

information collection, violate State or Federal law, or substantially interfere with any agency's ability to perform its statutory obligations. The Deputy Chief Information Officer, Office of the Chief Information Officer, publishes this notice containing proposed information collection requests prior to submission of these requests to OMB. Each proposed information collection, grouped by office, contains the following: (1) Type of review requested, e.g., new, revision, extension, existing or reinstatement; (2) Title; (3) Summary of the collection; (4) Description of the need for, and proposed use of, the information; (5) Respondents and frequency of collection; and (6) Reporting and/or Recordkeeping burden. OMB invites public comment at the address specified above. Copies of the requests are available from Patrick J. Sherrill at the address specified above.

Dated: January 15, 1998.

Gloria Parker,

Deputy Chief Information Officer, Office of the Chief Information Officer.

Office of Postsecondary Education

Type of Review: Revision.

Title: Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate in Federal Perkins Loan, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, and Federal Work-Study Program.

Frequency: Annually.

Affected Public: Business or other for-profit; Not-for-profit institutions; State, local or Tribal Gov't; SEAs or LEAs.

Annual Reporting and Recordkeeping Hour Burden:

Responses: 4,800.

Burden Hours: 80,586.

Abstract: This application data will be used to compute the amount of funds needed by each institution during the 1999-2000 Award Year. The Fiscal Operations Report data will be used to assess program effectiveness, account for funds expended during the 1997-98 Award Year, and as part of the institutional funding process.

Office of Educational Research and Improvement

Type of Review: New.

Title: 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Writing Special Study.

Frequency: One Time.

Affected Public: Individuals or households.

Reporting Burden and Recordkeeping:

Responses: 6,200.

Burden Hours: 2,200.

Abstract: The 1998 NAEP writing special study is designed to bolster the understanding of study NAEP writing

achievement with information on student's best writing assignments, and the writing process. In addition, the study will collect information about teachers' emphasis on writing curriculum and instructional approaches. The study will be conducted with a sample of 6000 (4th and 8th grade) students and 200 teachers. The study will use a structured protocol to obtain more detailed and valid information about classroom instructional practices than a standard background questionnaire. Students will be asked to select three examples of their best writing and to fill out a brief questionnaire describing the samples of writing that they submit.

[FR Doc. 98-1391 Filed 1-20-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Production of Tritium in a Commercial Light Water Reactor

AGENCY: Department of Energy.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The Department of Energy (DOE) announces its intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the production of tritium using one or more commercial light water reactors (CLWR), pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 USC 4321 *et seq.*) and the DOE Regulations Implementing NEPA (10 CFR Part 1021). Under the CLWR Program, tritium production could occur in one of two manners: (1) purchase of CLWR irradiation services; or (2) purchase of a CLWR. Prior to preparation of the CLWR EIS, DOE initiated a procurement process to evaluate the feasibility of various CLWR alternatives, and the alternatives described in this notice have been derived from that procurement process. The CLWR EIS will evaluate the environmental impacts associated with tritium production for all reasonable alternatives identified through the procurement process.

DATES: Comments on the proposed scope of the CLWR EIS are invited from the public. To ensure consideration in the preparation of the EIS, comments must be postmarked by March 20, 1998. Late comments will be considered to the extent practicable. Public scoping meetings to discuss issues and receive oral comments on the scope of the EIS will be held in the vicinity of sites that may be affected by the proposed action.

The public scoping meetings will provide the public with an opportunity to present comments, ask questions, and discuss concerns with DOE officials regarding CLWR activities. An interactive format will be used. The location, date, and time for these public scoping meetings is as follows:

Northeast Alabama Community College,
135 Alabama Highway 35 West,
February 24, 1998, 7:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m., Rainsville, AL
Rhea County High School, February 26, 1998, 7:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m.,
Evansville, TN.

The Tennessee Valley Authority has been designated as a cooperating agency for this EIS. Any other agency that desires to be designated as a cooperating agency should contact the CLWR Program Office at the address listed below by March 20, 1998.

ADDRESSES: General questions concerning the CLWR Project can be asked by calling the toll-free telephone number at 1-800-332-0801, or by writing to: Stephen M. Sohinki, Director, CLWR Project Office, U.S. Department of Energy, P.O. Box 44539, Washington, DC 20026-4539.

As an alternative, comments can also be submitted by fax to: 1-800-631-0612; or electronically to the CLWR Web Site: <http://www.dp.doe.gov/dp-62>. Please mark envelopes, faxes, and E-mail: "CLWR EIS Comments."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For general information on the DOE NEPA process, please contact: Ms. Carol M. Borgstrom, Director, Office of NEPA Policy and Assistance (EH-42), U.S. Department of Energy, 1000 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20585, 202-586-4600; or telephone 800-472-2756 to leave a message.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: All of the nuclear weapons currently in the United States' stockpile must contain tritium, a radioactive isotope of hydrogen, to function as designed. Tritium decays at a rate of 5.5 percent per year, giving it a half-life of 12.3 years. Because of this decay, the tritium contained in the nuclear weapons must be periodically replenished. Tritium is not a fissile material and cannot be used alone to construct a nuclear weapon. Tritium also has commercial uses such as watch dials, exit signs, and medical research.

Tritium is so rare in nature that useful quantities must be man-made. The United States stopped producing new tritium in 1988 when the last government-owned nuclear materials production reactor at the Savannah River Site (SRS) was shut down. Currently, there is no capability to

produce the required amounts of tritium within the Nuclear Weapons Complex.

Previously, the Department evaluated the programmatic need for a new tritium source in a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for Tritium Supply and Recycling (DOE/EIS-0161, October 1995). Based on the findings in that PEIS and other technical, cost, and schedule evaluations, the Department issued a Record of Decision (ROD) on December 5, 1995 (60 FR 63877). In the ROD, the Department announced a decision to pursue a dual-track approach on the two most promising tritium supply alternatives: (1) To initiate purchase of an existing commercial reactor (operating or partially complete) or irradiation services with an option to purchase the reactor for conversion to a defense facility; and (2) to design, build, and test critical components of an accelerator system for tritium production (SRS was selected as the location for an accelerator, should one be built). The Department will select one of these approaches by the end of 1998 to serve as the primary source of tritium. The other alternative, if feasible, would continue to be developed as a backup tritium source.

In recent years, international arms control agreements have caused the nuclear weapons stockpile to be reduced in size. This, in turn, has allowed DOE to recycle the tritium removed from dismantled weapons for use in supporting the remaining stockpile. However, due to the decay of tritium, the current inventory of tritium will not meet the national security needs that are projected for the future. The most recent Presidential direction, which is contained in the 1996 Nuclear Weapons Stockpile Plan and an accompanying Presidential Decision Directive, mandates that new tritium be available by 2005 if a CLWR is the selected option for tritium production. If the accelerator is the selected option for tritium production, the Presidential direction mandates that new tritium be available by 2007.

The Department's strategy for compliance with NEPA has been to make decisions on programmatic alternatives in the ROD for the Tritium Supply and Recycling PEIS (now completed), followed by site-specific analyses to implement the programmatic decisions. The decisions made in the December 5, 1995, Tritium Supply and Recycling ROD have resulted in the Department's preparation of the following NEPA documents:

1. An EIS for the Selection of One or More Commercial Light Water Reactors

for Tritium Production (the subject of this Notice of Intent);

2. An EIS for the Construction and Operation of an Accelerator for the Production of Tritium at the Savannah River Site (Draft EIS issued in December 1997);

3. An Environmental Assessment for the Consolidation of Tritium Recycling Facilities at the Savannah River Site (currently under preparation);

4. An EIS for the Construction and Operation of a Tritium Extraction Facility at the Savannah River Site (Notice of Intent issued September 5, 1996 (61 FR 46790);

5. An Environmental Assessment for the Lead Test Assembly Irradiation and Analysis (completed in July 1997).

CLWR Production of Tritium

The production of tritium in a CLWR is technically straightforward. As discussed in the Tritium Supply and Recycling PEIS, most existing pressurized water reactors utilize twelve-foot long rods containing an isotope of boron in ceramic form that is inserted in their fuel elements to absorb excess neutrons produced by the uranium fuel in the fission process. These rods are sometimes called burnable absorber rods. DOE's tritium program has developed another type of burnable absorber rod in which neutrons are absorbed by a lithium aluminate ceramic rather than the boron ceramic. These rods would be placed in the same locations in the reactor core as the standard burnable absorber rods. There is no fissile material (uranium or plutonium) in the DOE burnable absorber rods.

While the two types of rods function in a very similar manner to absorb excess neutrons in the reactor core, there is one notable difference: when neutrons strike the lithium aluminate ceramic material in the DOE burnable absorber rod, tritium is produced. This tritium is then captured almost instantaneously in a solid zirconium material in the rod, called a "getter." Thus, there is virtually no free tritium in the rod. In fact, the solid material that captures the tritium as it is produced in the rod is so effective that the rod will have to be heated to temperatures in excess of 1800 degrees Fahrenheit in the extraction process to recover the tritium for eventual use in the nuclear weapons stockpile. Depending upon tritium needs, as many as 1000-3000 tritium-producing burnable absorber rods could be placed in each of one or more CLWRs for irradiation.

Relationship of the CLWR EIS and the CLWR Procurement Process

Prior to preparation of the CLWR EIS, DOE initiated a procurement process to evaluate the feasibility of various CLWR alternatives. DOE anticipated that it would enter into a contract/agreement with the owner/operator of one or more commercial reactors for the purpose of producing tritium. Such a contract/agreement could result in DOE purchasing CLWR irradiation services and/or purchasing a CLWR. A partially completed reactor could be utilized for tritium production if the owner/operator were to first complete construction of the reactor.

In June 1997, DOE requested proposals for producing tritium using existing and partially completed reactors. The proposals received from the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) in September were the only proposals that were determined to be responsive to the requirements in the procurement request. Consequently, the TVA proposals were the only proposals that were determined to be in the competitive range. The alternatives listed below, which were identified through the procurement process, currently constitute the reasonable alternatives that will be evaluated in the CLWR EIS. Through the procurement process, DOE may enter into an agreement with the TVA, contingent upon completion of the NEPA process, for the production of tritium required to support the nuclear weapons stockpile. However, before completion of the EIS and its associated Record of Decision, the Department and TVA will take appropriate actions, e.g., studies and analyses, related to the potential submission of licensing documents to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). Only those actions that are determined to be allowable interim actions would be permitted prior to the completion of the NEPA process. The NRC must issue regulatory approval for the use of tritium production rods in its licensed reactors.

Proposed Action and Alternatives

The CLWR EIS will evaluate the environmental impacts associated with producing tritium at one or more of the following reactor plants:

Bellefonte Nuclear Plant Units #1 and/or #2 (Hollywood, Alabama)
Watts Bar Nuclear Plant Unit #1 (Spring City, Tennessee)
Sequoyah Nuclear Plant Units #1 and/or #2 (Soddy-Daisy, Tennessee)

All of these plants are owned and operated by the Tennessee Valley Authority.

As required by the Council on Environmental Quality regulations, the CLWR EIS will also evaluate the No Action alternative. Under this alternative, the stockpile demand for tritium would have to be met by other means, such as constructing and operating an accelerator at the Savannah River Site.

Identification of Environmental and Other Issues

The Department has identified the following issues for analysis in the EIS. Additional issues may be identified as a result of the scoping process.

1. Public and Worker Safety, Health Risk Assessment: Radiological and nonradiological impacts, including projected effects on workers and the public from construction, operation and accident conditions associated with tritium production.
2. Impacts from releases to air, water, and soil associated with tritium production.
3. Impacts to plants, animals, and habitats, including threatened or endangered species and their habitats associated with tritium production.
4. The consumption of natural resources and energy associated with tritium production.
5. Socioeconomic impacts to affected communities from construction and operation associated with tritium production.
6. Environmental justice: Disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations associated with tritium production.
7. Impacts to cultural resources such as historic, archaeological, scientific, or

culturally important sites associated with tritium production.

8. Impacts associated with transportation of nuclear materials.

9. Status of compliance with all applicable Federal, state, and local statutes and regulations; required Federal and state environmental consultations and notifications; and DOE Orders on waste management, waste minimization, and environmental protection.

10. Cumulative impacts from the proposed action and other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions at the alternative sites.

11. Potential irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources associated with tritium production.

12. Pollution prevention and waste management practices, including characterization, storage, treatment and disposal of wastes associated with tritium production.

Public Scoping Process

To assist in defining the appropriate scope of the EIS and to identify significant environmental issues to be addressed, DOE will conduct public scoping meetings at the locations, dates, and times described above under DATES. DOE will begin each scoping meeting with an overview of the CLWR program. Following the initial presentation, DOE will answer questions and accept comments. Copies of handouts from the meetings will be available to those unable to attend, by contacting the DOE CLWR project described above under ADDRESSES.

Issued in Washington, D.C., this 15th day of January 1998.

Peter N. Brush,

Acting Assistant Secretary, Environment, Safety and Health.

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BILLING CODE 6450-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Office of Fossil Energy

[FE Docket Nos. 97-104-NG et al.]

TPC Corporation, et al.; Orders Granting and Transferring Blanket Authorizations To Import and/or Export Natural Gas

AGENCY: Office of Fossil Energy, DOE.

ACTION: Notice of orders.

SUMMARY: The Office of Fossil Energy of the Department of Energy gives notice that it has issued Orders granting and transferring various natural gas import and export authorizations. These Orders are summarized in the attached appendix.

These Orders are available for inspection and copying in the Office of Natural Gas & Petroleum Import and Export Activities, Docket Room, 3F-056, Forrestal Building, 1000 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20585, (202) 586-9478. The Docket Room is open between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

Issued in Washington, D.C., on January 14, 1998.

John W. Glynn,

Manager, Natural Gas Regulation, Office of Natural Gas & Petroleum Import and Export Activities, Office of Fossil Energy.

APPENDIX—BLANKET IMPORT/EXPORT AUTHORIZATIONS GRANTED

[DOE/FE Authority]

Order No.	Date issued	Importer/Exporter FE Docket No.	Two-year maximum		Comments
			Import Volume Bcf	Export Volume Bcf	
1337	12/02/97	TPC Corporation, 97-104-NG	73		Import and export up to a combined total from and to Canada beginning January 1, 1998, through December 31, 1999.
1338	12/04/97	Phibro Inc., 97-106-NG	200	200	Import including LNG from Canada and, to export to Canada beginning on first delivery after December 31, 1997.
1339	12/04/97	Phibro Inc., 97-105-NG	200	200	Import including LNG from Canada and, to export to Canada beginning on first delivery after December 31, 1997.
1340	12/04/97	Puget Sound Energy, Inc., 97-103-NG	50	Import from Canada beginning on first delivery after December 5, 1997.
1341	12/12/97	Direct Energy Marketing Inc., 97-111-NG	200	Import from Canada beginning February 1, 1998, through January 31, 2000.
1342	12/12/97	UtiliCorp United Inc., 97-107-NG	400		Import and export up to a combined total from and to Canada beginning January 1, 1998, through December 31, 1999.