



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

July 15, 1996

Ms. Sarah Devereaux
26098 Dumont Road
Hemet, California 92544

Dear Ms. Devereaux:

I am responding to your letter (unsigned) of February 9, 1996, addressed to President Clinton, which the White House forwarded to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for reply. In your letter, you requested information about the amount of time required to complete the Watts Bar Nuclear Plant (WBNP) and noted that at the time of your letter WBNP was not yet in commercial operation. You also requested information on who pays for the plant and who designed the WBNP.

The construction permit for WBNP was issued on January 23, 1973, and the application for an operating license (OL) was submitted to NRC by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) on September 27, 1976. NRC completed the OL review and granted the full-power OL on February 7, 1996. TVA declared the plant to be in commercial operation as of May 27, 1996. Irrespective of the amount of time that had transpired, the NRC staff could not issue the OL until it could reach a finding that TVA had met all applicable NRC regulatory requirements and there was reasonable assurance that the plant could be operated safely. Thus, the operating license was not issued until concerns could be resolved and those findings reached. The results of the safety review by the NRC staff are documented in the NRC's report, NUREG-0847, "Safety Evaluation Report (SER) related to the operation of Watts Bar Nuclear Plant, Units 1 and 2," and Supplements 1 through 20 thereto. We believe that the enclosed Supplement No. 17, which presents a summary and assessment of the quality of construction, operational readiness and quality assurance effectiveness during approximately the last 10 years, is responsive to your interest in the time it took to complete WBNP Unit 1. With the resolution of the remaining concerns, the NRC staff concluded in Supplement 20 that all applicable regulations and guidance, as stated in the SER and the supplements thereto, had been met and that findings from all applicable inspections were satisfactory. Accordingly, a full-power OL issued on February 7, 1996.

The NRC's authority for regulatory activities associated with WBNP is defined by statute and is principally concerned with establishing that there is reasonable assurance that the plant can be operated safely. The concerns you raised in your letter about the cost of the plant and who pays this cost are outside NRC's jurisdiction authorized by the statutes, and we make no comment on them.

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Ms. Sarah Devereaux

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In response to your question on the design of the plant, WBNP was designed and constructed by TVA and is also operated by TVA. The plant utilizes a pressurized-water reactor nuclear steam supply system furnished by the Westinghouse Electric Corporation. The plant is similar to several other previously constructed and operated nuclear power plants. We have no information that suggests that the plant design itself is inherently "delay-prone" as mentioned in your letter.

I trust that this information is responsive to your concerns.

Sincerely,
Original signed by

Steven A. Varga, Director
Division of Reactor Projects - I/II
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure: NUREG-0847, Supplement No. 17

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FROM: DUE: 07/15/96 EDO CONTROL: GT96477
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FINAL REPLY:

Sarah Devereaux
(6/14/96 White House Referral)

TO:

NRC

FOR SIGNATURE OF :

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CRC NO: 96-0679

Russell

DESC:

Q'S RE WATTS BAR

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DATE: 06/28/96

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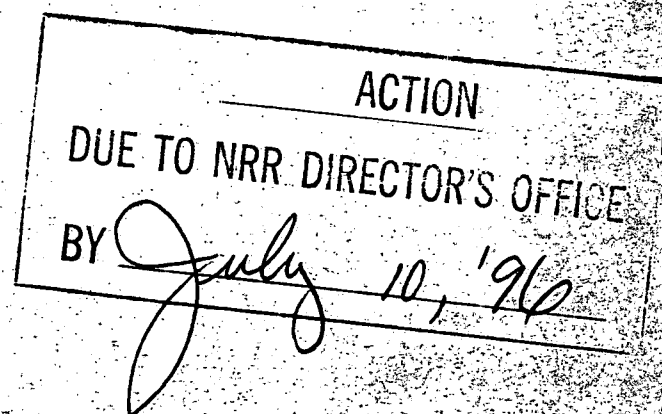
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AUTHOR: SARAH DEVERAUX
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