50-390/391

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

January 25, 1995

Dr. Lee A. Barclay, Supervisor
Ecological Services Office
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
446 Neal Street
Cookeville, Tennessee 38501

SUBJECT: WATTS BAR NUCLEAR PLANT BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Dear Dr. Barclay:

By letter dated October 28, 1994, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff transmitted its biological assessment concerning the environmental impacts of commercial operation of Watts Bar Nuclear Plant (WBN) on seven aquatic and terrestrial species listed as endangered by the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that are known to occur on or near the WBN site. These include four species of freshwater mussels, the snail darter, the bald eagle, and the gray bat.

The biological assessment also identified three additional aquatic species known to occur on or near the WBN site that have been designated as active candidates (Candidate Category 2) by FWS under the ESA. These were a mussel, the Tennessee clubshell (Pleurobema oviforme), a fish, the blue sucker (Cycleptus elongatus), and an amphibian, the eastern hellbender (Cryptobranchus a. alleghaniensis).

The biological assessment was jointly prepared by Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and NRC and supported both agencies' conclusion that operation of WBN is not likely to affect individuals or populations of any of the Federally-listed or candidate species or their critical habitat.

Although not mentioned in the biological assessment, the staff and TVA are aware of another candidate species, the pyramid pigtoe mussel (Pleurobema rubrum [=pyramidatum]), that also occurs in the Tennessee River near WBN. It is the position of both agencies that the conclusions in the biological assessment apply to the pyramid pigtoe as well as the three candidate species mentioned above.

The staff concludes that the presence of a fourth candidate species, the pyramid pigtoe, that was not mentioned in the biological assessment, does not alter the conclusion that operation of WBN is not likely to affect individuals or populations of any of the Federally-listed or candidate species or their critical habitat. We would be interested in receiving your views on this matter.

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If you have any questions about the information in the biological assessment or in this letter, please call James H. Wilson, (301) 504-1108 or Scott C. Flanders, (301) 504-1172.

Sincerely,

Original Signed By
WILLIAM T. RUSSELL

William T. Russell, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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*See previous concurrence

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