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Big Rock Point Plant: 10289 US-31 North, Charlevoix, MI 49729 (517) 547-8354

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James S. Rang  
Project Manager  
BRP Decommissioning  
Plan Team

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
NRC

March 9, 1994

Secretary  
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
ATTN: Docketing and Service Branch  
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Sirs:

We are pleased to provide the following comments relating to the Draft Radiological Criteria for Decommissioning, 10 CFR Part 20, dated 01/26/94:

1) Part 20.1404(a)(2) -

The proposed goal not to exceed background or 3 millirem/yr should be deleted.

The proposed goal for decommissioning (3 millirem/yr) is not a measurable value. It is more than an order of magnitude below one standard deviation of background variation, and only 1% of U.S. average TEDE from background sources (Ref: NCRP Report 94). This goal would be dependent totally upon assumptions of the dose calculations, and could not be verified. It is not reasonable that licensees be expected to expend significant resources to lower doses to unverifiable levels.

Determination of site specific background on a nuclide-by-nuclide basis will be extremely expensive (millions of dollars per site) for site characterization and site release surveys for nuclides where only laboratory analyses, including chemical separations can be expected to reach background levels (C-14, Ni-63, Ni-59, Fe-55, Pu-238, Pu-239, Pu-241, and all other transuranics present as background fallout radioactivity).

2) Part 20.1402 and 20.1404(b) -

The proposed limit of 15 millirem/yr should be replaced by a limit of 100 millirem/yr, consistent with the balance of 10CFR20.

The limit proposed for decommissioning (15 millirem/yr) also is below limits of detection for many dose measurement techniques. This proposed limit also is below levels recommended by the ICRP and NCRP for the public.

We continue to recommend that a 100 millirem/yr limit, subject to the principle of maintaining doses as low as reasonably achievable (ALARA) below that limit, be applied to decommissioned facilities as it is to operating facilities. The NRC has not provided any convincing arguments as to why there should be a lower limit applied to decommissioning. Indeed, the proposal that dose not exceed 100 millirem/yr upon loss of

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institutional control for the restricted release case (20.1405(d)) acknowledges the reasonableness of that level of protection.

The nuclear industry has demonstrated that ALARA practices are effective in reducing doses well below established NRC limits. Both occupational and public doses currently are being maintained at small fractions of their respective limits. If a goal or screening level for appropriate ALARA application were to be established, it should be in the potentially measurable range of 15 to 25 millirem/yr total effective dose equivalent as recommended in ICRP-60.

3) Part 20.1406-1407 -

These two sections should be deleted.

Procedures currently exist for public notification and opportunity for input by interested parties, including ability to request public hearing. Addition of a new and potentially litigious route for public input through a required body such as the site specific advisory board (SSAB) is both unnecessary and an unacceptable impediment to the decommissioning process.

4) Part 20.1003 Definition of Residual Radioactivity -

The final phrase "...or discharged from the site in accordance with 10 CFR Part 20" should be deleted.

Due to the inappropriately low limit/goal proposals of 20.1402 and 20.1404, radioactivity released at currently allowable levels in effluents are likely to require offsite remediation at the time of decommissioning. While the wording in the first part of the definition implies on site radioactivity (the term "at the site" is used), this final phrase implies offsite radioactivity (the term "discharged from the site" is used).

As applied to effluents discharged from the site, the definition's inclusion of the catchall term "and other media" would include living organisms. Thus, fish, crayfish, shrimp, shellfish, etc. with detectable radioactivity within waters at some distance from a licensed site would be candidates for remediation. At near-background levels, it is doubtful that the source of activity in a mobile species could be identified (another NRC licensee, a DOE facility or in the case of the Great Lakes, Canadian facilities). We note that radioactivity from such facilities is not considered as background in the definition of Background Radiation, unless it has been released under accident conditions.

5) Concept of "critical group" and Completion of NUREG/CR-5512 Guidance -

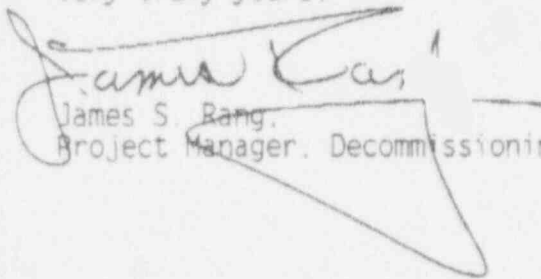
We support NRC adoption of the concept of the critical group, and that dose limits should apply to the average member of that group.

We encourage the NRC to complete work on NUREG/CR-5512 Volumes 2 and 3 prior to the date comments will be due on the published proposed rule.

If guidance for calculation of doses is not available by that time, it will be impossible for us to assess, prior to implementation of the final rule, the impact of the dose limits upon our decommissioning costs or schedule.

We thank you for this opportunity to comment on the proposed rule at this early stage. The rule is of great potential impact to us, as we have just begun site characterization surveys in support of a final decommissioning plan for Big Rock Point. Costs in terms of both final survey requirements and waste volumes at the extremely low total effective dose equivalent goal and limit proposed by this rule are expected to significantly increase our funding requirements. However, because the guidance on dose calculation and survey techniques applicable to these new limits has not yet been provided, we are unable to quantify the impact of the rule at this time.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James S. Bang". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

James S. Bang,  
Project Manager, Decommissioning Plan Team

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No. Pages: 4

Message: Comments relating to the Draft Radiological Criteria for  
Decommissioning, 10 CFR Part 20, dated 01/26/94. Hard copy will  
be mailed.

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