

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
DOCKET NO. 040-07455
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Environmental Assessment Related to Renewal
of U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Materials License No. SMA-1018,
Issued to Whittaker, Corp.

Introduction:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff has prepared this environment assessment of the Whittaker Corporation's renewal and amendment requests for continued decommissioning of its site, located in the Reynolds Industrial Park near Greenville, Pennsylvania. On May 28, 2004, Whittaker Corporation requested renewal of NRC License No. SMA-1018 to allow for the continued decontamination and decommissioning (D&D) of the site. Whittaker has also requested amendment of the license to approve site-specific dose concentration guideline levels (DCGLs) for use in developing the Decommissioning Plan for this site. License No. SMA-1018 was issued in 1969 to Mercer Alloys Corporation, which performed minerals processing. Some of the raw materials and feedstock used in these processes contained licensable quantities of natural thorium or uranium. Most of these materials contained trace quantities that were below the amount requiring an NRC license. The thorium and uranium were concentrated in the waste and slag materials that were a byproduct of the processing. In 1973, Mercer Alloys was purchased by Whittaker Corporation. Processing operations utilizing licensable materials ceased in 1975, and decommissioning activities began. A portion of the facility was decontaminated and released for unrestricted use in 1985, and is presently occupied by the Greenville Metals plant. Whittaker Corporation has been maintaining control over the radioactive materials at the site while developing a plan for remediation.

The NRC staff has evaluated Whittaker's requests and has developed an environmental assessment (EA) to support the review of Whittaker's license renewal and amendment requests, in accordance with the requirements of 10 CFR Part 51. Based on the staff evaluation, the conclusion of the EA is a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on human health and the environment for the proposed licensing actions.

The current Whittaker site is a 5.9 acre strip of land located approximately 3.5 miles south of Greenville, PA, between the Greenville Metals Plant and the Shenango River. There are no remaining buildings, and the surrounding area of the site is primarily rural. There is contaminated soil and slag, and also 20 storage bins containing contaminated materials. This material includes scrap from the licensed operations and also from the cleanup of the portion of the site that was released in 1985. The radiological contaminants consist of natural thorium and uranium, and their daughter products in approximate secular equilibrium. This action addresses radioactive material already present at the site from past operations and does not authorize an increase in the amount of material specified by the license.

Whittaker Corporation
Environmental Assessment

The Proposed Action

The proposed action is to renew Materials License No. SMA-1018 to authorize continued characterization and other decommissioning activities. The license will also be amended to incorporate approved site-specific DCGLs for use in the development of the Decommissioning Plan (DP). The DCGLs will specify the cleanup criteria for the radionuclides present at the site to achieve the regulatory dose standard for license termination. The Decommissioning Plan will be submitted under a separate license amendment request and shall be reviewed under a separate Environmental Assessment. This license amendment does not constitute approval of a DP for the Whittaker site.

Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The purpose of the proposed action is to renew Materials License SMA-1018 so that Whittaker Corporation continues to possess and maintain control of the radioactive material from past operations. The licensee requested this license amendment to facilitate decommissioning of the site. NRC is fulfilling its responsibilities under the Atomic Energy Act to make a timely decision on a proposed license amendment that would ensure protection of public health and safety and the environment.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

The affected environment was described in the Introduction. The issuance of this amendment covers existing material already present at the site from past operations and does not authorize an increase in the amount of material authorized by the license. No changes are being made to the type or amounts of effluents that may be released from the site, and no increase in public radiation exposure is expected. The NRC has found no other activities in the area that could result in cumulative impacts.

Environmental Impacts of the Alternatives to the Proposed Action

The only alternative to the proposed action is for the Whittaker license to not be renewed (i.e. "no action"). The environmental impact of the no action alternative would result in no change to the current conditions at the facility. Radioactive materials would remain on site, and future use of this location would be restricted.

Agencies and Persons Consulted

The NRC staff has determined that the proposed action will not affect listed species or critical habitat. Therefore, no further consultation is required under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Likewise, the NRC staff have determined that the proposed action is not the type of activity that has the potential to cause effects on historic properties. Therefore, no further consultation is required under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Whittaker Corporation
Environmental Assessment

NRC provided a draft of its Environmental Assessment to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection for review. On August 24, 2005, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection responded by email and agreed with the conclusions of the EA.

Conclusions

Based on its review, the NRC staff has concluded that the completed action complies with 10 CFR Part 20. The NRC staff have prepared this EA in support of the proposed action to renew License No. SMA-1018. On the basis of the EA, NRC has concluded that there are no significant environmental impacts and the license amendment does not warrant the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement. Accordingly, it has been determined that a Finding of No Significant Impact is appropriate.

List of Preparers

Marjorie McLaughlin, Health Physicist, Division of Nuclear Materials Safety, Region I

List of References

1. Telephone Log Dated 2/17/05 Re. Questions in Support of License Renewal [ADAMS Accession No. ML050490050]
2. Deficiency Response Letter [ADAMS Accession No. ML050680314]
3. Revision 1 to Dose Assessment in Support of Establishing DCGLs for Whittaker Site, Dated August 10, 2004 [ADAMS Accession No. ML042310154]
4. "NRC Regulatory Issue Summary 2004-008: Results of the License Termination Rule Analysis", dated May 28, 2004 [ADAMS Accession No. ML 041460385].
5. Federal Register Notice, Volume 65, No. 114, page 37186, dated Tuesday, June 13, 2000, "Use of Screening Values to Demonstrate Compliance With The Federal Rule on Radiological Criteria for License Termination."
6. Title 10, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 51, "Environmental Protection Regulations for Domestic Licensing and Related Regulatory Functions."

The application for the license amendment and supporting documentation are available for inspection at NRC's Public Electronic Reading Room at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>. Any questions with respect to this action should be referred to Marjorie McLaughlin, Decommissioning Branch, Division of Nuclear Materials Safety, Region I, 475 Allendale Road, King of Prussia, Pennsylvania 19406, telephone (610) 337-5240, fax (610) 337-5269.

Whittaker Corporation
Environmental Assessment

Dated at King of Prussia, Pennsylvania this 9th day of September, 2005

FOR THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

/RA/

Marie Miller, Chief
Decommissioning Branch
Division of Nuclear Materials Safety
Region I

Whittaker Corporation
 Environmental Assessment

SISP Review Completed:

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