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Center for a Sustainable Coast

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STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION TO THE PROPOSED RELICENSING OF PLANT HATCH

The Center and many others are deeply concerned about the proposed relicensing of Plant Hatch, an aging nuclear power plant in Baxley along the Altamaha River, a short distance from the coast. Not only is the plant one of the nation's oldest facilities still in use, its design is dangerously obsolete, providing no containment structure for protection in case of an accidental release of radioactive contaminants. The Georgians for Clean Energy report that the facility has a history of accidents, suggesting significant threats with continuing operation of Plant Hatch.

Added to the unjustifiable risks of allowing this plant to operate is a new proposal to store spent fuel outside, in concrete casks to be located on the plant site and within close proximity to the Altamaha River, Georgia's largest and most naturally productive waterway. Because of their vital importance to the nation's marine resources, the expansive coastal estuaries supported by the Altamaha are designated as Essential Fish Habitat by the National Marine Fisheries Service. Jeopardizing these indispensable national resources and the existing nature-based business activities that critically depend on them is not justified by the need to keep Plant Hatch operational when there are readily available lower-risk alternatives.

Georgians for Clean Energy warn that the proposed outdoor storage is an unproven technology that introduces yet another significant threat to public health and natural resources. Lethal concentrations of radioactive materials released in even a minor accident could cause long-term damage to natural habitat and wildlife resources, not to mention the health and prosperity of tens of thousands of coastal residents who live in the vicinity, especially those whose income is derived from these natural resources.

There are conventional forms of power generation and newly emerging technologies that are far less hazardous, and far more efficient on the basis of accurate and complete assessment of long-term costs and benefits. Under the present situation, the operators of Plant Hatch are, in effect, shifting their costs of operation (including risks) onto the general public, and thereby unfairly profiting by using this dangerously obsolete technology. Relicensing the Plant Hatch nuclear power facility under these circumstances is most definitely not in the public interest according to any objective evaluation of impacts, alternatives, and uncertainties -- as required under federal law.

For these reasons, the Center for a Sustainable Coast declares unqualified opposition to the proposed relicensing of Plant Hatch. We strongly urge the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and Governor Barnes to thoughtfully consider the full implications of the proposed relicensing in light of the region's quality of life as well as our economic interests in the sustainable use and responsible protection of productive natural resources. By denying the license and supporting safer alternatives, public officials will be serving the true interests of all Georgians and setting essential standards of accountability in safeguarding the public trust.

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