



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Mississippi Field Office
6578 Dogwood View Parkway, Suite A
Jackson, Mississippi 39213
June 24, 2008

Mr. Richard Raione
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of New Reactors
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

Dear Mr. Raione:

Thank you for your May 29, 2008 letter concerning an application submitted by Entergy Operations Inc. (EOI) for a combined license (COL) for construction and operation of a new nuclear power plant at its Grand Gulf Nuclear Station (GGNS) site in Claiborne County, Mississippi. A power line associated with the nuclear power plant would extend from the GGNS to the Ray Braswell Substation in Clinton, Mississippi, thereby crossing three counties including Claiborne, Warren, and Hinds. As part of the review of the COL application, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) as required by Part 51 of the Code of Federal Regulations (10 CFR), the NRC's regulation that implements the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. To ensure compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the NRC requests current information on federally listed, proposed and candidate species, and critical habitat that may be in the vicinity of the GGNS site and associated power line. Your agency also requests that we provide any appropriate information under the provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act.

The following endangered or threatened species or their habitats could be found in the counties listed below. Our comments are provided in accordance with the Endangered Species Act (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661 – 667e).

Claiborne, Warren, and Hinds.

The federally listed threatened Louisiana black bear (*Ursus a. luteolus*) occurs primarily in bottomland hardwood and floodplain forests along the Mississippi River and the southern part of the state. Although the bear is capable of surviving under a range of habitat types, some necessary habitat requirements include hard mast, soft mast, escape cover, denning sites, forested corridors, and limited human access. Forest management practices, agricultural, commercial and industrial development, and highways can cause

adverse impacts to bear habitat by increasing human disturbance, fragmenting forests, and removing den trees.

Claiborne and Warren.

The endangered interior least tern (*Sterna antillarum*) migrates up the Mississippi River and lays its eggs directly on the sandbars associated with the river. Hundreds of these birds may nest together to form a colony. The breeding season for terns is approximately May through July. Avoidance of these areas during the above time would prevent adverse impacts to this species.

The endangered fat pocketbook mussel (*Potamilus capax*) is found in the Mississippi River and associated tributaries. It is a broad, rounded, and slightly angular mussel with a smooth, yellowish, and frequently clouded with brown, exterior color. Fat pocketbooks occur primarily in sand and mud substrates, although the species has been found in fine gravel and hard clay occasionally. Water depth ranges from a few inches to several feet. The fish host for this species is primarily the freshwater drum.

In addition, the endangered pallid sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus albus*) is found in the lower Mississippi River, although it is rare throughout its range. These fish require large, turbid, free-flowing riverine habitats, and feed mainly on other fish. They are usually found near the bottom of streams or lakes in sand flats or gravel bars. Little information is known on spawning or migration habits of these fish, although spawning likely occurs in the spring and summer months.

Claiborne and Hinds.

The threatened bayou darter (*Etheostoma rubrum*) is found only in Bayou Pierre and its tributaries, White Oak Creek, Foster Creek, and Turkey Creek. The darter prefers stable gravel riffles or sandstone exposures with large sized gravel or rock. Habitat loss or degradation has been a major contributor to the reduction in bayou darter numbers.

Statewide.

Although the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) was officially removed from the List of Endangered and Threatened Species as of August 8, 2007, it continues to be protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA). Bald eagles nest in Mississippi from December through mid-May in mature trees (e.g., bald cypress, sycamore, willow, etc.) near fresh to intermediate marshes or open water. Nest sites typically include at least one perch with a clear view of the water or area where the eagles usually forage. Bald eagles are vulnerable to disturbance during courtship, nest building, egg laying, incubation, and brooding.

The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) developed the National Bald Eagle Management (NBEM) Guidelines to provide landowners, land managers, and others with information and recommendations regarding how to minimize potential project impacts to bald

eagles, particularly where such impacts may constitute "disturbance," which is prohibited by the BGEPA. Should any of the proposed work activities be located near an active bald eagle nest, we recommend that construction activities be conducted in accordance with the Service's NBEM Guidelines (www.fws.gov).

The Service also note that the construction of the proposed power line corridor could result in the loss of 90 acres of high quality forested wetlands. We recommend measures such as drilling under the Big Black River or other streams be used to avoid the loss of wetlands. It is further recommended that a plan be developed and implemented to adequately mitigate wetlands losses that cannot be avoided.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide information for the SEIS for the new nuclear power plant at the GGNS site. Please let me know if we can be of further service.

Sincerely,



Lloyd E. Inmon

Environmental Contaminants Specialist