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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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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 6:30
p.m. EDT, Lance Rakovan, Facilitator, presiding.

PRESENT:

LANCE J. RAKOVAN, Facilitator

JENNIFER A. DAVIS, NMSS/REFS/ERNRB

ROBERT B. ELLIOTT, NMSS/REFS/ERLRB

KEVIN T. FOLK, 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

6:35 p.m.

MR. RAKOVAN: Thank you so much. Good evening, everyone. My name is Lance Rakovan. I am a project manager at the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, or NRC as you'll hear it referred to today. It is my pleasure to facilitate today's meeting. I'm gGoing to try to do my best to 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 Licensed 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 hear more about the various ways you can participate soon.

This meeting will essentially have two parts. First, we'll hear a presentation from NRC

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staff on the topics at hand -- information we think is important for you to understand. You can find a link to the slides we are using at the information page for this meeting on the NRC's website. But Nancy, if you could provide a link to the slides in the Webex chat, I would appreciate that. Thank you.

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. Once we get to that point of the meeting, if you'd like to make a comment or ask a question, you can send it in using the chat feature on Webex. Please send it to everyone. Or you can let the operator know that you'd like your phone line to be unmuted, and our operator, Jennifer, will let you know when that is going to happen.

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

One item I am hoping you will take a

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moment to fill out is our public meeting feedback form. And you can link to this form from the page for this meeting, again, on the NRC's website. And you can fill it out online. Your opinion on how this meeting went will help us improve upon future meetings. So please take a moment to let us know what you think.

I'd like to take a moment to introduce some of the NRC staff that are in attendance today. Jennifer Davis is the project manager for the GEIS. She has 18 years of ~~an~~ environmental project management experience, involving various licensing projects including the 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 of experience in conducting environmental reviews for 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. This is the branch that is responsible for preparing the update to the GEIS. And finally,

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Kevin Folk is a lead environmental ~~technician~~ technical reviewer for the GEIS. He is an environmental scientist with over 25 years of experience in environmental impact assessment, including working on the previous GEIS review.

With that, I'd like to hand things over to Jennifer Davis who is going to be giving our presentation tonight. Once she is done with the presentation, we will go ahead and move to the public question and comment part of the meeting. Jennifer, please take it away.

MS. DAVIS: Thank you, Lance. First off, we would like to thank everyone for participating this evening. We really do appreciate you taking time out of your schedules to meet with us and provide us with your comments. Again, my name is Jennifer Davis and I am the project manager for the GEIS review and today I'll be here to explain how the NRC plans to review and possibly update the GEIS.

Over the course of this presentation we will explain the purpose of the GEIS, describe the review process, summarize the results of NRC's preliminary review and tell you -- tell -- tell you how you can submit your comments and proposals that

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you feel that we should incorporate into the GEIS. Next slide, please.

I just want to give you a little bit of background. As part of a licensed renewal program initiated in the late 1980s, the NRC undertook a comprehensive review to identify environmental impacts that could result from the continued operation of nuclear power plants beyond the 40-year original 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.

During this comprehensive review, the Commission determined that certain environmental impacts were essentially the same or similar at all nuclear power plants, and as such, could be generically addressed in the GEIS. A total of 92 licensed renewal and environmental impact issues were identified in 1996 as the result of this review. The primary purpose for the GEIS is to identify all the environmental effects of licensed renewal, and to evaluate those impacts considered to be generic and common to all nuclear power plants. The GEIS also determines the issues that need to be addressed in

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nuclear plant site-specific environmental reviews, which are produced as supplements to the GEIS.

The results of the comprehensive review are summarized as findings on NEPA issues for licensed renewal of nuclear power plants in Table B-1 and the NRC regulations at 10 CFR Part 51. In these regulations the ~~e~~Commissioner also indicated its intent to review and update the findings Table B-1 and in the licensed renewal GEISguides every ten years. So, this meeting today is part of that process to determine whether the NRC should revise the GEIS and the summary findings in Table B-1, but most importantly, to receive your comments and proposals of -- for areas of the GEIS needing to be updated.

The GEIS has been very effective in focusing licensed renewal environmental reviews on important site-specific issues and concerns at each nuclear power plant site, thereby increasing the overall efficiency of licensed renewal environmental reviews. Lessons learned and knowledge gained about environmental issues of public concern during these site-specific reviews are also considered when updating the GEIS. Public comments are also used to help validate existing issues and to identify new

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ones.

In revising the GEIS, the NRC staff will consider the need to modify, add to, consolidate or delete any of the environmental issues evaluated in the GEIS. As a result of the previous 10-year comprehensive review which was completed in 2013, the NRC carried forward 78 of the original 92 environmental impact issues for detailed consideration in the GEIS. The 2013 review did not eliminate any of the environmental issues evaluated in the '96 GEIS, but certain issues were consolidated or grouped according to similarities.

Next slide, please. The range of environmental impact issues addressed by the GEIS and considered during every license renewal environmental review is wide ranging. This slide gives you an idea of some of the important environmental impact areas that the NRC considers during each review. The GEIS discusses the license renewal impact for each of the resource areas depicted here on this slide. Next slide, please.

As previously noted, Table B-1 and 10 CFR Part 51 summarizes the findings on environmental impact issues analyzed in the GEIS. So, in other

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words, the GEIS is the technical basis for the summary findings in ~~Table~~~~ABLE~~ B-1. As many of you already know, issues in Table B-1 are categorized as either Category 1 or Category 2. Category 1 issues are considered generic, as the impact of them found to be essentially the same or similar at all nuclear plants.

Whereas 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 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 that are identified during nuclear plant site-specific environmental reviews, as well as reflecting changes in environmental laws and regulations.

We are also considering whether to

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reorganize the issues in the GEIS to clarify and simplify impact discussions, and streamline environmental impact analyses. In addition, we all -- we would also review the organization and format of the GEIS. Most importantly, the review is going to consider the public comments that we receive from today, throughout the scoping period, as well as public comments that were previously received during site-specific reviews. Next slide, please.

This slide illustrates the process for reviewing and updating the GEIS, along with opportunities for public involvement. The NRC issued the 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 throughout the scoping period will aid the eCommission's decision on whether to proceed with updating the GEIS ~~and in the~~ rule.

At the end of the scoping period, the staff will review all public comments and determine whether to proceed with a review and update. Should the determination be to proceed, the staff would prepare a rule-making plan for the eCommission to review ~~and in~~ approval, thereby explaining the reasons

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for updating the GEIS ~~andin the~~ rule.

If approved, the staff would begin to revise the GEIS and draft proposed rule changes. Once this is completed and approved by the eCommission, the draft GEIS and proposed rules would be issued for public review and comments. At that time, the staff would collect and address all comments received during that public comment period, and make any necessary revisions to the GEIS and rule. The eCommission will then review and approve the final GEIS and rule. Next slide, please.

So 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 proposal for changes that you feel should be made to the GEIS, and in the license renewal environmental reviews themselves. Next slide.

The NRC staff has completed its preliminary review and identified several potential areas needing to be updated or addressed in the GEIS.

The staff identified greenhouse gas emissions as an area needing to be addressed because the Council on Environmental Quality issued proposed guidance on June 26, 2019 titled "Draft National Environmental Policy

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Act Guidance on the Consideration of Greenhouse Gas Emissions," which explains how federal agencies should address greenhouse gas emissions in their NEPA analyses.

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

Next Table B-1 issue called groundwater quality degradation, plants with cooling ~~pondsumps~~ ~~inand~~ salt marshes, affects two nuclear plants. The NRC's staff is determining whether this issue should be consolidated with groundwater quality, degradation resulting from water withdrawals, and be expanded to consider the environmental effects of saltwater intrusion and encroachment on adjacent surface water quality.

Next the 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~~s~~.

And staff is also considering whether the issue heading should be changed to federally protected species and habitats to exclude protection categories that do not require inter-agency consultation, or non-federal protection categories such as ~~state~~fe-listed species. Additionally, we would also like to clarify the meaning of the word protected.

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

Subsequent or second license renewal. Based on the preliminary review, the NRC staff ~~is~~has determined that there is the need to clarify that the findings from the GEIS also apply to subsequent or second license-renewal environmental reviews. The NRC

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staff is considering revising the GEIS to clarify that the generic effects of licensed renewal are not limited to the first renewal and can be applied to subsequent renewals. The next area deals with the incorporation of updated guidance.

In February of 2019, the U.S. Department of Energy updated its "Graded Approach for Evaluating Radiation Doses to Aquatic and Terrestrial Biota." This is standard for evaluating the potential effects of radionuclides on biota. The NRC is considering making conforming changes based on this new guidance within the GEIS.

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

The staff would also include new information from the Revised Biological Effects of Ionizing Radiation, or BEIR VII report, titled "Health Risks from Exposure to Low Levels of Ionizing

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Radiation," which is prepared by the National Research Council Committee. In addition to revising - - in addition, in revising the GEIS, the NRC staff would also address subsequent license renewal review situations where licensees did not use NEI Guidance 5-01, Revision A, the "Severe Accident Mitigation Alternative Analysis Guidance Document," during previous reviews.

And finally on this slide, the NRC staff 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 licensing reviews. Next slide, please. Additional issues include the consideration of environmental impacts of new large light water reactors, holding an operating license, construction permit, or combined license issued after June 30 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 30, 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 staff is also considering the future utility of the GEIS. For example, an advanced reactor, or a small modular reactor licensee, could at some point 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 the environmental impacts of license renewals beyond the 20-year license renewal term.

The Atomic Energy Act, 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 up to an additional 20 years beyond the current licensing period. The staff was in the early stages of evaluating whether to extend the operating reactor license renewal period from 20 years to a maximum of 40 years. But the question is should the impact analyses in the GEIS consider the environmental impact of license renewal beyond the current regulatory limit

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of 20 years, up to a maximum 40 years?

This briefly summarizes the results of the NRC's preliminary review of the GEIS. And the NRC invites you to comment on the results of this 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 16, 2020 final rule, which updates the "Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act" to determine its effect on the GEIS. Next slide, please.

Now 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 the slide. You can email your comments directly to our project email address, which is LicenseRenewal-GEIS@NRC.gov. You can also submit comments through regulations.gov by searching for the appropriate docket I.D., which is NRC-2020-0175. Written comments can also be submitted by mail to the NRC's Office of Administration at the address that's indicated on this slide.

If you choose to submit written comments,

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we do ask that you specifically state that you're commenting on the license renewal GEIS in your correspondence, and reference the appropriate docket I.D. number. This makes it easier for our administrative staff to route your comments to us in a timely fashion.

Please note that due to COVID-19, providing comments via our project email address or through regulations.gov are the preferred methods, as there is currently limited staff in the NRC buildings at this time. 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 provide comments today -- at today's meeting. As Lance mentioned, we do have a court reporter here to help us record all comments received today. Next slide. As a reminder, the deadline for submitting comments is November 2, 2020. At the conclusion of scoping, the NRC will review all public comments and proposals to determine -- and determine whether to proceed with the update.

If the NRC determines that an update is

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not necessary and -- a notice of this decision will be published in the Federal Register. Next slide, please. This slide provides contact information in case you have any questions or need to reach out to the NRC staff to discuss any concerns about the GEIS review. Again, all comments received during scoping and at this meeting will be considered. And with that, I'll turn the meeting back over to Lance. Thank you.

MR. RAKOVAN: Okay, thank you Jennifer. Let's go ahead and do a quick check to see if anyone has any clarifying questions about Jen's presentation. Again, right now just looking to see if anybody wanted it in a little more detail, or didn't quite understand something that Jen went over. If you have a question, and you'd like to type it up and send it through the Webex chat, please send it to everyone. And Jennifer, our operator, if you could let folks know how to give you a heads-up if they would like to have their line unmuted, please?

OPERATOR: Thank you. If you do have a comment or question, please press star-1 to join the queue. Please make sure to unmute your phone to record your name at the prompt. Again, that is star-1

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for a comment or question from the phone. Thank you.

MR. RAKOVAN: Okay, we'll pause a moment to see if anyone has any clarifying questions on Jennifer Davis's presentation.

(Pause.)

MR. RAKOVAN: Jennifer, anyone on the phone line?

OPERATOR: Nothing from the phone at this time.

MR. RAKOVAN: Okay. I'm not seeing anything in the chat, so let's go ahead and open the floor to anyone with either clarifying questions, again, on Jennifer Davis's presentation -- or, if you have a comment that you would like to make on the license renewal GEIS, again, you can do that either by sending it into the chats feature on Webex. Please send it to everyone. Or you can hit start-1 and our operator will go in in time and unmute your line. So if you have any questions or comments, please do that now.

(Pause.)

MS. DAVIS: Okay, if we -- if you don't have any questions or comments, please note that you can always contact at the -- our information is

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provided on the last slide. Then Lance, I would say if there are no comments, we can go back to slide 12 where we can recap how people can provide comment.

(Pause.)

MS. DAVIS: Okay, I just wanted to reiterate that you can provide -- there are multiple ways to provide public comment as described on this slide. As we mentioned earlier, the best way to get your comments into us at this point in time due to the COVID-19 pandemic are the first two options -- where you can email directly to our license renewal address.

You can also submit comments through regulations.gov. And again, you can provide comments at tonight's meeting. Or if you want, take time, think about it -- we did present quite a bit of information tonight. You can always send~~e~~ it in at a later date. Just a reminder that our public comment period does close on November 2nd. So, we are eager to hear what proposals you may have to provide us.

MR. RAKOVAN: All right, let's do one last check on the phones. Jennifer, by any chance, do we have anyone?

OPERATOR: Nothing from the phone.

MR. RAKOVAN: Okay. Seeing nothing from

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the chat, I think we are okay to close. Thank you everyone for your participation tonight, the meeting has commenced -- or finished, I am sorry.

(Laughter.)

OPERATOR: That completes today's call. Thank you for participating. Please disconnect at this time.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 7:01 p.m.)

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