

July 24, 2002

Mr. Jay Slack, Field Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
South Florida Ecological Service Office
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960

SUBJECT: BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT FOR LICENSE RENEWAL AT ST. LUCIE,
UNITS 1 AND 2 AND REQUEST FOR INFORMAL CONSULTATION
(TAC NOS. MB3407 AND MB3411)

Dear Mr. Slack:

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is evaluating an application submitted by Florida Power and Light Company for the renewal of the operating licenses for an additional 20 years for its St. Lucie Nuclear Plant, Units 1 and 2. The St. Lucie plant is located in St. Lucie County, Florida, on Hutchinson Island approximately 7.2 km (4.5 miles) east of the city of Port St. Lucie, Florida. The current license for Unit 1 will expire on March 1, 2016, and for Unit 2 on April 6, 2023. License renewal will extend the operating license for each unit an additional 20 years past the above dates. The proposed action would include the continued operation and maintenance of the existing facilities at the St. Lucie plant site and the transmission corridor that connects St. Lucie, Units 1 and 2 to the regional electrical grid. The proposed action will not include any new construction or onsite disturbance. The NRC is preparing a supplement to its 1996 "Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants" (NUREG-1437) for this proposed license renewal. As part of the renewal review, we evaluate potential impacts to Federally listed, proposed, or candidate species, as well as designated or proposed critical habitat.

In a letter to you dated February 27, 2002, the NRC staff requested a list of Federally-protected species and any critical habitat known from the vicinity of the St. Lucie plant. The NRC staff received correspondence from Ms. L. Ferrell of your staff, dated March 15, 2002, that provided a list of listed, proposed, or candidate species known from the vicinity of the plant site. On April 2, 2002, the NRC staff conducted a site audit of the St. Lucie facility in which subject matter experts from a variety of disciplines were present to conduct the environmental evaluation. Mr. C. Kelso, of your staff, was present at the site audit.

Since April 2, 2002, the NRC staff and its contractor, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, has evaluated the potential impact of the power plant re-licensing on the list of species provided in your March 15, 2002, correspondence. We have prepared the enclosed biological assessment (BA) that provides an evaluation of the potential for impact to each of the 14 Federally-protected species known from the vicinity of the site.

The staff has determined that the proposed action is not a major construction activity. The proposed action will "not effect" the American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*), the bald

eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), the wood stork (*Mycteria americana*), the red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*), the Audubon's crested caracara (*Polyborus plancus audubonii*), the Everglades snail kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*), the southern beach mouse (*Peromyscus polionotus niveiventris*), the Lakela's mint (*Dicerandra immaculate*) and the tiny milkwort (*Polygala smallii*). The staff has determined that the proposed action is "not likely to adversely affect" the eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon corias couperi*), the Florida scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*), the Florida manatee (*Trichechus manatus*), the four-petal pawpaw (*Asimina tetramera*), or the fragrant prickly apple (*Harrisia (Cereus) eriophorus*).

The staff has also determined that there is designated critical habitat for the Florida manatee in all of the Indian River Lagoon that forms the western boundary of the St. Lucie, Units 1 and 2 site. Direct effects of plant operations on the designated critical habitat on the manatees in the Indian River Lagoon are determined to be non-existent. Nearby Big Mud Creek, an arm of the Indian River Lagoon that is closest to the plant, is closed to the general public for reasons of plant physical security and the licensee withdraws no water or has any routine activities in this or any other nearby habitat designated critical during normal plant operations.

The reasons for our conclusions related to the "no effect" or "not likely to adversely affect" for each of the 14 species and a discussion of the critical habitat in Indian River are documented in the enclosed BA. We are placing a copy of the BA in our project files and on our public docket for this license renewal application and are requesting your concurrence with our determination.

If you have questions regarding the proposed action, the BA, or the staff's request for concurrence, please contact the environmental project manager, Dr. Michael Masnik, by telephone at 301-415-1191 or e-mail at MTM2@NRC.GOV.

Sincerely,
Original Signed By: PTKuo
Pao-Tsin Kuo, Program Director
License Renewal and Environmental Impacts
Division of Regulatory Improvement Program
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos.: 50-335 and 50-389

Enclosure: As stated

cc w/encl.: See next page

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Sincerely,

Original Signed By: PTKuo

Pao-Tsin Kuo, Program Director

License Renewal and Environmental Impacts

Division of Regulatory Improvement Program

Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos.: 50-335 and 50-389

Enclosure: As stated

cc w/encl.: See next page

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*See previous concurrence

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DISTRIBUTION: Letter to J. Slack, Dated: July 24, 2002

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ST. LUCIE PLANT

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