

July 20, 2001

The Honorable Jesse Helms
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Helms:

I am responding to your letter dated June 5, 2001, regarding a letter from Ms. Dorothy Sulock to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) dated May 17, 2001. Ms. Sulock's letter was in response to an NRC invitation for public comment during the recent scoping period for the NRC Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Mixed Oxide (MOX) Fuel Fabrication Facility. The public comment period ended on May 21, 2001.

The MOX facility is part of the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) plan for dispositioning surplus plutonium using new facilities at the Savannah River Site in South Carolina. On February 28, 2001, Duke Cogema Stone & Webster, DOE's contractor for this project, submitted an application to the NRC for construction approval. On March 7, 2001, the NRC published, in the Federal Register, a notice of intent to prepare an EIS, which began the scoping process.

The scoping process defines the range of actions, alternatives, and impacts to be considered in NRC's EIS. For the MOX facility, the NRC sought input from the public regarding areas where we might focus analysis of impacts to air, water, animal life, vegetation, natural resources, and property of historical, archaeological, or architectural significance, for example. The EIS will also contain evaluations of cumulative, economic, social, cultural, and other impacts.

With regard to Ms. Sulock's request for an extension of the public comment period, the NRC does not believe that an extension is warranted. In response to the NRC's notice of intent, and similar announcements in NRC newsletters, e-mails and on our website, between March 7, 2001, and May 21, 2001, the NRC received over 80 letters from individuals and organizations. In addition, the NRC held three public scoping meetings on April 17, 2001, in North Augusta, South Carolina; on April 18, 2001, in Savannah, Georgia; and on May 8, 2001, in Charlotte, North Carolina. The NRC is currently reviewing Ms. Sulock's other comments along with the many others we received during the comment period. We expect to complete a Scoping Summary Report that summarizes the input of Ms. Sulock and the other scoping participants by the end of July 2001. The NRC will take the concerns from the scoping process into consideration during the EIS evaluations. In addition, Ms. Sulock will have another opportunity to comment on the draft EIS itself, when it is issued for public comment, currently scheduled to occur in February 2002.

The NRC recognizes your constituent's concern about the MOX Fuel Fabrication Facility. We take our regulatory mission to protect public health and safety and our commitment to excellence and fairness in regulation seriously and will continue to ensure that we uphold these high standards.

Please contact Mr. Dennis Rathbun, Director, Office of Congressional Affairs, at (301) 415-1795 if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

/RA/

William D. Travers
Executive Director
for Operations

The Honorable Jesse Helms

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Sincerely,
/RA/
William D. Travers
Executive Director
for Operations

Docket: 70-3098

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WILLIAM TRAVERS**

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LETTER TO: The Honorable Jesse Helms

FROM: William Travers
Executive Director for Operations

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO LETTER DTD JUNE 5, 2001, RE: LETTER FM
DOROTHY SULOKE TO NRC RE: NRC INVITATION TO PUBLIC
COMMENT DURING SCOPING PERIOD FOR NRC EIS FOR MOX
FUEL FABRICATION FACILITY

REMARKS:

ORIGINATOR: David Brown

PHONE: 415-7299

SECRETARY: Carrie Crawford

PHONE: 415-7192
