

UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSIONCONSUMERS ENERGY COMPANYDOCKET NO. 50-155BIG ROCK POINT NUCLEAR PLANTENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FINDING OFNO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) is considering issuance of an exemption from certain requirements of its regulations to Facility Operating License No. DPR-6, issued to Consumers Energy Company (Consumers or the licensee) for the possession of the Big Rock Point Nuclear Plant (BRP) located in Charlevoix County, Michigan.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTIdentification of the Proposed Action:

The proposed exemption would reduce or remove selected physical security requirements of 10 CFR Part 73.

The proposed action is in accordance with the licensee's application dated November 12, 1998.

Need for the Proposed Action:

On June 26, 1997, Consumers certified that it would permanently cease reactor power operations at its BRP facility. On August 30, 1997, the reactor was shut down. By letter dated September 23, 1997, the licensee certified the permanent removal of all fuel from the reactor vessel. In accordance with 10 CFR 50.82(a)(2), upon docketing of

the certifications, Facility Operating License No. DPR-6 no longer authorizes operation of the reactor or emplacement or retention of the fuel in the reactor vessel. In this permanently shutdown and defueled condition, the facility poses a reduced risk to public health and safety.

The proposed action is required to allow the licensee to implement physical security plans appropriate to the permanently shutdown and defueled condition of the BRP facility.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action:

The Commission has completed its evaluation of the proposed action and concludes that the granting of the exemption from selected portions of 10 CFR Part 73 is acceptable, as described in the safety evaluation accompanying issuance of the exemption.

The proposed action will not increase the probability or consequences of accidents, no changes are being made in the types of any effluents that may be released off site, and there is no significant increase in occupational or public radiation exposure. Therefore, there are no significant radiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

With regard to potential non-radiological impacts, the proposed action does not involve any historical sites. It does not affect non-radiological plant effluents and has no other environmental impact. Therefore, there are no significant non-radiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

Accordingly, the Commission concludes that there are no significant environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

Alternatives to the Proposed Action:

As an alternative to the proposed action, the staff considered denial of the proposed action (i.e., the "no-action" alternative). Denial of the application would result in no change in current environmental impacts. Further, the "no-action" alternative would require Consumers to maintain and implement physical security plans required of an operating reactor plant. Such a plan would represent a burden on the licensee and not enhance the protection of the environment. Denial of the application would result in no change in current environmental impacts. The environmental impacts of the proposed action and the alternative action are similar.

Alternative Use of Resources:

This action does not involve the use of resources not previously considered in BRP's Environmental Report for Decommissioning, dated February 27, 1995.

Agencies and Persons Consulted:

In accordance with its stated policy, on December 29, 1998, the staff consulted with the Michigan State official, Robert D. Skowronek, Acting Chief Radiological Protection Section, Drinking Water and Radiological Protection Division, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, regarding the environmental impact of the proposed action. The State official had no comments.

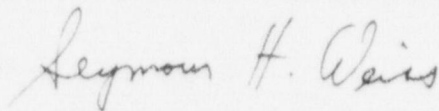
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

On the basis of the environmental assessment, the Commission concludes that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, the Commission has determined not to prepare an environmental impact statement for the proposed action.

For further details with respect to the proposed exemption, see the licensee's letter dated November 12, 1998, which is available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room, The Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, NW., Washington, DC 20555 and at the Local Public Document Room, North Central Michigan College Library, 1515 Howard Street, Petoskey, MI 49770.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 13th day of January 1999.

FOR THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Seymour H. Weiss".

Seymour H. Weiss, Director
Non-Power Reactors and Decommissioning
Project Directorate
Division of Reactor Program Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation