

No: 15-026

April 24, 2015

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NRC Seeks Comment on Draft Environmental Impact Statement For Bell Bend New Reactor

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, are seeking public comment on a preliminary conclusion that environmental impacts would not prevent issuing a Combined License (COL) for a new reactor at the Bell Bend site in Pennsylvania. The site is adjacent to the existing Susquehanna nuclear power plant, about 70 miles northeast of Harrisburg, Pa.

The NRC staff's preliminary environmental recommendation is that the license could be issued. The staff's conclusion is based on its independent review of information in the application submitted by PPL Bell Bend. The review took into account consultations with other federal agencies.

The staff also consulted with state, tribal and local governments, and considered comments received during the public scoping process in early 2009 and in 2012. The staff's preliminary conclusions include a finding that there are no environmentally preferable or obviously superior sites. The staff must also complete a separate review of safety issues and a mandatory hearing must be held before the Commission makes a decision on the license.

The staff documents these preliminary conclusions in NUREG-2179, "Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Combined Licenses for Bell Bend Nuclear Power Plant." The draft EIS will be available on Regulations.gov under Docket ID NRC-2008-0603. The public can comment on the draft EIS until July 10. The comment period includes public meetings June 4 in Bloomsburg, Pa. The NRC will issue a separate notice for the meetings in the near future. Comments can be submitted, using Docket ID NRC-2008-0603, through Regulations.gov or by mailing them to Cindy Bladey, Office of Administration, Mail Stop: OWFN 12 H8, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001.

The COL review process includes examination of the potential environmental impacts from construction and operation of a nuclear power plant at the designated site. PPL submitted the COL application on October 10, 2008, and updated the application's environmental report in March 2012. If approved, the COL would give PPL permission to build and operate a U.S. EPR reactor at the site. More information on the PPL application is available on the NRC website.

The COL application includes activities that require Army Corps of Engineers authorization under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbor Act of 1899. Those activities are described in the draft EIS. The Corps is reviewing PPL's permit application to authorize those activities, and the Corps will publish a separate public notice detailing the activities proposed for Corps review and authorization.