

Location: Crary Lab, McMurdo Station, Antarctica.

Dates: October 1, 1997–December 31, 1997.

Permit Application No. 98–012

6. *Applicant:* Donald B. Siniff, Dept. of Ecology, Evolution and Behavior, 100 Ecology Building, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota 55108

Activity for Which Permit is

Requested: Taking. Import into the U.S.

The applicant plans to tag and release approximately 350 Weddell adult seals and approximately 550 Weddell pups as part of a continuing investigation of the McMurdo Sound Weddell seal population, which was begun in the early 1960's and has continued to the present. In addition, blood and tissue samples will be taken from up to 300 individuals and imported to the U.S. for DNA extraction and toxins analysis. These samples are primarily to supplement future research into the paternity and genetic characteristics of the McMurdo populations specifically and Antarctic seals in general. Aspects of this research are: (1) To continue the long-term tagging studies by tagging all pups born into the McMurdo Sound population and to replace tags on previously tagged individuals so they will not be lost from the tagged population; (2) to update estimates of population parameters annually, using mark-recapture surveys, to continue the analyses and test of hypotheses associated with this data base; (3) collect blood and tissue samples for research examining the social structure and behavioral ecology of Weddell seals. The samples will be analyzed at the Universities of Minnesota and Alberta for DNA fingerprinting; (4) Previous research of stomach samples from harvested seals indicated that Antarctic silver fish is the major prey constituent during the austral summer. Since stomach content is no longer a viable option, and otoliths from fecal samples are often too eroded for accurate age estimation, lavage techniques (performed under supervision of a marine mammal veterinarian) offer a non-lethal technique of obtaining this data; and (5) VHF radio transmitters will be used to monitor the activity of territorial males during the breeding season in conjunction with the studies of behavioral ecology and paternity. The radio transmitters will be attached with marine epoxy and removed after use. If animals cannot be recaptured, the radios will fall off during their annual molt.

Location: McMurdo Sound vicinity, Antarctica.

Dates: October 1, 1997–September 30, 1998.

Permit Application No. 98–013

7. *Applicant:* Donald B. Siniff, Dept. of Ecology, Evolution and Behavior, 100 Ecology Building, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota 55108

Activity for Which Permit is

Requested: Take. Import into the U.S. Enter Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The applicant proposes to enter the White Island Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI#18) to tag up to 15 adult Weddell seals, and tag and draw blood samples from approximately 5–8 Weddell pups, as part of a continuing population biology study. The White Island seal population has been a focus of interest dating to the early 1960's. This group of seals represents an isolated population that is very small and the evidence suggests it has very limited exchange of individuals with the McMurdo Sound population. Since intensive censusing was begun in the late 1980's, no new (tagged) adults have appeared in the population. Thus, the genetics of this population is of interest because it will increase understanding of such concepts as inbreeding depression and genetic drift.

Location: SSSI#18—North-west White Island, McMurdo Sound, Antarctica.

Dates: October 1, 1997–September 30, 1998.

Nadene G. Kennedy,

Permit Officer, Office of Polar Programs.

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket Nos. 50–266 and 50–301]

Wisconsin Electric Power Company; Point Beach Nuclear Plant, Units 1 and 2, Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) is considering issuance of amendments to Facility Operating Licenses Nos. DPR–24 and DPR–27, issued to Wisconsin Electric Power Company, (the licensee), for operation of the Point Beach Nuclear Plant, Units 1 and 2, located in Manitowoc County, Wisconsin.

Environmental Assessment

Identification of the Proposed Action

By letter dated January 21, 1997, the licensee proposed to change Technical Specification (TS) 15.6.11, "Radiation Protection Program" by revising all references to 10 CFR part 20, section

20.203 to section 20.1601, and by revising the footnote associated with this TS to indicate dose rates are those measured at no more than 30 centimeters from the source of radioactivity in accordance with 10 CFR 20.1601(a)(1).

The Need for the Proposed Action

The proposed action is needed for the licensee to be consistent with 10 CFR part 50, Appendix I, in implementing the revised 10 CFR part 20.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

The Commission has completed its evaluation of the proposed revision to the TS and concludes that the administrative changes associated with updating the references to 10 CFR part 20 will not increase the types or amounts of effluents that may be released offsite, nor increase individual or cumulative occupational radiation exposure. Accordingly, the Commission concludes that this proposed action would result in no significant radiological environmental impact.

The change will not increase the probability or consequences of accidents, no changes are being made in the types of any effluents that may be released offsite, no changes are being made to the authorized power level, and there is no significant increase in the allowable individual or cumulative occupational radiation exposure. Accordingly, the Commission concludes that there are no significant radiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

With regard to potential nonradiological impacts, the proposed action does involve features located entirely within the restricted area as defined in 10 CFR part 20. It does not affect nonradiological plant effluents and has no other environmental impact. Accordingly, the Commission concludes that there are no significant nonradiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

Alternatives to the Proposed Action

Since the Commission has concluded there is no measurable environmental impact associated with the proposed action, any alternatives with equal or greater environmental impact need not be evaluated. As an alternative to the proposed action, the staff considered denial of the proposed action. 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 Point Beach Nuclear Plant, Units 1 and 2.

Agencies and Persons Consulted

In accordance with its stated policy, on July 29, 1997, the staff consulted with the Wisconsin State official, Ms. Sarah Jenkins of the Wisconsin Public Service Commission, regarding the environmental impact of the proposed action. The State official had no comments.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based upon the environmental assessment, the Commission concludes that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, the Commission 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 21, 1997, which is available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room, The Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, NW., Washington, DC, and at the local public document room located at The Lester Public Library, 1001 Adams Street, Two Rivers, WI 54241.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 22nd day of August 1997.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Linda L. Gundrum,

Project Manager, Project Directorate III-1, Division of Reactor Projects—III/IV, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket Nos. 50-266 and 50-301]

Wisconsin Electric Power Company; Point Beach Nuclear Plant, Units 1 and 2; Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) is considering granting an exemption from the requirements of 10 CFR 70.24(a) to Wisconsin Electric Power Company, (the licensee), in connection with the operation of the Point Beach Nuclear Plant (PBNP), Units 1 and 2, located in Manitowoc County, Wisconsin, under Facility Operating Licenses Nos. DPR-24 and DPR-27.

Environmental Assessment

Identification of Proposed Action

The proposed action would exempt the licensee from the requirements of 10 CFR 70.24(a), which requires a monitoring system that will energize clear audible alarms if accidental criticality occurs in each area in which special nuclear material is handled, used, or stored. The proposed action would also exempt the licensee from the requirements to maintain emergency procedures for each area in which this licensed special nuclear material is handled, used, or stored to ensure that all personnel withdraw to an area of safety upon the sounding of the alarm, to familiarize personnel with the evacuation plan, and to designate responsible individuals for determining the cause of the alarm, and to place radiation survey instruments in accessible locations for use in such an emergency.

The proposed action is in accordance with the licensee's application for exemption dated June 7, 1997.

The Need for the Proposed Action

The purpose of 10 CFR 70.24 is to ensure that if a criticality were to occur during the handling of special nuclear material, personnel would be alerted to that fact and would take appropriate action. At a commercial nuclear power plant the inadvertent criticality with which 10 CFR 70.24 is concerned could occur during fuel handling operations. The special nuclear material that could be assembled into a critical mass at a commercial nuclear power plant is in the form of nuclear fuel; the quantity of other forms of special nuclear material that is stored on site is small enough to preclude achieving a critical mass. Because the fuel is not enriched beyond 5.0 weight percent Uranium-235 and because commercial nuclear plant licensees have procedures and features designed to prevent inadvertent criticality, the staff has determined that it is unlikely that an inadvertent criticality could occur due to the handling of special nuclear material at a commercial power reactor. The requirements of 10 CFR 70.24, therefore, are not necessary to ensure the safety of personnel during the handling of special nuclear materials at commercial power reactors.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

The Commission has completed its evaluation of the proposed action and concludes that there is no significant environmental impact if the exemption is granted. Inadvertent or accidental

criticality will be precluded through compliance with the PBNP, Units 1 and 2, Technical Specifications, the design of the fuel storage racks providing geometric spacing of fuel assemblies in their storage locations, and administrative controls imposed on fuel handling procedures. Technical Specifications requirements specify reactivity limits for the fuel storage racks and minimum spacing between the fuel assemblies in the storage racks.

Appendix A of 10 CFR Part 50, "General Design Criteria for Nuclear Power Plants," Criterion 62, requires that criticality in the fuel storage and handling system shall be prevented by physical systems or processes, preferably by use of geometrically safe configurations. This is met at PBNP, as identified in the Technical Specifications and the Final Safety Analysis Report (FSAR). PBNP Technical Specifications Section 15.5.4, "Fuel Storage," states that "The new and spent fuel storage racks are designed so that it is impossible to store assemblies in other than the prescribed storage locations. The fuel is stored vertically in an array with sufficient center-to-center distance between assemblies to assure $K_{eff} < 0.95$ * * *." FSAR Section 9.5, "Fuel Handling System," Subsection 9.5.1, "Design Basis," states the Point Beach general design criterion for prevention of fuel storage criticality is "Criticality in the new and spent fuel storage pits shall be prevented by physical systems or processes. Such means as geometrically safe configurations shall be emphasized over procedural controls."

The proposed action would not result in any significant radiological impacts. The proposed action would not affect radiological plant effluents nor cause any significant occupational exposures since the Technical Specifications, design controls (including geometric spacing of fuel assembly storage spaces), and administrative controls preclude inadvertent criticality. The amount of radioactive waste would not be changed by the proposed action.

The proposed action does not result in any significant nonradiological environmental impacts. The proposed action involves features located entirely within the restricted area as defined in 10 CFR Part 20. It does not affect nonradiological plant effluents and has no other environmental impact. Accordingly, the Commission concludes that there are no significant nonradiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.