

April 6, 1994

Docket Nos. 50-528, 50-529
and 50-530

Mr. William F. Conway

Executive Vice President, Nuclear
Arizona Public Service Company
Post Office Box 53999
Phoenix, Arizona 85072-3999

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Dear Mr. Conway:

SUBJECT: PALO VERDE UNITS 1, 2, AND 3 - ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (TAC NOS. M88211, M88212 AND
M88213)

Enclosed for your information is a copy of an "Environmental Assessment and
Finding of No Significant Impact." The Environmental Assessment relates to
your request dated October 26, 1993, for amendments to the Palo Verde
Technical Specifications to increase the maximum fuel enrichment to 4.3 weight
percent U-235.

The environmental assessment has been forwarded to the Office of the Federal
Register for publication.

Sincerely,

Original signed by:

Linh N. Tran, Project Manager
Project Directorate IV-3
Division of Reactor Projects III/IV
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure:
Environmental Assessment

cc w/enclosure:
See next page

SEE PREVIOUS CONCURRENCE*

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DATE:	04/4/94	04/5/94	03/31/94	04/6/94

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UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

April 6, 1994

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Mr. William F. Conway
Executive Vice President, Nuclear
Arizona Public Service Company
Post Office Box 53999
Phoenix, Arizona 85072-3999

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Linh N. Tran".

Linh N. Tran, Project Manager
Project Directorate IV-3
Division of Reactor Projects III/IV
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure:
Environmental Assessment

cc w/enclosure:
See next page

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UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
ARIZONA PUBLIC SERVICE COMPANY, ET AL.
DOCKET NOS. 50-528, 50-529, AND 50-530
PALO VERDE NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION UNITS 1, 2, AND 3
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) is considering issuance of amendments to Facility Operating License Nos. NPF-41, NPF-51, and NPF-74 issued to Arizona Public Service Company, et al., (the licensee), for the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station (PVNGS) Units 1, 2, and 3 located in Wintersburg, Arizona.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Identification of Proposed Action

By letter dated October 26, 1993, the licensee proposed to change technical specifications (TS) to allow an increase in fuel enrichment (Uranium 235) to a maximum of 4.30 weight percent.

The Need for the Proposed Action

The proposed changes to the TS are required in order to provide the licensee with operational flexibility to use fuel enriched with U-235 up to 4.30 weight percent at PVNGS, Units 1, 2, and 3. The present TS permit a maximum of 4.05 weight percent U-235. Thus the change to the TS was requested.

Environmental Impact of the Proposed Action

The Commission has completed its evaluation of the proposed revision to the TS and concludes that storage and use of fuel enriched with U-235 up

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to 4.30 weight percent at PVNGS, Units 1, 2, and 3 is acceptable. The safety considerations associated with higher enrichments have been evaluated by the NRC staff and the staff has concluded that such changes would not adversely affect plant safety. The proposed changes have no adverse effect on the probability of any accident. There will be no change to authorized power level. There was no change requested to current 52,000 MWD/MTU burnup. The change in fuel enrichment is bounded by NRC staff generic review (discussed below). As a result, there is no significant increase in individual or cumulative radiation exposure.

The environmental impacts of transportation resulting from the use of higher enrichment and extended irradiation are discussed in the staff assessment entitled "NRC Assessment of the Environmental Effects of Transportation Resulting from Extended Fuel Enrichment and Irradiation." This assessment was published in the FEDERAL REGISTER on August 11, 1988 (53 FR 30355) as corrected on August 24, 1988 (53 FR 32322) in connection with the Shearon Harris Nuclear Power Plant, Unit 1: Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact. As indicated therein, the environmental cost contribution of an increase in fuel enrichment of up to 5 weight percent U-235 and irradiation limits of up to 60,000 MWD/MTU are either unchanged, or may in fact be reduced from those summarized in Table S-4 as set forth in 10 CFR 51.52(c). These findings are applicable to the proposed amendments for PVNGS, Units 1, 2, and 3. Accordingly, the Commission concludes that this proposed action would result in no significant radiological environmental impact.

With regard to potential nonradiological impacts, the proposed changes involve systems located within the restricted area as defined in 10 CFR Part 20. It does not affect nonradiological plant effluents and has no other environmental impact. Therefore, the Commission concludes that there are no significant nonradiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed amendments.

The Notice of Consideration of Issuance of Amendment, Proposed No Significant Hazards Consideration Determination, and Opportunity for Hearing in connection with this action was published in the FEDERAL REGISTER on January 19, 1994 (59 FR 2860). No request for hearing or petition for leave to intervene was filed following this notice.

Alternative to the Proposed Action

Since the Commission concluded that there are no significant environmental effects that would result from the proposed action, any alternatives with equal or greater environmental impacts need not be evaluated.

The principal alternative would be to deny the requested amendments. The staff considered denial of the proposed action. This would not reduce environmental impacts of plant operation and would result in reduced operational flexibility.

Alternative Use of Resources

This action does not involve the use of resources not previously considered in the Final Environmental Statement related to operation of the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station Units 1, 2, and 3, dated February 1982 (NUREG 0841).

Agencies and Persons Consulted

The staff consulted the State of Arizona official regarding environmental impact of the proposed action. The State official had no comments.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The Commission has determined not to prepare an environmental impact statement for the proposed license amendment.

Based upon the foregoing environmental assessment, the Commission concludes that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, the Commission has determined not to prepare an environmental impact statement for the proposed license amendments.

For further details with respect to this action, see the licensee's application for amendment dated October 26, 1993, which is available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room, Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20555 and at the local public document room at the Phoenix Public Library, 12 East McDowell Road, Phoenix, Arizona 85004.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 6th day of April 1994.

FOR THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION



Theodore R. Quay, Director
Project Directorate IV-3
Division of Reactor Project III/IV
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation