

**U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Public Meeting for the Vogtle Combined Operating License
Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement
October 7, 2010 -- Augusta Technical College, Waynesboro Campus
Public Comments from Southern Alliance for Clean Energy**

Good evening. My name is Sara Barczak. I am a program director with the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, a non-profit energy policy organization with members throughout Georgia and the region who are concerned about energy and the environment. Nearly four years have passed since the NRC held the first public scoping meeting for the proposed Vogtle expansion – that time it was for the early site permit licensing process. Since then many, many things have changed but strangely, much remains the same in terms of this project – regulators continue to have blinders on. We again believe that the NRC has failed to protect the public by recommending approval of Georgia Power and its utility partners' push to build two new reactors here in Waynesboro for an estimated \$14 billion price tag.

I mentioned four years ago that the issue of building more nuclear reactors at Plant Vogtle will affect not just this local community, but Georgia as a whole and our region overall and hoped that the NRC staff understood that it was important to do something that would benefit all—not just a select few. Sadly, that has not happened.

So what has changed since then? What has happened over these last four years? Many reactor proposals have fallen by the wayside, such as the most recent news by Progress Energy to perhaps abandon the new reactors in North Carolina. Costs have gone through the roof. New reactors proposed in Florida have more than tripled. In fact, in just over the course of one year Progress' estimate for the Levy County reactors sits at \$5 billion more than in 2009 – now \$22 billion overall – and with a five-year delay to boot.

Most astonishingly, *the AP1000 design still is not certified!* I think all of us vividly remember being told that having a certified design would make this process much smoother, save money and on and on. Well that hasn't happened and the most recent news is that Westinghouse has again missed another deadline. Yes, maybe eventually they'll get it together and the NRC will approve the design but it certainly has been a long and bumpy road.

Additionally, since four years ago the region suffered through a severe drought and the reliability of existing nuclear plants were tested – and there were failures then that have continued even through this year – the powering back or shutting down of TVA's Browns Ferry reactors along the Tennessee River in Alabama for example. And yet somehow the NRC is able to recommend approving the combined operating license (COL) for Vogtle even though the reactor design that Southern Company intends to build here has yet to be approved and water concerns remain and other issues are yet to be resolved.

What else has changed? Many things that the NRC doesn't really concern itself with but that are of utmost concerns to most citizens. For instance, Georgia Power ratepayers now are saddled with a bum deal that will cause their electric bills to go up come January when the Georgia legislature passed anti-consumer legislation in 2009 to help finance the new reactors. This nuclear power tax is a prepayment scheme that

takes money out of Georgian's pocketbooks today, instead of from the wallets of Southern Company's shareholders and the big industrials who managed to get exempted from this scheme, for something that may never come to fruition tomorrow – and there will be no rebate. And this all happened as the country is stuck in the middle of an historic recession that has devastated the economy, families and our overall future. And this recession has also impacted the fact that future energy projections have fallen putting projects such as this in serious question...but nothing in the draft report touches on these realities.

If Vogtle is abandoned Southern Company and its utility partners managed to also feed from the trough of the U.S. Treasury, which is ultimately the U.S. taxpayers' checkbook, by getting an \$8.3 billion conditional loan guarantee award from the Obama Administration that was awarded in February. All of us in this room could be on the hook financially for this boondoggle. That's what high paid lobbyists can get a giant corporation – assurance that all of the risks will be shouldered by some other unsuspecting soul – in this case, taxpaying Americans and hard working Georgians. No wonder Georgia utilities remain doggedly set on pushing the Vogtle reactors forward – they have very little in this game and are proposing a very risky project in a very regulatory friendly environment that is shrouded in secrecy.

I could go on about the fact that there are more cost effective, less water-intensive energy choices that would actually save money in the long run, keep money here at home and protect people's health and the environment such as energy efficiency and conservation and renewables including biopower, solar, and wind. But why bother as it falls upon deaf ears in terms of the NRC and I'm afraid other regulators overseeing this project? Let's face it. Georgia is using its natural resources, impacting its citizens' health, and allowing radioactive nuclear waste to pile up within its' borders to power other states' air conditioning units and to line Southern Company's shareholders' wallets.

Does the NRC even care that if Plant Vogtle is expanded¹ less water will be available in the Savannah River for other users both upstream and downstream? To put this consumptive water loss in perspective from Plant Vogtle, with average per capita daily water use in Georgia at 75 gallons from surface and ground water sources, this means the two existing and two proposed reactors could use enough water to supply 1.4 to 2.3 million Georgians.² Somehow the NRC thinks that is a 'small' impact. We disagree and we believe that the future communities upstream and downstream of the plant will vehemently disagree as climate change impacts are observed and droughts get longer and more severe and everyone is fighting over water. But it'll be too late by then.

In closing, we hope that the NRC and other regulators overseeing this project will step back and rethink all of this – will step back from all the hoopla surrounding this boondoggle and do what is best for the public and our natural resources and deny the license for the proposed Vogtle reactors. It is not fair for the power companies to be given the biggest straw to pull from our precious water resources and a blank check from our wallets. As I said four years ago, the future safety of not only this community, but many, many, others, are at stake. Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ Currently less than half of the more than 60 million gallons of water per day Plant Vogtle withdraws from the Savannah River is returned (between 34-43 mdg are lost to evaporation). The two proposed Westinghouse AP1000 reactors are estimated to use 55-88 million gallons of water per day from the Savannah River with 50-75% consumptive loss. To put this consumptive water loss in perspective, with average per capita daily water use in Georgia at 75 gallons from surface and ground water sources, this means the two existing and two proposed reactors could use enough water to supply 1.4 to 2.3 million Georgians.

² The average per capita daily water use in Georgia is 75 gallons from surface and ground water sources, <http://water.usgs.gov/watuse/tables/dotab.st.html>. Existing Vogtle nuclear reactors have similar water requirements. With water withdrawals for all 4 reactors (2 existing and 2 proposed) ranging from 110MGD to 178 MGD, that could mean the equivalent of 1.4-2.3 million residents.