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UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

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July 3, 2006

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FROM: William M. Dean 
Assistant for Operations, OEDO

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE GLOBAL NUCLEAR ENERGY PARTNERSHIP (GNEP)

The staff met with Department of Energy staff on June 27, 2006, and were informed of a change in the approach to the GNEP program. The enclosure provides a summary of the meeting.

Enclosure: As stated

- cc: L. Reyes, EDO (w/o enclosure)
- M. Virgilio, DEDMRS (w/o enclosure)
- W. Kane, DEDR (w/o enclosure)
- J. Silber, DEDIA (w/o enclosure)
- W. Dean, AO (w/enclosure)
- T. Bergman, OEDO (w/o enclosure)
- A. Mauer, OEDO (w/enclosure)
- P. Yadav, NMSS (w/o enclosure)
- SECY (w/enclosure)
- OGC (w/enclosure)
- OCA (w/o enclosure)
- OPA (w/o enclosure)
- OIP (w/o enclosure)
- OIS (w/o enclosure)
- CFO (w/o enclosure)
- EDO R/F (w/enclosure)

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DOE MEETING SUMMARY

NMSS/FCSS, NSIR, and OIP staff met with Department of Energy (DOE) staff on June 27, 2006, and were informed of a change in the approach to the GNEP program. DOE indicated a shift in approach from working entirely with DOE labs to working more with industry to accomplish the GNEP goals, and proceeding directly to commercialization where possible. DOE indicated that it plans to issue several documents soliciting industry participation in the design and operation of demonstration or commercialization GNEP facilities, rather than DOE specifying the design and contracting for the design and operation of the three demonstration facilities it plans to build over the next several decades (spent fuel separations Engineering Scale Demonstration [ESD], advanced fuel cycle facility [AFCF], and advanced burner test reactor [ABTR]).

DOE plans to (1) issue a Financial Opportunity Announcement indicating the availability of funds to support industry endeavors (\$20 million total, \$5 million per site, as discussed in the Energy Policy Act); (2) solicit Expressions of Interest (EOI) from private companies interested in designing, building, and operating an Advanced Burner Reactor (i.e, commercial scale); and (3) solicit Expressions of Interest from private companies interested in designing, building, and operating an Integrated Fuel Recycling Center, including an ESD and an AFCF.

DOE indicated a potential result from this shift in focus could be an acceleration of the schedule from current plans.¹ Furthermore, if the separation, fuel cycle, and/or burner reactor facilities are operated by commercial entities, NRC would need to develop the regulatory infrastructure for licensing the facilities much sooner than if the facilities were DOE operated (based on existing legislation). The staff believes that if the GNEP program does change in this manner, significant resources may be needed earlier than previously envisioned. Staff will closely follow the results of the EOIs and attend scoping meetings for DOE's Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to understand and update projections for resources needed to support the GNEP program.

¹DOE's current schedule is ESD 2011 to 2015, AFCF 2016 to 2019, ABTR 2014 to 2019, ABR 2025 to 2030.