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MEMORANDUM

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

20201 50-220

TO : Mr. Daniel R. Muller
Assistant Director for
Environmental Projects
Directorate of Licensing
U.S. Atomic Energy Commission

DATE: AUG 17 1973

FROM : Acting Chief
Office of Environmental Affairs

SUBJECT: The Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the Nine Mile Point Nuclear Station Unit 1

Thank you for forwarding the draft environmental impact statement on the Nine Mile Point Nuclear Station Unit 1 for review. The following comments on the draft are based on suggestions by officials within the Public Health Service, H.E.W. Regional II Office and the H.E.W. Office of Environmental Affairs.

Our primary observation concerns the fact that the Nine Mile Point Nuclear Station Unit 1 is just one of three plants which are to operate essentially side by side on the southern shore of Lake Ontario. As stated in the introduction to the draft EIS, the applicant plans to construct a Unit 2 station adjacent to the Unit 1 site which will produce almost twice the amount of Unit 1's electrical power. In addition, the Power Authority of the State of New York is building the James A. Fitzpatrick Nuclear Plant 3300 feet east of the Unit 1 Station. All three plants are to utilize once-through cooling systems with lake water. It is therefore necessary that cumulative thermal effects be addressed. Likewise other cumulative effects of the three plants must be considered.

While the draft indicates that separate environmental statements have been prepared for these additional facilities, we have not received copies of them for review and have no way of knowing their content. We are unable therefore, to assess the environmental effects the proposed action will bring about in its actual operational context.

It would appear that a thorough analysis of the environmental impact of the Unit 1 Station requires consideration of the cumulative effects of all three nuclear plants including the effects of thermal discharges, gasious effluents, liquid effluents, releases of radioactive materials, fish impingement, transmission lines, as well as the effects of increased populations on human services. This may, for reasons unknown to us, be unnecessary,

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but, if so, the present limited approach should be justified in the statement.

Our more specific comments on the content of the draft EIS for the Unit 1 Station are as follows:

1) It is suggested that the upgraded liquid waste systems referenced in Sections 3.5.1.2., 3.5.1.4., and 3.5.1.6., and the gasious waste treatment system referenced in Section 3.5.2.2., should be operational before a full-term license is granted the Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation for the Nine Mile Point Nuclear Station Unit 1.

2) In Section 2.7.1., describing the Terrestrial Ecology of the site, it is stated that the southern shore of Lake Ontario is a major migration route used by many birds including the American osprey and the bald eagle. Subsequently it is said that a terrestrial survey of the site found that no rare or endangered species of plants or animals were present. There seems to be an inconsistency here as the American osprey and the bald eagle are both listed as endangered species and as the site of the Unit 1 Station makes up part of the southern shore.

3) The information provided on the operational effects of the Unit 1 Station on acquatic biota is lacking. It does not allow for a thorough assessment of the environmental impact of the proposed action and therefore, offsets the environmental effects to be weighed in the decision-making process.

4) We note that the once-through cooling system utilized by the Unit 1 Station fails to meet the current New York State thermal criteria. These criteria "limit the rise in surface temperature to 3°F over the ambient temperature within 300-feet radius or equivalent area from the point of discharge". (5.2.2.) Studies of the thermal effects of the Unit 1 Station have shown that at times "even at a depth of 5 feet, approximately one and a quarter of shoreline had temperatures greater than 5°F above ambient". (5.2.2.) Further information should be provided as to the effects, including health effects, of this rise in temperature above the standard. It would also be useful to address legal ramifications of failing to meet the criteria.

5) Given the information provided in the draft, we find that the Unit 1 Station fails to consistently meet the minimum Federal Water Quality Criteria for phosphorus concentrations. More precise information on phosphorus effects and the legal considerations of failing to meet the criteria should be included in the draft.

Paul Cromwell

cc: Dr. Ian Mitchell
Mr. William Matuszeski