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NRC Extends Construction Deadline for MOX Fuel Fabrication Plant

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission signed an order Nov. 13 extending the completion deadline for a mixed-oxide fuel fabrication facility in South Carolina. Shaw AREVA MOX Services will have an additional 10 years, or until March 30, 2025, to finish building the facility at the Department of Energy's Savannah River Site in Aiken.

MOX Services asked for the extension in May after a number of factors delayed construction, including lower than requested annual funding from Congress and delays in the delivery of components and key construction activities. The NRC issued the original 10-year construction authorization March 30, 2005. The extension does not expand the scope of work.

The NRC published an environmental assessment Oct. 23 that found no significant environmental impact would result from extending the authorization. NRC staff also found that MOX Services has shown good cause to extend the deadline for completion.

The order also reflects some administrative changes to the construction authorization, including a change in the licensee's name to CB&I AREVA MOX Services to reflect Chicago Bridge & Iron's acquisition of The Shaw Group in 2013. That change does not reflect any change in control of the company, management, operation or security. The order also removes a list of submittals that had been incorporated as references in the construction authorization, but have now been incorporated into the application.

The MOX fabrication facility is a major component of the United States' program to dispose of surplus plutonium taken from nuclear weapons by mixing it with uranium and burning it as fuel in commercial nuclear reactors.