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NRC LICENSES SPENT NUCLEAR FUEL STORAGE FACILITY AT IDAHO NATIONAL ENGINEERING AND ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a license to the Foster Wheeler Environmental Corp. to construct and operate an independent spent nuclear fuel storage installation at the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory (INEEL).

The facility will receive, repackage and store spent fuel originally from the Shippingport Atomic Power Station, a decommissioned light-water breeder reactor; the Peach Bottom Unit 1 reactor, a decommissioned high-temperature gas-cooled reactor; and various training and research reactors built by General Atomics (TRIGA reactors). Most of this fuel is currently stored at INEEL in above-ground spent fuel pools or dry underground storage facilities. The new facility will store the spent fuel in sealed stainless steel canisters placed inside steel tubes within a concrete storage vault.

The Foster Wheeler facility, to be called the Idaho Spent Fuel Facility, will be located adjacent to existing Department of Energy spent fuel storage installations at INEEL, including the NRC-licensed facility storing fuel debris from Three Mile Island Unit 2. It will include a transfer area for repackaging the spent fuel into the new canisters.

“The issuance of this license culminates a detailed three-year review by NRC staff with our determination that the applicant’s plans provide adequate protection for public health and safety, security and the environment,” said E. William Brach, director of the NRC’s Spent Fuel Project Office. “We will continue our focus on safety as we inspect the facility during its construction and operation.”

The NRC issued a notice of opportunity to request a hearing on this application in June 2002, but no requests for a hearing were received. The agency received more than 90 written comments on a draft environmental impact statement; these were addressed in the final environmental impact statement, issued in January 2004.

The license is valid for 20 years and may be renewed if NRC staff determines that its continued operation provides adequate protection for the public health and safety.

The Shippingport Atomic Power Station was the first commercial nuclear power plant in the United States. Co-owned by the Atomic Energy Commission and Duquesne Light Company, it operated from 1958 until 1974. Peach Bottom Unit 1 was an experimental 40-megawatt reactor that

provided performance data to the nuclear industry during its operation from 1967 to 1974. The General Atomics TRIGA reactors are a widely used type of research reactor.

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