

June 9, 2006

Ms. Patricia Kurkul
Regional Administrator
NOAA Fisheries Service
Northeast Regional Office
One Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2237

SUBJECT: REQUEST INITIATION OF AN ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT CONSULTATION
REGARDING LICENSE RENEWAL OF OYSTER CREEK NUCLEAR
GENERATING STATION (TAC NO. MC7625)

Dear Ms. Kurkul:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff has completed the enclosed draft Supplement 28 to NUREG-1437, "Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants" (GEIS), to evaluate the proposed renewal of the Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station (OCNGS) operating license for a period of an additional 20 years. The Supplement Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) evaluates the proposed action of license renewal for OCNGS, and in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the NRC is requesting initiation of an Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) consultation regarding this proposed action of license renewal. The NRC's EFH Assessment for license renewal of OCNGS is included in Appendix E of the enclosed draft SEIS.

OCNGS is located in Lacey Township in Ocean County, New Jersey. OCNGS employs a once-through heat dissipation system designed to remove waste heat from the condensers. The circulating water system includes the intake canal, an intake structure divided into two bays, circulating water pumps, condensers, dilution pumps, discharge pipes, and the discharge canal. An angled boom in the intake canal is immediately in front of the circulating water intake preventing large mats of eelgrass and algae from clogging the intake system. The purpose of the dilution pumps is to decrease the attractiveness of the heated discharge to the migratory marine species during the spring and fall, and to reduce thermal stress on the organisms in the discharge canal during the summer. Barnegat Bay is the plant's cooling water source and heat sink. Cooling water is drawn from Barnegat Bay through the South Branch of Forked River and into a 150-foot-wide intake canal dredged to a depth of 10 feet. The heated circulating water is returned to the 150-foot-wide discharge canal, which also receives dilution water at ambient temperature; the water then flows to Oyster Creek and back to Barnegat Bay. Depths in the South Branch of the Forked River, canals, and lower reaches of Oyster Creek are maintained by periodic dredging.

As described in the EFH Assessment, the NRC staff identified species that have EFH designated in the vicinity of OCNGS. Further, the NRC staff identified 14 Federally managed species with designated EFH that may be affected by the proposed action. The evaluation in the EFH Assessment concludes that no adverse impact is expected to occur as a result of

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OCNGS operations for 1 species, and the remaining 13 species could experience a minimal adverse effect on their EFHs. Although once-through cooling systems are thought to have a substantial adverse effect on EFH due to the withdrawal of water, the NRC staff has determined that continued operation of the OCNGS cooling system, with its existing mitigation measures, is expected to have a minimal adverse effect on EFH.

We are requesting initiation of an EFH consultation. In reaching our conclusion, the NRC staff relied on information provided by the applicant, on research performed by NRC staff, and on information from National Marine Fisheries Service. If you have any questions regarding the enclosed draft SEIS, the EFH Assessment in Appendix E of the SEIS, or the staff's request, please contact Dr. Michael Masnik, Senior Environmental Project Manager, at 301-415-1191 or by e-mail at mtm2@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Frank Gillespie, Director
Division of License Renewal
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-219

Enclosure:
As stated

cc w/encl: See next page

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Frank Gillespie, Director
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Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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Adams Accession Nos.:

1. Ltr. To P. Kurkul w/Svc. List: ML
2. Draft Supplemental 28 to NUREG-1437 "Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants" (GEIS): ML
3. Pkg.: ML

Document Name:E:\Filenet\ML061500192.wpd

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