



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
1500 Museum Road, Suite 105
Conway, Arkansas 72032

50-368

January 14, 2004

Mr. Thomas Kenyon
Environmental Project Manager
License Renewal and Environmental Impacts
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555-001

Dear Mr. Kenyon:

The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed the information supplied with your letter dated December 9, 2003 concerning the potential impacts of relicensing the Arkansas Nuclear One Unit 2 (ANO-2), Pope county, Arkansas. Our comments are submitted in accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (87 Stat. 884, as amended 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16U.S.C. 661-667e).

The endangered least tern (*Sterna antillarum*) and the threatened bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) are present in the vicinity of the project area. However, the proposed relicensing of the existing plant is not likely to impact any listed species.

The Service has become aware that a block net shad barrier is now being used on the entrance to the intake canal during the fall and winter months. The detailed use and effects of this barrier should be included in any environmental assessments and/or environmental impact statements regarding ANO operations. We believe this barrier may have both positive and negative effects on the fishery. In addition to reducing temperature induced shad entrainment and impingement the barrier may also prevent impingement of other healthy species. However, the barrier appears to prevent and/or discourage other species from entering the intake canal, which is valuable fisheries habitat and a popular recreation fishing location for much of the year. The Service recommends the establishment of specific protocols for the deployment of the barrier only when necessary to prevent increased temperature induced shad entrainment and impingement. Water temperature monitoring, meteorological data, and forecasts should provide sufficient indication of water temperatures approaching and departing shad thermal intolerances. Limiting shad barrier use by having deployment coincide with these water temperatures will maintain habitat availability and recreational use to the maximum extent, while maintaining ANO's ability to reduce shad impingement when necessary. Fisheries and recreational use of the intake canal have historically been reduced during the winter and for this reason along with the benefits to

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ANO operations, the Service believes that the use of the barrier when necessary will have limited effects on fisheries or recreation.

Further, the Service is aware that security barriers have been placed in the intake and effluent canals restricting access and recreational use. These restrictions and the effects of these barriers on the fisheries and recreation access should be included in any environmental assessments and/or environmental impact statements regarding ANO operations. These areas provide high quality habitat and water conditions that attract high densities of fish seasonally and therefore these areas and the adjacent waters have been and continue to be popular recreational fishing areas. The Service recommends documenting the loss of these valuable recreational uses and the benefits of creating a fisheries refugia. By restricting access to these areas ANO is providing high quality habitat refugia for fish by limiting take or harassment from recreational fishing to adjacent areas. In the past the dense fish concentrations in these areas have resulted in high levels of take. Limiting take will improve the quality and quantity of the fisheries and recreational fishing in Lake Dardanelle as a whole annually and in the long term. The Service recommends coordinating with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and/or other fisheries researchers to examine the effects of these changes on the fisheries in Lake Dardanelle.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments.

Sincerely,



Margaret Harney
Acting Field Supervisor

cc:

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Little Rock, Arkansas

Attn: Bob Leonard

Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, Little Rock, Arkansas

Attn: Cindy Osborne