



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

December 11, 2013

Ms. Cindy Dohner
Southeast Regional Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1875 Century Blvd., Suite 400
Atlanta, GA 30345-3319

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR CONCURRENCE ON THE EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSED
GRAND GULF NUCLEAR STATION, UNIT 1, LICENSE RENEWAL ON
THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

Dear Ms. Dohner:

With this letter, and in accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA), the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) requests your concurrence with NRC's determination that the proposed license renewal of Grand Gulf Nuclear Station, Unit 1 (GGNS), is not likely to adversely affect any Federally-listed or proposed species or critical habitat under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife's (FWS's) jurisdiction.

Project Summary

GGNS is located in Claiborne County, MS approximately 25 miles south of Vicksburg. GGNS is a one-unit nuclear-powered steam electric generating facility with a closed-cycle cooling water system that withdraws make-up water from the Mississippi River Alluvium groundwater aquifer through Ranney wells. The 2,100-acre GGNS site consists primarily of woodlands and former farms as well as two lakes, and the land in the vicinity of the site is mostly rural. Section 2.2 of the enclosed draft Supplement 50 to NUREG-1437, "Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants" (SEIS) regarding the license renewal of GGNS includes a detailed description of the GGNS site, cooling water system, and surrounding terrestrial and aquatic habitats.

The NRC's Federal action is the decision whether to renew the GGNS operating license for an additional 20 years of operation. GGNS's current operating license expires in 2024. If approved, the license renewal would allow GGNS to operate until 2044. The NRC considered the remainder of the current operating license term, as well as the renewed operating license term, in its analysis of effects on Federally-protected species and habitats.

Section 7 Consultation History

As part of its environmental review for the proposed GGNS license renewal, NRC contacted the Lafayette, LA and Jackson, MS FWS field offices to request concurrence with its list of Federally-protected species and habitat in letters dated January 20, 2012. The NRC's initial list included six Federally-listed species and one candidate species. The Lafayette, LA field office provided its concurrence with the NRC's list in a letter dated February 29, 2012. The Jackson, MS field office replied in a letter dated February 3, 2012, that "no Federally listed

species or their habitats are likely to be affected from the proposed GGNS operating license renewal.”

Request for Concurrence with the NRC's ESA Effect Determinations

Since the time of the correspondence discussed above, the NRC has performed an assessment of whether the proposed license renewal of GGNS has the potential to adversely affect Federally-listed species that were initially identified in the NRC's 2012 list as well as additional species and critical habitats that were identified in the course of the review that could be affected by the proposed action. This assessment is documented in Sections 2.2.8 and 4.8 of the enclosed draft SEIS. The assessment includes eight Federally-listed species and one proposed species, as well as designated Louisiana black bear (*Ursus americana luteolus*) critical habitat and proposed critical habitat for the rabbitsfoot (*Quadrula cylindrica* ssp. *cylindrica*).

In the draft SEIS, the NRC staff concluded that continued operation of GGNS during the license renewal term may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect four Federally-listed species:

- Louisiana black bear
- American black bear (*Ursus americana*)
- bayou darter (*Etheostoma rubrum*)
- pallid sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus albus*)

The NRC staff concluded that the license renewal would have no effect on:

- wood stork (*Mycteria americana*)
- red cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*)
- least tern (interior pop.) (*Sterna antillarum*)
- fat pocketbook (*Potamilus capax*)
- rabbitsfoot and its critical habitat
- Louisiana black bear critical habitat

Per the ESA regulations at 50 CFR 402.06, the NRC considers the SEIS to constitute a biological assessment. Thus, the staff did not prepare a separate biological assessment as part of its National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review.

With this letter, we are requesting FWS's concurrence with the staff's effect determinations under section 7 of the ESA. In reaching our conclusions, the NRC staff relied on information provided by the applicant, on analysis performed by NRC staff, and on information from FWS.

Request for NEPA Comments on Draft SEIS

As indicated above, the NRC is also performing a NEPA review for the proposed GGNS license renewal. The NRC prepared the enclosed draft SEIS in accordance with 10 CFR Part 51, the NRC's regulation that implements NEPA and is now seeking comments on the document through February 11, 2014. During the draft SEIS comment period, the NRC staff plans to hold

C. Dohner

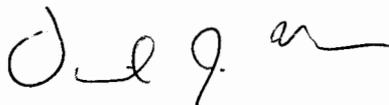
- 3 -

two public environmental meetings at Port Gibson City Hall, 1005 College Street, Port Gibson, Mississippi, 39150, on Wednesday, January 29, 2014, at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. I invite you and your staff to both attend the public meetings and to submit comments on the draft SEIS. See the enclosed *Federal Register* notice or go to <http://www.Regulations.gov> and search for documents filed under Docket ID NRC-2012-0105 for additional information on the NEPA process and on how to submit draft SEIS comments.

Conclusion

If you have any questions regarding the staff's request, please contact Ms. Briana Grange, biologist, at 301-415-1042 or by e-mail at briana.grange@nrc.gov. I have also forwarded a copy of this letter to Mr. Stephen Ricks, Jackson, MS field office supervisor, and Mr. Jeffrey Weller, LA field office supervisor, each of whom responded to NRC's previous letters regarding Federally-listed species and habitats at GGNS.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. J. Wrona". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

David J. Wrona, Chief
Environmental Review
and Guidance Update Branch
Division of License Renewal
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-416

Enclosures:
As stated

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Sincerely,

/RA/

David J. Wrona, Chief
Environmental Review
and Guidance Update Branch
Division of License Renewal
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-416

Enclosures:
As stated

DISTRIBUTION: See next page

ADAMS Accession Nos.: ML13330B386 (package), ML13177A033 (letter)

Enclosures: ML13328A002 (draft SEIS), ML13336A734 (FRN)

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Letter to C. Dohner from D. Wrona dated December 11, 2013

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GRAND GULF NUCLEAR STATION, UNIT 1, LICENSE RENEWAL ON
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DISTRIBUTION:

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