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Pages 1-19

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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PUBLIC MEETING TO DISCUSS THE

PRAIRIE ISLAND NUCLEAR GENERATING PLANT,

UNITS 1 AND 2, SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL

IMPACT STATEMENT RELATED TO LICENSE RENEWAL

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Held At The

Red Wing Public Library

225 East Avenue

Red Wing, Minnesota

On

Wednesday, December 16, 2009

6:30 p.m.

NRC PARTICIPANTS:

Michael Fuller, Moderator

Lance Rakovan

Elaine Keegan

Andy Imboden

Jeffrey Rikhoff

Allan Barker

Prema Chandrathil

Karla Stoder

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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

6:30 P.M.

1
2
3 MR. FULLER: Good evening. My name is
4 Mike Fuller. I'm a Project Manager at the Nuclear
5 Regulatory Commission, or NRC as you will hear it
6 referred to many times tonight. It is my pleasure to
7 be here to facilitate tonight's meeting along with my
8 colleague, Lance Rakovan. There is Lance. Our job
9 today is to hopefully help make this meeting as
10 worthwhile and productive as it can be.

11 We're here tonight to discuss the license
12 renewal process and, more specifically, the
13 environmental review process for Prairie Island
14 Nuclear Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2. We are here
15 more importantly, however, to hear from you. We're
16 here to receive your comments tonight.

17 Tonight's meeting will be divided into two
18 parts. First, we will have a presentation from NRC
19 staff on the license renewal process and the
20 environmental review process, sort of where we are and
21 what lies ahead for us.

22 We'll try to keep the first part of the
23 meeting, the presentation, fairly brief so that we can
24 get to the real reason we are here, and that is to
25 receive comments. We want to hear your comments

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1 regarding the draft Supplemental Environmental Impact
2 Statement that was issued in October.

3 When you arrived here tonight, you were
4 asked to fill out a yellow card or a blue card. The
5 yellow cards are for those of you who wish to speak
6 and provide us with your comments. This is important
7 because we are transcribing the meeting and we need to
8 make sure that we spell your name correctly, and if
9 you are representing an organization, we need to know
10 that information as well so we get that transcribed
11 correctly.

12 The blue cards are -- we ask that you fill
13 out the blue cards if you don't want to speak so that
14 we'll have an accurate record of who is here and so we
15 can have you on our mailing list for other documents
16 related to the renewal process and get those to you.

17 So far we don't have anyone here who has
18 filled out a yellow card, but we do have some if
19 someone wishes to make comments. We can get those to
20 you by just raising your hand.

21 As I mentioned before, this meeting is
22 being transcribed. In order to get a good
23 transcription, we're going to ask that everyone speak
24 into the microphone.

25 Now, we have a microphone up here at the

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1 podium which is where we'll ask people to come if they
2 want to make comments. We also have another remote
3 microphone that we can use if we need to bring it out
4 into the audience.

5 When you do make comments, we ask that you
6 identify yourself and also identify any group that you
7 might be representing when you speak. We also ask
8 that you keep side conversations to a minimum; and if
9 any of you haven't done so already, we would ask you
10 to please silence your cell phones at this time.

11 We also provided, and hopefully you picked
12 up, a feedback form. Now, this form is one that we
13 would like you to fill out and provide us with your
14 comments about how the meeting went this evening. Your
15 opinion on how the meeting went is very important to
16 us and will help us to improve future meetings such as
17 this.

18 That form can be handed to anyone here
19 that's with the NRC tonight or it can be mailed
20 postage free at your convenience, but we really would
21 like to have your feedback on how the meeting went.

22 I want to introduce one of our staff
23 members here who is going to make a brief
24 presentation, but before I do that, I want to say to
25 please hold any questions that you might have until

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1 the end of her presentation. That way, again, we can
2 make sure that everyone hears the questions.

3 At this time I want to introduce Elaine
4 Keegan. Elaine is a Project Manager and the lead for
5 the environmental review and has prepared some slides.

6 I'm also going to ask Elaine to introduce some of the
7 other NRC staff who are with us tonight.

8 And also, if you did not pick up a copy of
9 the presentation and you'd like one now, please raise
10 your hand and I'll make sure that I get that to you.

11 Okay. Elaine?

12 MS. KEEGAN: Thank you, Mike. Thank you
13 everybody for coming out tonight. I am Elaine Keegan.

14 I'm a Senior Project Manager in the Division of
15 License Renewal and Office of Nuclear Reactor
16 Regulation at the NRC.

17 First, I would like to introduce Andy
18 Imboden, who is the Chief of the Environmental Review
19 Branch; Jeff Rikhoff, who is a socioeconomist in
20 Andy's branch; Allan Barker, he's the Senior
21 Government Liaison Officer in our Region 3 office in
22 Chicago; and Chandra -- Prema Chandrathil -- I am so
23 worried about her name -- Prema Chandrathil, who is
24 with the Office of Public Affairs in our Region 3
25 Chicago office.

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1 I will provide a brief overview of the
2 license renewal process to date. I will talk a little
3 bit about the draft Supplemental Environmental Impact
4 Statement that was published in October of 2009. I
5 will tell you how to submit comments on the draft. And
6 as Mike said earlier, the main purpose is to get
7 public comments on the draft so we can make it the
8 best document we can.

9 NRC's regulatory oversight, the two
10 governing statutes are the Atomic Energy Act and
11 National Environmental Policy Act. The Atomic Energy
12 Act gives the NRC the authority to issue operating
13 licenses to commercial nuclear plants for 40 years.

14 The 40 years is based on economic
15 consideration and antitrust matters, not based on
16 safety or technical issues. The Atomic Energy Act
17 also gives the NRC the authority to renew the licenses
18 for 20 additional years.

19 The National Environmental Policy Act, or
20 NEPA, was established as the national policy for
21 considering the impact of federal decision-making on
22 environmental actions. An EIS, an Environmental
23 Impact Statement, is prepared for all major federal
24 action. License renewal is considered a major federal
25 action.

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1 License renewal consists of two concurrent
2 reviews. Northern States Power applied for a license
3 renewal in April of 2008. If the licenses are not
4 extended, Unit 1 expires August 9, 2013, and Unit 2 is
5 October 29, 2014.

6 The safety review looks at operational
7 safety aspects. It includes plants' aging management
8 program and also looks at operational experience.

9 The final Safety Evaluation Report was
10 published in October 2009. On December 3rd, the NRC
11 staff presented the findings to the Advisory Committee
12 on reactor safety. On December 10, the Advisory
13 Committee sent their letter to the commission giving
14 their acceptance of the staff's findings.

15 The environmental review basically starts
16 when a license application is received. The scoping
17 period begins shortly after the license application is
18 submitted. The scoping period is when the NRC is
19 looking for comments from the public on all the new
20 and significant information regarding the
21 environmental information that we are not privy to
22 since we're in D.C.

23 The staff's review resulted in the draft
24 Supplement 39 to the generic Environmental Impact
25 Statement for license renewal, which is NUREG-1437.

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1 The Prairie Island Indian Community is a
2 cooperating agency with our review. Their expertise
3 is in the area of historic and archeological
4 resources, socioeconomic, land use, and environmental
5 justice.

6 For the environmental review, in the
7 middle of the 1990s, to help improve the efficiency of
8 the license renewal process, the NRC performed a
9 generic assessment to look at what the environmental
10 impacts are of licensing plants.

11 92 issues were identified that were
12 important environmental issues. 69 of those issues
13 were considered to be generic across the board to all
14 nuclear plants. They are given the designation of a
15 category 1 issue. And essentially, it means that
16 unless there is new and significant information, not a
17 lot of additional information is reviewed for those
18 issues. 21 issues remained, plus, environmental
19 justice and electromagnetic fields are issues that
20 have to be evaluated on a site-specific basis.

21 Impacts are evaluated and quantified, and
22 these are the three designations; small, moderate and
23 large. For a full explanation of the areas that are
24 impacted by this and explained further, Appendix B to
25 Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 51,

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1 which is our environmental regulations, that specifies
2 all the issues and how they fit into these categories.

3 The decision standard for environmental
4 review is to determine whether or not adverse
5 environmental impacts of license renewal are so great
6 that preserving the option of license renewal for
7 energy planning decision-makers would be unreasonable.

8 Basically, all this is, is, is the renewal of the
9 operating license acceptable from an environmental
10 standpoint.

11 This slide shows some of the areas that
12 have been evaluated on a site-specific basis. Staff
13 also consulted with a number of federal and state
14 agencies. One of them was the U.S. Field and
15 Wildlife, Fish and Wildlife, whatever, and they did
16 provide the list of endangered and threatened species
17 for this area.

18 We looked at the cumulative impacts from
19 all the issues, because an issue considered by itself
20 may have a very small impact; but when it is evaluated
21 with the other issues, it could have a greater impact.

22 Staff looked at alternatives.
23 Alternatives include no action, which means the
24 license would be -- the licenses would not be
25 extended, that they would expire on the 2013 and 2014

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1 dates. We looked at alternative energy sources that
2 are listed, gas-fired generation at the plant site and
3 gas-fired generation at a different site, and then a
4 combination of alternatives, and it basically was
5 determined that the replacement power for the two
6 units could result in a moderate to large impact to
7 the environment.

8 These are the preliminary conclusions from
9 the draft Supplemental EIS, that the potential
10 environmental impact for license renewals are
11 basically small for the resource areas, and the
12 primary or the preliminary recommendation is that the
13 environmental impact of license renewal for Prairie
14 Island is not so great that license renewal would not
15 be unreasonable.

16 This gives a history of the milestones
17 that have been met to date. The comment period ends
18 on January 30, 2010. Once we get all the public
19 comments, we address them, we revise the Environmental
20 Impact Statement, as necessary, and we will issue the
21 final Supplemental EIS.

22 If you need additional information, the
23 phone number I can be reached at, my email address.
24 The draft can be viewed. There is a copy in the Red
25 Wing Library, and this link should work. We're hoping

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1 it does.

2 To submit comments on the draft, email to
3 prairieislandeis@nrc.gov or by mail to the Chief of
4 the Rule Making and Directives Branch. And like I
5 said, we will be addressing the comments, the comment
6 period ends January 30, 2010, and we appreciate your
7 comments. We look forward to them. And that's all for
8 me.

9 Mike?

10 MR. FULLER: Thank you, Elaine.

11 Before we get to the public comment part
12 of our meeting tonight, is there everyone who has any
13 questions for Elaine who would like any clarification
14 on anything that she went over during her
15 presentation? If you do, just raise your hand and
16 I'll bring you a microphone.

17 (No response.)

18 MR. FULLER: Okay. This brings us to our
19 public comment portion of our meeting, and this is
20 really the important part for us. The main reason
21 we're here tonight is to hear from you and to hear
22 your comments on the Supplemental Environmental Impact
23 Statement, and we ask that you keep those comments
24 focused on that particular issue.

25 And if you have any questions, we would be

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1 happy to answer any brief questions that you might
2 have; but if you want to get into any sort of
3 discussion, we would ask that you wait until the end
4 of the meeting and then find one of the NRC folks, and
5 we'll see if we can't take care of any other questions
6 that you might have.

7 So far tonight I have one person who has
8 indicated that they would like to make a comment. And
9 again, as I said earlier, if there is anyone else who
10 would like to make a comment, just raise your hand and
11 we'll get one of these yellow cards out to you.

12 But right now, I'd like to invite Michael
13 Schweyen.

14 MR. SWHWEYEN: It's Schweyen.

15 MR. FULLER: I'm sorry. Michael Schweyen
16 would like to make a comment. So Michael, if you
17 would, just come on up to the microphone. It's
18 important that -- as I stated earlier, it's important
19 that you speak into the microphone so that the person
20 who is transcribing this meeting can get your name and
21 everything accurately and also hear your comments
22 accurately.

23 I'd also ask that you state your name
24 because, obviously, I didn't do it perfectly. And
25 then if you have any affiliation, also let us know who

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1 you are representing. So thank you.

2 Michael?

3 MR. SCHWEYEN: Thank you. My name is
4 Michael Schweyen, spelled S-c-h-w-e-y-e-n; and my
5 family and I, we actually live in Rochester, so we
6 drove here tonight so that we can just learn more
7 about what's happening here and just to express an
8 opinion. So thank you for having the hearing tonight.

9 There is basically three comments I wanted
10 to make, and before I do those, I would say that,
11 Elaine, you mentioned the website or the NUREG on the
12 website. I tried to download it a couple times and I
13 never really did have luck, either because our
14 computer is too slow or the internet is too slow, but
15 it was frustrating to try and enter in that whole
16 website. And so it was not user friendly. But I'll
17 still have time to do that before the comment period
18 is over, so I have not had a chance to review it in
19 detail.

20 My three comments are that, first of all,
21 one of the reasons why we're here is because we do
22 feel that nuclear power is an option that needs to
23 stay strong in America because we need to have less
24 reliance on coal, and air pollution goes with it.

25 So I support the continued operation of

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1 the power plant here in Red Wing. We need to have
2 options because we face some serious issues
3 environmentally as time goes on.

4 Just a question, or not a question, but a
5 comment about reactor/plant safety. Again, I haven't
6 reviewed the EIS in detail, but when I studied Three
7 Mile Island, the operator error that happened there,
8 I'm sure or I would hope that the NRC and the
9 inspectors, you know, that that's a big emphasis is
10 training of the operators and running different
11 scenarios and just making sure that nobody is in there
12 that's not fully prepared.

13 My affiliation is with the Minnesota
14 Department of Transportation as a professional, but
15 I've also spent 10 years working for the United States
16 DOT, and we just -- you know, human factors are a big
17 issue. And human factors, probably more than anything
18 in terms of technical issues, can lead to an issue at
19 the plant.

20 And I've had some exposure limited to
21 plant evacuation procedures. Minnesota DOT would be
22 involved if there was some kind of incident, depending
23 on the plume that's involved or whatever would happen.

24 So I want to emphasize how important that is, and I'm
25 sure you've assessed that.

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1 The biggest reason that I'm here and the
2 thing I want to comment on is as part of the
3 environmental impact, you obviously assessed the fact
4 that the plant creates nuclear waste that has a
5 half-life of 10,000 years, and to me that's
6 phenomenal, you know, to create a product that lasts
7 that long. And to store it onsite here in dry casks,
8 I guess I'm comfortable with that as a person. I'm
9 sure that the engineering and the testing of the casks
10 is good.

11 What I'd like to comment about is Yucca
12 Mountain, and that is, what is the right thing to do
13 with this nuclear waste instead of just stacking it
14 out in the back lot?

15 Personally, as a citizen living in
16 Rochester who could be subject to something that might
17 happen here, you know, I'm not really worried about
18 the plant, I'm not really worried about the nuclear
19 waste, although, I don't know much about it. Whether
20 the casks can tip over or if somebody could throw a
21 hand grenade at them or if an earthquake could knock
22 them over, I'm not really concerned about that.

23 What I would say about Yucca Mountain is
24 that we need a better site. I'm frustrated that our
25 government has spent so much money and we still don't

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1 have a place to take the waste. And to approve an
2 Environmental Impact Statement to allow plants to
3 operate for another 20 years, at the same time
4 creating this waste that has a 10,000 year half-life
5 or whatever, to me is quite unbelievable.

6 So my biggest comment is that we need to
7 find a site somewhere in America, and Yucca Mountain I
8 think was selected, my opinion, based on political
9 reasons because it's a state that doesn't have much
10 population, doesn't have a lot of political clout; but
11 in the past few weeks, I did read an article by a
12 woman who is a national expert in nuclear waste, and
13 she said Yucca Mountain is not the right choice.

14 I realize it's a controversial topic and
15 everybody is going to have their own opinion, but
16 based on the geology of Yucca Mountain and what she
17 had to say, let's make a decision, let's quit wasting
18 the taxpayers' money, let's find the appropriate site
19 to store the nuclear waste.

20 Because if the nuclear plants continue to
21 operate, you know, obviously various plants that do
22 the underwater storage, they have to add on to just
23 keep storing this stuff under water. My opinion is
24 that it's safer to store all of it perhaps in one spot
25 deep underground than it is in all of these isolated

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1 spots if there is an issue of, I don't know, terrorism
2 or whatever.

3 But I just would like to see the
4 government really be honest with all of us about Yucca
5 Mountain, and if we're going to spend more money on
6 Yucca, let's finish the job, study it, make a
7 decision. And if we need to go somewhere else, let's
8 do that, but it just shouldn't go on forever. We're
9 wasting a lot of money and we need a place to put the
10 waste.

11 That concludes my comments.

12 MR. FULLER: Thank you. Now, that
13 concludes all of the comments that we were told
14 beforehand that would be made. But again, if there is
15 anyone here that would like to make a comment at this
16 time, please let me know and come on up.

17 (No response.)

18 MR. FULLER: Okay. If not, I'd like to
19 introduce Andy Imboden. He's the manager for the
20 folks that are conducting the environmental reviews,
21 and this would be an opportunity for him to make a few
22 comments.

23 MR. IMBODEN: Thanks, Mike. As Mike said,
24 my name is Andy Imboden. I'm chief of the
25 Environmental Review Branch in charge of environmental

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1 issues for all the operating reactors in the country.

2 The purpose of this meeting and the one
3 earlier in the afternoon was to collect comments on
4 the draft Environmental Impact Statement that we have
5 examining the license renewal of Prairie Island
6 Nuclear Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2.

7 We heard tonight and this afternoon from
8 folks at the Prairie Island Indian Community that are
9 600 yards away, folks from Red Wing, which is a few
10 miles away, and folks all the way from Rochester.

11 So that's good that we're all hearing
12 those comments, sharing our concern about the safe
13 operation of the plant, and a lot of important issues
14 were discussed now and prior in the afternoon: Human
15 factors analysis, waste generation, waste storage.
16 Very important considerations.

17 And so I thank everyone for commenting on
18 it, and I just wanted to reinforce that after this,
19 myself and other NRC staff are going to stay around
20 and answer any questions anyone may have. Thank you.

21 Mike?

22 MR. FULLER: Okay. Well, that sort of
23 concludes what we had hoped to accomplish tonight and
24 what we plan to do. Unless there are any other
25 questions or anything anybody needs, we'll go ahead

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1 and adjourn the meeting at this time, and thank you
2 all for coming.

3 (Whereupon, at 7:10 p.m. the proceedings
4 were adjourned.)
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