



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

January 17, 2017

Mr. Frank Rusco
Director, Natural Resources and Environment
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20226

Dear Mr. Rusco:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your e-mail dated December 14, 2016, requesting comments on the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) draft report GAO-17-232, "Nuclear Regulatory Commission: Regulatory Fee-Setting Calculations Need Greater Transparency."

The NRC generally agrees with the GAO's recommendations that the NRC could enhance the transparency of NRC's regulatory user fees, noting that improvement activities are in progress. These efforts were discussed with GAO and are described below, and in the enclosure in greater detail.

GAO recommendations:

"To enhance the transparency of NRC's regulatory user fees, we recommend that the Chairman of the NRC take the following two actions:

- 1) Clearly present information in its proposed fee rule, final fee rule and fee work papers that stakeholders need to understand fee calculations and provide substantive comments to the agency by defining and consistently using key terms, provide complete calculations for how fees are determined, and correcting errors.
- 2) Develop (1) performance goals and measures to assess the extent to which its efforts under Project Aim create greater transparency regarding NRC's fee calculations and improves the timeliness with which NRC communicates fee changes so that they are objective, measurable, and quantifiable, and (2) develop and implement a plan and schedule for comparing results with the established performance goals."

NRC response:

As a result of Project Aim, the NRC has committed to implementing improvements to enhance the agency's ability to plan and execute its mission while adapting in a timely and effective manner to a dynamic environment. As part of this initiative, the NRC analyzed its fee setting process to improve transparency, timeliness and equitability for our stakeholders. We developed numerous improvements that are scheduled to be implemented over the next few years, as practicable. Starting in fiscal year 2017, the agency will implement changes to the proposed and final fee rule, related work papers, public NRC license fee website, project manager outreach to licensee activities, and the Congressional Budget Justification that will

enhance transparency for stakeholders. To enhance timeliness for communicating fee changes, we are planning to publish the proposed fee rule earlier than in previous years. To enhance transparency, we are beginning the analysis to support changes to fee setting to enhance equitability, and invoicing. In addition, the NRC has established goals to support the improvement of the fee setting process, and developed output level metrics to measure whether the improvements to the fee setting process have been achieved. We constantly strive to improve the transparency, timeliness, and equitability of our fee setting process and look forward to using GAO's insights to enhance our ongoing improvement efforts.

The NRC appreciates the opportunity to provide its planned activities to address the recommendations provided in the GAO report. Please feel free to contact Mr. John Jolicoeur at (301) 415-1642 or John.Jolicoeur@nrc.gov if you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Victor M. McCree
Executive Director for Operations

Enclosure:
NRC comments on GAO report

SUBJECT: NRC's response to e-mail dated December 14, 2016, requesting comments on the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) draft report GAO-17-232, "Nuclear Regulatory Commission: Regulatory Fee-Setting Calculations Need Greater Transparency," dated January 17, 2017.

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