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Consideration on Environmental Impacts on Temporary Storage of Spent Fuel After Cessation of Reactor Operation

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Consideration of Environmental Impacts of Temporary Storage of Spent Fuel After Cessation of Reactor Operation

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General Comment

On June 8, 2012, Riverkeeper and our allies won a landmark U.S. Court of Appeals decision nullifying the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's "Waste Confidence Rule," which has allowed each U.S. nuclear reactor to store highly radioactive nuclear waste on site. The now-invalidated rule presumed that waste stored at reactors would go to a national nuclear waste dump someday and that the storage of spent fuel at individual reactors is temporary and causes "no significant environmental impact."

Because of the landmark court victory, there is no longer any legal basis for plants like Indian Point to avoid studying the environmental impacts of long-term nuclear waste storage in fuel pools or dry storage. At Indian Point, spent fuel has leaked carcinogenic nuclear waste into groundwater and the Hudson River, and its unfortified storage structure has been considered as a target of terrorists. The Court's decision forces the NRC to address the risks of nuclear waste disposal before any U.S. nuclear plant, including Indian Point, may be licensed or re-licensed. This reckoning is long overdue.

SUNSI Review Complete

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