

October 12, 2006

Dr. W. Ray Luce, Division Director and Deputy SHPO
State Historic Preservation Officer
Historic Preservation Division
Department of Natural Resources
34 Peachtree Street, NW Suite 1600
Atlanta, GA 30303-2316

SUBJECT: EARLY SITE PERMIT (ESP) REVIEW FOR THE VOGTLE ESP SITE

Dear Dr. Luce:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff is reviewing an application for an early site permit (ESP) to set aside a site for the potential future construction of one or more new nuclear power plants. The NRC staff is currently seeking information from consulting parties, and other individuals and organizations likely to have knowledge of, or concerns with, historic properties in the area, to identify issues relating to the proposed undertaking's potential effects on historic properties.

If built, the new unit(s) would be located adjacent to the existing Vogtle Electric Generating Plant (VEGP) site, which is located on a Coastal Plain bluff on the southwest side of the Savannah River in eastern Burke County, Georgia. The application for an ESP was submitted by Southern Nuclear Operating Company (Southern), on August 15, 2006, pursuant to NRC requirements at Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR) Part 52. The application is available through the web-based version of the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System which can be found at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>. The application is listed under accession number ML062290248.

As part of its review of the application, the NRC staff will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) under the provisions of 10 CFR Part 51, which sets forth the NRC rules that implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. In accordance with 36 CFR 800.8, the NRC staff is using the NEPA process to comply with the obligations imposed under §106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (NHPA). Accordingly, the staff has identified parties who may wish to consult with the staff in this regard and invited them to consult with the NRC staff on this matter. Consultation will include participation in the scoping process; identification of historic properties on the Vogtle ESP site; assessment of the effects of the proposed action on any historic properties identified; and development of alternatives and proposed measures that might avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse effects of the proposed action on historic properties. As set forth more fully below, you are invited to consult with the NRC staff regarding the proposed action.

If approved, the ESP would not authorize the applicant to begin construction of the unit(s). However, in its review the NRC staff will evaluate the environmental impacts of construction and operation and will also consider alternatives, including alternative sites.

Southern has also included a site redress plan in its application in accordance with 10 CFR 52.17(c) and 52.25. If a site redress plan is incorporated in an ESP approved by the NRC, the applicant may carry out certain site preparation and limited construction activities. Southern would still be required to obtain the appropriate local, State, and other Federal permits required for these activities prior to starting work.

In the context of the NHPA, the NRC staff has determined that the area of potential effect for this ESP review is the area at the power plant site and its immediate environs, which may be impacted by land-disturbing activities associated with the construction and operation of the new unit(s), and construction and operation of new transmission lines that may parallel some of the existing transmission line systems now serving VEGP. The new units would utilize the new line or some combination of new and existing lines. The probable route of the new line will be to an existing substation. The specific route of a proposed line has not been determined; however, it will be routed northwest from the VEGP site, passing west of Fort Gordon, a U.S. Army facility west of Augusta, Georgia, then north to an existing substation. The power plant site is located in Burke County, Georgia, and the transmission line corridors traverse Jefferson County, Warren County, McDuffie County, and has not identified any conflicts, zoning or otherwise, that would preclude construction of a transmission line.

In its application, Southern refers to a comprehensive cultural resource and historic property investigation that was performed prior to the construction of VEGP. Southern further states that any issues that were raised were resolved through removal of these historic and cultural resources. No historic standing structures have been identified within the Southern ESP power block footprint, cooling tower footprint, or within the immediate vicinity of VEGP. The applicant has committed to perform further evaluation to determine if additional archaeological review is required if additional area within the ESP site is developed.

We invite you and your staff to participate in the review of the VEGP ESP application. We will also be contacting any Native American Tribes that may have a potential interest in the proposed undertaking, affording them the opportunity to participate in this process and identify issues of concern to them. These tribes are being identified by records research with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, State and local governments, tribal organizations, and through other historical documentation.

On October 19, 2006, the NRC will conduct a public environmental scoping meeting from 7:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m., at the Augusta Technical College, Waynesboro Campus Auditorium, 216 Hwy 24 South, Waynesboro, GA 30830. You and your staff are invited to attend. To complete consultation under §800.8, the NRC staff will forward the draft EIS to the consulting parties for review and comment, and will address the comments in the final EIS. Your office will receive a copy of the draft EIS along with a request for comments after it is issued. This draft EIS will include identification of historic properties, assessment of impacts, and our preliminary determination. The anticipated publication date for the draft EIS is July 2007.

W. Luce

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If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact the Environmental Project Manager for the VEGP ESP project, Mark Notich at 301-415-3053 or Cristina Guerrero at 301-415-2981. You may also e-mail us at mdn@nrc.gov or cxg3@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Christopher Nolan, Branch Chief
Division of New Reactor Licensing
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Project No. 737

cc: See next page

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DOCUMENT NAME: C:\FileNet\ML062850020.wpd

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