

January 8, 2004

The Honorable Gregory E. Pyle, Chief
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
P. O. Drawer 1210
Durant, OK 74702-1210

SUBJECT: EARLY SITE PERMIT (ESP) REVIEW FOR THE GRAND GULF SITE

Dear Chief Pyle:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff is reviewing an application for an ESP to set aside a site for the potential future construction of one or more new nuclear power plants. The application was submitted by System Energy Resources, Inc. (SERI), on October 16, 2003, pursuant to NRC requirements at Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 52 (10 CFR Part 52). If built, the new unit(s) would be co-located with the existing Grand Gulf Nuclear Power Station (GGNS) site near the town of Port Gibson in Claiborne County, Mississippi.

As part of its review of the application, the NRC staff will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) under the provisions of 10 CFR Part 51, the NRC rules that implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The NRC environmental review process includes an opportunity for public participation in the environmental review. The Grand Gulf ESP site is located on land that may be of interest to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. We want to ensure that you are aware of our efforts and, pursuant to our regulations at 10 CFR 51.28(b), the NRC invites the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma to provide input to the scoping process relating to the NRC's environmental review of the application. The following is a description of the application and the environmental review process.

The EIS will document the NRC staff's determination regarding the suitability of the proposed site for the construction and operation of one or more new nuclear plants. In addition, the staff will also consider alternatives to the proposed action, including alternative sites. The EIS will contain the results of the review of the environmental impacts on the area surrounding the Grand Gulf ESP site that are related to terrestrial ecology, aquatic ecology, hydrology, socioeconomic issues, and historic properties (among others), and will contain a recommendation regarding the environmental acceptability of granting an ESP. If approved, the ESP would not authorize the applicant to begin construction of the unit(s).

As part of this review, and in accordance with 36 CFR 800.8, the EIS will include analyses of potential impacts to historic properties. Accordingly, pursuant to 10 CFR 51.28 and 36 CFR 800.2(c), the NRC wishes to ensure that Indian tribes that might have an interest in any potential historic properties in the area of potential effect (APE) are afforded the opportunity to identify their concerns, provide advice on the identification and evaluation of historic properties, including those of traditional religious and cultural importance, and, if necessary, participate in the resolution of any adverse effects to such properties.

In the context of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the APE for this ESP review is the area at the power plant site and its immediate environs that may be impacted by land-disturbing activities associated with the construction and operation of the new unit(s). GGNS is located in Claiborne County, Mississippi. The application is available through the web-based version of the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) which can be found at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>. The application is listed under accession number ML032960315.

On January 21, 2004, the NRC will conduct a public environmental scoping meeting from 7:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m. at the Port Gibson City Hall, located at 1005 College Street, Port Gibson, Mississippi. Representatives of your tribe are invited to attend. The meeting will be preceded by a one-hour open house during which members of the public may meet and talk with NRC staff members on an informal basis.

Please submit any written comments your tribe may have to offer on the scope of the environmental review by February 12, 2004. Comments should be submitted either by mail to the Chief, Rules and Directives Branch, Division of Administrative Services, Mail Stop T-6 D59, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, D.C. 20555-0001, or by e-mail to GrandGulfEIS@nrc.gov.

At the conclusion of the scoping process, the NRC staff will prepare a summary of the significant issues identified and the conclusions reached, and will send a copy to you. In addition, after it is issued, your office will receive a copy of the draft EIS along with a request for comments. The anticipated publication date for the draft EIS is February 2005. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Ms. Cristina Guerrero at 301-415-2981 or GrandGulfEIS@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Pao-Tsin Kuo, Program Director
License Renewal and Environmental Impacts
Division of Regulatory Improvement Programs
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No.: 52-009

cc: See next page

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Sincerely,

/RA/

Pao-Tsin Kuo, Program Director
 License Renewal and Environmental Impacts
 Division of Regulatory Improvement Programs
 Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No.: 52-009

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Accession No.: **ML040090309**

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DISTRIBUTION: Ltr. to the Honorable G. Pyle, Dated: January 8, 2004

Accession # ML040090309

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Grand Gulf Early Site Permit - Environmental Review

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