

June 17, 2010

MEMORANDUM TO: Gregory Hatchett, Chief
Environmental Projects Branch 1
Division of Site and Environmental Reviews
Office of New Reactors

FROM: Mallecia Sutton, Project Manager/**RA**/
Environmental Projects Branch 1
Division of Site and Environmental Reviews
Office of New Reactors

SUBJECT: SUMMARY OF TELECONFERENCE CALLS HELD WITH THE
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES FOR
THE VOGTLE ELECTRIC GENERATING PLANT, UNITS 3 AND
4 ONSITE BACKFILL AMENDMENT

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL), a contractor of the NRC and Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GDNR) held four conference calls between May 26 and June 3, 2010, related to the additional onsite backfill for the proposed Vogtle Electric Generating Plant (VEGP), Units 3 & 4. The early site permit (ESP) was issued to Southern Nuclear Operating Company (Southern) on August 26, 2009. The NRC staff is preparing a supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) for the project. The dates, the purpose of the calls and with the participants are as follows:

5/26/2010 Participants: Matt Elliott (GDNR), Tom Patrick (GDNR), Mallecia Sutton (NRC), Mike Sackschewsky (PNNL), Amanda Stegen (PNNL).

Members of the NRC and GDNR staff's discussed the 267 acres Southern plans to clear for additional onsite backfill material – specifically, notices of intent (NOI) 28, 25 and part of 3. These areas were not analyzed in the Early Site Permit Environmental Impact Statement. The NRC staff forwarded GDNR a copy of the NOI map that depicts the areas that will be impacted for the additional backfill. The NRC staff discussion centered on the environmental impacts related to clearing these areas and the removal of backfill material to assist them in analyzing the impacts for the preparation of an environmental assessment (EA) associated with this action.

The NRC staff also discussed the state threatened Southeastern Pocket Gopher and the Sandhill Milkvetch that were identified in NOI 28. NRC staff asked GDNR about any general concerns with clearing the additional 267 acres, in terms of the state species and of habitat loss. Matt stated he would get back to the NRC staff by June 1, 2010, regarding habitat loss in the areas being cleared.

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NRC staff addressed relocation efforts regarding the Southeastern Pocket Gopher. Matt stated that Sharon Holbrook was working with Southern on this effort, but has since changed jobs and that Jim Ozier is now the contact for the Southeastern Pocket Gopher. Matt stated that across the state that Southeastern Pocket Gophers are more common in the southwestern part of the state. Additionally, he stated there are very few Pocket Gophers in the east fall line part of the state and VEGP is one of the few areas where they are found in Burke County. He mentioned that Fort Gordon has a few Pocket Gophers. He also stated that Pocket Gophers are very difficult to trap and the success Southern had with the trapping efforts on VEGP was notable.

The NRC staff and GDNR also discussed the relocation efforts of the Sandhill Milkvetch. Tom Patrick indicated that they had previously seen Sandhill Milkvetch in the northern part of the VEGP site, in an area just north of the power line. He thought that possibly John Jenkins (GDNR) was the biologist who found it. Tom pointed out that there are 22 historical records – but only 8-10 rediscovered – prior to 10 years. However, none of these populations were in Burke County. Populations in Richmond County disappeared long ago. Most of these known populations are in the southern part of the state and that Bruce Sorrie with the Nature Conservancy had completed surveys for the Milkvetch around 1992-93.

In addition, Tom stated that the Sandhill Milkvetch is a good indicator of a habitat that is still intact, as well as being an indicator of many good elements in the habitat. The species cannot withstand other disturbances and it doesn't disperse well. Usually populations are small with fewer than 20 individuals. He thought the plants could be trans-located. These plants have a large underground rhizome which led him to suggest that the best time to move the plants would be during the dormant period. Though he has not been directly involved with the relocation effort, he directed us to Lisa Kluse, who has been working with Bob Brinkeman (Southern), on relocating these plants.

6/1/10 Participants: Matt Elliott (GDNR), Mallecia Sutton (NRC), Nancy Kuntzleman (NRC), Mike Sackschewsky (PNNL), Amanda Stegen (PNNL)

During this conference call, Matt Elliott discussed habitat at the impacted locations. He presented overlaid aerial photos on the NOI areas that are going to be cleared for backfill. He stated that it was always better not to lose habitat; however, the habitat in the areas that would be impacted is marginal in comparison to habitat on the northern part of the site and that the habitat on the northern piece of the site is better in terms of quality. He also pointed out that the areas to be cleared are not critical to any species.

6/2/10 Participants: Lisa Kluse (GDNR), Mallecia Sutton (NRC), Nancy Kuntzleman (NRC), Mike Sackschewsky (PNNL), Amanda Stegen (PNNL)

Lisa Kluse indicated that Bob Brinkeman contacted GDNR looking for recommendations on how to protect the Sandhill Milkvetch. Bob worked with the Georgia Plant Conservation Alliance and GDNR to create and implement a relocation plan. She added that this was a voluntary effort by Southern in contacting GDNR for advice on how to protect the plant. Lisa thought the plan was thorough and that Bob had done his research into the best methods for relocation. Bob stated to Lisa that he will be collecting seed as part of the effort. Lisa and Bob are working together to determine the appropriate storage and collection methods. Lisa stated that given the biology of the plant, there is a possibility that all the plants will die when they are moved.

She also stated that before the plants at VEGP were found, there were only 22 historical populations and only eight have been seen in the past 20 years, adding that if all plants are lost from this site, it would be noticeable. However, she did state that even though it may be noticeable, there are other specimens of Sandhill Milkvetch on the VEGP site that will still remain. She also said that if the relocation effort is successful, it will be very notable.

Additionally, she stated that normally, Legumes on deep sandhill soil form a taproot that goes very deep over time and this can make them hard to move. These will be relocated in areas with a similar habitat signature but she is not aware of any Milkvetch in the relocation area. She was also not aware of any fencing to protect the plants at the relocation area.

6/3/10 Participants: Jim Ozier (GDNR), Mallecia Sutton (NRC), Nancy Kuntzleman (NRC), Amanda Stegen (PNNL)

NRC staff talked to Jim Ozier about the status of the Southeastern Pocket Gopher in Burke County and in the state of Georgia. He directed the staff to the 2008 "Survey of the Current Distribution of the Southeastern Pocket Gopher in Georgia." This report contains information of the occurrences around the VEGP site. Jim informed NRC staff that he has received e-mails from Bob Brinkeman regarding relocation efforts of the Pocket Gopher. He thought that Southern had tried to trap gophers on one occasion since the original trapping effort but they had been unsuccessful. Jim thought it may be due to the warmer weather and the gophers becoming less active. He thought Southern was going to try one more time to trap the gopher. He noted that trapping gophers is very difficult. He stated that the GDNR had led an effort in Taylor County to try and trap Pocket Gophers on private land and relocate them on public land deemed suitable for Pocket Gophers but there were no populations there and after many unsuccessful efforts and many man-hours, they were able to trap only one gopher.

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Docket Nos.: 52-025 and 52-026

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Memo to G. Hatchett from M. Sutton June 17, 2010

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