

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[DOCKET NO. 040-8027]

AGENCY: Nuclear Regulatory Commission

ACTION: NOTICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT
IMPACT RELATED TO AMENDMENT OF MATERIALS LICENSE NO. SUB-1010 FOR
THE SEQUOYAH FUELS CORPORATION, GORE, OKLAHOMA

PUBLIC DOCUMENT ROOM

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission is considering a license amendment request, submitted by the Sequoyah Fuels Corporation (SFC). The proposed action is to abandon certain groundwater monitoring wells at SFC's Gore, Oklahoma, facility, and to replace these groundwater monitoring points, specified in the license, with existing wells of better construction that produce more reliable data.

Summary of the Environmental Assessment

By license amendment application dated October 3, 1994, SFC requested changes to the license for its Sequoyah facility at Gore, Oklahoma. This amendment to the license is needed to implement the well plugging and abandonment described in Section 8 of the Groundwater Monitoring Interim Measures (GMIM) Workplan approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on December 15, 1993, under the Administrative Order on Consent (AOC) signed August 3, 1993. This license amendment request was revised by the licensee by letter dated February 9, 1996, in response to staff comments dated December 8, 1995.

The proposed action is necessary so that SFC can permanently abandon, and remove from the license, 35 groundwater monitoring wells that may not

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provide reliable information and may serve as a conduit for the movement of contaminants between groundwater zones. These wells will be replaced in the license with 24 more recently installed, better constructed wells. This action is intended to reduce the potential for contamination between groundwater zones at the SFC site and provide for the monitoring of groundwater wells that yield more reliable data.

None of the wells proposed to be plugged are in areas of current uranium contamination in the groundwater. Therefore, it is not expected that the plugging operation will result in the generation of contaminated material or effluents. However, the GMIM Workplan states that all material removed from each hole will be managed in compliance with all State and Federal regulations and facility procedures. SFC is expected to follow its environmental and radiation protection programs for the removal and plugging of the wells described in the amendment request.

The environmental impact associated with the preferred alternative is minimal. The well abandonment procedure is similar to installing a new well. There is the generation of soil, well cuttings, and old well casing. If none of this material is impacted by radioactive or hazardous substances, the material removed from the wells can be handled as solid waste. As stated previously, the GMIM Workplan states that all material removed from the abandoned wells will be managed in compliance with all State and Federal regulations and facility procedures. Therefore, if the licensee determines that the material removed from any of the boreholes is contaminated with radioactivity, above the action levels in the license, the material must be handled and disposed of in accordance with NRC regulations and SFC's license. In addition, the GMIM Workplan is being implemented under an AOC that the

licensee has with EPA. Therefore, material removed from the abandoned wells that is contaminated with hazardous constituents will be handled in accordance with EPA regulations.

The removal of these old wells from service and plugging of the boreholes may have a positive impact on the environment if, because of poor construction, the old wells could serve as potential pathways for migration of contaminants between groundwater zones. The NRC staff believes that the proposed replacement wells will provide an acceptable level of groundwater monitoring capability based on well location and depth in relation to known and potential sources of groundwater contamination.

The NRC staff identified alternatives other than the preferred alternative of abandonment and replacement of the identified groundwater monitoring wells. The alternatives are as follows: 1) no action; 2) abandonment with no replacement; and 3) no abandonment but with replacement. None of the alternatives meet the dual purpose of the preferred alternative of replacing unreliable monitoring points with more reliable ones and reducing the possibility for migration of contaminants between groundwater zones through the old well boreholes. Therefore, the staff believes that the proposed alternative provides the optimum level of protection of the environment, among the various alternatives.

Based on evaluation of SFC's well abandonment and replacement plan, NRC staff determined that SFC's proposal complies with NRC's regulations, and that authorizing the license amendment would not be a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. The NRC staff concludes that a finding of no significant impact is justified and appropriate and that an environmental impact statement is not required. Notice of

consideration of this amendment request and opportunity for hearing was published in the Federal Register (59 FR 55716, November 8, 1994). No hearing was requested.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based on the findings in the environmental assessment, the NRC staff has determined that, under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, and NRC's regulations in 10 CFR Part 51, authorizing this license amendment would not be a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, and therefore an environmental impact statement is not required. The NRC staff concludes that a finding of no significant impact is justified and appropriate.

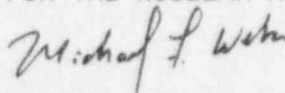
Further Information

For additional information with respect to the proposed action, see the licensee's request for license amendment dated October 3, 1994, and supplementary information, the safety evaluation report, and the environmental assessment which are available for inspection at the NRC's Public Document Room, 2120 L Street NW, Washington, DC.

For further information, contact James Shepherd, Division of Waste Management, USNRC, Mailstop T-7F27, Washington, DC 20555-0001. Telephone: (301) 415-6712.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 6th day of August 1996.

FOR THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION



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