

**Frequently Asked Questions about U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's
Decision to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the
Westinghouse Columbia Fuel Fabrication Facility License Renewal Review**

Q. Why did the NRC staff decide to pursue an environmental impact statement for the license renewal?

A. The NRC issued an environmental assessment (EA) for the Westinghouse license renewal in October of 2019. An EA can result in a finding of no significant impact or a determination to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The NRC received and evaluated new data that was provided in March 2020 by Westinghouse in an Interim Remedial Investigation Data Summary Report ([ML20063P321](#)). The Report contained the interim results of an ongoing investigation conducted under a Consent Agreement with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) to comprehensively assess potential environmental impacts from current and historical operations, including additional assessment of known impacts. In the Report, Westinghouse concluded there were still data gaps that require additional investigation, and the source of Technetium-99 contamination is still unknown and requires more investigation. In addition, the NRC staff noted that the Report identified (a) a new plume of uranium contamination in onsite groundwater, the source of which is unknown; (b) the detection of volatile organic compounds in floodplain wells downgradient of the Sunset Lakes; (c) potentiometric data indicating groundwater flow west of the sanitary lagoon; and (d) indications of possible connectivity between the upper and lower surficial aquifer. Based on NRC's independent evaluation of the data provided by Westinghouse, the NRC determined that the FONSI in the draft EA can no longer be supported and therefore, would proceed with an EIS in accordance with its regulations at [10 CFR 51.31\(a\)](#). The NRC informed Westinghouse of its decision by letter dated June 5, 2020 ([ML20150A289](#)).

Q: How will the results of the EIS be used to inform the NRC's renewal decision?

A. The EIS will evaluate and disclose the potential environmental impacts of continued operation of the Westinghouse facility for an additional 40 years to inform the NRC and the public. The decision to renew the operating license will be based on the staff's safety review, documented in a Safety Evaluation Report and the environmental review, documented in the EIS.

Q: What opportunities for public involvement will be available during the EIS process?

A. The public will be able to submit written comments on the scope of the EIS during the scoping period, and on the draft EIS after it is published. The NRC expects to publish a *Federal Register* notice later this summer to initiate its scoping process.

Q. What did the NRC do with comments they received from the public on the draft Environmental Assessment (EA)? What were the issues raised by the comments?

A. The comments received on the draft EA are available in ADAMS at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html> under Docket No. 07001151 and on www.regulations.gov under Docket ID: NRC-2015-0039.

Commenters on the draft EA provided comments on the environmental review, safety and performance concerns, and general oversight of the facility. Comments included requests that the NRC extend the comment period and prepare an EIS; raised concerns about contamination from spills and leaks and Westinghouse's performance; and length of the license renewal term.

Comments received on the draft EA will be considered in preparing the EIS.