

August 16, 2005

Mr. C. Randy Hutchinson, Senior Vice President
Business Development
Entergy Nuclear, Inc.
P.O. Box 32000
Jackson, MS 39286

Dear Mr. Hutchinson:

By letter dated June 24, 2005, you expressed concern regarding potential delays in the review schedule for the application of System Energy Resources Inc. (SERI) for an early site permit (ESP) for the Grand Gulf ESP site. This letter updates you on the progress of the review and identifies revised schedule targets for the remainder of the review (see enclosure).

The review schedule reflects the effort to complete the environmental and safety reviews for the SERI ESP application. An estimate of the dates for the mandatory hearing and Commission's final decision is also provided in the enclosed schedule; however, these schedules are not within the staff's control. The staff may be able to improve on that schedule if the review progresses more quickly than planned.

The staff issued the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the SERI ESP in April 2005. The comment period ended on July 14, 2005. The staff is assessing the number of public comments for the SERI ESP draft EIS. In addition to reviewing the SERI ESP application, the staff is also reviewing ESP applications from Dominion Nuclear North Anna, LLC (Dominion) and Exelon Generation Company, LLC (Exelon). In the case of the Dominion review, more than 1300 people provided approximately 7000 comments on the draft EIS. The number of public comments significantly exceeded what had been planned for in the previous schedule. The level of stakeholder participation for the Dominion draft EIS led the staff to determine that additional resources and time are needed to consider the public comments and to complete the Dominion environmental review. Therefore, the staff expects to delay the issuance of the Dominion final EIS by four months. The resources devoted to the Dominion review have had an effect on the review schedules for the Exelon and SERI ESP applications, as common issues are being resolved and key members of the environmental review teams are being used on multiple ESP applications. The NRC staff expects that much of the experience gained from its review of the Dominion ESP application (e.g., comment responses, changes resulting from final internal review) will be applicable to the review of the Exelon and SERI ESP applications.

The NRC staff developed an integrated environmental review schedule for the first-of-a-kind ESP applications concurrent with license renewal reviews, extended power uprate reviews, and other operating reactor licensing actions. The staff planned and scheduled the ESP application reviews reflecting applicants' fulfillment of schedule commitments and staggered the review schedules of the three ESP applications in an attempt to ensure that (1) experience from the initial review would be incorporated into the subsequent reviews, (2) reviews are consistent, and (3) resources are effectively utilized. Consequently, the SERI ESP application review schedule depended, in part, on the successful implementation of the Dominion ESP application review.

The Commission places a high value on establishing and maintaining stable and predictable regulatory programs for licensing and inspecting new nuclear plants, including the review of ESPs. Based on the lessons-learned from the three ongoing ESP reviews, the staff is taking additional actions to limit future scheduling delays. Actions include developing a database of public comment responses and obtaining additional contractor support.

The NRC staff discussed these schedule changes with your staff in a phone conference on August 16, 2005. If you have any questions or comments concerning this matter, you may contact James H. Wilson at (301) 415-1108 or jhw1@nrc.gov, or Raj Anand at (301) 415-1146 or rka@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA L. Dudes for/

William D. Beckner, Program Director
New, Research and Test Reactors Program
Division of Regulatory Improvement Programs
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 52-009

Enclosure: As stated

cc: See next page

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William D. Beckner, Program Director
New, Research and Test Reactors Program
Division of Regulatory Improvement Programs
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 52-009

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Distribution: See next page

ADAMS ACCESSION NO. ML052000114-Package
ML051950260-Incoming
ML051530341-Response Letter

OFFICE	PM:RNRP	PM:RLEP	SC:RNRP	OGC/NLO	PD:RNRP
NAME	RAnand	AKugler (BZalcman for)	LDudes	AFernandez-w/comments noted	WBeckner /c/
DATE	07/19/2005	07/13/2005	07/19/2005	07/18/2005	07/19/2005

OFFICE	D:NRR	EDO	OCM	PD:RNRP
NAME	JDyer	LReyes		WBeckner (L. Dudes for)
DATE	07/20/2005	07/24/2005	08/15/2005	08/16/2005

Distribution for G20050470, Letter to C. R. Hutchinson dated August 16, 2005

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BSweeney

RAnand

JHWilson

AKugler

LDudes

WBeckner

JSegala

BSosa

**Review Schedule for SERI Early Site Permit Application for
Grand Gulf ESP Site**

Milestone	Complete Date (Actual-A Target-T)
Receive early site permit application	10/21/03-A
Press Release announcing receipt and availability	11/07/03-A
Federal Register notice (FRN) published for receipt and availability	11/14/03-A
FRN published announcing acceptance	12/01/03-A
FRN published for Notice of Intent (environmental scoping process)	12/31/03-A
Press Release announcing acceptance	01/13/04-A
FRN published for mandatory hearing	01/16/04-A
Environmental scoping meeting	01/21/04-A
Scoping period ends	02/12/04-A
1st inspection complete	02/13/04-A
Deadline for filing petitions for intervention	02/17/04-A
Environmental site audit	04/16/04-A
Deadline for submitting contentions	05/03/04-A
Prehearing conference on proceeding	06/21/04-A
Environmental requests for additional information (RAIs) issued to applicant	07/02/04-A
Applicant submits response to environmental RAIs	09/17/04-A
Safety and emergency planning (EP) RAIs issued to the applicant	09/21/04-A
Applicant submits responses to safety and EP RAIs	12/07/04-A
Draft safety evaluation report (SER) issued	04/07/05-A
Draft environmental impact statement (EIS) to EPA, Issue Notice of Availability	04/21/05-A
ACRS subcommittee meeting on draft SER	05/16/05-A
ACRS full committee meeting on draft SER	06/02/05-A
ACRS interim letter to Commission	06/14/05-A
Applicant submits responses to SER open items	06/21/05-A
Public meeting to discuss draft EIS	06/28/05-A
2nd inspection complete	NA*
Optional final inspection complete	NA*
ACRS subcommittee meeting on final SER	NA*
End of draft EIS comment period	07/14/05-A
Final SER issued	10/21/05-T
Regional Administrator's Letter	NA*
ACRS full committee meeting on final SER	12/08/05-T
ACRS letter to Commission	12/22/05-T
Final SER issued as NUREG	01/28/06-T
Final EIS issued to EPA/Issue Notice of Availability	04/14/06-T
Atomic Safety and Licensing Board (ASLB) initial decision	09/29/06-T
Commission decision	01/30/07-T

*Optional final inspection, ACRS subcommittee meeting, and Regional Administrator letter on final SER not needed.

Grand Gulf Early Site Permit - Environmental Review

cc:

Executive Vice President
& Chief Operating Officer
Entergy Operations, Inc.
P. O. Box 31995
Jackson, MS 39286-1995

Attorney General
Department of Justice
State of Louisiana
P. O. Box 94005
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9005

Wise, Carter, Child & Caraway
P. O. Box 651
Jackson, MS 39205

State Health Officer
State Board of Health
P. O. Box 1700
Jackson, MS 39205

Winston & Strawn
1400 L Street, N.W. - 12th Floor
Washington, DC 20005-3502

Office of the Governor
State of Mississippi
Jackson, MS 39201

Chief
Energy and Transportation Branch
Environmental Compliance and
Enforcement Division
Mississippi Department of Environmental
Quality
P. O. Box 10385
Jackson, MS 39289-0385

Attorney General
Asst. Attorney General
State of Mississippi
P. O. Box 22947
Jackson, MS 39225

President
Claiborne County
Board of Supervisors
P. O. Box 339
Port Gibson, MS 39150

Vice President, Operations Support
Entergy Operations, Inc.
P.O. Box 31995
Jackson, MS 39286-1995

Regional Administrator, Region IV
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
611 Ryan Plaza Drive, Suite 1000
Arlington, TX 76011

Director
Nuclear Safety Assurance
Entergy Operations, Inc.
P.O. Box 756
Port Gibson, MS 39150

Senior Resident Inspector
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
P. O. Box 399
Port Gibson, MS 39150

Charles Paulk, Region IV
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
611 Ryan Plaza Drive, Suite 400
Arlington, TX 76011

General Manager, GGNS
Entergy Operations, Inc.
P. O. Box 756
Port Gibson, MS 39150

Nancy Butler
Harriette Person Memorial Library
606 Main St.
Port Gibson, MS 39150

The Honorable Phillip Martin, Chief
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians
P.O. Box 6010 - Choctaw Branch
Choctaw, MS 39350

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

Earl J. Barbry Jr., State Historic
Preservation Officer
Tunica Biloxi Indian Tribe of Louisiana
P.O. Box 1589
Marksville, LA 71351

Mr. Tom Wagner
Federal and State Review Program
Interagency Coordinator
Mississippi Department of Archives and
History
Historic Preservation
P. O. Box 571
Jackson, MS 39205-0571

Mr. Don Klima, Director
Office of Federal Agency Programs
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Old Post Office Building
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 809
Washington, DC 20004

Mr. David Stilwell, Field Office Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
New York Ecological Services Office
3817 Luker Road
Cortland, NY 13045

Mr. Mike Bartlett, Field Office Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
New England Ecological Services Office
70 Commercial Street, Suite 300
Concord, NH 03301-5087

Mr. Russ Watson
Acting Field Office Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Louisiana Ecological Services Office
646 Cajundome Blvd.
Lafayette, LA 70506

Mr. Ray Aycock, Field Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Mississippi Ecological Services Office
6578 Dogwood View Parkway
Jackson, MS 39213

Ms. Georgia Cranmore
Assistant Regional Administrator
NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office
9721 Executive Center Drive North
Saint Petersburg, FL 33702

Ms. Patricia Kurkul
Regional Administrator
NOAA Fisheries Northeast Regional Office
1 Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

Mr. William A. Eaton, Vice President
System Energy Resources, Inc.
Entergy Operations, M-ECH-38
1340 Echelon Parkway
Jackson, MS 39213