

September 24, 2001

Mr. Roger Banks, Field Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Charleston Ecological Services Field Office
176 Croghan Spur Road, Suite 200
Charleston, SC 29404

SUBJECT: INFORMAL CONSULTATION UNDER SECTION 7 OF THE ENDANGERED
SPECIES ACT FOR THE MIXED OXIDE FUEL FABRICATION FACILITY

Dear Mr. Banks:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) published its Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for construction, operation and deactivation of a Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility (MOX FFF) in the Federal Register (66 FR 13794) on March 7, 2001 (copy of NOI enclosed). The MOX FFF would be used to manufacture mixed oxide fuel from surplus weapons plutonium.

The proposed MOX FFF would be constructed in F Area at the Department of Energy's (DOE) Savannah River Site (SRS) in Aiken County, South Carolina (see three enclosed figures). The F Area of SRS is within the Savannah River watershed. NRC requests that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provide information regarding federally listed threatened and endangered species (including candidate and proposed species) that may occur on or in the vicinity of F Area at SRS that should be considered in preparing the EIS.

The MOX FFF and associated infrastructure would occupy approximately 6.9 ha of the 16.6 ha project site. The remainder of the site will be landscaped. The F area is an upland plateau that is designated for industrial use. A portion of the MOX FFF project site was previously used to store excavation material from another facility constructed in the F Area. About 68 percent of the MOX FFF site is composed of planted longleaf and slash pine forest. No wetlands occur within the area proposed for the MOX FFF (see enclosed land cover figure), but wetlands associated with Upper Three Runs Creek are adjacent to and downslope of the project site. Operational impacts would be minimized as airborne and aqueous releases would comply with applicable standards and permit requirements. Preliminary analyses presented in the environmental report for the MOX FFF prepared by the applicant DCS (a consortium formed by Duke Engineering & Services, COGEMA, Inc., and Stone and Webster) indicate that the impacts to ecological resources from facility construction and operation would be limited to the immediate project site vicinity.

R. Banks

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I wish to thank you in advance for the information on the threatened, endangered, candidate, and proposed species that you believe should be addressed in the EIS. Please mail your response to me within 30 days of the date of this letter.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (301) 415-7293, or Jennifer Davis at (301) 415-5874.

Sincerely,

/RA/ Phyllis Sobel Acting for

Charlotte E. Abrams, Section Chief
Environmental and LLW Section
Environmental and Performance
Assessment Branch
Division of Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

Docket: 70-3098

Enclosures: Notice of Intent
F Area Figures
Land Cover Figure

cc: See attached list

R. Banks

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Letter to Roger Banks, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, SC
dated September 24, 2001

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F Area Figures
Land Cover Figure

cc: See attached list

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