



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
 NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
 NORTHEAST REGION
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Chief, Rules and Directives Branch
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 US Nuclear Regulatory Commission
 Washington, DC 20555-0001

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 72 FR 45075
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RULES AND DIRECTIVES
 BRANCH
 USMPC

Re: 72 FR45075-6 (August 10, 2007)

To Whom It May Concern: These comments are submitted by the Protected Resources Division (PRD) of NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regarding the application for renewal of Facility Operating Licenses DPR-26 and DPR-64 for an additional 20 years of operation at Indian Point Nuclear Generating Unit Nos. 2 and 3. A request for comments related to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and conduct the scoping process pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was published in the Federal Register on August 10, 2007.

A population of federally endangered shortnose sturgeon (*Acipenser brevirostrum*) occurs in the Hudson River. Additionally, Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*) are also present in the Hudson River. Atlantic sturgeon are considered a Candidate Species as NMFS has initiated a status review for this species to determine if listing as threatened or endangered under the ESA is warranted. A status review report was completed by the status review team in February 2007. NMFS is currently reviewing the report and other available information to determine if listing under the ESA is warranted. A listing determination, and, if listing is warranted, any accompanying proposed rule(s), is expected to be published by NMFS in 2008. If it is determined that listing is warranted, a listing determination and final rule listing the species could be published within a year from the date of publication of the listing determination or proposed rule. The Status Review report is available at: http://www.nero.noaa.gov/prot_res/CandidateSpeciesProgram/AtlSturgeonStatusReviewReport.pdf. NMFS has several concerns regarding the potential for the continued operation of the Indian Point facility to affect sturgeon. NMFS' primary concern is the likelihood of impingement of

SONSI Review Complete
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sturgeon on screens or racks at plant intakes. Information provided in the application by Dynegy for an Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 10(a)(1)(B) permit for their Roseton and Danskammer plants indicated that from 1972-1998, 37 shortnose sturgeon were impinged at Indian Point Unit 2 and from 1976-1998, 26 shortnose sturgeon were impinged at Indian Point Unit 3. It is NMFS understanding that no monitoring of the intakes has occurred since screening and a fish return system were installed in 1998. While the screening and fish return system were designed to minimize entrainment and reduce the levels of injury and mortality associated with impingement, no studies have been conducted to demonstrate the effectiveness of these systems for sturgeon. While NMFS has no information on likely impingement rates since 1998, we also have no information that suggests it no longer occurs. Shortnose sturgeon impinged on intake screens or racks experience high levels of injury and/or mortality.

Sturgeon yolk sac larvae (YSL) and post yolk sac larvae (PYSL) have been documented in the vicinity of Indian Point. Given that two distinct distributions of YSL and PYSL have been identified in the river (above RM 120 and RM 48 to 110), it is assumed that the larvae in the lower river grouping are Atlantic sturgeon. As such, entrainment is a significant concern for Atlantic sturgeon in this area of the river.

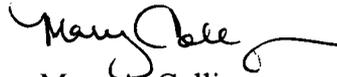
The best available information suggests that unauthorized take (as defined in Section 9 of the ESA) has occurred in the past at the Indian Point facility and may continue to occur. Additionally, Atlantic sturgeon eggs and/or larvae are likely to be present in this region of the river and may be subject to entrainment in the facility's intakes. Both shortnose and Atlantic sturgeon may also be affected by the discharge of heated effluent, chlorine, and other pollutants or antifouling agents.

Section 7(a)(2) of the ESA states that each Federal agency shall, in consultation with the Secretary, insure that any action they authorize, fund, or carry out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of a listed species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat. Any discretionary federal action that may affect a listed species must undergo section 7 consultation. The relicensing of Indian Point by the NRC is a federal action that will require section 7 consultation. If it is determined through consultation between the NRC and NMFS that the action is likely to adversely affect any listed species (i.e., if any adverse effect to listed species may occur as a direct or indirect result of the proposed action or its interrelated or interdependent actions, and the effects are not: discountable, insignificant, or beneficial) then a formal consultation, resulting in the issuance of a Biological Opinion and accompanying Incidental Take Statement would be required.

Any NEPA documentation prepared by NRC relating to the relicensing of this facility should contain an assessment of the facility's impact on shortnose and Atlantic sturgeon. Additionally, NMFS expects the NRC to initiate section 7 consultation with NMFS on the effects of the proposed action on listed species. In order to conduct a consultation, NMFS will need a complete project description and a complete assessment of the facility's impacts on listed species. NMFS expects that this assessment will include an estimate of the number of shortnose sturgeon likely to be impinged and/or entrained at the facility's intakes over the life of the proposed 20 year license. This information should be submitted to NMFS along with a request for concurrence with NRC's determination of effects and justification for that determination.

My staff looks forward to working cooperatively with the NRC during the relicensing process. Should you have any questions regarding shortnose sturgeon or the section 7 process in general, please contact Pat Scida, Endangered Species Coordinator (978-281-9208 or Pasquale.Scida@noaa.gov). For questions specific to Atlantic sturgeon, please contact Kim Damon-Randall, Proactive Conservation Program Coordinator (978-281-9300 x6535).

Sincerely,



Mary A. Colligan
Assistant Regional Administrator
for Protected Resources

Cc: Nash, NRC
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