

Official Transcript of Proceedings
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Title: Public Meeting RE Draft Environmental
 Impact Statement, Exelon Generation Company
 Byron Station Units 1 and 2
 Evening Session

Docket Number: 50-454 and 50-455

Location: Byron, Illinois

Date: Tuesday, February 3, 2015

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Pages 1-21

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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Category 3 Public Meeting to Discuss the
Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

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EXELON GENERATION COMPANY

BYRON STATION UNITS 1 AND 2

Regarding the Renewal of Facility Operating
License Nos. NPF-37 and NPF-66 for a 20-Year Period

Docket Nos. 50-454 and 50-455

+ + + + +

TUESDAY

FEBRUARY 3, 2015

+ + + + +

BYRON FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT

7993 NORTH RIVER ROAD

BYRON, ILLINOIS

+ + + + +

The above-entitled matter commenced
pursuant to notice at 7:00 p.m.

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PRESENT:

CHERYL HAUSMAN, Facilitator

LOIS M. JAMES, NRC Environmental Project Manager

BRIAN WITTICK, NRC Branch Chief

HARRAL LOGARAS, NRC Government Liaison

JAMES MCGHEE, Senior Resident Inspector

JASON DRAPER, Resident Inspector

VIKTORIA MITLYNG, NRC Public Affairs Officer

P R O C E E D I N G S

(7:00 p.m.)

1
2
3 MS. JAMES: Good evening. Thank you for
4 coming. This is the public meeting to discuss the
5 preliminary results of the license renewal
6 environmental review for Byron Station. I'd like to
7 introduce Cheryl Hausman, our facilitator for the
8 evening.

9 MS. HAUSMAN: Good evening, everyone. I
10 would like to welcome you and thank you for
11 participating in the meeting to provide comments on the
12 US NRC's draft supplemental environmental impact
13 statement for license renewal of Byron Station's Unit
14 1 and 2.

15 My name is Cheryl Hausman and I will be your
16 facilitator for the meeting this evening. My role as
17 the facilitator is to help the meeting run smoothly, to
18 ensure that everyone who wishes to speak has an
19 opportunity to do so, and to keep us on time.

20 I would like to introduce the NRC staff at
21 this time.

22 MS. JAMES: My name is Lois James. I'm the
23 Project Manager for the environmental review of the
24 Byron license renewal application.

25 MR. WITTICK: Good evening. My name is

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1 Brian Wittick. I am the Branch Chief for the
2 Environmental Projects Branch at the NRC headquarters.

3 MR. MCGHEE: My name is James McGhee. I'm
4 the Senior Resident Inspector at the Byron Station, one
5 of the two inspectors that are stationed full time at
6 Byron.

7 MR. DRAPER: I'm Jason Draper, I'm a
8 Resident Inspector. I work with Jim.

9 MR. LOGARAS: I'm Herral Logaras. I'm a
10 Government Liaison from the Region III office.

11 MS. MITLYNG: And I am Viktoria Mitlyng,
12 Public Affairs, Region III, NRC.

13 MS. HAUSMAN: Thank you. This is a
14 Category 3 public meeting to encourage active
15 participation and information exchange with the NRC and
16 members of the public to obtain comments for the draft
17 environmental impact statement. The NRC invites and
18 encourages members of the public to present oral and
19 written comments on the appropriate scope of issues to
20 be considered in and the content of the draft
21 environmental impact statement.

22 Before we begin, I would like to go over a
23 few ground rules for the meeting this evening. I would
24 like to let everybody know that this meeting is being
25 transcribed, so I ask that you keep any background noise

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1 to a minimum so the transcriptionist can be provided
2 accurate recording of the meeting. Also, a security
3 officer is present at the meeting. This is standard
4 practice for the NRC, and the security officer is here
5 for everyone's safety.

6 Please be respectful of others during the
7 meeting, and we will ensure that all the participants
8 who have a question or want to make a comment can be heard
9 and have time to do so. Please turn off all electronic
10 devices at this time or put them on vibrate. If you need
11 to take a phone call, that is certainly understandable,
12 but please do so in the lobby.

13 There are two exits out of the building, the
14 one on the left-hand side outside in the lobby and one
15 on the right-hand side. And the restrooms are out the
16 door in the lobby just in the back left-hand corner. If
17 we have to evacuate for any reason, please follow the
18 directions from the security officer.

19 The agenda for the meeting includes a
20 presentation by NRC staff to present an overview of
21 NRC's role and mission, a summary of the draft
22 environmental review, and upcoming milestones.
23 Following the presentation, we will take time to answer
24 questions from the audience, and then open the floor for
25 questions and comments. Please keep your questions and

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1 comments relative to the topic.

2 Hopefully, everyone has signed in and
3 received copies of the agenda and presentation slides
4 and a feedback form. If you haven't signed in or need
5 some of the forms or the slides, they are at the
6 registration table in the lobby. When speaking, please
7 use a microphone. If you have a question or a comment,
8 step up to the microphone in the center of the room and
9 begin by stating your name.

10 Finally, the NRC is always looking to
11 improve our meetings and your feedback is important to
12 us. There are some postage-paid public meeting
13 feedback forms available and you can fill one out today
14 and give it to any NRC staff member or drop it in the
15 mail.

16 Any questions about the logistics of the
17 meeting?

18 (No response.)

19 MS. HAUSMAN: Okay. With that, I would
20 like to turn it over to Lois James.

21 MS. JAMES: Thank you, Cheryl. And thank
22 everyone here for coming to participate in the meeting
23 tonight. As I said, my name is Lois James. I'm the
24 project manager for the environmental review of the
25 Byron Station license renewal application. I hope the

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1 information we provide in the presentation tonight will
2 help you understand what we've done so far and the role
3 you can play in helping us make sure the final
4 environmental impact statement is accurate and
5 complete. I would like to emphasize that the
6 environmental review is not complete yet and your input
7 would be vital to us.

8 I would like to start off by briefly going
9 over the agenda and the purpose. I will discuss the NRC
10 regulatory role, the preliminary findings of our
11 environmental impact statement, and I will present the
12 current schedule for completion of the final
13 environmental impact statement. Next slide.

14 The NRC was established to regulate
15 civilian use of nuclear material, including power
16 facilities. The NRC conducts license renewal for
17 plants whose owners wish to operate the plants beyond
18 their initial licensing term. The NRC license review
19 includes safety issues related to managing the effects
20 of aging, and environmental issues related to the
21 operation through the additional 20-year period.
22 Excuse me.

23 In all aspects of the NRC's regulation, our
24 mission is threefold:

25 * To ensure adequate protection of the public

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1 health and safety;

2 * To promote common defense and security; and

3 * To protect the environment.

4 We are here to discuss the potential
5 site-specific impacts of the Byron license renewal
6 environmental impact statement. The generic
7 environmental impact statement or GEIS examines the
8 possible environmental impacts that could occur as a
9 result of renewing licenses of individual nuclear power
10 plants. The GEIS, to the extent possible, establishes
11 and bounds the significance of these potential impacts.

12 The analysis in the GEIS pertains to
13 operating power reactors. For each type of
14 environmental impact, the GEIS establishes generic
15 findings, covering as many plants as possible. For
16 some of these environmental issues, the GEIS found that
17 a generic evaluation is not sufficient, and a
18 plant-specific analysis is required.

19 The site-specific findings for Byron are
20 contained in the draft SEIS published in December 2014.
21 This document contains analyses of all applicable
22 site-specific issues, as well as a review of issues
23 covered by the GEIS to determine whether the conclusions
24 in the GEIS are valid for Byron. Next slide please.

25 The purpose and need of the proposed

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1 federal action. First, what is the proposed federal
2 action? The proposed federal action is to issue a
3 renewed license. The purpose and need is to provide an
4 option that allows for power generation capability
5 beyond the term of the current operating license. The
6 definition of the purpose and need reflects the NRC's
7 recognition that unless there are findings in the safety
8 review required by the, or the NEPA environmental
9 analyses, the NRC does not have a role in the energy
10 planning decisions of the state regulators and utility
11 officials as to whether a particular nuclear power plant
12 should continue to operate. Next slide please.

13 How are the impacts defined? For each
14 environmental issue, an impact levels is assigned. The
15 NRC standard of significance for impacts was
16 established using the White House Council on
17 Environmental Quality terminology. For small impact,
18 the effects are not detectable or are so minor that they
19 will need to destabilize nor noticeably alter any
20 important resource attribute. For moderate impact,
21 the effects are sufficient to alter noticeably, but not
22 to destabilize an important attribute of the resource.
23 Large impacts are defined as effects are clearly
24 noticeable and are sufficient to destabilize an
25 important attribute of the resource.

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1 While these impact designations are used
2 for most resources, there are three that have their own
3 designation level. They are:

4 Special status species or Endangered
5 Species Act, that is defined as no effect, or may affect
6 but not likely to adversely affect, may affect and is
7 likely to adversely affect.

8 Then we have cultural and historical, and
9 those are effects on any historical properties in the
10 area. Last, we have environmental justice, and
11 that is described in terms of disproportionately high
12 and adverse impacts. Next slide please.

13 First, we will discuss cumulative impacts.
14 The NRC staff considers cumulative impacts.
15 Cumulative impacts include the effects on the
16 environment from other past, present, and reasonably
17 foreseeable future human actions. These effects not
18 only include the operation of Byron Station, but also
19 impacts some activities unrelated to Byron, such as
20 further urbanization or other energy-producing
21 facilities in the area.

22 The cumulative impact on all resource areas
23 for Byron were found to be small with the following
24 exceptions. Cumulative impact on terrestrial
25 resources would be small to moderate, primarily due to

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1 the agricultural runoff and residential development
2 over the period of the extended operation. The
3 cumulative impacts on aquatic ecology would be
4 moderate, primarily due to past river channelization
5 and damming and ongoing runoff and sedimentation. The
6 cumulative impact of global climate change would be
7 moderate, primarily due to the present and future global
8 emissions of greenhouse gases. Next slide please.

9 Site-specific environmental review of
10 Byron. As you can see from this slide, the
11 environmental impact on all the resources was small.
12 For special status species, there was no effect. For
13 historic and cultural resources, there was no adverse
14 effect. And for environmental justice, there was no
15 proportionately high and adverse impacts. Next slide
16 please.

17 The National Environmental Policy Act or
18 NEPA mandates that each environmental impact statement
19 consider alternatives to any proposed major federal
20 action. A major step in determining whether license
21 renewal is reasonable or not is comparing the likely
22 impacts of continued operations of the nuclear power
23 plant with likely impacts of alternative means of power
24 generation. An alternative must provide an option that
25 allows for power generation capability beyond the term

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1 of the current nuclear power plant license to meet
2 future system generating needs.

3 In the draft SEIS, the NRC staff initially
4 considered 17 different alternatives, then narrowed
5 those down to five and considered those five in depth.
6 Those five were: new nuclear; integrated gasification
7 combined cycle; natural gas combined cycle; a
8 combination which includes natural gas combined-cycle,
9 wind, and solar. And then, finally, we considered the
10 purchase power. All NEPA environmental impact
11 statements have to also consider the no action
12 alternative. Next slide please.

13 Our preliminary conclusion is that the
14 adverse environmental impacts of the license renewal
15 for Byron Station are not great enough to deny the option
16 of license renewal for energy planning decision makers.

17 I wanted to mention here that in September
18 of 2014, the NRC issued the final Continued Storage
19 Rule, an associated generic environmental impact
20 statement. You can find this environmental impact
21 statement and other related documents at the website on
22 the bottom of the slide.

23 The last thing I'll cover is the
24 environmental review milestones. Most of these we have
25 completed. Today is the day that we are conducting the

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1 draft public meeting. Comments are due by February
2 20th, and the final SEIS is scheduled to be issued in
3 July of 2015.

4 If you need additional information, you can
5 contact me. My contact information is on the slide.
6 The draft SEIS can also be viewed at the local public
7 library, and you can find it on the NRC website at this
8 location.

9 To provide comments, there's three
10 different ways provide comments after the meeting. One
11 is by mail. You can mail it to the Chief Rules,
12 Announcement and Directives Branch. You can also drop
13 by the NRC headquarters directly, the address is here.
14 And finally, you can go to the regulations.gov and
15 search for the docket, NRC-2013-0178, and provide your
16 comments there.

17 This concludes my presentation and I'll
18 turn it back over to Cheryl.

19 MS. HAUSMAN: Thank you, Lois. Before we
20 move into the public comment period, the NRC staff would
21 like to provide an opportunity to answer questions or
22 provide clarifications on the slide presentation you
23 have just seen. So, we'll take a few minutes for a brief
24 Q&A period regarding the presentation. This is the
25 part of the meeting where you have an opportunity to ask

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1 questions on the material which has been presented. If
2 you have a question, please step up to the microphone
3 and introduce yourself. This first portion of the
4 meeting is just regarding the presentation, and then
5 following the brief Q&A we'll begin the public comment
6 portion of the meeting.

7 Does anybody have any questions on the
8 presentation or need any clarifications on any of the
9 slides?

10 (No response.)

11 MS. HAUSMAN: Is there anybody on the
12 bridge line that has a question or a comment about the
13 slide presentation?

14 PHONE OPERATOR: We have no questions from
15 the phone on this.

16 MS. HAUSMAN: Okay, thank you. All right.
17 We'll move into the public comment period. So, this is
18 the part of the meeting where you have an opportunity
19 to give your comments on the scope and content of the
20 draft environmental review. If you have a question or
21 comment, please step up to the microphone, introduce
22 yourself, and if you would like to mention any
23 organization affiliation, please do that as well. In
24 addition, if you can be as succinct as possible, we
25 should be able to get everyone's comments and complete

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1 the meeting in a timely manner. If you wish to make a
2 comment outside the scope of this meeting, the NRC staff
3 will be available for approximately 30 minutes
4 following the meeting to answer questions.

5 I'll go to the phone lines first before I
6 open it up to the audience here. Does anybody in the
7 phone line have a question or comments regarding the
8 environmental impact review?

9 PHONE OPERATOR: There is nobody in the
10 queue at this time.

11 MS. HAUSMAN: Thank you. First, I would
12 like to invite Angela Mahoney.

13 MS. MAHONEY: Hello. I'm Angela Mahoney,
14 I'm one of the board members of Rockriversweep.org. We
15 are a 501C3 not-for-profit organization dedicated to
16 preserving the health and ecosystem of the Rock River.
17 We represent over 500 volunteers in 34 communities along
18 the Rock River, the 284 miles of the Rock River, and we
19 do this in a yearly one-day cleanup effort.

20 The Byron Generating Station of Exelon has
21 generously supported this effort and they were very
22 instrumental in the funding of the rockriversweep.org
23 as well as employee volunteers of the Byron Station that
24 contribute every year at the local cleanup efforts.
25 With their help, we are making a positive impact every

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1 year to the river cleanliness. Thank you.

2 MS. HAUSMAN: Thank you. Anybody else
3 have a comment or question? Sir.

4 MR. FARMER: My name is Mitch Farmer, I
5 spoke a little earlier. I just wanted to augment some
6 of the comments I made earlier today and reflect on some
7 of the previous comments that were made earlier today.
8 But I do want to reiterate the fact that, just, I work
9 at Argonne National Lab. I'm a nuclear engineer,
10 that's a Department of Energy facility, and I've worked
11 in reactor safety for about 27 years, just for the
12 record.

13 I do want to go back and readdress the
14 primary concern here which was the environmental
15 statement. And I just want to reconfirm that I think
16 that Byron has a positive influence on the environmental
17 status of the area, and nuclear power in general does
18 that by reducing carbon emissions which are very
19 beneficial. And I think at this time everybody is aware
20 of the effect of greenhouse gases and global warming and
21 I think this is very important.

22 But I do want to come back and just talk
23 about a couple of other things, questions that were
24 raised. There was a concern about rising costs at Byron
25 that could be influencing the operation and maintenance

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1 and, thereby, the safety of the plant. And I think, my
2 personal opinion is that there is not an increase in the
3 operation and maintenance costs. What's happened in
4 the industry is cheap natural gas from fracking.
5 That's undercut not only the nuclear industry but also
6 the coal industry and the ability to profitably produce
7 electricity.

8 But I do want to say that my personal
9 opinion is, and I think it's driven by regulation, that
10 has no significant impact on the safety of the plant.
11 I am familiar with the people who operate the plants and
12 I can tell you that safety is their number one priority.
13 And as a regulatory guide, the equipment that is used
14 to shut the plants down is under an in-service
15 inspection and maintenance program that is auditable.
16 And so, the first thing that any plant operator does is
17 ensure that his safety equipment is operational.

18 And therefore, any reduction in costs at a
19 plant are not going to impact the safety, I want to say
20 that. That's the number priority. If there are any
21 losses in safety, that would be a basis for pulling the
22 license. And I don't think that's going to happen.

23 I do want to say also that there has been
24 a continuous effort in the industry in terms of safety
25 over the years, and I think the industry has done a very

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1 good job in responding and evolving safety culture.
2 And this was reconfirmed in terms of Fukushima. This
3 was an event that brought safety back to the forefront
4 of everybody's mind. But I do want to say that there
5 has been a continuous effort in the industry for the last
6 27 years of my career working on safety, and that's
7 continued to evolve. And that was in place before
8 Fukushima and it will remain in place for the balance
9 of the plant operations because it is the number one
10 priority. So, thank you.

11 MS. HAUSMAN: Thank you. Any other
12 comments or questions?

13 PHONE OPERATOR: There are none on the
14 phone line at this time.

15 MS. HAUSMAN: Thank you.

16 MR. O'BRIEN: Thank you. I'm Doug O'Brien
17 with the Illinois Clean Energy Coalition. And like
18 Mitch, I wanted to echo some of the things that I said
19 at the earlier meeting. And again, this is a meeting
20 that's about environmental impacts and that was touched
21 upon that one of the most important positive impacts of
22 nuclear power generation in Illinois is the fact that
23 it generates almost 50 percent of the electricity
24 produced in Illinois with zero carbon emissions.

25 The Illinois Clean Energy Coalition, in a

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1 study last year of carbon emissions from electricity,
2 found that nuclear energy in Illinois prevents the
3 annual generation of over 90 million tons of CO2. And
4 that's the equivalent of the carbon pollution from all
5 the cars registered in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa and
6 Wisconsin. In a recent multi-agency report produced by
7 the state of Illinois about the risks of losing nuclear
8 generation, it stated that the social costs of replacing
9 nuclear generation with fossil fuel generation could be
10 as high as \$18 billion over the next decade in the form
11 of added public health costs and other expenditures
12 resulting from increased pollution. Last week in
13 Chicago, one of the leading environmental advocates in
14 the country, former EPA Administrator Carol Browner
15 made the case very clearly. After decades of pursuing
16 reductions in pollution and advocating policies to
17 limit climate change, she said we simply cannot make
18 meaningful environmental progress without using
19 nuclear energy as one of the power sources we rely upon.

20 The Illinois Clean Energy Coalition
21 strongly encourages the renewal of the operating
22 license for Byron Station. It's a key component in our
23 role as the leading generator of carbon-free energy in
24 the nation, and it's vital to our progress towards a
25 cleaner environment. Thank you.

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1 MS. HAUSMAN: Thank you. Anybody else
2 with a question or comment? Everybody ready to call it
3 an evening?

4 All right. Well, with that, I'm going to
5 turn it over to Brian Wittick for closing remarks.

6 MR. WITTICK: Thank you, Cheryl. And
7 thank you, Lois, for the presentation.

8 I especially wanted to thank everyone here
9 for participation in this evening's meeting and as well
10 as participation in this afternoon's meeting. These
11 meetings are a very important part of our regulatory
12 process to gain insights from and engage with the public
13 in the development of our environmental impact
14 statements. As Lois mentioned previously, the public
15 comment period is open through the 20th of February.
16 Any additional comments that are desired to be
17 submitted, please submit them as shown up here on the
18 slide, or feel free to contact Lois to do so.

19 Also, as mentioned, NRC staff will be
20 available after the meeting for any further discussions
21 or questions that anyone may have. And with that, we
22 close the meeting. Thank you for coming.

23 (Whereupon, the meeting was concluded at
24 7:27 p.m.)

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