



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

June 5, 2018

Ms. Monica Sikes  
Endangered Species Coordinator  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Louisiana Ecological Services Field Office  
646 Cajundome Blvd., Suite 400  
Lafayette, LA 70506-4290

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR CONCURRENCE WITH THE U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION'S DETERMINATION THAT LICENSE RENEWAL OF RIVER BEND STATION, UNIT 1, IS NOT LIKELY TO ADVERSELY AFFECT THE PALLID STURGEON

Dear Ms. Sikes:

With this letter, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff is forwarding you a draft environmental impact statement in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA); Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations (10 CFR) Part 51; and the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA). This draft is plant-specific Supplement 58 to NUREG-1437, "Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants, regarding River Bend Station, Unit 1 (River Bend). This letter refers to the enclosed document as the "Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement" (SEIS). The proposed action that the SEIS evaluates is renewal of the River Bend operating license for an additional 20-year period.

The purpose of this letter is twofold: (1) to request the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) concurrence with the NRC staff's determination that the proposed license renewal of River Bend is not likely to adversely affect the pallid sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus albus*); and (2) to inform the FWS of the NEPA public comment period associated with the proposed action.

#### Project Summary

River Bend is a one-unit nuclear power reactor located on a 3,342-acre property in West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana. Entergy Louisiana, LLC, a subsidiary of Entergy Corporation, owns the plant, and Entergy Nuclear Operations, Inc., also a subsidiary of Entergy Operations, operates the plant; the two subsidiaries are collectively referred to as "Entergy" in this letter. The NRC issued a facility operating license for River Bend on November 20, 1985, and commercial operation began in June 1986. River Bend's license authorizes Entergy to operate the plant for a 40-year period through August 29, 2025.

The River Bend site borders the east bank of the Mississippi River and lies 3 miles east-southeast of St. Francisville, Louisiana, and 24 miles north-northwest of the city of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. River Bend's closed-cycle (cooling-tower based) heat dissipation system withdraws makeup water from the Mississippi River at River Mile 262. Waste heat and comingled effluents are discharged to National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System

permitted Outfall 001, which then discharges to the river downstream of the intake at River Mile 262.4.

The NRC's Federal action is the decision whether to renew the River Bend operating license for an additional 20-year period. If NRC issues Entergy a renewed license, Entergy could continue to operate River Bend through August 29, 2045.

### Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

The enclosed SEIS<sup>1</sup> addresses the environmental impacts of the proposed Federal action and alternatives. Chapter 1 describes the NRC staff's environmental review process related to the proposed license renewal. Chapter 2 describes the proposed action (license renewal), the no-action alternative, and replacement power alternatives. Chapter 3 describes the affected environment, including terrestrial resources, aquatic resources, and ESA-protected species and critical habitats. Chapter 4 assesses impacts to these and other environmental resources. In Chapter 5, the NRC staff makes the preliminary recommendation that the adverse environmental impacts of River Bend license renewal are not so great that preserving the option of license renewal for energy-planning decisionmakers (through the NRC's issuance of a renewed license) would be unreasonable.

### ESA "Not Likely to Adversely Affect" Determination

As part of its environmental review, the NRC staff evaluated the potential impacts of River Bend license renewal on the pallid sturgeon, the only federally listed species identified in an official species list obtained through the FWS's Environmental Conservation Online System (ECOS) Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC) tool and confirmed through staff-level communications with FWS Louisiana Ecological Services Field Office.<sup>2,3</sup> In Section 3.8 of the enclosed SEIS, the NRC staff describes the action area, the relevant life history characteristics, available ecological studies, and potential for the pallid sturgeon to be present in the action area. In Section 4.8, the NRC staff evaluates the impacts of entrainment, impingement, thermal effects, exposure to radionuclides and other contaminants, and reduction in available prey on the pallid sturgeon. The NRC staff finds these impacts to be insignificant, discountable, or both. Accordingly, the NRC staff concludes that the proposed license renewal may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the pallid sturgeon.

The NRC staff submits the enclosed SEIS for your review and requests your concurrence with its determination that River Bend license renewal "may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect" the pallid sturgeon within 30 days of receipt of this letter in accordance with Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations (50 CFR) 402.12(j). I respectfully request that, if you are unable to make such a determination within this time, you contact Ms. Briana Grange, Biologist,

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<sup>1</sup> The draft SEIS can also be accessed on the NRC's website at: <https://www.nrc.gov/reactors/operating/licensing/renewal/applications/river-bend.html>.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Letter from FWS to NRC. Subject: List of threatened and endangered species that may occur in your proposed project location, and/or may be affected by your proposed project. Consultation Code: 04EL1000-2017-SLI-0965. August 30, 2017. ADAMS Accession No. [ML17242A116](#).

<sup>3</sup> The NRC staff used the IPaC system on April 5, 2018, to confirm that no additional species or habitats have been listed or are otherwise potentially present in the action area since the NRC staff generated the initial species list in August 2017.

of my staff by phone at 301-415-1042 or by e-mail at [briana.grange@nrc.gov](mailto:briana.grange@nrc.gov) to discuss an alternate review timeline.

You may address your ESA response to me by U.S. mail at the following address: Benjamin Beasley, Division of Materials and License Renewal, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, Mail Stop: OWFN-11-F01, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001. Please address any electronic correspondence to me at [benjamin.beasley@nrc.gov](mailto:benjamin.beasley@nrc.gov) and copy Briana Grange at [briana.grange@nrc.gov](mailto:briana.grange@nrc.gov).

#### NEPA Comment Period and Public Meetings

In addition to the above request for ESA concurrence, the NRC staff is seeking general public comments on the draft SEIS pursuant to NEPA through July 23, 2018. You may submit NEPA comments either online or via U.S. mail.

- Online: Go to the Federal Rulemaking Web site at <http://www.regulations.gov> and search for Docket ID NRC-2017-0141.
- U.S. mail: Address comments to May Ma, Office of Administration, Mail Stop: TWFN-7-A60M, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001.

Alternately, if you wish to include both your ESA response and NEPA comments in one letter, you may address both to me at the address identified above.

#### Conclusion

Should you need to discuss the requests made in this letter or any other matters related to River Bend and ESA Section 7 consultation, please contact Briana Grange.

Sincerely,

*/RA/*

Benjamin Beasley, Chief  
Environmental Review and NEPA Branch  
Division of Materials and License Renewal  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-458

Enclosure: Draft SEIS

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Monica Sikes, FWS ([monica\\_sikes@fws.gov](mailto:monica_sikes@fws.gov))  
Cary Lynn Perry, LNHP ([cperry@wlf.la.gov](mailto:cperry@wlf.la.gov))

**ADAMS Accession Nos.: Package: ML18095A163, letter: ML18095A164; Draft SEIS: ML18143B736**

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