



NRC NEWS

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OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, REGION II

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NRC STAFF SEEKS INPUT ON BROWNS FERRY NUCLEAR PLANT DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR LICENSE RENEWAL

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has reached the preliminary conclusion that there are no environmental impacts to preclude renewal of the operating licenses for the Browns Ferry Nuclear Power Plant located in Limestone County, Alabama, about 10 miles southwest of Athens.

The information is contained in a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) on the proposed license renewal. The draft EIS is open for public comment until March 2, 2005, and will also be the subject of public meetings on January 25, 2005, in Athens, Alabama.

The NRC has been reviewing the application for extension of the Browns Ferry license since the Tennessee Valley Authority, which operates the plant, filed it on December 31, 2003. Under NRC regulations, the original operating license for a nuclear power plant is issued for up to 40 years. The license may be renewed for up to an additional 20 years if NRC requirements are met. The current NRC licenses at Browns Ferry will expire on December 20, 2013, for Unit 1; June 28, 2014, for Unit 2; and July 2, 2016, for Unit 3.

The NRC is reviewing TVA's extensive work on Browns Ferry Unit 1, which TVA would like to restart after being shut down for an extended period. Unit 1 has retained an operating license.

The possible environmental effects of an additional 20 years of nuclear plant operation are described in the NRC's Generic Environmental Impact Statement or GEIS (NUREG-1437). The NRC issues a site-specific supplement to the GEIS on each plant requesting license renewal to address the potential environmental impacts. Issues specific to Browns Ferry are addressed in Supplement 21. The NRC staff's preliminary recommendation is that the adverse environmental impacts of license renewal for the three Browns Ferry reactors are not so great that preserving the option of license renewal for energy-planning decision makers would be unreasonable.

On Tuesday, January 25, 2005, the NRC staff will hold two similar meetings in Athens to obtain comments on the draft supplement to the GEIS. The meetings will be held at Athens State University, Student Center Cafeteria Ballroom, located at 300 North Beaty Street. The two sessions will begin at 1:30 in the afternoon and at 7:00 in the evening, respectively. In addition, the NRC staff will host informal discussions one hour prior to each meeting. NRC staff members will be available to answer questions and provide additional information about the license renewal process during those informal sessions, but no comment submittals on environmental issues will be accepted then.

The two sessions will begin with identical overviews, including a presentation by NRC staff and its contractors on the contents of the draft supplement to the GEIS. There will then be an opportunity for public comments.

For planning purposes, anyone interested in attending or presenting oral comments at the January 25 meetings is encouraged to pre-register by contacting Dr. Michael Masnik of the NRC by telephone at 1- 800- 368-5642, extension 1191, or by e-mail at BrownsFerryEIS@nrc.gov, no later than January 18, 2005. Interested persons may also register to speak before the start of each session. Time for individual comments at the meetings may be limited to accommodate all speakers.

Written comments on the draft supplement to the GEIS will also be considered by NRC staff. Comments should be submitted either by mail to the Chief, Rules and Directives Branch, Division of Administrative Services, Office of Administration, Mailstop T-6D59, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001, or by e-mail to BrownsFerryEIS@NRC.gov.

The draft supplement to the GEIS, along with other related documents, is available electronically for public inspection in the NRC Public Document Room at NRC headquarters, 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Md. It is also available by contacting the PDR reference staff at 1-800-397-4209, by email to pdr@nrc.gov or on the NRC Web Site at <http://www.nrc.gov/reactors/operating/licensing/renewal/applications/browns-ferry.html#eis>. In addition, the Athens-Limestone Public Library at 405 East South Street in Athens has agreed to make the draft supplement to the GEIS available for public inspection.

At the conclusion of the public comment period on March 2, 2005, the NRC staff will consider and address comments during the preparation of the final supplement to the GEIS, which is scheduled to be issued in July, 2005.

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