

June 12, 2012

Douglas C. McLearen, Chief
Division of Archaeology & Protection
Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission
Bureau for Historic Preservation
Commonwealth Keystone Building, 2nd Floor
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Harrisburg, PA 17120-0093

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION IN THE
SUPPLEMENTAL SCOPING PROCESS REGARDING THE REVISED SITE
LAYOUT FOR THE BELL BEND NUCLEAR POWER PLANT COMBINED
LICENSE APPLICATION REVIEW

Dear Chief McLearen:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff is reviewing a revised environmental report (ER) submitted on March 30, 2012, by PPL Bell Bend, LLC (PPL) in support of its initial application for a combined license (COL) for the construction and operation of one new nuclear power plant at its Bell Bend Nuclear Power Plant (BBNPP) site near Berwick, Pennsylvania. This revised ER provides detailed information regarding PPL's revised site layout, which was developed to avoid wetland impacts by relocating the power block footprint and other plant components. The revised ER is available through the NRC's Agencywide Document Access Management System (ADAMS) and is accessible at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html> under the ADAMS accession number ML12145A242. The document is also available on the Internet at <http://www.nrc.gov/reactors/new-reactors/col/bell-bend/documents.html#application>.

As part of the review of the COL application, the NRC is preparing an environmental impact statement (EIS) as required by Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) Part 51, the NRC's regulation that implements the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA). The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Baltimore District, which is a cooperating agency with the NRC for the purpose of complying with NEPA, is reviewing a joint permit application (JPA) that was submitted by PPL in June 2011 (and was revised in November). The EIS will include analyses of potential impacts to historic properties that reflect consultation and will document the NRC and USACE staff's determinations regarding the environmental impacts to the proposed site from the construction and operation of one new nuclear plant. In addition, the EIS will consider alternatives, including an evaluation of alternative sites. The following four alternative sites will be evaluated in the EIS: the Montour site located in Derry Township in Montour County, Pennsylvania; the Humboldt site located in Humboldt Industrial Park west of the City of Hazleton in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania; the Seedco site located in Coal Township in Northumberland County, Pennsylvania; and the Martins Creek site located in Warren County, New Jersey, along the Delaware River.

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that the NRC and USACE are providing the public with an additional opportunity to submit scoping comments on the new information provided by PPL regarding the revised site layout. Please provide any information, comments, or concerns you feel are appropriate on the scope of the review, especially related to the revised site layout during the scoping comment period, which ends on July 16, 2012. Comments should be submitted either by mail to the Chief, Rulemaking, Announcements and Directives Branch, Division of Administrative Services, Office of Administration, Mail Stop TWB-05-B01M, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, D.C. 20555-0001 or by e-mail to BBNP.COLEIS@nrc.gov.

On October 10, 2008, PPL submitted its COL application pursuant to NRC requirements in 10 CFR Part 52. The NRC staff accepted the application for docketing on December 15, 2008. The NRC and USACE first initiated consultation with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission by letter dated January 9, 2009 (ML083470653). On March 2, 2009 (ML090720932), the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission replied by informing us the results of your review of the cultural surveys, and indicated that sites 36Lu278, 36Lu282, 36Lu284, and site 36Lu287 are not eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). You also indicated that sites 36Lu279, 36Lu280, 36Lu281, 36Lu288, 36Lu283, 36Lu285, and 36Lu286 had the potential to be eligible for inclusion on the NRHP, and should either be avoided, or would require Phase II archaeological investigations. Through this letter, the NRC and USACE are continuing consultation with your office under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (NHPA), regarding the COL and JPA applications.

The NRC and USACE are currently seeking information from consulting parties, and other individuals and organizations likely to have knowledge of, or concerns with, historic properties in the area to identify issues relating to the proposed undertaking's potential effects on historic properties. It is the view of the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission (PHMC), in consultation with the applicant, that the archaeological area of potential effect (APE) is the approximately 902 acres of the proposed project footprint. The architectural APE is the approximately 902 acres of the proposed project footprint and a surrounding viewshed that was defined as extending at least 0.5 miles beyond the project footprint. In some areas (i.e. along the elevated riverbank) the viewshed APE was extended to include additional resources located within a clear line of sight of the project area, and in one case extended to 2.6 miles. For purposes of consultation under Section 106 of the NHPA, the USACE is the lead Federal agency. The USACE will continue consultation with the PHMC to make a final determination on the USACE's APE for the JPA review. The NRC staff has determined that the APE for the COL review is the area at the power plant site and the immediate environs that may be directly or indirectly impacted by NRC authorized construction and operation of the proposed new unit. The APE is influenced by the limitation of the scale and nature of the NRC undertaking which does not include most of the ground disturbing activities which constitute "preconstruction" activities. Many of the activities required to build a nuclear power plant do not fall within NRC's regulatory authority and, therefore, are not "construction" as defined by the NRC. Such activities are referred to as "preconstruction" activities in 10 CFR 51.45(c).

As stated in our initial 2009 scoping letter, the NRC staff is using the process required by NEPA for the preparation of the EIS to comply with the obligations imposed under Section 106 of the NHPA in accordance with 36 CFR 800.8(c), in lieu of the procedures set forth in 36 CFR 800.3 through 800.6 and will consult with your tribe on the proposed action. Consultation will include participation in the scoping process; identification of historic properties on the BBNPP site; assessment of the effects of the proposed action on any historic properties identified; and development of alternatives and proposed measures that might avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse effects of the proposed action on historic properties. To complete consultation under 36 CFR 800.8(c), the NRC staff will send the draft EIS to consulting parties for review and comment, and the NRC staff will address the comments in the final EIS. This draft EIS will include identification of historic properties, assessment of environmental impacts, and the preliminary recommendation on whether the requested COL should be granted or denied.

The BBNPP project boundary consists of approximately 2,055 acres in the Salem Township, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, approximately 5 miles northeast of Berwick, Pennsylvania, near the west bank of the North Branch Susquehanna River, and it contains the BBNPP site and the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station (SSES) site. As a result of the revised site layout, the BBNPP site comprises an area of 975 acres within the BBNPP project boundary in an area of open deciduous woodlands interspersed with grasslands, previously cultivated fields, and orchards. The area of disturbance within the BBNPP site is approximately 677 acres. Land use in the immediate vicinity of the site is primarily forested and agricultural. The BBNPP site is located west of the SSES site, which has two operating boiling water reactors, Units 1 and 2, that have the capacity to generate 2,270 megawatts of electricity (MW(e)) combined. PPL is proposing to construct and operate an AREVA U.S. EPR reactor with an approximate output of 1,600 MW(e).

PPL has stated there is no need for new transmission lines or corridors to connect the new reactor unit to the existing electrical grid. The existing 500-kilovolt (kV) transmission line is currently being modified to add the Susquehanna-Roseland Interconnection approved by the Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Maryland Regional Transmission Organization. This modification was planned independent of and without consideration of the BBNPP project. On the BBNPP site, planned facilities include one new 500-kV switchyard to transmit power from BBNPP, one new 500-kV transmission system switchyard (Susquehanna 500-kV Yard #2), expansion of the existing Susquehanna 500-kV Yard, and two new 500-kV, 4,260 megavolt-ampere circuits on individual towers connecting the BBNPP substation to the existing SSES 500-kV yard and to the proposed Susquehanna Yard #2. Additionally, the 230-kV transmission lines currently passing through the BBNPP site would be relocated to run to the north of Beach Grove Road in order to provide a buffer from the cooling towers and provide additional areas for the location of structures.

D. McLearen

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If you have any questions concerning the environmental review of this COL application, please contact Mrs. Laura Quinn-Willingham, Environmental Project Manager, at 301-415-2220 or via e-mail at Laura.Quinn-Willingham@nrc.gov. In her absence, please contact Mr. John Fringer at 301-415-6208 or via e-mail at John.Fringer@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Anthony Hsia, Branch Chief
Environmental Projects Branch 2
Division of New Reactor Licensing
Office of New Reactors

Docket No.: 52-039

cc: See next page

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If you have any questions concerning the environmental review of this COL application, please contact Mrs. Laura Quinn-Willingham, Environmental Project Manager, at 301-415-2220 or via e-mail at Laura.Quinn-Willingham@nrc.gov. In her absence, please contact Mr. John Fringer at 301-415-6208 or via e-mail at John.Fringer@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

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Docket No.: 52-039

cc: See next page

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Accession No.: ML12073A076 *See previous concurrence block **via e-mail **NRO-002**

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