



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION III
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-2029**

APR 16 2012

Colonel David E. Anderson
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Baltimore District
P.O. Box 1715
Baltimore, Maryland 21203-1715

Dear Colonel Anderson:

On March 22, 2012, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provided comments in response to the Public Notice NAB-2008-01401-P13 issued for Pennsylvania Power and Light Bell Bend LLC (PPL or applicant), Bell Bend Nuclear Power Plant (BBNPP), located in Salem Township, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania. Our letter referenced Part IV, paragraph 3(a), of the 1992 Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404(q) Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between EPA and the Department of the Army. The letter expressed EPA's concern that this project may adversely affect water quality and result in significant degradation of the aquatic ecosystem, and that efforts should be considered to address such impacts. EPA's March 22, 2012 comments are incorporated herein by reference (copy enclosed).

The purpose of the project as described in the Public Notice is to provide 1,600 megawatts of additional nuclear baseload electrical power to the northeast portion of the Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland Regional Transmission Organizational grid. PPL proposes to construct a new nuclear power plant, at a site adjacent to the existing Susquehanna Steam Electric Station. The project site boundary consists of approximately 2,055 acres, of which 687 would be altered to support construction and operation of the facility. Waterways on the site include Lake Took-a-While, an unnamed tributary to Lake Took-a-While, North Branch Canal, Walker Run, Eastern tributary to Walker Run, and the North Branch of the Susquehanna River plus associated wetland systems. These aquatic resources are all tributaries to the Susquehanna River.

According to the applicant, construction of the BBNPP facility would result in approximately 13.14 acres of impacts to jurisdictional wetlands and approximately 1.25 acres of impacts to jurisdictional rivers and streams. Additionally, water intake from the North Branch of the Susquehanna River would be necessary for plant operation and safety purposes. It is estimated that the BBNPP circulating water system and raw water supply would withdraw 37 million gallons of water a day (MGD) on average from the North Branch of the Susquehanna River. PPL has made applications to the Susquehanna River Basin Commission to withdraw up to 42 MGD from the North Branch of the Susquehanna River, and a withdrawal of 1 MGD from groundwater resources in the area.



Additional information has not been provided to address the concerns raised in our March 22 letter. EPA appreciates the applicant's efforts undertaken to date to engage the resource agencies in the planning process for this project. We realize that additional environmental studies will be undertaken, including an Environmental Impact Statement which is being prepared by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in their compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, to close data gaps and better clarify the potential environmental uncertainties that this proposed project raises. These additional studies may bring to light significant information that would assist the resource agencies in their review including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in its public interest review and its review of the project pursuant to the CWA Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines.

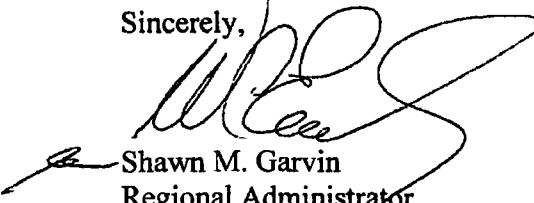
However, EPA continues to be concerned, based on the existing available information, that this project, as currently proposed, does not satisfy the CWA 404(b)(1) Guidelines, 40 C.F.R. Part 230. EPA believes that additional avoidance and minimization efforts should be considered, that the anticipated impacts are likely to cause or contribute to significant degradation of waters of the United States, and that the direct and cumulative impacts of this project, when combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects will adversely affect aquatic ecosystems.

Consistent with Part IV, paragraph 3(b), of the 1992 CWA 404(q) MOA between EPA and the Department of the Army, EPA believes that the project, as described in the information provided to EPA, will result in substantial and unacceptable impacts to aquatic resources of national importance. As explained in our March 22, 2012 letter, this project would result in significant direct impacts to the North Branch of the Susquehanna River, which is an important component of the Chesapeake Bay aquatic ecosystem.

EPA reaffirms our commitment made in the March 22, 2012 letter to continue to work with the applicant and you to assure that the proposed impacts resulting from this project are the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative, consistent with the CWA Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines and that significant degradation to the North Branch of the Susquehanna River is prevented. We look forward to working with you to discuss and resolve these important issues.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or have your staff contact Mr. John R. Pomponio, Director of EPA Region III's Environmental Assessment & Innovation Division, at 215-814-2702.

Sincerely,



Shawn M. Garvin
Regional Administrator

Enclosure