



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance
Denver Federal Center, Building 56, Room 1003

P.O. Box 25007 (D-108)

Denver, Colorado 80225-0007

April 01, 2003

ER 03/0040

Chief
Rules Review and Directive Branch
Division of Administrative Services
Mail Stop T 6 D59
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

11/14/03

68 FR 1873

(1)

Dear Sir or Madam:

The Department of the Interior has reviewed the Draft Supplement Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants, Supplement 12, Regarding Fort Calhoun Station, Unit 1, Washington County, Nebraska and has the following comments.

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT COMMENTS

On December 16, 2002, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) received a letter dated December 9, 2002, from the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) requesting comments on a Biological Assessment (Assessment) of the Potential Impacts to Threatened and Endangered Species Resulting from an Additional 20 Years of Operation of the Fort Calhoun Station (FCS), Unit 1, Nuclear Power Plant (TAC No. MB3402), located in Washington County, Nebraska. The Assessment determined that the proposed action is not likely to adversely affect the federally listed endangered pallid sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus albus*) or the threatened bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). In addition, the Assessment stated that the proposed action would have no effect on the federally listed threatened western prairie fringed orchid (*Platanthera praeclara*) and piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*), or the endangered least tern (*Sterna antillarum*). The December 9 letter requested concurrence from the USFWS.

After reviewing the Assessment, the USFWS concluded that additional information was required before an evaluation could be completed to determine whether the USFWS would be able to concur with a not likely to adversely affect determination for the pallid sturgeon. The USFWS is concerned about the impact of heated water, which is released from the facility, on the pallid sturgeon. In the spring, increasing water temperatures are a spawning cue for the pallid sturgeon. Depending on the degree of increase in water temperature, and the distance downstream it can be detected, operation of the facility may or may not disrupt pallid sturgeon reproduction in the Missouri River. Therefore, in a letter dated January 13, 2003, the USFWS requested that NRC provide the following information:

1. How warm is the released water after it is discharged from FCS?
2. How far downstream does the released water travel before being fully mixed with the Missouri River water during the May - July time period? Does this distance vary under high and low flow conditions, and if so what is the variation?

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E-RIDS = ADM-03
Cdr = J.S. Cushing (JXC9)

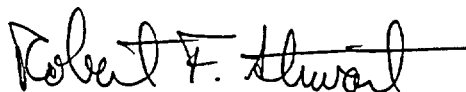
3. How much does the warm water plume warm the Missouri River in total after mixing? Does the amount of warming vary under high and low flow conditions?
4. During the pallid sturgeon spawning period (May - July), how far downstream (under high and low flow conditions) is a temperature change detectable? Is it detectable at the mouth of the Platte River?

Although no pallid sturgeon spawning has been documented in the Missouri River between FCS and Gavins Point Dam, there does appear to be potential spawning habitat between Gavins Point Dam and Ponca State Park. If spawning does occur in this river reach, pallid sturgeon larvae may drift as far downstream as FCS and be susceptible to impingement and entrainment. According to the Assessment, the larval monitoring studies at FCS ended in 1977. Since the current operating license for FCS does not expire until 2013, the USFWS requested that the larval monitoring studies be reinitiated to verify that pallid sturgeon larvae are not being adversely affected by FCS operations.

On February 4, 2003, the USFWS received a phone call from NRC stating that they would be responding to our January 13 letter, and would provide the requested information. As of March 24, 2003, the USFWS had not received a response from NRC.

- If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Mr. Wally Jobman of the USFWS Nebraska Field Office at (308)382-6468, extension 16.

Sincerely,

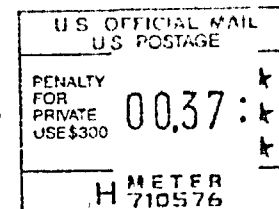


Robert F. Stewart
Regional Environmental Officer

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