

June 24, 2015

Ms. Sally Jewell, Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

SUBJECT: NOTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL ADVERSE EFFECT TO A NATIONAL
HISTORIC LANDMARK FROM THE PSEG EARLY SITE PERMIT
APPLICATION REVIEW IN SALEM COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Dear Secretary Jewell:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is reviewing an application submitted by PSEG Power, LLC and PSEG Nuclear, LLC (PSEG) for an Early Site Permit (ESP) for a new nuclear power plant site, which is located on the southern part of Artificial Island on the east bank of the Delaware River in Lower Alloways Creek Township, Salem County, New Jersey. The proposed site is adjacent to the existing Hope Creek Generating Station and Salem Nuclear Generating Station, Units 1 and 2. As part of the review of this ESP application, the NRC is preparing an environmental impact statement (EIS) as required by Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) Part 51, the NRC regulations that implement the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended. We are contacting your office and inviting your participation in the project as required under 36 CFR 800.10(c) when there is an adverse effect to a National Historic Landmark resulting from an undertaking.

The draft EIS, which was released to the public in August 2014, contained an agency determination of No Adverse Effect to historic properties. The draft EIS is accessible online at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>. Based on a revised New Jersey Historic Preservation Office (NJ HPO) opinion on the undertaking received during the comment period for the draft EIS, additional research was undertaken. Four meetings were held with the NJ HPO to discuss the effects and possible strategies for mitigating any effects resulting from the project (January 9, 2015, in Salem County; February 12, 2015, at NJ HPO offices, April 23, 2015, at NJ HPO offices, and May 19, 2015, in Salem County). In attendance at some of these meetings were the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the National Park Service, PSEG and interested stakeholders. PSEG also had its contractor, AKRF, do additional research on the potential for visual effects on historic resources found in the region from the project. The NRC has now concluded that an indirect visual effect on the Abel and Mary Nicholson House (Nicholson House), which was nominated as a National Historic Landmark in 2003, would result if a new plant using natural draft cooling was built on Artificial Island. The Nicholson House, constructed in 1722, is 4.9 miles from the project location and is partially screened by vegetation, therefore, the effect to the property is deemed to be indirect. The effect on the Nicholson House would be cumulative as the setting for the Nicholson House already contains the natural draft cooling tower from the existing plant. The effect would only occur if the applicant ultimately puts forth an application that includes this cooling system configuration. The applicant could seek to use a mechanical draft cooling system option, which would not

visually affect any historic properties. An ESP does not approve construction nor is the applicant obligated to use the technologies analyzed at the ESP stage.

An ESP resolves issues involving site safety, environmental characteristics, and emergency preparedness that are independent of a specific nuclear reactor design. This permitting approach provides an applicant with an opportunity to “bank” a site for up to 20 years, reduces licensing uncertainty, and resolves siting issues before construction. The ESP does not license a nuclear power plant to be built. If the applicant decides to build and operate a nuclear power plant, then it has to apply for a combined license. The NRC will issue a supplemental EIS and perform Section 106 consultation for the combined license (COL) undertaking if and when an application is received. For the supplemental EIS, if there is no new and significant information, then the NRC relies on the final EIS issued for the ESP. For the COL Section 106 review, the NRC would rely on the consultation performed at the ESP stage to inform the required consultation at the COL stage.

For your reference, this letter includes background (see enclosures) on the NRC’s activities pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act to date. As part of this consultation, a draft Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is currently under development between NRC, interested parties, NJ HPO, PSEG and potentially the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Once a finalized draft is developed, it will be forwarded to your office for review and comment. In addition, the NRC invites your agency to be a signatory to the MOA. The NRC staff requests that you indicate your interest in participating within 30 days of receipt of this letter and associated materials. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Mr. Allen Fetter, NRC Environmental Project Manager, at (301) 415-8556, or via email at Allen.Fetter@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Jennifer Dixon-Herrity, Chief
Environmental Projects Branch
Division of New Reactor Licensing
Office of New Reactors

Docket No.: 52-043

cc: Bonnie Halda, Bill Bolger

Enclosures:

1. NJ HPO letter dated December 4, 2014 (ML15005A040)
2. Nicholson House NHL Nomination Package (ML15168A985)

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