United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Pennsylvania Field Office
315 South Allen Street, Suite 322
State College, Pennsylvania 16801-4850

April 17, 2002

Duke Wheeler
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
11555 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852

50-277/278

Dear Mr. Wheeler:

This responds to your letter of March 13, 2002, requesting our review of the Peach Bottom Atomic Power Station, Units 2 and 3, license renewal - "No Effect" and "Not Likely to Adversely Affect" determinations, located in York County, Pennsylvania. The Power Station is located within the range of two federally listed species, the threatened bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and bog turtle (*Clemmys muhlenbergii*). The following comments are provided pursuant to the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) to ensure the protection of endangered and threatened species.

Bald Eagle

Bald eagles typically occur in the vicinity of aquatic ecosystems; they frequent lakes, reservoirs, large rivers (e.g., Delaware River, Juniata River, Susquehanna River), and wetland systems. Their nests are usually built in large trees within two miles of these features. Because eagles are vulnerable to human disturbance, particularly during the nesting season, nests are often located in relatively remote forested areas.

The Fish and Wildlife Service proposed to remove the bald eagle from the federal *List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife* on July 6, 1999 (*Federal Register*, Vol. 64, No. 128), but final action on that proposal has not been taken. The bald eagle, therefore, continues to be listed under the Endangered Species Act. Any changes in the regulatory status of the bald eagle can be monitored by accessing the Service's web site (www.fws.gov).

The bald eagle population in Pennsylvania has increased substantially from the three nest sites found in the State from 1963 through 1980. In 2001, 53 eagle nests were documented. Because bald eagles are continuing to recover and expand their breeding range in Pennsylvania, new eagle nests may be found in previously undocumented locations.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission has determined that the project is in the vicinity of 10 eagle nests on the Lower Susquehanna. In Pennsylvania, the closest nest site is located three miles upstream. Downstream of the project (Maryland), the closest eagle nest is approximately two miles away. Because of the distance between the project and the known eagle nests, continued

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operation of the power plant is not likely to adversely affect the bald eagle.

Bog Turtle

A Phase I Bog Turtle Habitat Survey was conducted by Tetra Tech in 2000. According to the report, no wetlands are located at the power plant site. However, the transmission corridor traverses several streams and wetlands. Four of the five streams were incised channels with rocky substrates. The fifth stream crossing had a small, adjacent wetland. However, hydrology adequate to support bog turtles is not present in this wetland. Therefore, based on our review of this information, we conclude that the proposed project will have no permanent or temporary impacts on palustrine wetland habitat that could be occupied by bog turtles.

If this project is implemented as proposed, we concur that renewal of the license of the Peach Bottom Power Station will not effect the bog turtle or its habitat, and is not likely to adversely affect the bald eagle. This response relates only to endangered or threatened species under our jurisdiction, based on an office review of the proposed project's location. No field inspection of the project has been conducted by this office. Consequently, this letter is not to be construed as addressing potential Service concerns under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act or other authorities.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact Bonnie Dershem of my staff at 814-234-4090.

Sincerely,

David Densmore
Supervisor