



**UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION**  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

May 12, 2022

Matthew P. Levesque, President  
Barnstable Town Council  
367 Main Street  
Village of Hyannis, MA 02601

Dear Mr. Levesque:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter dated February 7, 2022, (Agencywide Documents Access and Management System Accession No. ML22068A193). In that letter, you raised concerns about the regulation of the potential irradiated water release into Cape Cod Bay during the decommissioning of the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station (Pilgrim), and specifically the safety impact on the region's public health, environment, and coastal economy, including ramifications for the commercial fisheries. We appreciate your concerns about the safety of these potential releases and for the well-being of the local community.

The NRC has regulatory requirements governing the discharge of radioactive gaseous and liquid effluents from nuclear facilities. Both the NRC and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provide standards for radiological contaminants in liquid effluents from a nuclear facility. The EPA issues National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits that establish requirements for the discharge of non-radiological constituents of wastewater.

The controlled release of effluents within specified limits is part of normal nuclear facility operations, and the NRC's regulations and licensing reviews for the facility consider such releases during the NRC's safety and environmental reviews. The NRC's regulations and conditions in the license issued to Holtec Decommissioning International, LLC (HDI) for Pilgrim require HDI to ensure that the releases of gaseous and liquid effluents meet the applicable NRC and EPA requirements. Further, NRC regulations require HDI to maintain radiological releases as low as reasonably achievable, which results in actual impacts far below regulatory limits. The NRC also requires HDI to maintain a radiological environmental monitoring program (REMP) for Pilgrim to provide data on measurable levels of radiation and radioactive materials in the local environment. In addition, HDI is required to submit to the NRC an annual radiological environmental operating report with the results of the REMP and a radioactive effluent release report every year, both of which are publicly available. As part of its oversight activities, the NRC staff reviews HDI's ongoing compliance with regulations and license conditions, as well as compliance with recordkeeping and notification requirements. With this regulatory framework in place, separate NRC approval for each effluent release is not required.

HDI is responsible for determining how it will dispose of the liquid effluents from Pilgrim decommissioning within the methods allowed under the NRC's regulations, which allow

discharge, shipment for disposal, or evaporation of the liquid and disposal of the resulting solid waste. HDI is required to keep records of releases, along with documentation that demonstrates that it is meeting the license conditions and applicable regulations for the releases. To ensure that HDI is meeting its license relating to radioactive effluents, the NRC reviewed and approved Pilgrim's Off-Site Dose Calculation Manual, which HDI uses to comply with its license. The NRC also routinely inspects HDI's compliance with NRC regulations, their license, and approved manuals and procedures. In addition, EPA Region 1 and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Department of Environmental Protection jointly issued a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit for Pilgrim that establishes requirements for non-radiological constituents of wastewater discharges.

HDI communicates with the NRC weekly to discuss decommissioning plans and proposed schedules for Pilgrim. In 2021, HDI informed NRC staff that it would not pursue releasing the processed water at Pilgrim in 2022 and would store it onsite while considering disposal options, including evaporation, trucking off site for disposal at another facility, or discharge into Cape Cod Bay. As required by NRC regulations and license conditions, HDI will continue to conduct routine environmental sampling of vegetation, water, sediment, fish, and shellfish through its REMP to ensure there is no significant accumulation of radionuclides and will continue to provide the REMP results to the NRC in its annual radiological environmental operating report, which is publicly available.

I appreciate your interest in the decommissioning of Pilgrim and your service to the surrounding community. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me or have your staff contact Mr. Bruce Watson, Special Assistant, Division of Decommissioning, Uranium Recovery, and Waste Programs, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, at (301) 415-6221.

Sincerely,



Signed by Marshall, Jane  
on 05/12/22

Jane E. Marshall, Director,  
Division of Decommissioning, Uranium Recovery  
and Waste Programs  
Office of Nuclear Material Safety  
and Safeguards

LTR-22-0067 Response to Matthew P. Levesque, President, Barnstable Town Council regarding Irradiated Water Release from Pilgrim DATE May 12, 2022

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