

Corrected Transcript

Official Transcript of Proceedings

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Title: Public Scoping Meeting to Discuss the Review and Potential Update of NUREG-1437, Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants - Final Report (LR GEIS)

Docket Number: (n/a)

Location: webinar

Date: Thursday, August 27, 2020

Work Order No.: NRC-1018

Pages 1-27

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING TO DISCUSS THE REVIEW AND
POTENTIAL UPDATE OF NUREG-1437,
GENERIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR LICENSE
RENEWAL OF NUCLEAR PLANTS - FINAL REPORT (LR GEIS)

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THURSDAY

AUGUST 27, 2020

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The Meeting convened via Webex, at 1:30
p.m. EDT, Lance Rakovan, Facilitator, presiding.

PRESENT:

LANCE J. RAKOVAN, NMSS/MSST/MSTB, Facilitator

JENNIFER A. DAVIS, NMSS/REFS/ERNRB

ROBERT B. ELLIOTT, NMSS/REFS/ERLRB

KEVIN T. FOLK, NMSS/REFS/ERLRB

BRIANA A. GRANGE, NMSS/REFS/ERLRB

KELLEE L. JAMERSON, NMSS/MSST/MSEB

NANCY X. MARTINEZ, NMSS/REFS/ERLRB

JEFFREY J. RIKHOFF, NMSS/REFS/ERLRB

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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

1:36 p.m.

MR. RAKOVAN: Hello, everyone. My name is Lance Rakovan. I'm a project manager at the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, or NRC, as you'll hear it referred to today, and it's my pleasure to facilitate today's meeting.

I'm going to do my best to help make this meeting worthwhile for everyone and we hope you'll help us out with that.

The purpose of this scoping meeting is to provide you with an opportunity to give us your comments on the review and possible update of the Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants, or NUREG-1437. For those of you not familiar with the term Generic Environmental Impact Statement, you'll hear it referred to as G-E-I-S or GEIS today.

Today's public scoping meeting is just one way that you can participate in this commenting process, and you'll be hearing more about the various ways you can participate soon.

The meeting will essentially have two

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parts: first, we'll hear a presentation from NRC staff on the topics at hand, information we think is important for you to understand. You can find the link to the slides we are using at the information page for this meeting on the NRC's website.

Nancy, can you provide a link to the slides on the chat feature on the Webex? Thanks.

We're going to try to keep the presentations short so we can get to the real reason we're conducting this meeting, which is to listen to you. If you would like to make a comment when we get to that part of the meeting, you can send it in using the chat feature of Webex. Please be careful you send it to everyone. Or you can let our operator Lynn know and she'll unmute your phone line and when the time is appropriate, she'll let you know how to do that.

We are transcribing tonight's meeting, so to make sure we fully capture your comments. You can help us get a clean transcript by identifying yourself and any group you're with if you do choose to speak. You can also help us by making sure that you minimize background noise if you do speak.

One thing I'm hoping you'll take a moment to fill out is our public meeting feedback form. You

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can link to this form from the page from this meeting on the NRC's website and fill it out online. Your opinion on how this meeting went will help us improve upon future meetings. So, if you do have a moment, please let us know what you think.

I'd like to take a moment now to introduce some of the NRC staff in attendance today.

Jennifer Davis will be giving our presentation. She's a project manager for the GEIS. She has 18 years of environmental project management experience involving various licensing projects including as project manager on the previous review of the GEIS.

Jeff Rikhoff is a senior environmental scientist and is the technical issues lead on this review of the GEIS. Jeff has many years' experience conducting environmental reviews with the NRC and other federal agencies including as technical lead for the previous 10-year review and update of the GEIS.

Robert Elliott is the Chief of the Environmental Review License Renewal Branch in the NRC's Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards. That branch is responsible for preparing the update to the GEIS.

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And Kevin Folk is a lead environmental technical reviewer for the GEIS. —He's an environmental scientist with over 25 years of experience in environmental impact assessments including working on the previous GEIS review.

With that I'm going to go ahead and hand things over to Jennifer Davis to give the presentation for the meeting. After that we'll move onto the public comment part and I'll come back and let you know how we're going to handle that.

So, Jen, can you go ahead and take it over?

MS. DAVIS: Thank you, Lance. First off, we want to thank everyone for participating today. We really appreciate you taking the time to meet with us to provide us with your comments.

Again, my name is Jennifer Davis and I am the project manager for the GEIS review and I'm here today to explain how the NRC plans to review and possibly update the GEIS.

Over the course of this presentation, we'll be explaining the purpose of the GEIS, describing the review process, summarize the results of NRC's preliminary review and tell you how you can

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submit your comments and any proposals for changes that you feel should be made to the GEIS.

Next slide, please? First let me give you a little background information. As part of the License Renewal Program initiated in the late-1980s, the NRC undertook a comprehensive review to identify environmental impacts that could result from continued ~~operation~~ of nuclear power plants beyond the 40-year operating license term. The results of this comprehensive review were published in 1996 as the "Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants," also known as the GEIS.

Through the review the Commission determined that certain environmental impacts were essentially the same or similar for all nuclear power plants, and as such could be addressed generically in a GEIS. A total of 92 license renewal environmental impact issues were identified in 1996 as a result of this comprehensive review.

The primary purpose for the GEIS is to identify all of the environmental effects of license renewal and to evaluate those environmental impacts considered to be generic or common to all nuclear power plants. The GEIS also determines issues that

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need to be addressed in site-specific nuclear plant reviews in supplements that are prepared to the GEIS.

The results of the comprehensive review are summarized as findings on NEPA issues for license renewal of nuclear plants in Table B-1 of the NRC's regulations at 10 CFR Part 51.

In these regulations the Commission also indicated its intent to review and update the findings in Table B-1 and the license renewal GEIS every 10 years. This meeting today is part of the process to determine whether or not the NRC should revise the GEIS and update the summary of findings in Table B-1, but most importantly is to receive your comments and proposals for the areas of the GEIS that need to be updated.

The GEIS has been a very effective -- has been very effective in focusing license renewal environmental reviews on important site-specific issues and concerns at each nuclear power plant site, thereby increasing the overall efficiency of license renewal environmental reviews.

Lessons learned and knowledge gained about environmental issues of public concern during these site-specific reviews are also considered when we are

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updating the GEIS. Public comments are also used to help validate the existing environmental issues and to identify new ones. In revising the GEIS the NRC staff will consider the need to modify, add to, consolidate or delete any of the environmental issues currently evaluated in the GEIS.

As a result of the previous 10-year comprehensive review, which was completed in 2013, the NRC carried~~s~~ forward 78 of the original 92 environmental impact issues for detailed consideration of the GEIS. The 2013 review did not eliminate any of the environmental issues evaluated in the 1996 GEIS, but certain issues were consolidated or grouped according to similarities.

Next slide, please. This slide shows the range of environmental impact issues addressed by the GEIS and considered during every license renewal environmental review. The GEIS discusses the impacts for each of these environmental resource areas shown on this slide.

Next slide, please. As previously noted, Table B-1 in 10 CFR Part 51 summarizes the findings on environmental impact issues analyzed in the GEIS. So, in other words, the GEIS is the technical basis for

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the summary of findings from Table B-1.

As many of you may already know, the issues in Table B-1 are categorized as either Category 1 or Category 2. Category 1 issues are considered generic as the impacts have been found to be essentially the same or similar at all nuclear plants.

Category 2 issues are impact issues that need to be addressed in nuclear plant site-specific environmental reviews.

Category 1 impacts are addressed in the GEIS and are usually not evaluated in site-specific environmental reviews unless new and significant information has been found that differs from the findings presented in the GEIS.

Next slide, please. In reviewing the GEIS the NRC is also considering whether the summary of findings on environmental impact issues listed in Table B-1 needs to be updated, modified or deleted. We are considering whether new environmental impact issues need to be added and evaluated in the GEIS including issues identified during nuclear plant site-specific environmental reviews as well as changes to environmental laws and regulations. We are also considering whether to reorganize the issues in the

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GEIS to clarify and simplify impact discussions and streamline environmental impact analyses.

In addition, we would also review the organization and format of the GEIS. Most importantly the review will consider public comments we receive today, during the scoping period, as well as public comments previously received during nuclear plant site-specific license renewal and environmental reviews.

Next slide. This slide illustrates the process for reviewing and updating the GEIS along with opportunities for public involvement. The NRC issued a Notice of Intent to conduct scoping for the 10-year review of the GEIS on August 4th. This initiated a 90-day public scoping period. Public comments received today and during the scoping period will aid the Commission's decision on whether to proceed with updating the GEIS and rule.

At the end of the scoping period, the NRC staff will review all public comments and determine whether to proceed with this review and update. Should the determination be to proceed, the NRC staff would develop a rulemaking plan for the Commission's review and approval explaining the reasons for

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updating the GEIS and the rule. If approved by the Commission the staff would begin to revise the GEIS and draft proposed rule changes.

Once completed and approved by the Commission, the draft GEIS and proposed rule will be issued for public review and comment. The staff will collect and address all comments received during that particular comment period and will make any necessary revisions to the GEIS and the rule. The Commission will then review and approve the final GEIS and rule.

Next slide, please. Today we are requesting your help in identifying environmental issues and concerns needed to be evaluated and updated in the GEIS. We also welcome any proposals for changes that you feel should be made to the GEIS and in the license renewal environmental reviews.

Next slide, please. The NRC staff has completed a preliminary review and identified several potential areas needing to be addressed or updated in the GEIS.

Greenhouse gas emissions. The staff identified this is an area needing to be updated because the Council on Environmental Quality issued proposed guidance on June 26th, 2019 titled "Draft

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National Environmental Policy Act Guidance on Consideration of Greenhouse Gas Emissions'' which explains how federal agencies should address greenhouse gas emissions in its NEPA analyses.

The GEIS already discusses the environmental impacts of greenhouse gas emissions, so the discussion would be updated to ensure consistency with CEQ's proposed guidance. Additionally, NRC staff is also considering whether to evaluate greenhouse gas emissions as a new Category 1 or 2 Table B-1 NEPA issue.

Next Table B-1 NEPA issue: groundwater quality degradation, plants with cooling ponds in salt marshes, eaffects two nuclear power plants.

The NRC staff is determining whether this issue should be consolidated with groundwater quality degradation resulting from water withdrawal and expanded to consider environmental effects of saltwater intrusion and encroachment on adjacent surface water quality.

Next the NRC staff is also considering whether the existing NEPA issue in Table B-1 titled Threatened, Endangered, and Protected Species and Essential Fish Habitat, should be divided into

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separate inter-agency consultation requirements based on federal statutes that afford certain species or habitats special status or protections. Some of these requirements do not apply to all nuclear plants. For example, essential fish habitat.

The staff is also considering whether the issue's heading should be changed to federally protected species and habitats to exclude protection categories that don't require inter-agency consultation or non-federal protection categories such as state-listed species. It also would be looking at clarifying the meaning of the word protected.

Additionally, the staff is also considering whether a new finding should be added for the protection of marine resources and to address requirements for inter-agency consultation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act.

Next slide, please. Subsequent license renewal. Based on the preliminary review the staff has determined that there is a need to clarify that the findings of the GEIS also apply to subsequent or second license renewal environmental reviews. The NRC staff is considering revising the GEIS to clarify that

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the generic effects of license renewals are not limited to the first renewal and can also be applied to subsequent renewals.

The next area deals with the incorporation of updated guidance. In February 2019, the U.S. Department of Energy updated its Graded Approach for Evaluating Radiation Doses to Aquatic and Terrestrial Biota, a standard for evaluating essential effects of radionuclides on biota. The NRC is considering making conforming changes based on this new guidance to the GEIS.

The NRC staff would also like to endorse Nuclear Energy Institute guidance, NEI 17-04 Revision 1, Model for Subsequent License Renewal, or SLR, New and Significant Assessment Approach for SAMA and in the GEIS. This guidance explains how license renewal applicants should identify and consider new and significant information with respect to a prior severe accident mitigation alternatives, or SAMA, analysis.

The staff is also considering incorporating new information from the revised Biological Effects of Ionizing Radiation, or BEIR VII, report titled Human Health Risks from Exposure to

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Low Levels of Ionizing Radiation'' which was prepared by the National Research Council Committee.

In addition, in revising the GEIS the NRC staff would also address subsequent license renewal review situations where licensees did not use NEI Guidance 05-01 Revision A ~~with~~''s Severe ~~a~~Accident ~~m~~Mitigation ~~a~~Alternatives, (SAMA), ~~a~~Analysis ~~e~~Guidance ~~d~~Document''s during previous SAMA reviews.

And finally on this slide, the NRC staff has also determined that there is a need to better explain the meaning and purpose of new and significant information in the GEIS for clarity and consistency in nuclear plant site-specific license renewal environmental reviews.

Next slide, please. Additional issues include addressing environmental impacts of new large light water reactors holding an operating license, construction permit or combined license issued after June 30th of 1995. Currently NRC regulations limit the findings in Table B-1 to only those nuclear plants licensed to be constructed and operated prior to June 30th, 1995. Vogtle Units 3 and 4 are nearing completion and the owner-licensee could at some point in the future consider applying for license renewal.

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The NRC staff is considering whether to revise the GEIS to address large light water reactors permitted for construction after this date.

The NRC staff is also considering the future utility of the GEIS. For example, an advanced reactor or small modular reactor licensee could in the future apply for license renewal. The staff is considering whether to include license renewal environmental reviews for these facilities in the GEIS.

And finally, the staff is considering environmental impacts of license renewals beyond the 20-year license renewal term. The Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as amended allows the NRC to grant nuclear power plant operating licenses for up to 40 years. NRC regulations allow for the renewal of operating reactor licenses for an additional 20 years beyond the current licensing period. The NRC staff is in the early stages of evaluating whether to extend the operating reactor license renewal from 20 years to a maximum of 40 years. So, the question is, should the impact analyses in the GEIS consider environmental impacts of license renewal beyond the current regulatory limit of 20 years up to a maximum of 40

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years?

This briefly summarizes the results of NRC's preliminary review of the GEIS. The NRC invites the public to comment on the results of its review and requests proposals for other areas of the GEIS that should also be updated.

It is also important to note that the NRC is reviewing the Council on Environmental Quality's July 16th, 2020 final rule which updates the ~~''#~~Regulations ~~±~~Implementing the ~~p~~Procedural ~~p~~Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act'' to determine its effect on the GEIS.

Next slide, please. There are multiple ways to comment on the NRC's review, and you only need to submit comments by one of the methods listed here on this slide. You can email your comments directly to our project email address at licenserenewal-geis@nrc.gov. You can also submit your comments through regulations.gov by searching for docket ID NRC-2020-0175. Written comments can also be submitted by mail to the NRC's Office of Administration at the address provided here on this slide.

If you choose to submit written comments, we do ask specifically that you state that you're

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commenting on the license renewal GEIS and reference the appropriate docket ID number in your correspondence. That makes it easier for our administrative staff to route your comments to us in a timely fashion. However, please note that due to COVID-19, providing comments via our project email address or through regulations.gov are the preferred methods as there are currently limited staff in the NRC buildings at the moment.

We would also like to remind you that comments will not be edited to remove any personal or identifying contact information, so do not include any information in your comments that you do not want publicly disclosed.

And finally, you can also provide comments at today's meeting. As Lance mentioned, we do have a court reporter here who is helping us record all of the comments received today.

Next slide, please. As a reminder, the deadline for submitting comments is November 2nd of 2020. At the conclusion of scoping, the NRC staff will review all public comments and proposals to determine whether to proceed with the update. If the NRC determines that an update is not necessary, a

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notice of this decision will be published in the Federal Register.

Next slide. This slide provides contact information in case you have any questions or need to reach out to NRC staff to discuss any concerns about the GEIS review. Again, all comments received during scoping will be considered.

And with that I'll turn the meeting back over to Lance. Thank you.

MR. RAKOVAN: Okay. Thank you, Jen.

I'd like to take a moment now to see if anyone has any clarifying questions on Jen's presentation. So let's stick to questions that folks might have -- maybe they didn't quite understand something that Jen covered or had a question that came from that.

If you want to use the chat feature of Webex, please send your question to everyone.

And, Lynn, if you could, can you please let folks know how they could get your attention to get un-muted?

(No response.)

MR. RAKOVAN: Lynn, are you with us?

(No response.)

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MR. RAKOVAN: All right. I believe that folks should hit *0 if they would like to get Lynn's attention to have their line un-muted.

OPERATOR: My apologies. My line was on mute.

MR. RAKOVAN: Oh, that's okay. Go ahead.

OPERATOR: If you hit *0, I can un-mute your line and then I will bring you into that in order for you to have any questions today. Thank you.

MR. RAKOVAN: Okay. Again if you have any clarifying questions on Ms. Davis' presentation, please send them in on the chat to everyone or hit *0.

We'll pause for a moment to see if any come in and then we will move on once it's time.

Okay. Lynn, any takers?

OPERATOR: There are no questions at this time.

MR. RAKOVAN: Okay. So I'll go ahead and open up the floor to any questions or comments. If you'd like to provide a comment on the GEIS, something that you think NRC staff should consider, et cetera. Again, you can follow the same pattern that we just announced for the questions. You can send in a chat through the Webex. Please send it to everyone. Or

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you can hit *0 and Lynn will un-mute your line. We'll take a moment to let folks hit their buttons or type of their questions.

Lynn, any takers?

OPERATOR: There are no questions at this time.

MR. RAKOVAN: All right. Seeing nothing on the chat as well. So let's go ahead and we'll hold for a little while just to give people a chance.

MS. DAVIS: Also, if anybody has any questions about our review process or the technical review that we've conducted today, please feel free to ask those questions now.

OPERATOR: Excuse me, Mr. Rakovan. We do have someone that has a question. One moment, please.

MR. RAKOVAN: Hello? Are you there?

(No response.)

MS. DAVIS: Do you have a question?

MR. RAKOVAN: Lynn, do we have the line unmuted?

(No response.)

MR. RAKOVAN: You can also address questions that are entered into the chat box.

All right. Jen, I'm going to drop off to

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see if I can get Lynn's attention. Okay?

MS. DAVIS: Okay. Thank you.

Again, if anybody has any questions, you can put them in the chat feature or press *0 to have the operator open your line.

MR. [FOLKRAKOVAN](#): Any questions on our -- on the NRC staff's preliminary review or on schedule or on the path forward for the review and possible update?

MS. DAVIS: If you need time to digest the information that we have provided today, we do have another public meeting this evening. It starts at 6:30 pm Eastern Standard Time. Also, if you do not feel comfortable with speaking today, you can also submit your comments through the other methods that we provided earlier.

Okay. It looks like we do have a question in the chat. It's from Maggie Sager.

What are the current guidelines for agency-specific consultation with regard to aquatic resources and aquatic protected species?

Jeff, would you like to take a stab at this one?

MR. RIKHOFF: We follow all the standard

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consultation processes so, unless something specific is mentioned -- that's broad because every plant -- not all plants are located on -- along rivers or along the ocean. So different agencies are involved with that. So, unless we get a little bit more clarification, I don't know how best to respond. Thanks.

MS. DAVIS: What I can also say is that we do follow the Endangered Species Act. We do initiate for site-specific review -- Section 7 consultation under the ESA. And it does depend on where the power plant is located. Some are located on rivers, some are located on the ocean, some have manmade impoundments. So it is -- the nature of the consultation is shaped by where the plant is located.

MR. FOLKRIKHOF: So as appropriate, we consult with both Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries as well.

MS. DAVIS: Okay. Maggie has -- Maggie Sager has a follow-up question. Sorry. I guess my question is what the change will be that is being suggested with regards to essential fish habitat particularly.

MR. RIKHOFFFOLK: I think I can answer

that, Jenny.

So the change specifically would make EFH consultation a separate and distinct and what we call a Category 2 issue, or site-specific issue.

Oh, Briana is offering to respond to this in detail.

MS. DAVIS: Yes, Briana Grange is our staff ecologist and she -- I guess if you unmute your -- if you can get your line to be unmuted, Briana -- I think if you hit *0 the operator could open your line for you.

MR. ~~RIKHOF~~FOLK: Or you can just chat -- add to the chat box, if you'd like.

MS. DAVIS: Indeed. Yes, so I think what we were suggesting is there could be a change to the existing Table B-1 issue where we would focus on the federal inter-agency statutes and there could -- we either could expand the number of Category 2 issues that are applicable to that. One could be ESA-related. The other is EFH-related.

MR. FOLK~~RIKHOF~~: Right. Right now they're just lumped together.

MS. DAVIS: Right, whereas now they're lumped together in one Table B-1, Category 2 area.

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Yes, thank you, Maggie. Sorry for the convoluted response there, but --

MR. RAKOVAN: Great. Thank you.

MS. DAVIS: Are there any other questions?

Oh, thank you, Briana.

Briana just chimed that our response was correct.

MR. RAKOVAN: I think we're having a little bit of trouble with the phone lines unfortunately, so sending in questions or comments through the Webex is probably the better way at this point, unfortunately.

MR. [FOLKRIKHOFF](#): Yes, thank you for that, Briana.

Briana Grange is our subject matter expert in this area, so -- and, Maggie, please feel free to reach out to Briana directly.

MS. DAVIS: Okay. Are there any more questions for us today?

(No response.)

MS. DAVIS: Again, if you have a question you can enter it into the chat feature, otherwise the operator can unmute your line if you hit *0.

MR. RAKOVAN: Any questions or comments

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for additional issues that you would like the NRC staff to consider in the review and update?

(No response.)

MR. RAKOVAN: Anything you think we've missed or perhaps mis-clarified?

(No response.)

MR. RAKOVAN: Lynn, do we have anyone on the phone line who's asked to be unmuted, assuming we can?

OPERATOR: No one has signaled at this time.

MS. DAVIS: Okay. Well, if you don't have any questions now, you can also participate in this evening's session. Again it starts at 6:30 in the evening, Eastern Standard Time.

Okay. Kellee, can we put the comment slide back up? Thank you.

Okay. Again, seeing as how nobody -- I think we don't have any comments and no other questions.

So we'll go ahead and we'll close out the meeting by first thanking everyone for attending and participating today. We really appreciate you taking time out of your schedules to meet with us today. And

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if you have any questions or comments, you can submit via various ways. You can email your comments directly to licenser renewal-geis@nrc.gov. You can also submit comments to us through [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov). Just make sure you cite the appropriate docket ID number, NRC-2020-0175. You can also mail comments to the Office of Administration at the address provided on this slide.

And again you can also provide -- in addition to this meeting, we have one this evening. So as a reminder this public scoping period concludes on November the 2nd. And if you have any other comments or questions for us, please forward them onto us. Thanks again, everyone, for your time today.

MR. RAKOVAN: Okay. I believe with that, our meeting is adjourned. Thank you so much, everyone.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 2:12 p.m.)

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