

March 6, 2000

Mr. W. R. McCollum, Jr.
Vice President, Oconee Site
Duke Energy Corporation
7800 Rochester Highway
Seneca, SC 29672

SUBJECT: OCONEE NUCLEAR STATION, UNITS 1, 2 AND 3 RE: ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR AN
AMENDMENT TO REMOVE CERTAIN LICENSE CONDITIONS
(TAC NOS. MA8041, MA8042, AND MA8043)

Dear Mr. McCollum:

By letter dated January 27, 2000, Duke Energy Corporation submitted an amendment requesting changes to the Oconee Nuclear Station, Units 1, 2, and 3 Facility Operating Licenses. The proposed changes include deletion of certain conditions that are associated with the environment, for which the staff prepared the enclosed Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact. The proposed amendment would revise the Facility Operating Licenses by (a) deleting the license conditions that have been fulfilled by actions that have been completed, (b) changing the license conditions that have been superseded by the current plant status, and (c) incorporating other administrative changes. In particular, the proposed amendment would remove the license conditions that require (1) the establishment of baselines for the evaluation of thermal, chemical, and radiological effects of station operation on terrestrial and aquatic biota in Lakes Keowee and Hartwell; and (2) the development and implementation of a comprehensive monitoring program to permit surveillance of these effects during plant operation.

This assessment is being forwarded to the Office of the Federal Register for publication.

Sincerely,

/RA/

David E. LaBarge, Senior Project Manager, Section 1
Project Directorate II
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-269, 50-270, and 50-287

Enclosure: Environmental Assessment

cc w/encl: See next page

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UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

DUKE ENERGY CORPORATION

DOCKET NOS. 50-269, 50-270, AND 50-287

OCONEE NUCLEAR STATION, UNITS 1, 2, AND 3

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FINDING OF

NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is considering issuance of an amendment to the Duke Energy Corporation (the licensee/Duke) for operation of the Oconee Nuclear Station, Units 1, 2, and 3, Facility Operating License Nos. DPR-38, DPR-47, and DPR-55, respectively, located in Oconee County, Seneca, South Carolina.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Identification of the Proposed Action:

The proposed amendment would revise the Facility Operating Licenses by (a) deleting the license conditions that have been fulfilled by actions that have been completed, (b) changing the license conditions that have been superseded by the current plant status, and (c) incorporating other administrative changes. In particular, the proposed amendment would remove (1) License Condition 3.C.1 that requires the licensee to accumulate the information required to establish baselines for the evaluation of thermal, chemical, and radiological effects of station operation on terrestrial and aquatic biota in Lakes Keowee and Hartwell; (2) License Condition 3.C.2, which requires the licensee to develop and implement a comprehensive monitoring program that will permit surveillance during plant operation of thermal, chemical, and radiological effects of station operation on terrestrial and aquatic biota in Lakes Keowee and Hartwell; (3) License Condition 3.G, which requires the licensee to

implement a secondary water chemistry program having specified attributes; (4) License Condition 3.H, which requires the licensee to implement a program having specified attributes to reduce leakage from certain systems outside containment; (5) License Condition 3.I, which requires the licensee to implement an iodine monitoring program having certain attributes; (6) License Condition 3.J, which requires the licensee to implement a program ensuring the capability to accurately monitor the Reactor Coolant System subcooling margin; and (7) License Condition 3.K, which incorporates into the licenses the additional conditions currently set forth in Appendix C to the license. The proposed action also corrects clerical errors or out-of-date information on the licenses.

The proposed action is in accordance with the licensee's application for an amendment dated January 27, 2000.

The Need for the Proposed Action:

After the startup of Oconee, requirements related to the establishment of environmental programs and the performance of studies of the effects of plant operation on the environment have been regulated by other programs. These programs include the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) National Pollution Discharge Elimination System program and Section 316(a) and 316(b) of the Clean Water Act and other EPA programs, the Oconee Environmental Technical Specifications and Offsite Dose Calculations Manual, plant design and operation as described in the Updated Final Safety Analysis Report, and criteria contained in the Selected Licensee Commitments Manual.

In addition, the requirements in License Condition 3.G are equivalent to the requirements of Technical Specification (TS) 5.5.11, "Secondary Water Chemistry;" the requirements of License Condition 3.H are equivalent to those of TS 5.5.3, "Reactor Coolant Sources Outside Containment;" the requirements of License Condition 3.I are equivalent to those of TS 5.5.4, "Post Accident Sampling;" and the requirements of License Condition 3.J are

equivalent to those of TS 5.5.17, "Backup Method for Determining Subcooling Margin." Finally, the additional conditions currently set forth in Appendix C to the license, and which are required by License Condition 3.K, are all one-time or time-limited actions that have been completed and were adequately addressed.

Therefore, elimination of the license conditions that are the subject of this environmental assessment would delete (1) provisions for certain activities that are regulated by other government agencies or are being addressed by other programs, (2) requirements redundant to those in TS, and (3) requirements for one-time or time-limited actions that have been completed and were adequately addressed. This would eliminate unnecessary license conditions from the Facility Operating Licenses.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action:

The proposed action to implement the amendment would remove extraneous license conditions that (1) are now being regulated by other government agencies or were subsumed by other programs, (2) are redundant to TS, or (3) require actions that have been completed. The proposed action will not change the design of the facilities or the manner in which the licensee operates them. The staff has concluded that the proposed action will not significantly increase the probability or consequences of accidents, there are no changes being made in the types of any effluents that may be released offsite, and there is no significant increase in occupational or public radiation exposure. Therefore, the Commission concludes that there are no significant radiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

With regard to potential nonradiological environmental impacts, the proposed action does not involve any historic sites. It does not affect nonradiological plant effluents and has no other environmental impact. Therefore, there are no significant nonradiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

Accordingly, the NRC concludes that there are no significant environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

Alternatives to the Proposed Action:

As an alternative to the proposed action, the staff considered denial of the proposed action (i.e., the “no-action” alternative). Denial of the application would result in no change in current environmental impacts. The environmental impacts of the proposed action and the alternative action are similar.

Alternative Use of Resources:

This action does not involve the use of any resources not previously considered in the Final Environmental Statement for the Oconee Nuclear Station, Units 1, 2, and 3.

Agencies and Persons Consulted:

In accordance with its stated policy, on March 6, 2000, the staff consulted with the South Carolina State official, Mr. Virgil L. Autry of the Division of Radiological Waste Management, Bureau of Land and Waste Management, Department of Health and Environmental Control, regarding the environmental impact of the proposed action. The State official had no comments.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

On the basis of the environmental assessment, the NRC concludes that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, the NRC has determined not to prepare an environmental impact statement for the proposed action.

For further details with respect to the proposed action, see the licensee's letter dated January 27, 2000, which is available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room, The Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, NW., Washington, DC. Publically available records will be accessible electronically from the ADAMS Public Library component on

the NRC Web site, <http://www.nrc.gov> (the Electronic Reading Room).

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 6th day of March 2000.

FOR THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

/RA/

Richard L. Emch, Jr., Section Chief, Section 1
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Oconee Nuclear Station

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