

August 23, 2011

Mr. Richard Domingue
National Marine Fisheries Service
Hydropower Division
1201 NE Lloyd Blvd, Ste 1100
Portland, OR 97232-2182

SUBJECT: BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT FOR INFORMAL SECTION 7 CONSULTATION
AND REQUEST TO INITIATE ABBREVIATED EFH CONSULTATION
FOR LICENSE RENEWAL OF COLUMBIA GENERATING STATION
(TAC NO. ME3121)

Dear Mr. Domingue:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff has completed the enclosed draft Supplement 47 to NUREG-1437, "Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants," to evaluate the proposed renewal of Columbia Generating Station (CGS) operating license for a period of an additional 20 years. In accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA), the NRC's Biological Assessment for license renewal of CGS is included in Appendix D-1 of the enclosed draft supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS). Additionally, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, as amended through 2006 (MSA), the NRC requests to initiate abbreviated essential fish habitat (EFH) consultation per 50 CFR 600.920(h)(2) for the proposed CGS license renewal. The NRC's EFH Assessment is also in Appendix D-1 of the enclosed draft SEIS.

CGS is located in Benton County, Washington, 12.5 miles northwest of Richland. CGS is equipped with a closed-cycle heat dissipation system that withdraws makeup water from, and discharges that water to, the Columbia River from six mechanical draft cooling towers.

In a letter dated May 3, 2010¹, the NRC staff requested that your office of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) provide the NRC with information on Federally listed endangered or threatened, proposed, and candidate species as well as designated critical habitats and EFH in the vicinity of the project site. NMFS responded to the NRC's request in a letter dated June 23, 2010², which identified two Federally listed species near the CGS site: the Upper Columbia River spring Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) and the Upper Columbia River steelhead (*O. mykiss*). NMFS also noted that critical habitat for both species occurs within the proposed action area. Because the NRC did not prepare its biological assessment within the 180-day timeframe specified at 50 CFR 402.12(i), the NRC confirmed the accuracy of

¹ [NRC] U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. 2010. Letter from Pham B, Branch Chief, to Thom B, Northwest Regional Administrator, NMFS. Subject: Request for list of species and essential fish habitat for the Columbia Generating Station license renewal application review. May 3, 2010. ADAMS Accession No. ML100980161.

² [NMFS] National Marine Fisheries Service. 2010. Letter from Suzumoto B, Northwest Assistant Regional Manager, to Pham B, Branch Chief, NRC. Subject: Reply to request for species information for Columbia Generating Station license renewal. June 23, 2010. ADAMS Accession No. ML101830405.

R. Domingue

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the species list in an e-mail to NMFS on June 23, 2011. The NMFS responded on June 27, 2011, confirming that the two salmon species are the only listed species in the area under the NRC's review.

In its June 23, 2010, letter, NMFS indicated that the Columbia River within the CGS plant vicinity contains EFH for both the Upper Columbia River Chinook and the coho salmon (*O. kisutch*). EFH for the Upper Columbia River Chinook includes all three runs (spring, summer, and fall).

To fulfill our duties under the ESA and MSA, the NRC staff developed one document that contains both the biological assessment and EFH Assessment. In the biological assessment, the NRC staff concludes that the proposed CGS license renewal **may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect**, the two Federally listed species. In the EFH Assessment, the NRC staff concludes that the proposed CGS license renewal would have a **minimal adverse effect** on EFH for both the Upper Columbia River Chinook salmon and the coho salmon.

We are requesting your concurrence with our biological assessment determination within 30 days per 50 CFR 402.12(j). We also request your concurrence with our EFH Assessment determination within 30 days per 50 CFR 600.920(h)(2). In reaching these conclusions, the NRC staff relied on information provided by the applicant, on research performed by NRC staff, and on information from NMFS. Please note that if you have comments specifically pertaining to the draft SEIS, the public comment period closes November 16, 2011. If you have any questions regarding the enclosed draft SEIS, the biological assessment, the EFH Assessment, or the staff's requests for concurrence, please contact Daniel Doyle, environmental project manager, or Dennis Logan, aquatic biologist. Mr. Doyle can be reached at 301-415-3748 or by e-mail at Daniel.Doyle@nrc.gov. Mr. Logan can be reached at 301-415-0490 or Dennis.Logan@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA/

David J. Wrona, Chief
Projects Branch 2
Division of License Renewal
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-397

Enclosure:
As stated

cc w/encl: Listserv

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 David J. Wrona, Chief
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 As stated

cc w/encl: Listserv

DISTRIBUTION:

See next page

ADAMS Accession Nos.:

1. Package: ML11165A030
2. Letter: ML11165A023
3. "Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants, Supplement 47": ML11227A007
4. *Federal Register* Notice: ML11091A028 *concurrence via e-mail

OFFICE	LA:DLR*	GS:RERB:DLR	PM:RPB1:DLR	BC:RPB2:DLR
NAME	SFigueroa	DLogan (BBalsam for)	DDoyle	DWrona
DATE	06/20/11	06/29/11	08/05/11	08/23/11

OFFICIAL RECORD COPY

Letter to Richard Domingue from David J. Wrona, dated August 23, 2011

SUBJECT: BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT AND ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT ASSESSMENT
FOR LICENSE RENEWAL OF COLUMBIA GENERATING STATION
(TAC NO. ME3121)

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MHayes, RIV
BMaier, RIV
VDricks, RIV
rebekah.krieg@pnl.gov

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

ENERGY NORTHWEST

COLUMBIA GENERATING STATION

DOCKET NUMBER 50-397

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF DRAFT SUPPLEMENT 47 TO THE GENERIC
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR LICENSE RENEWAL OF NUCLEAR PLANTS
AND PUBLIC MEETINGS FOR THE LICENSE RENEWAL OF
COLUMBIA GENERATING STATION

[NRC-2010-0029]

Notice is hereby given that the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has published a draft plant-specific supplement to the Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants (GEIS), NUREG-1437, regarding the renewal of operating license NPF-21 for an additional 20 years of operation for Columbia Generating Station. Columbia Generating Station is located in Richland, Washington. Possible alternatives to the proposed action (license renewal) include no action and reasonable alternative energy sources.

Any interested party may submit comments on the draft supplement to the GEIS for consideration by the NRC staff. To be considered, comments on the draft supplement to the GEIS and the proposed action must be received by November 16, 2011. The NRC staff is able to ensure consideration only for comments received on or before this date.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by any one of the following methods. Please include Docket ID **NRC-2010-0029** in the subject line of your comments. Comments submitted in writing or in electronic form will be posted on the NRC website and on the Federal rulemaking

website <http://www.regulations.gov>. Because your comments will not be edited to remove any identifying or contact information, the NRC cautions you against including any information in your submission that you do not want to be publicly disclosed.

The NRC requests that any party soliciting or aggregating comments received from other persons for submission to the NRC inform those persons that the NRC will not edit their comments to remove any identifying or contact information, and, therefore, they should not include any information in their comments that they do not want publicly disclosed.

Federal Rulemaking Website: Go to <http://www.regulations.gov> and search for documents filed under Docket ID **NRC-2010-0029**. Address questions about NRC dockets to Carol Gallagher at 301-492-3668 or by e-mail at Carol.Gallagher@nrc.gov.

Mail comments to: Cindy Bladey, Chief, Rules, Announcements, and Directives Branch (RADB), Division of Administrative Services, Office of Administration, Mail Stop: TWB-05-B01M, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001. Faxes may be sent to RADB at 301-492-3446.

You can access publicly available documents related to this notice using the following methods:

NRC's Public Document Room (PDR): The public may examine and have copied, for a fee, publicly available documents at the NRC's PDR, Public File Area O-1F21, One White Flint North, 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland 20852.

NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS): Publicly available documents created or received at the NRC are available electronically at the NRC's Electronic Reading Room at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>. From this website, the public can gain entry into ADAMS, which provides text and image files of NRC's public documents. If you do not have access to ADAMS or if there are problems in accessing the documents located in ADAMS, contact the NRC's PDR reference staff at 1-800-397-4209,

301-415-4737, or by e-mail at pdr.resource@nrc.gov. The Accession Number for draft Supplement 47 to the GEIS is ML11227A007.

Federal Rulemaking Website: Public comments and supporting materials related to this notice can be found at <http://www.regulations.gov> by searching for Docket ID **NRC-2010-0029**.

In addition, a copy of the draft supplement to the GEIS is available to local residents near the site at the Richland Public Library, 955 Northgate Drive, Richland, Washington 99352 and at the Kennewick Branch of Mid-Columbia Libraries, 1620 South Union Street, Kennewick, Washington 99338.

All comments received by the NRC, including those made by Federal, State, and local agencies; Native American Tribes; or other interested persons, will be made available electronically at the NRC's PDR in Rockville, Maryland, and through ADAMS. Comments received after the due date will be considered only if it is practical to do so.

The NRC staff will hold public meetings prior to the close of the public comment period to present an overview of the draft plant-specific supplement to the GEIS and to accept public comments on the document. Two meetings will be held at the Red Lion Hotel, 802 George Washington Way, Richland, Washington, on Tuesday, September 27, 2011. The first session will convene at 2:00 p.m. and will continue until 5:00 p.m., as necessary. The second session will convene at 7:00 p.m. and will continue until 10:00 p.m., as necessary. The meetings will be transcribed and will include: (1) a presentation of the contents of the draft plant-specific supplement to the GEIS and (2) the opportunity for interested government agencies, organizations, and individuals to provide comments on the draft report. Additionally, the NRC staff will host informal discussions one hour prior to the start of each session at the same location. No comments on the draft supplement to the GEIS will be accepted during the informal discussions. To be considered, comments must be provided either at the transcribed public meeting or in writing. Persons may pre-register to attend or present oral comments at the

meeting by contacting Mr. Daniel Doyle, the NRC Environmental Project Manager, at 1-800-368-5642, extension 3748, or by e-mail at Daniel.Doyle@nrc.gov no later than Friday, September 23, 2011. Members of the public may also register to provide oral comments within 15 minutes of the start of each session. Individual oral comments may be limited by the time available, depending on the number of persons who register. If special equipment or accommodations are needed to attend or present information at the public meeting, the need should be brought to Mr. Doyle's attention no later than September 23, 2011, to provide the NRC staff adequate notice to determine whether the request can be accommodated.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT: Mr. Daniel Doyle, Division of License Renewal, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Mail Stop O-11F1, Washington, DC 20555-0001. Mr. Doyle may be contacted at the aforementioned telephone number or e-mail address.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 23rd day of August 2011.

FOR THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

/RA/

David J. Wrona, Chief
Projects Branch 2
Division of License Renewal
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation