

Background and Summary of December 6, 2007 Public Meeting on Enhancing the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the NRC Environmental Review Process

In November 2006, Commissioner Merrifield led a task force, the Combined License Review Task Force, to explore further efficiencies in the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC's) review of new reactor license applications pursuant to 10 CFR Part 52. This task force looked not only at the environmental review process but also the technical and adjudicatory review processes and provided options and recommendations for process improvements. These recommendations were summarized in a report dated April 2007. One of the recommendations made in the April 2007 report was that the staff should create an Environmental Review Working Group comprised of senior NRC staff. A copy of the report (accession number ML071090128) is available electronically for public inspection in the NRC Public Document Room or from the Publicly Available Records (PARS) component of NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS). ADAMS is accessible from the NRC web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html> (the Public Electronic Reading Room).

In a Staff Requirements Memorandum (SRM) dated June 2007 (ADAMS Accession Number ML071760109), the Commission responded to the recommendations made in the April 2007 report and did not approve the recommendation on creating an Environmental Review Working Group. Instead, the Commission stated that NRC staff should conduct a public meeting with industry representatives and other stakeholders to give the public and stakeholders an opportunity to present their views on how to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the environmental review process.

NRC staff held a Category 3 public meeting on December 6, 2007 (ADAMS Accession Number for meeting notice - ML073060584). The meeting included a roundtable consisting of representatives from NRC, Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of Energy (DOE), Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FLDEP), Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MD DNR), Greenpeace, Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL), Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), American Nuclear Society (ANS), and Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI). The meeting included a brief overview of the NRC environmental review process including previous and current improvement efforts. After formal presentations given by NRC staff (ADAMS Accession Number ML073410672), roundtable participants presented comments and suggestions on how to improve the environmental review process. Several of the roundtable participants submitted written documents as part of their presentation (ADAMS Accession Numbers ML073440155, ML073410673, and ML073521288). Following the roundtable discussion, members of the public were invited to provide comments. Approximately 70 individuals, including NRC staff and members from various federal, state, and local agencies, public interest groups, and industry groups, attended the meeting.

The meeting was transcribed and comments and suggestions made during the meeting were documented (ADAMS Accession Number ML073521491). NRC issued a brief

summary of the meeting dated January 7, 2008 (ADAMS Accession Number ML073521531). In addition, comments were welcomed via e-mail and regular mail through mid-January. NRC staff received additional comments during this comment period following the public meeting, including an email from a private citizen (ADAMS Accession Number ML080990640) and a letter from NEI (ADAMS Accession Numbers ML080290050 and ML080290053).

Since many of the comments were similar in nature, NRC staff categorized the comments into improvement areas. A large portion of the comments were suggestions that were made or considered by the Combined License Review Task Force. In addition, many of the comments were ones that NRC staff have considered and have already been addressing. NRC staff developed responses to all of the comments and incorporated those responses into the table in Enclosure 2.