



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

81-051

MAY 27 1981

The Honorable John Danforth  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

~~PRODUCTION STN-50-482~~



Dear Senator Danforth:

~~STN-50-483~~

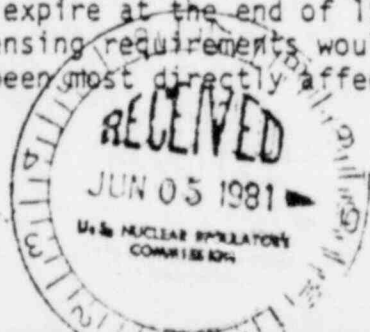
I am pleased to have this opportunity to respond to your inquiry of May 7, 1981 concerning the licensing schedule for the Wolf Creek and Callaway Nuclear Plants. The Commission shares your concerns about licensing delays. During the past several months, the Commission and its staff have spent considerable time in reviewing the licensing schedules for these plants and have undertaken various approaches to shorten them wherever possible.

For those plants nearest completion, the primary problem is the projected length of the hearing process and subsequent Commission review. At present, an operating license is not issued until the Appeals Board and the Commission review the Licensing Board decision. This review process takes about three months. The Commission has recently approved changes to its rules which will shorten this time by several months. This savings would be applicable to all impacted plants.

The Commission also believes it can compress the licensing schedule from an average of 18 months to approximately 10 months by tightening the time allowed for each part of the process and by providing firmer time management. In March, the Commission published for comment proposed rule changes which would help to accomplish this. These proposals, including the many comments received, are now under final consideration by the Commission. In addition, it is issuing a policy statement providing guidance to the Licensing Boards on conducting proceedings so as to expedite the process.

For plants due to be completed in 1983 and beyond, including the Wolf Creek Plant, the major action which would eliminate potential delay is early completion of staff reviews. Staff proposals to expedite staff reviews include resumed hiring, mandatory overtime, reallocation of existing resources and transfer of some scheduled projects from the licensing office, Nuclear Reactor Regulation, to other NRC offices. These changes will also help to reduce licensing delays in 1981 and 1982, although the exact time savings depend upon how quickly hiring, internal personnel transfers and shifts in ongoing projects can be accomplished.

On March 18, 1981, the Commission submitted proposed legislation to Congress which would allow it to authorize interim reactor operation for fuel loading and low-power operating and testing before the completion of a hearing. Such interim operation would save at least two months and, where the low power testing revealed a need for repairs or modifications, could save substantially more time. This proposed authority would expire at the end of 1983 thereby assuring that this adjustment to our licensing requirements would be temporary and confined to those plants which have been most directly affected by the Commission's post-TMI action.



DS03  
5/10

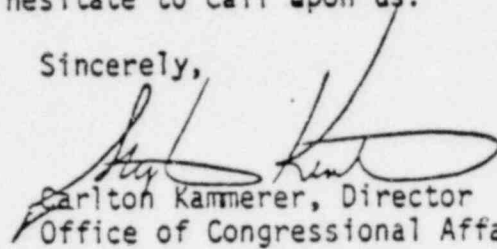
8106080 324 U

MAY 27 1981

There remains a great deal of work to do prior to issuance of the operating license for Wolf Creek. The applicant estimates that construction will be completed in April 1983. The staff currently projects that its review will be finished in time for the public hearing to begin in October 1982 with an NRC licensing decision projected for April 1983. This would be in sufficient time to meet the construction completion date estimate. The staff projects an NRC decision date of October 1982 for the Callaway plant. This projection coincides with the applicator's estimated date for completion of October 1982.

If you have further questions with respect to the licensing of the Wolf Creek or Callaway facilities, please do not hesitate to call upon us.

Sincerely,



Carlton Kammerer, Director  
Office of Congressional Affairs