with more waste. With all due respect, this makes no readily apparent sense.

3. **Spent Fuel Storage** The GEIS does not consider the impacts of spent fuel storage. We believe this to be based on artificial distinctions. Both Maine Yankee and Haddam Neck have identified establishing an Independent Spent Fuel Storage Facility as a "critical pathway" in decommissioning. ISFSI construction has been regulated under the very same Part 50 license that will be terminated upon successful decommissioning. Only then will a Part 72 license be issued. The ISFSI is in the middle of a decommissioning site and physically inseparable from decommissioning. Its impacts should be considered among the impacts of decommissioning in the GEIS.
4. **Exported Impacts** The on site disposal of radiological demolition debris (rubblization) is considered in the GEIS. With rubblization abandoned at Maine Yankee, the cumulative effect of disposal of the debris at a licensed facility elsewhere is not considered. This makes no sense. Nor does it make sense to "lose" impacts when contaminated materials are shipped to handling facilities for recycling. Different choices made at the decommissioning site will result in different impacts to workers and other citizenry offsite and away. These effects should not be artificially separated from the environmental impacts of decommissioning simply because they are exported.

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