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COMMENT AT NRC MEETING IN BAY CITY RE STP EXPANSION

My name is Venice Scheurich. I am Conservation Chair of the Coastal Bend Sierra Club, and in that role I often write or speak on behalf of that organization. However, the following comments are personal: My husband and I own land in two nearby counties, Karnes and DeWitt. Most of you probably know that Karnes County has a long and sad history of environmental degradation due to uranium mining. In neighboring DeWitt County, companies are beginning to show an interest in leasing land for uranium exploration. Because company representatives are making an effort to convince landowners that America needs locally mined uranium to supply existing and soon- to- be built nuclear power plants, my husband and I have followed closely the debate of the advantages and disadvantages of the resurgence of uranium mining and nuclear power plant expansion.

We have several major concerns, most of which have been or will be effectively expressed by others speaking here today. However, there are two areas of concern to us on which I wish to place additional emphasis:

1. It has long been common knowledge that vast amounts of water are required for cooling nuclear reactors. For example, of the 12,200 acres containing the current South Texas Nuclear Project, 7,000 of these acres (over 57%) comprise the reservoir needed for the cooling water. However, if it is common knowledge, we have not found how much of this water is lost to evaporation and how much more water might need to be diverted into the reservoir if STP expansion is approved. Further, in researching in-situ uranium mining, we have discovered that that activity also requires enormous amounts of groundwater during the mining process and that there is a high likelihood that the mining will contaminate portions of the Gulf Coast Aquifer. For example, the company which has applied for a permit to mine in Goliad County, about 100 miles west of here, will need 72,000 gallons of water a day during mining and additional vast amounts when restoration (which probably won't be possible) is attempted.

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2. It has also long been common knowledge that there are health and safety concerns associated with the production of nuclear power. We all know there are huge quantities of nuclear waste produced for which there is no satisfactory storage solution, and there are documented accidents resulting in contamination due to leakages. However, what may not be such common knowledge is that just two months ago, a large-scale, carefully conducted study concluded: "Our study confirmed that in Germany a connection has been observed between the distance of a domicile to the nearest nuclear power plant...and the risk of developing cancer, such as leukemia, before the fifth birthday." The study was conducted by the German Register of Child Cancer, an office which is funded by the 16 German states and the Federal Health Ministry. Among several alarming and unexplained findings was that 37 children living within 3 miles of nuclear power plants had come down with leukemia between 1980 and 2003, whereas the statistical average for Germany would have predicted just 17 cases in that group. Of course, additional research, which takes time, must be done to determine whether proximity to nuclear plants was a factor in causing the high number of cases. At this time, scientists can only conclude that this is just "another piece in a growing puzzle" of childhood leukemia's association with nuclear installations and they emphasize the need to keep investigating. We all know that there are risks to almost everything we do in life and that there is no escaping some hazards. However, in the case of granting nuclear power plant expansion, the risk is too high.

Given that some health and safety risks are so high, and given that viable renewable energy alternatives such as geothermal, wind, and solar can be rapidly developed to safely meet our energy needs, my husband and I strongly object to one additional drop of our precious Texas water being used to expand the South Texas Nuclear Project.



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