



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

November 18, 2015

Mr. Tom Melius
Regional Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Midwest Region (Region 3)
5600 American Blvd. West, Suite 990
Bloomington, MN 55437-1458

Louise Clemency
Field Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 3
Chicago Ecological Services Field Office
1250 S. Grove, Suite 103
Barrington, IL 60010-5010

SUBJECT: AVAILABILITY OF THE FINAL SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE PROPOSED LICENSE RENEWAL OF BRAIDWOOD STATION, UNITS 1 AND 2

Dear Mr. Melius and Ms. Clemency:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has completed the enclosed final Supplement 55 to NUREG-1437, "Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants" (SEIS), regarding the license renewal of Braidwood Station, Units 1 and 2 (Braidwood), in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA). With this letter, I am forwarding you a copy of the final SEIS.

Along with its NEPA review, the NRC considered effects to species and habitats protected under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA). In this final SEIS, the NRC staff determined that the proposed license renewal would have no effect on snuffbox (*Epioblasma triquetra*), Hine's emerald dragonfly (*Somatochlora hineana*), eastern prairie fringed orchid (*Platanthera leucophaea*), lakeside daisy (*Hymenopsis herbacea*), leafy prairie clover (*Delea foliosa*), Mead's milkweed (*Asclepias meadii*), northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*), the candidate species rattlesnake-master borer moth (*Papaipema eryngii*), and the proposed threatened species eastern massasauga (*Sistrurus catenatus*). The NRC staff also determined that the proposed license renewal may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the endangered sheepsnout mussel (*Plethobasus cyphus*).

The NRC staff documented its supporting analysis in Sections 3.8, 4.8, and Appendix C of the final SEIS. In a letter dated March 19, 2015, the NRC submitted a copy of the draft SEIS to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for its review. In a comment letter dated May 8, 2015, the FWS noted that after NRC published the draft SEIS, the status of northern long-eared bat had changed from proposed to threatened. In September 2015, after NRC published the draft SEIS and after FWS's comment letter, the FWS proposed the eastern massasauga rattlesnake as a threatened species. The final SEIS incorporates the changed status of these two species.

The FWS's letter of May 8 also said that "[i]f no tree clearing is proposed as part of the proposed action, the applicant should make a "no effect" determination for northern long-eared bat." In communications with both FWS and NRC staff, Exelon Generation Co., LLC (Exelon, the applicant) said that it does not expect tree clearing to be a recurring activity at the Braidwood site, and, if tree clearing were to be needed, work orders for tree clearing will "include guidance to minimize effects on northern long-eared bats, such as restricting tree removal activities to months when bats would not be present" and both the NRC and the FWS would be informed. With this additional information, the NRC staff changed its finding from "may, but not likely to adversely affect" in the draft SEIS to "no effect" in the final SEIS.

The FWS's letter of May 8 also stated that FWS could not concur at that time with the NRC's finding that the project would not adversely affect sheepsnose mussel due to a lack of recent survey information in the project area and because other potential hosts for the species were not considered as part of the impact determination. NRC updated the information on host species for sheepsnose in the final SEIS. On September 29, 2015, Exelon sent to the FWS and NRC a final mussel survey report providing information on the distribution of mussels in the Illinois River near the project in fall 2015. The FWS and NRC staff discussed the mussel survey report on October 20, 2015, and NRC began the publishing process for the final SEIS.

By letter dated October 20, 2015, the FWS concurred with NRC's determinations and concluded the informal consultation. The FWS's concurrence with NRC's "no effect" determination for northern long-eared bat is contingent on no tree-clearing activity being associated with the license renewal. The final SEIS does not contain the FWS's concurrence and the conclusion of the consultation. The NRC plans to put this information into the Braidwood Record of Decision. With the conclusion of consultation, the NRC considers its obligations under ESA section 7 for the proposed license renewal of Braidwood to be fulfilled.

I look forward to future coordination with your offices to ensure the continued protection of Federally listed species and designated critical habitats at Braidwood and other NRC-licensed operating nuclear plants in your respective regions. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact me or Dr. Dennis Logan, Aquatic Biologist, at 301-415-0490 or by e-mail at dennis.logan@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA/

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

Docket Nos. 50-456 and 50-457

Enclosures:
As stated

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David J. Wrona, Chief
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Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-456 and 50-457

Enclosures:

As stated

DISTRIBUTION: See next page

ADAMS Accession Nos.: ML15316A088 (package), ML15316A086 (letter)

Enclosures: MLXXXXXX (final SEIS) *concurred via email

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OFFICIAL RECORD COPY

Letter to T. Melius and L. Clemency from D. Wrona dated November 18, 2015

SUBJECT: AVAILABILITY OF THE FINAL SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE PROPOSED LICENSE RENEWAL OF BRAIDWOOD STATION, UNITS 1 AND 2

DISTRIBUTION:

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