



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Assistant Secretary for Science and Technology
Washington, D.C. 20230

September 2, 1976

50-247



Mr. George W. Knighton, Chief
Environmental Projects Branch No. 1
Division of Site Safety
and Environmental Analysis
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555

Regulatory Docket File

Dear Mr. Knighton:

This is in reference to your draft environmental impact statement entitled, "Extension of Operation with Once-Through Cooling for Indian Point Unit Number 2." The enclosed comments from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are forwarded for your consideration.

Thank you for giving us an opportunity to provide these comments, which we hope will be of assistance to you. We would appreciate receiving ten (10) copies of the final statement.

Sincerely,

Sidney R. Galler

Sidney R. Galler
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Environmental Affairs



Enclosures -- Memo from: NOAA - National Marine Fisheries Service (8-24-76)
NOAA - Office of Coastal Zone Management (8-3-76)

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Northeast Region
Federal Building, 14 Elm Street
Gloucester, Massachusetts 01930

AUG 30 1976

DATE : August 24, 1976

TO : Director, Office of Ecology and Environmental Conservation, EE

THRU *for* *Robert h. Schuler* AUG 27 1976
Associate Director for Resource Management, F3

FROM : *for* William G. Gordon *Merwin F. Bousau*
Regional Director, FNE

SUBJECT: Comments on Draft Environmental Impact Statement--Extension of Operation with Once-Through Cooling for Indian Point Unit No. 2--NRC--DEIS #7607.19

The draft environmental impact statement for Extension of Operation with Once-Through Cooling for Indian Point Unit No. 2 that accompanied your memorandum of July 14, 1976, has been received by the National Marine Fisheries Service for review and comment.

The statement has been reviewed and the following comments are offered for your consideration.

General Comments

The proposal under consideration would serve to allow the applicant a period of two additional years to operate Indian Point Unit 2 in a once-through cooling mode. Of the several factors used to assess the impact of such a decision, the most notable expounded by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is the claim of no anticipated irreversible impact. Irreversible impact, however, is not the primary criterion in the decision-making process under Council of Environmental Quality guidelines nor the National Environmental Policy Act. What is of significance in the analyses presented by NRC is that delaying on-line operation of a closed-cycle cooling system for two additional years will result in impingement of more than two million fishes of screenable size, and that many more million larval and early juvenile stages of the same species will be entrained. While such impacts may not be irreversible, the ability to avoid them through closed-cycle operations, already required by the license, would be a significant factor in denying the time extension. We believe the species impacted by power plant operation on the Hudson River are similar to species impacted at other sites along the northeast coast due to once-through cooling. That closed-cycle cooling would significantly reduce the impacts under consideration, as well as those cumulatively impacting the resources of the region, is to us an issue not requiring further debate.

Specific Comments

Section 2.1.2.2 Aquatic Biota

Page 2-4, 4th and last paragraphs. We are not aware of conclusive evidence which demonstrates the species in question are not farther ranging than stated. A major point for debate remains relative to the striped bass and its contribution to the Atlantic fishery. Further, alewives, blueback herring, and American shad range far at sea, being distributed along the continental shelf.

Section 2.2.2.3 Closed-Cycle Cooling Systems

Page 2-7. It is our understanding that Indian Point Unit 1 will no longer be used for commercial operation. If so, 709 cubic feet per second (cfs) should be subtracted from the total flow of 969 cfs under conditions of Units 2 and 3 in a closed-cycle mode. In effect, once-through cooling for Units 2 and 3 would require 3876 cfs, while closed-cycle operations for these units would reduce the volume of cooling water withdrawn from the river to only 260 cfs (approximately 93.3% reduction), according to the data presented. In view of the substantial difference between the alternative modes of operation, certainly the magnitude of impingement and entrainment would be substantially reduced through the use of a closed-cycle cooling system.

Section 3.2 AQUATIC ECOSYSTEM

3.2.1 Introduction

Page 3-1, 2nd and last paragraphs. We suggest that a contradiction exists. The last sentence, penultimate paragraph, states that "...no measurable indirect effect on the fish populations dependent upon these lower trophic levels for food would be anticipated." The following paragraph indicates a local reduction of Neomysis standing crop could occur depending upon the position of the salt front, and "...could result in reduced growth and survival of striped bass and white perch young-of-the-year and of other fish species in this region of the river if alternative foods are not available in sufficient abundance." Neomysis is a dominant organism in the region of the Indian Point complex. If the species is impacted through entrainment the likelihood of an alternative, equally abundant food source being available seems remote. There could, therefore, be a resultant direct and/or indirect effect.

Section 3.2.4 Comparison of the 1973 and 1974 Data on Distribution and Abundance of Young-of-the-year Life Stages of Striped Bass and Other Fish Species in the Hudson River Estuary

Page 3-7, 1st paragraph. As stated, justification for the ongoing study program seems questionable. If, in fact, the decision to order closed-cycle

cooling was based upon data already available, and the ongoing studies will not provide the basis for a "quantum jump" in ability to forecast the impact of plant operation, why, then, delay closed-cycle cooling in order to complete ongoing studies? When the statements made in the paragraph referred to are compared with those in the last paragraph of the section on page 3-8, the positions appear to be wholly contradictory.

Section 4.1.1 Benefit of Preserving Options

Page 4-1, last paragraph. We question the argument that the two-year extension will allow the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) time to arrive at a decision following hearings on the subject of closed-cycle cooling. The argument suggests to us that the NRC's decision is not binding, nor does it have relevance to the issue. Is the EPA the final decision-maker in this instance? Which agency would make the final determination in the hypothetical case of the NRC not agreeing with an EPA decision or vice versa? Both the NRC and the EPA have determined closed-cycle cooling is the preferred mode of operation on environmental grounds. If each agency were to withhold a final decision to allow the other to continue to explore issues, we envision that an endless process of review could result.

Section 4.2 COSTS

Page 4-2. We do not agree that impingement and entrainment of millions of aquatic organisms relates to a small cost. Furthermore, we anticipate the cost of constructing a closed-cycle cooling system two years after the date scheduled will be considerably more expensive in terms of today's dollars. Inasmuch as the power industry's arguments for plant construction frequently cite the increased cost of building if delayed, we believe similar arguments are applicable in this case of postponing construction for two years.

Section 5 ALTERNATIVES

5.2 GREATER OR LESSER EXTENSIONS OF TIME

Page 5-1. We suggest that the statements contained in this section represent the best argument against a time extension. Completion of studies "...would provide but one more data point..." nor will the studies "...further substantially improve the biological data base available to the Commission or any other parties." Why, then, is completion of studies, among other things, used for justification of the two-year extension? It seems that the statements contained in the penultimate paragraph of section 5.2 are contrary to those made in the last paragraph, section 3.2.5.1, page 3-8, already alluded to.

Section 6 EVALUATION

6.1 UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

See comments above for section 4.2 COSTS.

6.3 IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES

See comments above for section 4.2 COSTS.

Section 6.4 BENEFIT-COST BALANCE

6.4.1 Benefits

Page 6-1. This section implies that as long as the applicant believes future data will be favorable to its position, extensions of time will be forthcoming. Furthermore, the economic benefit of the proposed action should be stated.

Section 6.4.2 Costs

We believe the increased costs of constructing closed-cycle cooling facilities two years later than scheduled should be stated.

We appreciate the opportunity provided to review the DEIS and trust our comments will be helpful to the issue under consideration. We would like six copies of the final EIS, when issued.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Rockville, Md. 20852

Date: August 3, 1976

Reply to
Attn of: CZ6

Subject: DEIS 7607.19 - Indian Point Unit #2

AUG 5 1976

To: William Aron
EE

The Office of Coastal Zone Management did not find evidence that the document had been made available to the State of New York office responsible for development of the Coastal Zone Management Program, nor does it reflect an awareness of the Coastal Zone Management Program.

We suggest steps be taken to obtain New York State Office of Planning's memo and include a discussion of the relationship of the program to the State's developing coastal zone management program.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Phillip C. Johnson".

Robert R. Kifer
OCZM