



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
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 [Signature]

November 5, 2004

Rules Review and Directives Branch
 U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
 Mail Stop T6-D59
 Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

8/12/04
 69FR 49916
 (2)

**RE: EPA Review and Comments on
 Draft Generic Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DGSEIS)
 License Renewal of Nuclear Plants, Supplement 18
 Regarding Joseph M. Farley Nuclear Plant, Units 1 and 2
 CEQ No. 040378**

Dear Sir:

EPA Region 4 reviewed the Draft Generic Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DGSEIS) pursuant to Section 309 of the Clean Air Act and Section 102 (2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The purpose of this letter is to provide the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) with EPA's comments regarding potential impacts of the proposed renewal of the Joseph M. Farley Nuclear Plant, Units 1 and 2 Operating Licenses (OLs).

Southern Nuclear Operating Company (SNC) submitted an application to renew the Operating Licenses (OLs) for the Farley Nuclear Station for an additional 20 years. The proposed action, (license renewals), would provide for continued operation and maintenance of existing facilities and transmission lines.

Based on EPA's review of the DGSEIS, this document received an EC-1 rating, meaning that environmental concerns exist regarding some aspects of the proposed project. Specifically, protecting the environment involves the continuing need for appropriate storage and ultimate disposition of radioactive wastes generated on-site.

The DGSEIS acknowledges that OL renewals for the Farley Station will require continuing radiological monitoring of all plant effluents. Appropriate storage of spent fuel assemblies and radioactive wastes on-site is required, in order to prevent impacts. In the Waste Confidence Rule (10 CFR 51.23), the Commission generically determined that the spent fuel generated by any reactor can be safely stored onsite for at least 30 years beyond the licensed operating life of the reactor. Ultimately, long-term radioactive waste disposition will require transportation of wastes to a permitted repository site. We are aware of the expected availability of a geological repository within the first quarter of the twenty-first century.

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Further, Farley Nuclear Plant has an NPDES permit for discharges to the Chattahoochee River, and uses the river as a source of water for some plant operations. The DGSEIS notes that future water withdrawals from the river may be affected by allocation of water by state government.

In conclusion, the document states that the operating license renewals would result in fewer environmental impacts than the feasible alternatives for generating power, and the NRC considers impacts of operating license renewals to be small. Overall, the impacts as defined in the DGSEIS appear to be within acceptable limits.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this document. If we can be of further assistance, please contact Ramona McConney of my staff at (404) 562-9615.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heinz Mueller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Heinz J. Mueller, Chief
Office of Environmental Assessment

Enclosed: Summary of Rating Definitions

SUMMARY OF RATING DEFINITIONS AND FOLLOW UP ACTION*

Environmental Impact of the Action

LO-Lack of Objections

The EPA review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the proposal. The review may have disclosed opportunities for application of mitigation measures that could be accomplished with no more than minor changes to the proposal.

EC-Environmental Concerns

The EPA review has identified environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment. Corrective measures may require changes to the preferred alternative or application of mitigation measures that can reduce the environmental impacts. EPA would like to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

EO-Environmental Objections

The EPA review has identified significant environmental impacts that must be avoided in order to provide adequate protection for the environment. Corrective measures may require substantial changes to the preferred alternative or consideration of some other project alternative (including the no action alternative or a new alternative). EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

EU-Environmentally Unsatisfactory

The EPA review has identified adverse environmental impacts that are of sufficient magnitude that they are unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health or welfare or environmental quality. EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts. If the potential unsatisfactory impacts are not corrected at the final EIS state, this proposal will be recommended for referral to the CEQ.

Adequacy of the Impact Statement

Category 1-Adequate

The EPA believes the draft EIS adequately sets forth the environmental impact(s) of the preferred alternative and those of the alternatives reasonably available to the project or action. No further analysis or data collecting is necessary, but the reviewer may suggest the addition of clarifying language or information.

Category 2-Insufficient Information

The draft EIS does not contain sufficient information for the EPA to fully assess the environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment, or the EPA reviewer has identified new reasonably available alternatives that are within the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which could reduce the environmental impacts of the action. The identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussion should be included in the final EIS.

Category 3-Inadequate

EPA does not believe that the draft EIS adequately assesses potentially significant environmental impacts of the action, or the EPA reviewer has identified new, reasonably available alternatives that are outside of the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which should be analyzed in order to reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts. EPA believes that the identified additional information, data analyses, or discussions are of such a magnitude that they should have full public review at a draft stage. EPA does not believe that the draft EIS is adequate for the purposes of the NEPA and/or Section 309 review, and thus should be formally revised and made available for public comment in a supplemental or revised draft EIS. On the basis of the potential significant impacts involved, this proposal could be a candidate for referral to the CEQ.

*From EPA Manual 1640 Policy and Procedures for the Review of the Federal Actions Impacting the Environment