

May 5, 2006

Ms. Patricia A. Kurkul, Regional Administrator  
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service  
Northeast Regional Office  
One Blackburn Drive  
Gloucester, MA 09130-2298

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR LIST OF PROTECTED SPECIES AND ESSENTIAL FISH  
HABITAT WITHIN THE AREA UNDER EVALUATION FOR THE VERMONT  
YANKEE NUCLEAR POWER STATION LICENSE RENEWAL APPLICATION  
REVIEW

Dear Ms. Kurkul:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is reviewing an application submitted by Entergy Nuclear Operations, Inc. (Entergy) for the renewal of the operating license for the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station (VYNPS). VYNPS is located in the town of Vernon, Vermont, in Windham County on the west shore of the Connecticut River. As part of the review of the license renewal application (LRA), the NRC is preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) under the provisions of Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 51 (10 CFR Part 51), the NRC regulation that implements the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. The SEIS includes an analysis of pertinent environmental issues, including endangered or threatened species and impacts to marine resources and habitat. This letter is being submitted under the provisions of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1934, as amended, and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

The proposed action would include the use and continued maintenance of existing plant facilities and transmission lines. VYNPS stated that no major refurbishment activities have been identified as necessary to support the continued operation of VYNPS beyond the end of the existing operating license term. VYNPS is situated on approximately 125 acres of land on the west shore of the Connecticut River 0.75 miles upstream of the Vernon Hydroelectric Station. This section of the river is known as Vernon Pool. The areas adjacent to the station are primarily farm and pasture lands. The area within a five mile radius is predominantly rural with the exception of a portion of the town of Brattleboro, Vermont, and the town of Hinsdale, New Hampshire. Between 75 percent and 80 percent of the area within five miles of the station is wooded. The remainder is occupied by farms and small industries. Enclosure 1 shows the layout of the general area near the VYNPS site and Enclosure 2 presents an overview of the site location.

The VYNPS utilizes a once-through cooling system and mechanical draft cooling towers to remove waste heat from the condensers. The three circulating water pumps are located in the enclosed intake structure at the river bank. Water from the main condensers is returned to the discharge structure where it is either discharged through an aerating structure to the river or is diverted to the cooling towers. Water circulated through the towers may be either discharged through the aerating structure to the river or recirculated in a closed loop path to the intake structure, or a combination of both, known as hybrid cycle mode. The discharge path is manually selected by the operator and is contingent upon seasonal variation in environmental parameters.

The only transmission lines considered to be in scope for the review are located inside the 125 acre plant site. These transmission lines were constructed to connect VYNPS to the New England transmission grid. The transmission lines exiting the switchyards are part of the New England transmission grid that was constructed to supply purchased power to the State of Vermont. The New England transmission grid is not considered to be in scope of the license renewal review.

To support the SEIS preparation process and to ensure compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the NRC requests information on Federally listed, proposed and candidate species, and critical habitat under the jurisdiction of the National Marine Fisheries Service that may be in the vicinity of the VYNPS site.

In addition, please provide any information you consider appropriate under the provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act. Also in support of the SEIS preparation and to ensure compliance with Section 305 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the NRC requests a list of essential fish habitat that has been designated in the vicinity of the VYNPS site.

From May 23-25, 2006, the NRC staff plans to conduct a site audit at the VYNPS. On June 7, 2006, the NRC staff plans to hold two public NEPA scoping meetings at the Latchis Theatre, 50 Main Street, Brattleboro, Vermont 05301. The first session will convene at 1:30 p.m. and will continue until 4:30 p.m., as necessary. The second session will convene at 7:00 p.m., with a repeat of the overview portions of the meeting, and will continue until 10:00 p.m., as necessary. In addition to the environmental scoping meeting described above, the NRC will hold an informal open house at the Quality Inn & Suites, 1380 Putney Road, Brattleboro, Vermont 05301, on Tuesday, June 6, 2006, from 2:00-8:00 p.m., as necessary. You and your staff are invited to attend both the site audit and the public meetings. Your office will receive a copy of the draft SEIS along with a request for comments. The anticipated publication date for the draft SEIS is December 2006.

P. Kurkul

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If you have any questions concerning the NRC staff review of this LRA, please contact Mr. Richard L. Emch Jr., Senior Environmental Project Manager at 301-415-1590 or [RLE@nrc.gov](mailto:RLE@nrc.gov).

Sincerely,

/RA/

Rani Franovich, Branch Chief  
Environmental Branch B  
Division of License Renewal  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-271

Enclosures:

1. Layout of General Area near VYNPS Site
2. Overview of the Site Location

cc w/encls.: See next page

If you have any questions concerning the NRC staff review of this LRA, please contact Mr. Richard L. Emch Jr., Senior Environmental Project Manager at 301-415-1590 or [RLE@nrc.gov](mailto:RLE@nrc.gov).

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Rani Franovich, Branch Chief  
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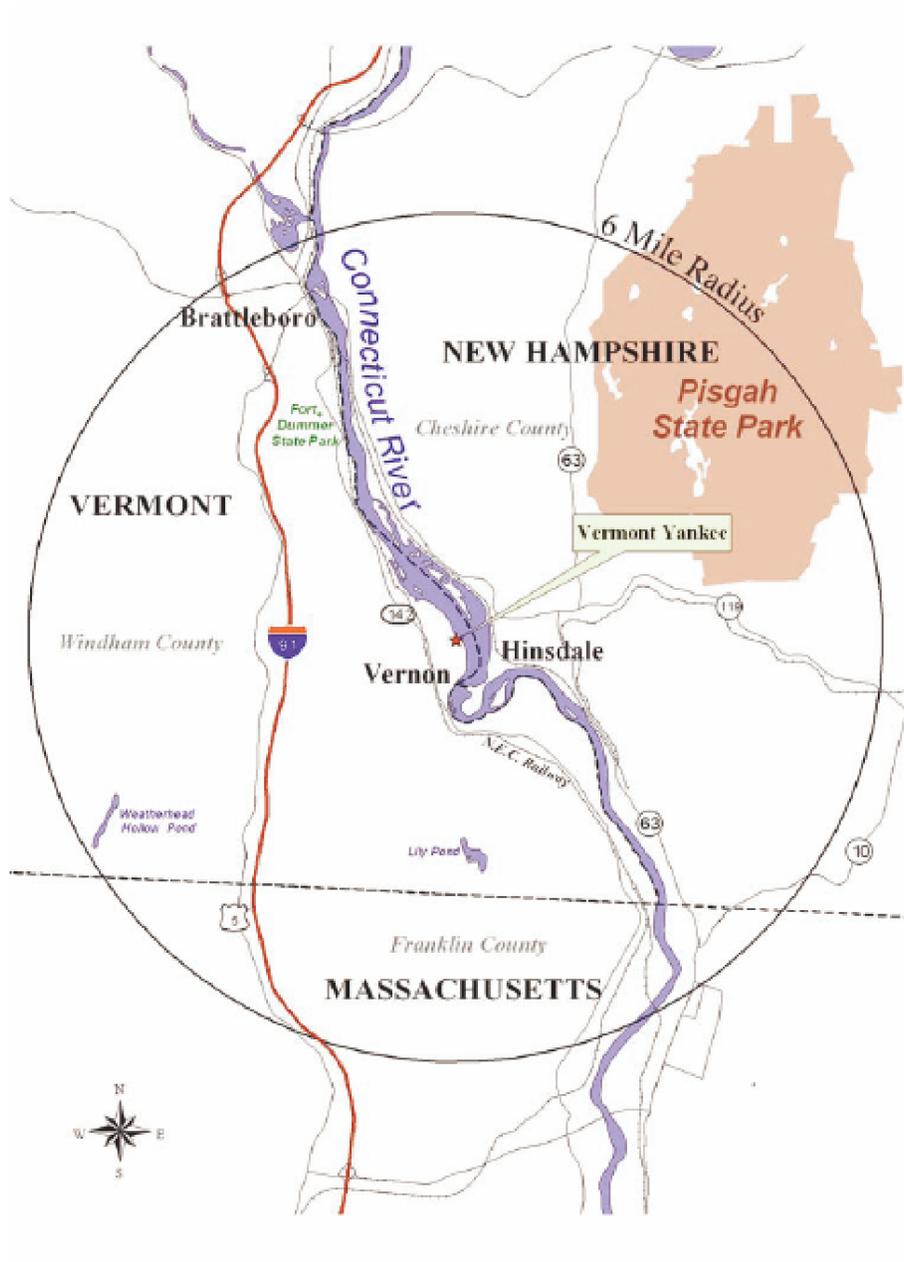
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