

Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants

Supplement 34

Regarding Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2

Draft Report for Comment

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Manuscript Completed: April 2008
Date Published: May 2008

COMMENTS ON DRAFT REPORT

Any interested party may submit comments on this report for consideration by the NRC staff. Comments may be accompanied by additional relevant information or supporting data. Please specify the report number NUREG-1437, Supplement 34, draft, in your comments, and send them by July 16, 2008 to the following address:

Chief, Rulemaking, Directives and Editing Branch
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
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Washington, DC 20555-0001

Electronic comments may be submitted to the NRC by the Internet at Vogtle_LR_EIS@NRC.GOV.

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Abstract

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) considered the environmental impacts of renewing nuclear power plant operating licenses for a 20-year period in its *Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants* (GEIS), NUREG-1437, Volumes 1 and 2, and codified the results in 10 CFR Part 51. In the GEIS (and its Addendum 1), the Staff identified 92 environmental issues and reached generic conclusions related to environmental impacts for 69 of these issues that apply to all plants or to plants with specific design or site characteristics. Additional plant-specific review is required for the remaining 23 issues. These plant-specific reviews are to be included in a supplement to the GEIS.

This draft supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) has been prepared in response to an application submitted by Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (SNC) to the NRC to renew the operating licenses for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Units 1 and 2 (VEGP) for an additional 20 years under 10 CFR Part 54. This draft SEIS includes the NRC staff's analysis that considers and weighs the environmental impacts of the proposed action, the environmental impacts of alternatives to the proposed action, and mitigation measures available for reducing or avoiding adverse impacts. It also includes the Staff's preliminary recommendation regarding the proposed action.

Regarding the 69 issues for which the GEIS reached generic conclusions, neither SNC nor the Staff has identified information that is both new and significant for any issue that applies to VEGP. In addition, the Staff determined that information provided during the scoping process was not new and significant with respect to the conclusions in the GEIS. Therefore, the Staff concludes that the impacts of renewing the operating licenses for VEGP will not be greater than impacts identified for these issues in the GEIS. For each of these issues, the Staff's conclusion in the GEIS is that the impact is of SMALL^(a) significance (except for collective off-site radiological impacts from the fuel cycle and high-level waste and spent fuel, which were not assigned a single significance level).

Regarding the remaining 23 issues, those that apply to VEGP are addressed in this draft SEIS. The Staff concludes that the significance of potential environmental impacts related to operating license renewal is SMALL for each applicable issue, with one exception. Research is continuing in the area of chronic effects on electromagnetic fields, and a scientific consensus has not been reached. Therefore, no further evaluation of this issue is required.

^(a) Environmental effects are not detectable or are so minor that they will neither destabilize nor noticeably alter any important attribute of the resource.

Abstract

1 The NRC staff's preliminary recommendation is that the Commission determines that the
2 adverse environmental impacts of license renewal for VEGP are not so great that preserving the
3 option of license renewal for energy-planning decision makers would be unreasonable. This
4 recommendation is based on (1) the analysis and findings in the GEIS; (2) the Environmental
5 Report submitted by SNC; (3) consultation with Federal, State, and local agencies; (4) the
6 Staff's own independent review; and (5) the Staff's consideration of public comments received
7 during the scoping process.
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29 **Paperwork Reduction Act Statement**

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31 This NUREG does not contain information collection requirements and, therefore, is not
32 subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501 et
33 seq.). These information collections were approved by the Office of Management and Budget,
34 approval numbers 3150-0004; 3150-0155; 3150-0014; 3150-0011; 3150-0021; 3150-0132;
35 3150-0151.
36

37 **Public Protection Notification**

38
39 The NRC may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a request
40 for information or an information collection requirement unless the requesting document
41 displays a currently valid OMB control number.

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Executive Summary

1
2
3
4 By letter dated June 27, 2007, Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (SNC) submitted an
5 application to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to renew the operating licenses
6 for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Units 1 and 2 (VEGP) for an additional 20-year period (SNC
7 2007a). If the operating licenses are renewed, State regulatory agencies and VEGP will
8 ultimately decide whether the plant will continue to operate based on factors such as the need
9 for power or other matters within the State's jurisdiction or the purview of the owners. If the
10 operating licenses are not renewed, then the plant must be shut down at or before the expiration
11 of the current operating licenses, which expires on January 16, 2027 for Unit 1 and February 9,
12 2029 for Unit 2.

13
14 The NRC has implemented Section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as
15 amended (NEPA) (42 USC 4321) in Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 51
16 (10 CFR Part 51). In 10 CFR 51.20(b)(2), the Commission requires preparation of an
17 environmental impact statement (EIS) or a supplement to an EIS for renewal of a reactor
18 operating license. In addition, 10 CFR 51.95(c) states that the EIS prepared at the operating
19 license renewal stage will be a supplement to the *Generic Environmental Impact Statement for*
20 *License Renewal of Nuclear Plants* (GEIS), NUREG-1437, Volumes 1 and 2.^(a)

21
22 Upon acceptance of the VEGP application, the NRC began the environmental review process
23 described in 10 CFR Part 51 by publishing a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS and conduct
24 scoping (*Federal Register*, Volume 72, page 43296 [NRC 2007]) on August 3, 2007. The Staff
25 visited the VEGP site and conducted a site audit in October 2007, and held two public scoping
26 meetings on September 27, 2007. In the preparation of this draft supplemental environmental
27 impact statement (SEIS) for VEGP, the Staff reviewed the VEGP Environmental Report and
28 compared it to the GEIS, consulted with other agencies, conducted an independent review of
29 the issues following the guidance set forth in NUREG-1555, Supplement 1, the *Standard*
30 *Review Plans for Environmental Reviews for Nuclear Power Plants, Supplement 1: Operating*
31 *License Renewal*, and considered the public comments received during the scoping process.
32 The public comments received during the scoping process are provided in Appendix A, Part 1,
33 of this draft SEIS.

34
35 The Staff plans to hold public meetings in Waynesboro, Georgia, in June 2008, to describe the
36 preliminary results of the NRC environmental review, to answer questions, and to provide
37 members of the public with information to assist them in formulating comments on this draft
38 SEIS. When the comment period ends, the Staff will consider and address all of the comments
39 received. These comments will be addressed in Appendix A, Part 2 of the final SEIS.

^(a) The GEIS was originally issued in 1996. Addendum 1 to the GEIS was issued in 1999. Hereafter,
all references to the "GEIS" include the GEIS and its Addendum 1.

Executive Summary

1 This draft SEIS includes the NRC staff's preliminary analysis that considers and weighs the
2 environmental effects of the proposed action, the environmental impacts of alternatives to the
3 proposed action, and mitigation measures for reducing or avoiding adverse effects. It also
4 includes the Staff's preliminary recommendation regarding the proposed action.

5
6 The Commission has adopted the following statement of purpose and need for license renewal
7 from the GEIS:

8
9 The purpose and need for the proposed action (renewal of an operating license) is to
10 provide an option that allows for power generation capability beyond the term of a current
11 nuclear power plant operating license to meet future system generating needs, as such
12 needs may be determined by State, utility, and, where authorized, Federal (other than NRC)
13 decisionmakers.

14
15 The evaluation criterion for the Staff's environmental review, as defined in 10 CFR 51.95(c)(4)
16 and the GEIS, is to determine:

17
18 . . . whether or not the adverse environmental impacts of license renewal are so great that
19 preserving the option of license renewal for energy planning decisionmakers would be
20 unreasonable.

21
22 Both the statement of purpose and need and the evaluation criterion implicitly acknowledge that
23 there are factors, in addition to license renewal, that will ultimately determine whether an
24 existing nuclear power plant continues to operate beyond the period of the current operating
25 licenses.

26
27 NRC regulations [10 CFR 51.95(c)(2)] contain the following statement regarding the content of
28 SEISs prepared at the license renewal stage:

29
30 The supplemental environmental impact statement for license renewal is not required to
31 include discussion of need for power or the economic costs and economic benefits of the
32 proposed action or of alternatives to the proposed action except insofar as such benefits
33 and costs are either essential for a determination regarding the inclusion of an alternative in
34 the range of alternatives considered or relevant to mitigation. In addition, the supplemental
35 environmental impact statement prepared at the license renewal stage need not discuss
36 other issues not related to the environmental effects of the proposed action and the
37 alternatives, or any aspect of the storage of spent fuel for the facility within the scope of the
38 generic determination in § 51.23(a) ["Temporary storage of spent fuel after cessation of
39 reactor operation—generic determination of no significant environmental impact"] and in
40 accordance with § 51.23(b).

1 The GEIS contains the results of a systematic evaluation of the consequences of renewing an
2 OPERATING LICENSE and operating a nuclear power plant for an additional 20 years. It
3 evaluates 92 environmental issues using the NRC's three-level standard of significance—
4 SMALL, MODERATE, or LARGE—developed using the Council on Environmental Quality
5 guidelines.

6
7 The following definitions of the three significance levels are set forth in footnotes to Table B-1 of
8 10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B:

9
10 SMALL - Environmental effects are not detectable or are so minor that they will neither
11 destabilize nor noticeably alter any important attribute of the resource.

12
13 MODERATE - Environmental effects are sufficient to alter noticeably, but not to
14 destabilize, important attributes of the resource.

15
16 LARGE - Environmental effects are clearly noticeable and are sufficient to destabilize
17 important attributes of the resource.

18
19 For 69 of the 92 issues considered in the GEIS, the analysis in the GEIS reached the following
20 conclusions:

21
22 (1) The environmental impacts associated with the issue have been determined to apply
23 either to all plants or, for some issues, to plants having a specific type of cooling system
24 or other specified plant or site characteristics.

25
26 (2) A single significance level (that is SMALL, MODERATE, or LARGE) has been assigned
27 to the impacts (except for collective offsite radiological impacts from the fuel cycle and
28 from high-level waste and spent fuel disposal).

29
30 (3) Mitigation of adverse impacts associated with the issue has been considered in the
31 analysis, and it has been determined that additional plant-specific mitigation measures
32 are not likely to be sufficiently beneficial to warrant implementation.

33
34 These 69 issues were identified in the GEIS as Category 1 issues. In the absence of new and
35 significant information, the Staff relied on conclusions as amplified by supporting information in
36 the GEIS for issues designated as Category 1 in Table B-1 of 10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A,
37 Appendix B.

38
39 Of the 23 issues that do not meet the criteria set forth above, 21 are classified as Category 2
40 issues requiring analysis in a plant-specific supplement to the GEIS. The remaining two issues,
41 environmental justice and chronic effects of electromagnetic fields, were not categorized.

Executive Summary

1 Environmental justice was not evaluated on a generic basis and must be addressed in a plant-
2 specific supplement to the GEIS. Information on the chronic effects of electromagnetic fields
3 was not conclusive at the time the GEIS was prepared.
4

5 This draft SEIS documents the Staff's consideration of all 92 environmental issues identified in
6 the GEIS. The Staff considered the environmental impacts associated with alternatives to
7 license renewal and compared the environmental impacts of license renewal and the
8 alternatives. The alternatives to license renewal that were considered include the no-action
9 alternative (not renewing the operating licenses for VEGP) and alternative methods of power
10 generation. Based on projections made by the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Information
11 Administration (DOE/EIA), coal and gas-fired generation appear to be the most likely power-
12 generation alternatives if the power from VEGP is replaced. These alternatives are evaluated
13 assuming that the replacement power generation plant is located at either the VEGP site or
14 some other unspecified alternate location.
15

16 SNC and the Staff have established independent processes for identifying and evaluating the
17 significance of any new information on the environmental impacts of license renewal. Neither
18 SNC nor the Staff has identified information that is both new and significant related to Category
19 1 issues that would call into question the conclusions in the GEIS. Similarly, neither the scoping
20 process nor the Staff has identified any new issue applicable to VEGP that has a significant
21 environmental impact. Therefore, the Staff relies upon the conclusions of the GEIS for all of the
22 Category 1 issues that are applicable to VEGP.
23

24 VEGP's license renewal application presents an analysis of the Category 2 issues plus
25 environmental justice and chronic effects from electromagnetic fields. The Staff has reviewed
26 SNC's analysis for each issue and has conducted an independent review of each issue. Five
27 Category 2 issues are not applicable, because they are related to plant design features or site
28 characteristics not found at VEGP. Four Category 2 issues are not discussed in this draft SEIS,
29 because they are specifically related to refurbishment. SNC has stated that its evaluation of
30 structures and components, as required by 10 CFR 54.21, did not identify any major plant
31 refurbishment activities or modifications as necessary to support the continued operation of
32 VEGP for the license renewal period. In addition, any replacement of components or additional
33 inspection activities are within the bounds of normal plant operation, and are not expected to
34 affect the environment outside of the bounds of the plant operations evaluated in the U.S.
35 Nuclear Regulatory Commission's 1985 *Final Environmental Statement Related to the*
36 *Operation of Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Units 1 and 2.*
37

38 Twelve Category 2 issues related to operational impacts and postulated accidents during the
39 renewal term, as well as environmental justice and chronic effects of electromagnetic fields, are
40 discussed in detail in this draft SEIS. For all of the twelve Category 2 issues and environmental
41 justice, the Staff concludes that the potential environmental effects are of SMALL significance in

1 the context of the standards set forth in the GEIS. The Staff also determined that appropriate
2 federal health agencies have not reached a consensus on the existence of chronic adverse
3 effects from electromagnetic fields. Therefore, no further evaluation of this issue is required.
4 For severe accident mitigation alternatives (SAMAs), the Staff concludes that a reasonable,
5 comprehensive effort was made to identify and evaluate SAMAs. Based on its review of the
6 SAMAs for VEGP and the plant improvements already made, the Staff concludes that SNC
7 identified two potentially cost-beneficial SAMAs. However, these SAMAs do not relate to
8 adequate managing of the effects of aging during the period of extended operation. Therefore,
9 they do not need to be implemented as part of the license renewal pursuant to 10 CFR Part 54.
10 Mitigation measures were considered for adverse effects associated with Category 2 issues.
11 For these issues, current measures to mitigate the environmental impacts of plant operation
12 were found to be adequate, and no additional mitigation measures were deemed sufficiently
13 beneficial to be warranted.

14
15 Cumulative impacts of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions were
16 considered, regardless of which agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such
17 other actions. For purposes of this analysis, the Staff concluded that the cumulative impacts
18 resulting from the incremental contribution of VEGP operation and maintenance of transmission
19 line ROW would be SMALL for all resources.

20
21 If the VEGP operating license is not renewed and the unit ceases operation on or before the
22 expiration of their current operating license, then the adverse impacts of likely alternatives will
23 not be smaller than those associated with continued operation of VEGP. The impacts may, in
24 fact, be greater in some areas.

25
26 The preliminary recommendation of the NRC staff is that the Commission determine that the
27 adverse environmental impacts of license renewal for VEGP are not so great that preserving the
28 option of license renewal for energy planning decisionmakers would be unreasonable. This
29 recommendation is based on (1) the analysis and findings in the GEIS; (2) the Environmental
30 Report submitted by SNC; (3) consultation with other Federal, State, and local agencies; (4) the
31 Staff's own independent review; and (5) the Staff's consideration of public comments received
32 during the scoping process.

Abbreviations/Acronyms

°	degree(s)
ac	acre(s)
AC	alternating current
ACC	averted cleanup and decontamination
ACEEE	American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy
ADAMS	Agency-wide Documents Access and Management System
AEO	<i>Annual Energy Outlook</i>
AFW	auxiliary feed water
ALARA	as low as reasonably achievable
ANS	Academy of Natural Sciences
AOC	averted off-site property damage costs
AOE	averted occupational exposure costs
AOSC	averted on-site costs
APE	averted public exposure
ASMFC	Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
ATWS	anticipated transient without scram
BA	biological assessment
B.P.	Before Present
Bq	becquerel
BTU	British thermal unit(s)
C	Celsius
CAA	Clean Air Act
CCW	component cooling water
CDC	U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDF	core damage frequency
CET	Containment Event Tree
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	<i>Code of Federal Regulations</i>
cfs	cubic foot (feet) per second
cms	cubic meter(s) per second
cm/sec	centimeter(s) per second
Ci	curie(s)
CO	carbon monoxide
CO ₂	carbon dioxide
COE	cost of enhancement
CPUE	catch-per-unit-effort
CSET	Containment Safeguards for Event Tree

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CVCS	Chemical and Volume Control System
CWA	Clean Water Act
CWIS	Circulating Water Intake Structure
CWS	Circulating Water System
CWSH	Circulating Water Screenhouse
dBa	decibels
DBA	Design Base Accident
DAW	dry waste system
DC	direct current
DOE	U.S. Department of Energy
DSM	Demand Side Management
DWR	Division of Water Resources
EDG	emergency diesel generator
EFH	essential fish habitat
EGS	Enhanced Geothermal Systems
EIA	Energy Information Administration
EIS	environmental impact statement
EL	Environmental Laboratory
ELF-EMF	extremely low frequency-electromagnetic field
EO	Executive Order
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
EPRI	Electric Power Research Institute
ERS	Environmental Radiation Surveillance
ESA	Endangered Species Act
ESP	early site permit
ESWS	Essential Service Water System
F	Fahrenheit
F&O	Facts and Observations
FES	Final Environmental Impact Statement
FIVE	fire-induced vulnerability evaluation
FMP	Fishery Management Plan
fps	foot (feet) per second
FPS	fire protection system
FR	<i>Federal Register</i>
FSAR	Final Safety Analysis Report
FSM	Fishery Management Plan
ft	foot (feet)
ft ³	cubic feet
ft/sec	feet per second
FWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Abbreviations and Acronyms

GDNR	Georgia Department of Natural Resources
GEIS	<i>Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants, NUREG-1437</i>
GEPD	Georgia Environmental Protection Division
GL	Generic Letter
GPC	Georgia Power Company
gpm	gallon(s) per minute
GPSC	Georgia Public Service Commission
GWPS	gaseous radioactive waste processing system
ha	hectare(s)
HCLPF	high confidence of low probability of failure
HEPA	high efficiency particulate air
HNP	Edwin/Hatch Nuclear Plant
hr	hour(s)
HRA	Human Reliability Analysis
HVAC	heating, ventilation, and air conditioning
IGCC	Integrated Gasification Combined-Cycle
INEEL	Idaho National Energy and Environmental Laboratory
IPE	individual plant examination
IPEEE	individual plant examination of external events
IRP	Integrated Resource Plan
ISLOCA	Interfacing Systems Loss of Coolant Accidents
J	Joule
kg	kilogram(s)
km	kilometer(s)
kV	kilovolt(s)
kW	kilowatt(s)
kWh	kilowatt hour(s)
lb	Pound
LC ₅₀	median lethal concentration
LERF	Large Early Release Frequency
LLMW	low-level mixed waste
LOCA	loss of coolant accident
LOS	level of service
LPSI	low pressure safety injection
LWPS	liquid waste processing system

Abbreviations and Acronyms

m	meter(s)
m/s	meter(s) per second
mm	millimeter(s)
m ³	cubic meter(s)
mA	milliampere(s)
MAAP	Modular Accident Analysis Program
MACCS2	MELLCOR Accident Consequence Code System 2
MBq	megabequerel
MCL	maximum contaminant level
MDC	Minimal Detectable Concentration
MDS	Minimum Desirable Streamflow
mg	milligram(s)
mgd	million gallons per day
mGy	milligray(s)
mg/L	milligram(s) per liter
mi	mile(s)
mL	milliliter(s)
MMACR	Modified Maximum Averted Cost-Risk
MOX	mixed oxide
mph	miles per hour
mrad	milliard(s)
mrem	millirem(s)
m/s	meter(s) per second
msl	mean sea level
MSW	Municipal Solid Waste
mSv	millisievert
MT	metric ton
MTHM	metric tonne
MTU	metric ton of uranium
MUSH	Makeup Water Screen House
MW	megawatt(s)
MWd	megawatt-days
MW(e)	megawatt(s) electric
MWh	megawatt hour(s)
MW(t)	megawatt(s) thermal
MWSF	Mixed Waste Storage Facility
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NAS	National Academy of Sciences
NCP	normal charging pump
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended

Abbreviations and Acronyms

NESC	National Electric Safety Code
NETL	National Energy Technology Laboratory
ng	Nanograms
NGVD	national geodetic vertical datum
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NIEHS	National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NO ₂	nitrogen dioxide
NO _x	nitrogen oxide(s)
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NRC	U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NSCW	Nuclear Service Cooling Water
O ₃	ozone
ODCM	Offsite Dose Calculation Manual
O&G	oil and grease
PAH	polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon
PAM	primary amoebic meningoencephalitis
PAYS	Pay as You Save
Pb	lead
pCi/L	picoCuries per liter
pCi/kg	picoCuries per kilogram
PM _{2.5}	particulate matter, 2.5 microns or less in diameter
PM ₁₀	particulate matter, 10 microns or less in diameter
ppm	parts per million
PRA	probabilistic risk assessment
PSA	probabilistic safety assessment
PWR	pressurized water reactor
radwaste	radioactive waste
RAI	request for additional information
RCP	reactor coolant pump
RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
REMP	Radiological Environmental Monitoring Program
rkm	river kilometer(s)
RLE	review level earthquake
RM	river mile(s)
ROI	region of influence
ROW	right-of-way

Abbreviations and Acronyms

RPC	long-term replacement power costs
RRW	risk reduction worth
RWDS	radioactive waste disposal system
RWST	refueling water storage tank
s	second(s)
SAR	Safety Analysis Report
SAMA	severe accident mitigation alternative
SBO	station blackout
SCDHEC	South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
SCE&G	South Carolina Electric and Gas
SCR	selective catalytic reduction
SDWIS	Safe Drinking Water Information System
sec	second
SECPOP	sector population, land fraction and economic estimation program
SEIS	supplemental environmental impact statement
SER	Safety Evaluation Report
SGTR	Steam Generator Tube Ruptures
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SNC	Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc.
SO ₂	sulfur dioxide
SO _x	sulfur oxide(s)
SOP	standard operating procedure(s)
SRS	Savannah River Site
SSE	safe shutdown earthquake
Sv	sievert
SWMS	solid waste management system
SWS	Service Water System
TD	turbine driven
TDS	total dissolved solids
TL	total length
TLD	thermoluminescent dosimeters
TMDL	Total Maximum Daily Load
TRC	Third Rock Consultants
TSS	total suspended solids
UHS	ultimate heat sink
U.S.	United States
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USCB	U.S. Census Bureau
USD	Unified School District

Abbreviations and Acronyms

USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
V	volt(s)
VEGP	Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Units 1 and 2
VOC	volatile organic compound
WET	whole effluent toxicity
WHC	Wildlife Habitat Council
WINGS	Wildlife Incentives for Non-Game and Game Species
WMA	Wildlife Management Area
WOG	Westinghouse Owner's Group
YOY	young of year
yr	year(s)

1.0 Introduction

Under the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC's) environmental protection regulations in Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 51, which implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), renewal of a nuclear power plant operating license requires the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). In preparing the EIS, the NRC staff is required first to issue the statement in draft form for public comment, and then issue a final statement after considering public comments on the draft. To support the preparation of the EIS, the Staff prepared a *Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants* (GEIS), NUREG-1437, Volumes 1 and 2 (NRC 1996, 1999).^(a) The GEIS is intended to (1) provide an understanding of the types and severity of environmental impacts that may occur as a result of license renewal of nuclear power plants under 10 CFR Part 54, (2) identify and assess the impacts that are expected to be generic to license renewal, and (3) support 10 CFR Part 51 to define the number and scope of issues that need to be addressed by the applicants in plant-by-plant renewal proceedings. Use of the GEIS guides the preparation of complete plant-specific information in support of the operating license renewal process.

Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (SNC) operates Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Units 1 and 2 (VEGP) near Waynesboro, Georgia under Operating License NPF-68 for Unit 1 and NPF-81 for Unit 2, which were issued by the NRC. The operating license will expire on January 16, 2027 for Unit 1 and February 9, 2029 for Unit 2. The Unit 2 license will not expire within the 20-year period designated in the License Renewal Rule; therefore, SNC filed for and received exemption by letter from the NRC dated January 9, 2007 (NRC 2007a) that supports the early renewal of the Unit 2 license.

On June 27, 2007, SNC submitted an application to the NRC to renew the SNC operating licenses for an additional 20 years under 10 CFR Part 54 (SNC 2007a). SNC is a licensee for the purposes of its current operating license and an applicant for the renewal of the operating license. Pursuant to 10 CFR 54.23 and 51.53(c), SNC submitted an Environmental Report (Environmental Report; SNC 2007b) in which SNC analyzed the environmental impacts associated with the proposed license renewal action, considered alternatives to the proposed action, and evaluated mitigation measures for reducing adverse environmental effects.

This report is the draft facility-specific supplement to the GEIS (the supplemental EIS [SEIS]) for the SNC license renewal application. This draft SEIS is a supplement to the GEIS because it relies, in part, on the findings of the GEIS. The Staff will also prepare a separate safety evaluation report in accordance with 10 CFR Part 54.

^(a) The GEIS was originally issued in 1996. Addendum 1 to the GEIS was issued in 1999. Hereafter, all references to the "GEIS" include the GEIS and its Addendum 1.

1.1 Report Contents

The following sections of this introduction (1) describe the background for the preparation of this draft SEIS, including the development of the GEIS and the process used by the Staff to assess the environmental impacts associated with license renewal, (2) describe the proposed Federal action to renew the VEGP operating license, (3) discuss the purpose and need for the proposed action, and (4) present the status of SNC's compliance with environmental quality standards and requirements that have been imposed by Federal, State, regional, and local agencies that are responsible for environmental protection.

The ensuing chapters of this draft SEIS closely parallel the contents and organization of the GEIS. Chapter 2 describes the site, power plant, and interactions of the plant with the environment. Chapters 3 and 4, respectively, discuss the potential environmental impacts of plant refurbishment and plant operation during the renewal term. Chapter 5 contains an evaluation of potential environmental impacts of plant accidents and includes consideration of severe accident mitigation alternatives. Chapter 6 discusses the uranium fuel cycle and solid waste management. Chapter 7 discusses decommissioning, and Chapter 8 discusses alternatives to license renewal. Finally, Chapter 9 summarizes the findings of the preceding chapters and draws conclusions about the adverse impacts that cannot be avoided; the relationship between short-term uses of man's environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity; and the irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources. Chapter 9 also presents the Staff's preliminary recommendation with respect to the proposed license renewal action.

Additional information is included in appendices. Appendix A contains public comments related to the environmental review for license renewal and Staff responses to those comments. Appendices B through G, respectively, include the following:

- The preparers of the supplement (Appendix B),
- The chronology of the NRC staff's environmental review correspondence related to this draft SEIS (Appendix C),
- The organizations contacted during the development of this draft SEIS (Appendix D),
- SNC's compliance status in Table E-1 (this appendix also contains copies of consultation correspondence prepared and sent during the evaluation process) (Appendix E),
- GEIS environmental issues that are not applicable to VEGP (Appendix F), and

- NRC staff evaluation of severe accident mitigation alternatives (SAMAs) (Appendix G).

1.2 Background

Use of the GEIS, which examines the possible environmental impacts that could occur as a result of renewing individual nuclear power plant operating licenses under 10 CFR Part 54, and the established license renewal evaluation process support the thorough evaluation of the impacts of operating license renewal.

1.2.1 Generic Environmental Impact Statement

The NRC initiated a generic assessment of the environmental impacts associated with the license renewal term to improve the efficiency of the license renewal process by documenting the assessment results and codifying the results in the Commission's regulations. This assessment is provided in the GEIS, which serves as the principal reference for all nuclear power plant license renewal EISs.

The GEIS documents the results of the systematic approach that was taken to evaluate the environmental consequences of renewing the licenses of individual nuclear power plants and operating them for an additional 20 years. For each potential environmental issue, the GEIS (1) describes the activity that affects the environment, (2) identifies the population or resource that is affected, (3) assesses the nature and magnitude of the impact on the affected population or resource, (4) characterizes the significance of the effect for both beneficial and adverse effects, (5) determines whether the results of the analysis apply to all plants, and (6) considers whether additional mitigation measures would be warranted for impacts that would have the same significance level for all plants.

The NRC's standard of significance for impacts was established using the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) terminology for "significantly" which requires consideration of both "context" and "intensity" (40 CFR 1508.27). Using the CEQ terminology, the NRC established three significance levels – SMALL, MODERATE, or LARGE. The definitions of the three significance levels are set forth in the footnotes to Table B-1 of 10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, as follows:

SMALL – Environmental effects are not detectable or are so minor that they will neither destabilize nor noticeably alter any important attribute of the resource.

MODERATE – Environmental effects are sufficient to alter noticeably, but not to destabilize, important attributes of the resource.

Introduction

1 LARGE – Environmental effects are clearly noticeable and are sufficient to destabilize
2 important attributes of the resource.

3
4 The GEIS assigns a significance level to each environmental issue, assuming that ongoing
5 mitigation measures would continue.

6
7 The GEIS includes a determination of whether the analysis of the environmental issue could be
8 applied to all plants and whether additional mitigation measures would be warranted. Issues
9 are assigned a Category 1 or a Category 2 designation. As set forth in the GEIS, Category 1
10 issues are those that meet all of the following criteria:

11
12 (1) The environmental impacts associated with the issue have been determined to apply
13 either to all plants or, for some issues, to plants having a specific type of cooling system
14 or other specified plant or site characteristics.

15
16 (2) A single significance level (i.e., SMALL, MODERATE, or LARGE) has been assigned to
17 the impacts (except for collective off-site radiological impacts from the fuel cycle and
18 from high-level waste and spent fuel disposal).

19
20 (3) Mitigation of adverse impacts associated with the issue has been considered in the
21 analysis, and it has been determined that additional plant-specific mitigation measures
22 are likely not to be sufficiently beneficial to warrant implementation.

23
24 For issues that meet the three Category 1 criteria, no additional plant-specific analysis is
25 required in this draft SEIS unless new and significant information is identified.

26
27 Category 2 issues are those that do not meet one or more of the criteria of Category 1;
28 therefore, additional plant-specific review for these issues is required.

29
30 In the GEIS, the Staff assessed 92 environmental issues and determined that 69 qualified as
31 Category 1 issues, 21 qualified as Category 2 issues, and 2 issues were not categorized. The
32 two issues not categorized are environmental justice and chronic effects of electromagnetic
33 fields. Environmental justice was not evaluated on a generic basis and must be addressed in a
34 plant-specific supplement to the GEIS. Information on the chronic effects of electromagnetic
35 fields was not conclusive at the time the GEIS was prepared.

36
37 Of the 92 issues, 11 are related only to refurbishment, 6 are related only to decommissioning,
38 67 apply only to operation during the renewal term, and 8 apply to both refurbishment and
39 operation during the renewal term. A summary of the findings for all 92 issues in the GEIS is
40 codified in Table B-1 of 10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B.

1.2.2 License Renewal Evaluation Process

An applicant seeking to renew its operating license is required to submit an Environmental Report as part of its application. The license renewal evaluation process involves careful review of the applicant's Environmental Report and assurance that all new and potentially significant information not already addressed in or available during the GEIS evaluation is identified, reviewed, and assessed to verify the environmental impacts of the proposed license renewal.

In accordance with 10 CFR 51.53(c)(2) and (3), the Environmental Report submitted by the applicant must:

- Provide an analysis of the Category 2 issues in Table B-1 of 10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B in accordance with 10 CFR 51.53(c)(3)(ii) and
- Discuss actions to mitigate any adverse impacts associated with the proposed action and environmental impacts of alternatives to the proposed action.

In accordance with 10 CFR 51.53(c)(2), the Environmental Report does not need to:

- Consider the economic benefits and costs of the proposed action and alternatives to the proposed action except insofar as such benefits and costs are either (1) essential for making a determination regarding the inclusion of an alternative in the range of alternatives considered or (2) relevant to mitigation,
- Consider the need for power and other issues not related to the environmental effects of the proposed action and the alternatives,
- Discuss any aspect of the storage of spent fuel within the scope of the generic determination in 10 CFR 51.23(a) in accordance with 10 CFR 51.23(b), or
- Contain an analysis of any Category 1 issue unless there is significant new information on a specific issue — this is pursuant to 10 CFR 51.23(c)(3)(iii) and (iv).

New and significant information is (1) information that identifies a significant environmental issue not covered in the GEIS and codified in Table B-1 of 10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B or (2) information that was not considered in the analyses summarized in the GEIS and that leads to an impact finding that is different from the finding presented in the GEIS and codified in 10 CFR Part 51.

Introduction

1 In preparing to submit its application to renew the VEGP operating license, SNC developed a
2 process to ensure that (1) information not addressed in or available during the GEIS evaluation
3 regarding the environmental impacts of license renewal for VEGP would be properly reviewed
4 before submitting the Environmental Report and (2) such new and potentially significant
5 information related to renewal of the license for VEGP would be identified, reviewed, and
6 assessed during the period of NRC review. SNC reviewed the Category 1 issues that appear in
7 Table B-1 of 10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, to verify that the conclusions of the GEIS
8 remained valid with respect to VEGP. This review was performed by personnel from SNC and
9 its support organization who were familiar with NEPA issues and the scientific disciplines
10 involved in the preparation of a license renewal Environmental Report.

11
12 The NRC staff also has a process for identifying new and significant information. That process
13 is described in detail in *Standard Review Plans for Environmental Reviews for Nuclear Power*
14 *Plants, Supplement 1: Operating License Renewal*, NUREG-1555, Supplement 1 (NRC 2000).
15 The search for new information includes: (1) review of an applicant's Environmental Report and
16 the process for discovering and evaluating the significance of new information; (2) review of
17 records of public comments; (3) review of environmental quality standards and regulations; (4)
18 coordination with Federal, State, and local environmental protection and resource agencies; and
19 (5) review of the technical literature. New information discovered by the Staff is evaluated for
20 significance using the criteria set forth in the GEIS. For Category 1 issues where new and
21 significant information is identified, reconsideration of the conclusions for those issues is limited
22 in scope to the assessment of relevant new and significant information; the scope of the
23 assessment does not include other facets of the issue that are not affected by the new
24 information.

25
26 Chapters 3 through 7 discuss the environmental issues considered in the GEIS that are
27 applicable to VEGP. At the beginning of the discussion of each set of issues, there is a table
28 that identifies the issues to be addressed and lists the sections in the GEIS where the issue is
29 discussed. Category 1 and Category 2 issues are listed in separate tables. For Category 1
30 issues for which there is no new and significant information, the table is followed by a set of
31 short paragraphs that state the GEIS conclusion codified in Table B-1 of 10 CFR Part 51,
32 Subpart A, Appendix B, followed by the Staff's analysis and conclusion. For Category 2 issues,
33 in addition to the list of GEIS sections where the issue is discussed, the tables list the
34 subparagraph of 10 CFR 51.53(c)(3)(ii) that describes the analysis required and the draft SEIS
35 sections where the analysis is presented. The draft SEIS sections that discuss the Category 2
36 issues are presented immediately following the table.

37
38 The NRC prepares an independent analysis of the environmental impacts of license renewal
39 and compares these impacts with the environmental impacts of alternatives. The evaluation of
40 the SNC license renewal application began with the publication of a notice of acceptance for
41 docketing, notice of opportunity for a hearing, and notice of intent to prepare an EIS and

1 conduct scoping in the Federal Register (FR; 72FR43296; NRC 2007b) on August 3, 2007. A
2 public scoping meeting was held on September 27, 2007 in Waynesboro, Georgia. Comments
3 received during the scoping period were summarized in the *Environmental Impact Statement*
4 *Scoping Process: Summary Report – Vogtle Electric Generating Plant* (NRC 2007c).
5 Comments are presented in Part 1 of Appendix A of this draft SEIS.

6
7 The Staff followed the review guidance contained in NUREG-1555, Supplement 1 (NRC 2000).
8 The Staff and contractor retained to assist the Staff visited the SNC Site on October 15 through
9 17, 2007, to gather information and to become familiar with the site and its environs. The Staff
10 also reviewed the comments received during scoping, and consulted with federal, state,
11 regional, and local agencies. A list of the organizations consulted is provided in Appendix D.
12 Other documents related to VEGP were reviewed and are referenced within this draft SEIS.

13
14 This draft SEIS presents the Staff's analysis that considers and weighs the environmental
15 effects of the proposed renewal of the operating license for VEGP, the environmental impacts of
16 alternatives to license renewal, and mitigation measures available for avoiding adverse
17 environmental effects. Chapter 9, "Summary and Conclusions," provides the NRC staff's
18 preliminary recommendation to the Commission on whether or not the adverse environmental
19 impacts of license renewal are so great that preserving the option of license renewal for energy-
20 planning decisionmakers would be unreasonable.

21
22 A 75-day comment period will begin on the date of publication of the U.S. Environmental
23 Protection Agency Notice of Filing of the draft SEIS to allow members of the public to comment
24 on the preliminary results of the NRC staff's review. During this comment period, public
25 meetings will be held in Waynesboro, Georgia. During these meetings, the Staff will describe
26 the preliminary results of the NRC environmental review and answer questions related to it to
27 provide members of the public with information to assist them in formulating their comments.

28 29 **1.3 The Proposed Federal Action**

30
31 The proposed Federal action is renewal of the operating license for VEGP. The VEGP facility is
32 located approximately 15 miles east-northeast of Waynesboro, Georgia and 26 miles southeast
33 of Augusta, Georgia. The VEGP Nuclear Steam Supply System consists of two Westinghouse
34 pressurized water reactors (PWRs) and a reactor core power of 3565 megawatts-thermal
35 (MWt), and an approximate net electrical output of 1232 megawatts-electrical (MWe) for each
36 unit. A power uprate for Vogtle Units 1 and 2 is in process and set for submittal to the NRC in
37 2007 (SNC 2007b). VEGP has a cooling tower-based heat dissipation system. Plant cooling is
38 provided by four forced-draft mechanical cooling towers with underground reservoirs drawing
39 from groundwater wells. Makeup water is drawn from and blowdown is discharged to the
40 Savannah River.

Introduction

1 The current operating licenses for VEGP expire on January 16, 2027 for Unit 1 and February 9,
2 2029. The Unit 2 license will not expire within the 20-year period designated in the License
3 Renewal Rule; therefore, SNC filed for and received exemption by letter from the NRC dated
4 January 9, 2007 (Docket No. 50-425; NRC 2007a) that supports the early renewal of the Unit 2
5 license. By letter dated June 27, 2007, SNC submitted an application to the NRC (SNC 2007a)
6 to renew this operating license for an additional 20 years of operation (i.e., January 16, 2047 for
7 Unit 1 and February 9, 2049 for Unit 2).
8

9 **1.4 The Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action**

10
11 Although a licensee must have a renewed license to operate a reactor beyond the term of the
12 existing operating license, the possession of that license is just one of a number of conditions
13 that must be met for the licensee to continue plant operation during the term of the renewed
14 license. Once an operating license is renewed, State regulatory agencies and the owners of the
15 plant will ultimately decide whether the plant will continue to operate based on factors such as
16 the need for power or other matters within the State's jurisdiction or the purview of the owners.
17

18 Thus, for license renewal reviews, the NRC has adopted the following definition of purpose and
19 need (GEIS Section 1.3):
20

21 The purpose and need for the proposed action (renewal of an operating license) is to
22 provide an option that allows for power generation capability beyond the term of a
23 current nuclear power plant operating license to meet future system generating needs,
24 as such needs may be determined by State, utility, and where authorized, Federal (other
25 than NRC) decision makers.
26

27 This definition of purpose and need reflects the NRC's recognition that, unless there are findings
28 in the safety review required by the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended or findings in the
29 NEPA environmental analysis that would lead the NRC to reject a license renewal application,
30 the NRC does not have a role in the energy-planning decisions of state regulators and utility
31 officials as to whether a particular nuclear power plant should continue to operate. From the
32 perspective of the licensee and the state regulatory authority, the purpose of renewing an
33 operating license is to maintain the availability of the nuclear plant to meet system energy
34 requirements beyond the current term of the plant's license.

1.5 Compliance and Consultations

SNC is required to hold certain Federal, State, and local environmental permits, as well as meet relevant Federal and State statutory requirements. In its Environmental Report, SNC provided a list of the authorizations from Federal, State, and local authorities for current operations as well as environmental approvals and consultations associated with VEGP license renewal.

Authorizations and consultations relevant to the proposed operating license renewal action are included in Appendix E.

The Staff has reviewed the list and consulted with the appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies to identify any compliance or permit issues or significant environmental issues of concern to the reviewing agencies. These agencies did not identify any new and significant environmental issues. The Environmental Report states that SNC is in compliance with applicable environmental standards and requirements for VEGP. The Staff has not identified any environmental issues that are both new and significant.

1.6 References

10 CFR Part 51. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 10, *Energy*, Part 51, “Environmental Protection Regulations for Domestic Licensing and Related Regulatory Functions.”

10 CFR Part 54. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 10, *Energy*, Part 54, “Requirements for Renewal of Operating Licenses for Nuclear Power Plants.”

40 CFR Part 1508. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 40, *Protection of Environment*, Part 1508, “Terminology and Index.”

Atomic Energy Act of 1954. 42 USC 2011, et. seq.

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). 42 USC 4321, et. seq.

Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). 1996. *Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Power Plants*. NUREG-1437 Volumes 1 and 2, Washington, DC.

Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). 1999. *Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants Main Report, “Section 6.3 – Transportation, Table 9.1, Summary of findings on NEPA issues for license renewal of nuclear power plants.”* NUREG-1437 Volume 1, Addendum 1, Washington, DC.

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- 5 Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). 2007a. Letter from Mr. Robert E. Martin, NRC,
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17
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21
- 22 Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (SNC). 2007b. *Applicant's Environmental Report –*
23 *Operating License Renewal Stage, Vogtle Electric Generating Plant. Docket Numbers 50-424*
24 *and 50-425*.

2.0 Description of Nuclear Power Plant and Site and Plant Interaction with the Environment

Vogtle Electric Generating Plant (VEGP) is located in Burke County, Georgia. The facility consists of two Westinghouse pressurized water reactors (PWR) producing steam that turns a turbine to generate electricity. Facility cooling is provided by a Nuclear Service Cooling Water (NSCW) system, which consists of two forced-draft mechanical cooling towers. The plant and its environs are described in Section 2.1, and the plant's interaction with the environment is presented in Section 2.2.

2.1 Facility and Site Description and Proposed Plant Operation During the Renewal Term

VEGP is a 3169-acre (ac) site located in a rural area on former forest and agricultural land. Ownership of VEGP is shared by the following based on the ownership percentages shown: Georgia Power Company (GPC) (45.7 percent), Oglethorpe Power Corporation (30 percent), Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia (22.7 percent), and City of Dalton, Georgia (1.6 percent). Dalton is a municipality that is doing business by and through the Water, Light, and Sinking Fund Board of Commissioners as Dalton Utilities. GPC is owned by the Southern Company. Southern Nuclear Operating Company (SNC) is a subsidiary of the Southern Company and is the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) licensee for VEGP (SNC 2007a).

VEGP is located on a Coastal Plain bluff on the southwest side of the Savannah River. The nearest cities are Waynesboro, Georgia approximately 15 miles west-southwest and Augusta, Georgia approximately 26 miles northwest. The site is bounded by River Road, Hancock Landing Road, and approximately 1.7 miles of the Savannah River (River Miles [RM] 150.0 to 151.7). The topography consists of low rolling hills with elevations ranging from 200 to 280 feet (ft) above mean sea level (msl; SNC 2007a). The site location and features within a 50-miles (mi) and 6-mi radii are illustrated on Figures 2-1 and 2-2, respectively.

The following features are located within a 6-mi radius of the VEGP site:

- Telfair Woods, a crossroads community approximately 5 miles southwest of VEGP;
- Yuchi Wildlife Management Area, a 7,000 acre site adjacent to VEGP to the south; and
- Savannah River Site (SRS), a Department of Energy (DOE) facility located directly across the Savannah River from VEGP.

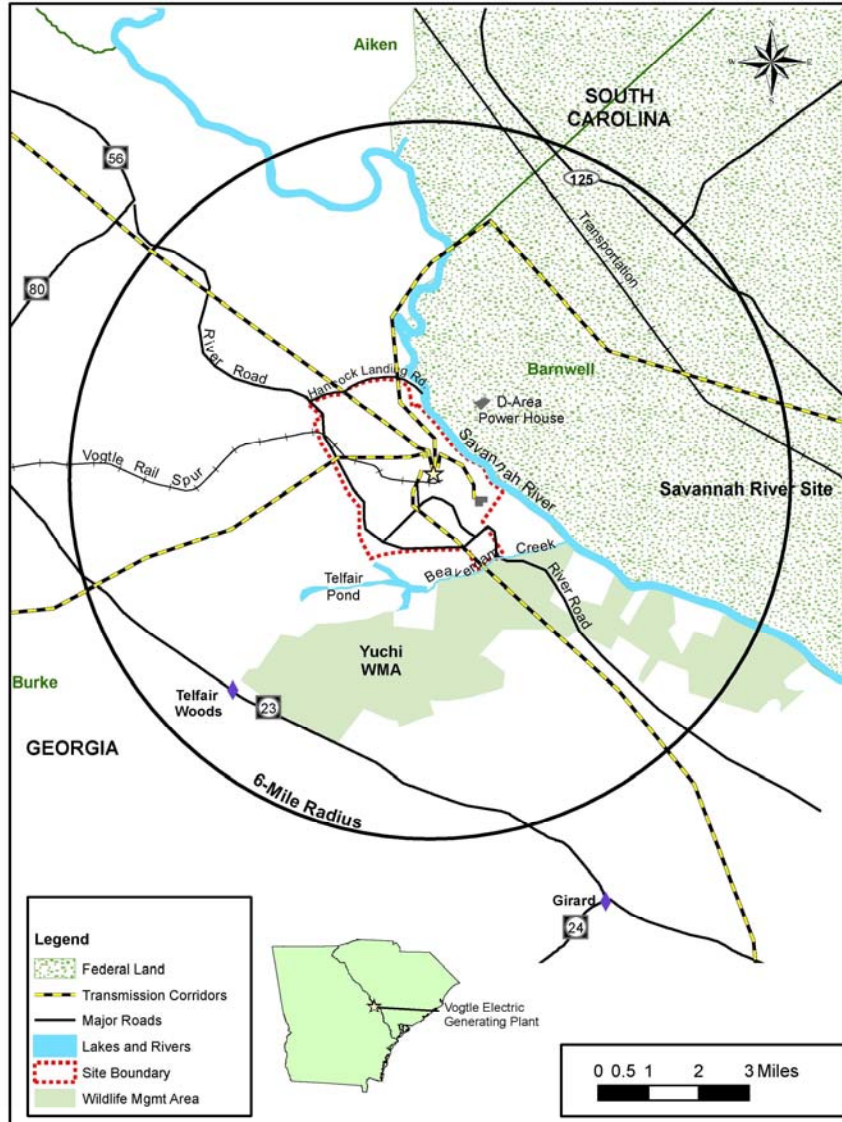
The SRS is a DOE-operated, Federally owned facility that covers a total area of 310 square miles. Its development began in 1950. Five nuclear reactors and two processing facilities for the production of materials for nuclear weapons, as well as other facilities, were built on SRS,

1
2



Source: SNC 2007a

Figure 2-1. Location of VEGP, 50-Mi Radius



Source: SNC 2007a

Figure 2-2. Location of VEGP, 6-Mi Radius

1 and construction was completed in 1955. The SRS reactors utilized once-through cooling
2 systems that used water from the Savannah River, and the heated water was discharged to
3 tributaries of the river (Reed et al. 2002). Within the 6-mile radius of VEGP, features at SRS
4 include two remediated industrial areas, one fossil fuel power plant (the D-Area Power House),
5 and three inactive recessed intake structures located on the east side of the Savannah River
6 (SNC 2007b). Past operations at SRS have resulted in the release of radiological and
7 hazardous contaminants, including tritium, to the atmosphere, groundwater, and surface water
8 (SNC 2007b).

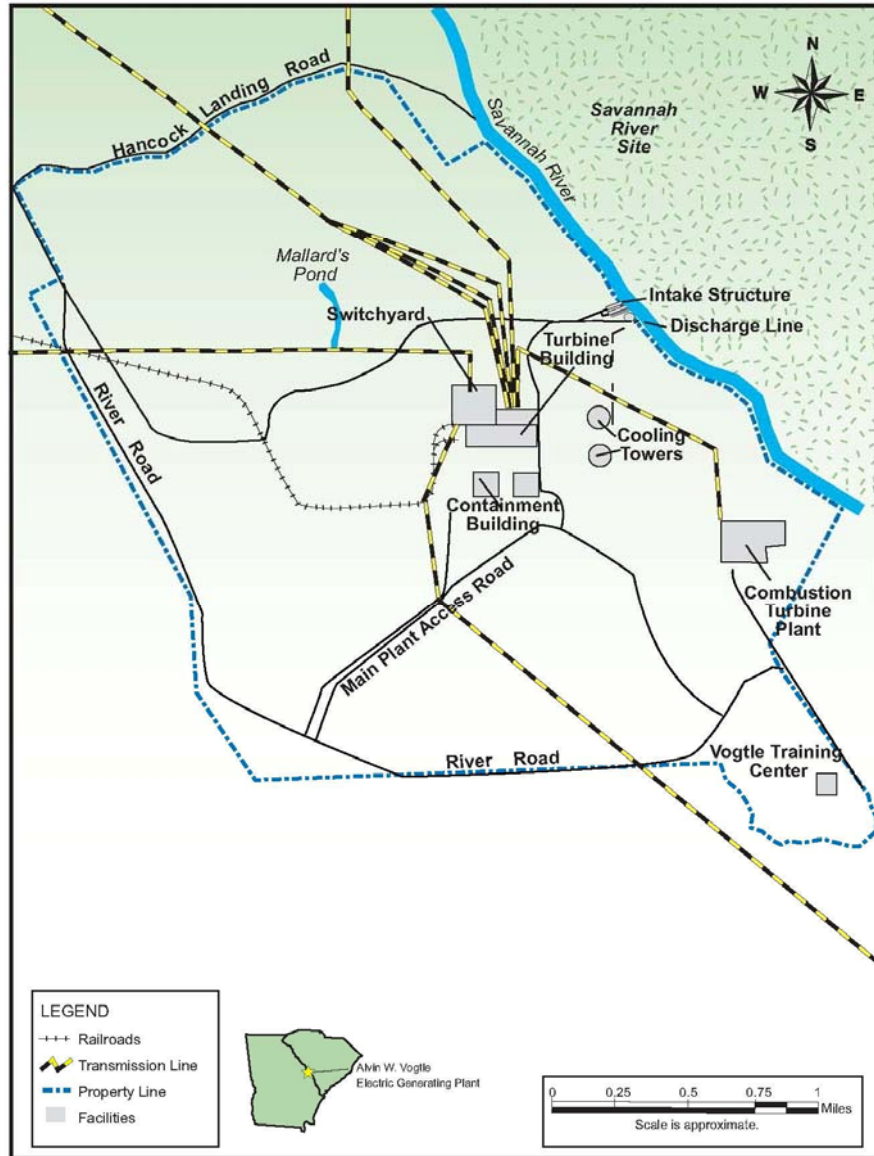
9
10 Although SRS is not specifically associated with the proposed relicensing of VEGP, the close
11 proximity of SRS to VEGP and the types of operations conducted at SRS are relevant to this
12 SEIS for two reasons: past industrial and radiological operations at SRS may have affected
13 environmental resources in the vicinity of VEGP, and environmental studies associated with
14 SRS are the source of much of the data and information utilized in Chapter 2 of the SEIS.
15 Baseline environmental studies of the SRS area and the Savannah River began in 1951 prior to
16 construction. Subsequently, numerous studies have been and continue to be conducted to
17 assess the environmental impacts of SRS operations. All SRS nuclear reactors were shut down
18 by 1989, though other nuclear-related operations, research and development, environmental
19 remediation, and ecological studies at the facility are ongoing (Reed et al. 2002).

20 21 **2.1.1 Site Location and Features**

22
23 VEGP is located on the Savannah River (RM 150.0 to 151.7). The facility can be accessed by
24 U.S. Route 25; Georgia Routes 46, 80, 24, or 23; and River Road (Figure 2-2).

25
26 The major features of the 3169-ac VEGP site are the reactor containment building, turbine
27 building, auxiliary building, combustion turbine plant, cooling towers, switchyard, and the training
28 center (SNC 2007a). The nearest residence is located approximately 1.6 kilometer (km; 1 mile)
29 from the facility (SNC 2007b). The closest communities are Telfair Woods (a crossroads
30 community), located approximately 5 miles southwest of the facility and Girard (population 230),
31 located approximately 8 miles to the south (SNC 2007a). The property boundary and general
32 facility layout are depicted on Figure 2-3.

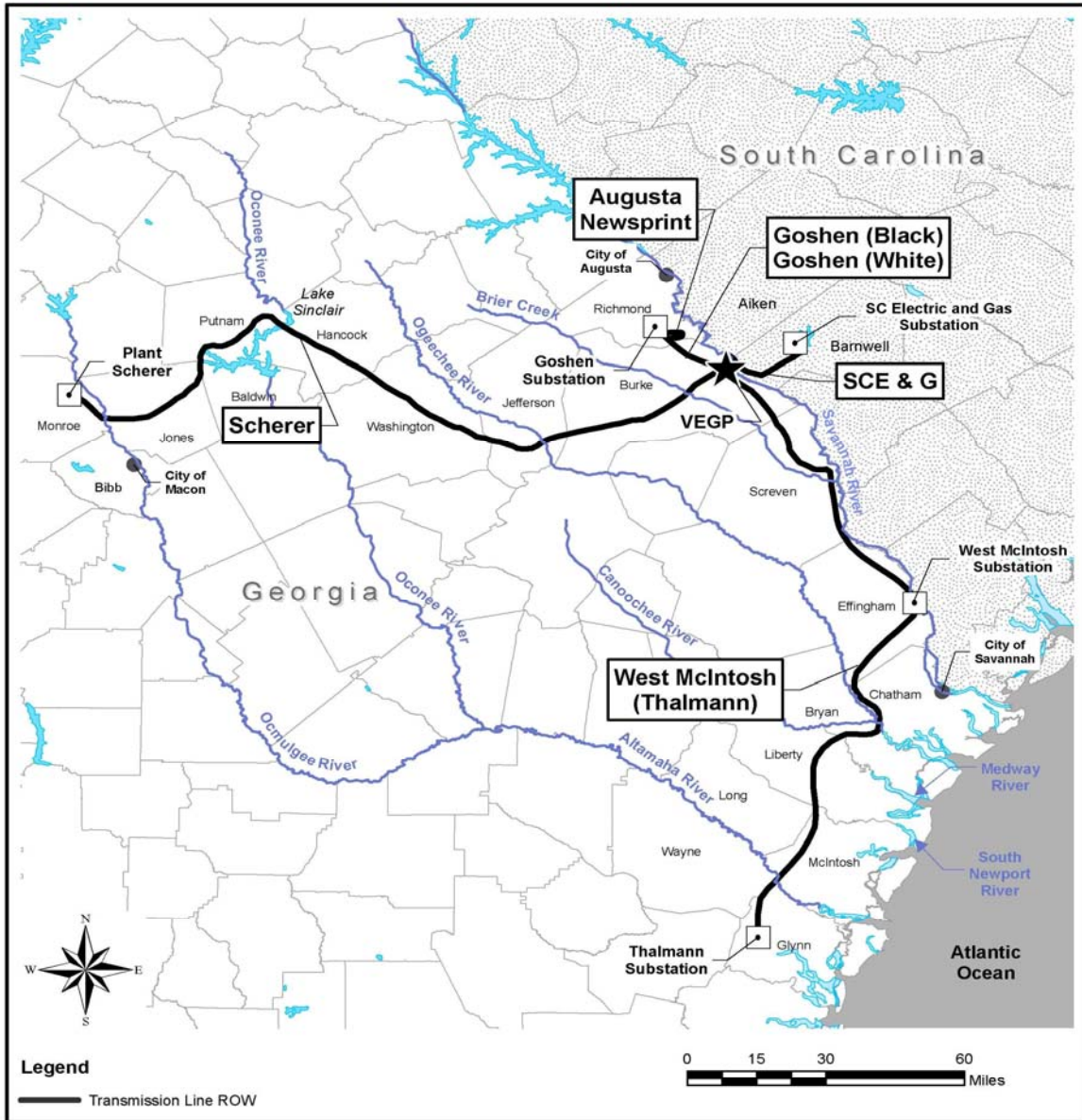
33
34 VEGP has two 500-kilovolt (kV) transmission lines and five 230-kV lines contained within five
35 right-of-ways (ROWs; Figure 2-4). The two 500-kV lines are the Scherer and the Thalmann
36 lines. The Scherer line runs west from VEGP to Plant Scherer in Macon, Georgia. The
37 associated ROW is approximately 154 miles long and generally 150 feet wide. The Thalmann
38 line runs south to West McIntosh substation north of Savannah, Georgia. The associated ROW
39 is approximately 159 miles long and 150 feet wide. Three of the 230-kV lines run north from the
40 VEGP site. Two lines run approximately 19 miles to the Goshen substation in a 275 feet wide



Source: SNC 2007a

Figure 2-3. VEGP Property Boundaries and Facility Layout

1
2



Adapted from: SNC 2007a and ESRI 2002

Figure 2-4. VEGP Transmission Lines and Water Bodies

1 ROW. A third lines runs 17 miles in the South Augusta ROW and then branches off for
2 approximately 3 miles to the Augusta Newsprint substation in a 275 foot wide ROW. One 230-
3 kV line runs through the South Carolina Electric and Gas (SCE&G) ROW. This ROW runs north
4 and east for 4.5 miles, crosses the Savannah River, and runs 17 miles to a substation operated
5 by SCE&G on the SRS. The ROW is 125 foot wide in Georgia and 100 foot wide in South
6 Carolina. The fifth 230-kV line is the Wilson Line, which is located wholly on VEGP property,
7 connects VEGP to Plant Wilson, and is used in the event of an emergency. The associated
8 ROW is 150 foot wide (SNC 2007a).

10 **2.1.2 Reactor Systems**

11
12 VEGP is a nuclear-powered steam electric generating facility that began commercial operation
13 in May 1987 (Southern Company 2007). The two nuclear reactors are Westinghouse PWRs
14 producing a reactor core power of 3565 megawatts-thermal per unit. The design net electrical
15 capacity is 1232 megawatts-electric per unit (SNC 2007a).

16
17 For each unit, the nuclear steam supply system at VEGP is a four-loop Westinghouse
18 pressurized water reactor. The steam yields its energy to turn the turbines, which are
19 connected to the electrical generator. The nuclear fuel is low-enriched uranium dioxide with
20 enrichments of 5 percent by weight uranium-235 or less and fuel burnup levels of a batch
21 average of approximately 60,000 megawatt-days per metric ton uranium. VEGP operates on an
22 18-month refueling cycle. The reactor, steam generators, and related systems are enclosed in
23 a containment building that is designed to prevent leakage of radioactivity to the environment in
24 the improbable event of a rupture of the reactor coolant piping. The containment building is a
25 vertical, right-cylindrical, pre-stressed, post-tensioned concrete structure with a dome and flat
26 base with a depressed center for a reactor cavity and instrumentation tunnel. A carbon steel
27 liner is attached to the inside face of the concrete shell to insure a high degree of leak tightness.
28 In addition, the approximately 4-ft thick concrete walls serve as a radiation shield for both
29 normal and accident conditions (SNC 2007a).

31 **2.1.3 Cooling and Auxiliary Water Systems**

32
33 VEGP operates several water systems, including systems to provide cooling for the reactor to
34 remove waste heat from the condensers (circulating water system); and to serve a variety of
35 other purposes (SNC 2007a, USACE 1996). The source of water for the circulating water
36 system is the Savannah River, while the source for all other systems is onsite groundwater wells
37 (SNC 2007a, USACE 1996).

1 **2.1.3.1 Circulating Water System**
2

3 The circulating water system at VEGP is part of a closed-cycle heat dissipation system that
4 utilizes water withdrawal from intakes on the Savannah River and natural draft cooling towers
5 (SNC 2007a). The intake system consists of a 365-ft long intake canal located on the western
6 bank of the river (SNC 2007a). The earthen bottom of the river at the discharge is 67 feet
7 above msl. There is a skimmer weir at the entrance to the intake canal, and a canal weir 100
8 feet inside the entrance. A sedimentation basin between the two weirs is used to allow silt to
9 settle out before entering the plant. The purpose of the skimmer weir is to prevent floating
10 materials from entering the intake canal (SNC 2007a).

11
12 The intake structure at the head of the canal contains four bays (two for each unit), each with a
13 stop log, trash rack, traveling screens, and a single pump (SNC 2007a). The trash racks consist
14 of a series of vertical flat bars, and the traveling screens are annealed type 304 stainless steel
15 ¾ inch mesh (SNC 2007a). As the system operates, wash water is used to rinse the traveling
16 screen and drive debris into a debris basket, which is emptied periodically (SNC 2007a). Daily
17 inspections are performed, and fish or other aquatic organisms are rarely observed (SNC
18 2007a).

19
20 Using an average river flow rate of 10,300 cubic feet per second (cfs) and water elevation of 85
21 feet above msl, the Final Environmental Statement (FES) for the facility operations determined
22 that flow velocities across the trash rack would be 0.3 feet per second, and velocities across the
23 screens would be 0.7 feet per second (NRC 1985). The FES concluded that these velocities
24 would be low enough so that fish entering the intake canal could escape the screens by
25 swimming away (NRC 1985).

26
27 The circulating water is removed from the intake by vertical turbine pumps, each with a capacity
28 of 22,000 gallons per minute (gpm) (SNC 2007a). The circulating water is directed into the
29 natural draft cooling towers, which use natural convection to remove heat from water that has
30 been used to cool the condensers (SNC 2007a). Because the cooling towers operate as a
31 closed-system, the only water loss is through evaporation, drift, and blowdown (SNC 2007a).

32
33 To minimize fouling within the cooling towers and condensers, the circulating water is treated
34 with sodium hypochlorite and sodium bromide (SNC 2007a). To treat the oxidation products
35 from these chemicals, the water is also treated with ammonium bisulfite in the blowdown mixing
36 sump prior to discharge of blowdown (SNC 2007a). Potential contaminants with the blowdown
37 are regulated by the facility's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit,
38 which is described in Section 2.2.3.1.

39
40 The cooling tower blowdown and other liquid wastestreams (such as the liquid radioactive waste
41 treatment effluents) are discharged back to the Savannah River through a discharge structure

1 located 500 feet downstream of the intake structure (SNC 2007a). The discharge consists of a
2 buried pipe which is 2 feet in diameter, and oriented in order to minimize bottom scour (SNC
3 2007a).
4

5 **2.1.3.2 Nuclear Service Cooling Water System**

6

7 The source of water for the Nuclear Service Cooling Water (NSCW) system is groundwater
8 production wells located on the VEGP property (SNC 2007a). A description of these wells, and
9 their uses, is provided in Section 2.2.2.1.2. The water within this system is circulated through
10 four forced-draft mechanical cooling towers with underground reservoirs, which act as the
11 ultimate heat sink for the facility (SNC 2007a). Blowdown from this system is combined with the
12 cooling tower blowdown from the circulating water system and liquid radioactive waste
13 treatment effluent, and discharged to the Savannah River through the same discharge structure
14 (SNC 2007a). As with the circulating water, the discharge of the NSCW system blowdown is
15 monitored and regulated in accordance with the VEGP NPDES permit (SNC 2007a).
16

17 **2.1.3.3 Other Water Systems**

18

19 In addition to cooling water, VEGP uses water for a variety of miscellaneous purposes, including
20 makeup water for the wastewater treatment plant, fire protection systems, potable water supply,
21 sanitary water, pure water systems, and irrigation for landscaping (SNC 2007a). The source of
22 water for all of these uses is from groundwater production wells, which are discussed in more
23 detail in Section 2.2.2.1.2. The ultimate discharge of all of these systems is through the
24 Savannah River discharge location, which is regulated by the VEGP NPDES permit (SNC
25 2007a).
26

27 **2.1.4 Radioactive Waste Management Systems and Effluent Control Systems**

28

29 VEGP radioactive waste disposal systems (RWDS) provide controlled handling and disposal of
30 radioactive wastes. All equipment in the RWDS is controlled from the waste processing system
31 panel. Operating procedures for the RWDS ensure that radioactive wastes are safely
32 processed and discharged from the plant to ensure compliance with the dose limits contained in
33 Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 20; the dose design objectives of
34 Appendix I to 10 CFR Part 50, Numerical Guide for Design Objectives and Limiting Conditions
35 for Operation to Meet the Criterion "As Low As is Reasonably Achievable" for Radiological
36 Material in Light-Water-Cooled Nuclear Power Reactor Effluents; the plant's technical
37 specifications; and VEGP's *Offsite Dose Calculation Manual* (ODCM) (SNC 2003a).
38

39 Unless otherwise noted, the description of the radioactive wastes management systems is
40 based on information provided in the applicant's Environmental Report (SNC 2007a) or the

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1 VEGP Final Safety Analysis Report (FSAR)(SNC 2006a), and the Staff's independent review of
2 NRC Inspection Reports.

3
4 VEGP's RWDS are designed to collect, treat, and dispose of the radioactive wastes that are
5 byproducts of plant operations. The byproducts are activation products resulting from the
6 irradiation of reactor water and impurities therein (principally metallic corrosion products) and
7 fission products resulting from migration through the fuel cladding or uranium contamination
8 within the reactor coolant system. Radioactive wastes resulting from plant operations are
9 classified as liquid, gaseous, or solid. Liquid radioactive wastes are generated from liquids
10 received directly from portions of the reactor coolant system or were contaminated by contact
11 with liquids from the reactor coolant system. Gaseous radioactive wastes are generated from
12 gases or airborne particulates vented from the reactor. Solid radioactive wastes are solids from
13 the reactor coolant system or solids that came into contact with reactor coolant system's liquids
14 or gases (SNC 2006a).

15
16 Reactor fuel that has exhausted a certain percentage of its fissile uranium content is referred to
17 as spent fuel. Spent fuel assemblies are removed from the reactor core and replaced with fresh
18 fuel assemblies during routine refueling outages, typically every 18 months. The spent fuel
19 assemblies are stored in the spent fuel pool in the reactor building. VEGP also provides for on-
20 site storage of mixed wastes, which contain both radioactive and chemically hazardous
21 materials (SNC 2006a).

22
23 VEGP's ODCM contains the methodology and parameters used to calculate off-site doses
24 resulting from radioactive gaseous and liquid effluents, and the radiation monitoring alarm and
25 trip set points used to verify that the radioactive material being discharged meets regulatory
26 limits (SNC 2003a). The ODCM also contains the radioactive effluent controls and radiological
27 environmental monitoring program requirements and the information that is required to be
28 included in the annual Radiological Environmental Operating Report and annual
29 Radioactive Effluent Release Report required by Appendix I to 10 CFR Part 50, and 10 CFR
30 50.36a, respectively.

31 **2.1.4.1 Liquid Waste Processing Systems and Effluent Controls**

32
33
34 The VEGP liquid waste processing system (LWPS) collects, holds, treats, processes, and
35 monitors all liquid radioactive wastes for reuse or disposal. The LWPS is divided into several
36 subsystems so that liquid wastes from various sources can be segregated and processed
37 separately. Cross connections between the subsystems provide additional flexibility for
38 processing the wastes by alternate methods. The wastes are collected, treated, and disposed
39 of according to their conductivity and/or radioactivity (SNC 2006a).

1 Liquid wastes are collected in sumps and drain tanks and transferred to the appropriate
2 subsystem collection tanks for subsequent treatment, disposal, or recycle. Liquid wastes are
3 processed by a series of components and employing various processes specifically designed to
4 provide maximum decontamination factors. The processing methods used include; filtration,
5 reverse osmosis, and/or demineralization. Following treatment, the processed wastes in the
6 waste evaporator condensate tank, waste monitor tanks, or secondary liquid waste monitor
7 tanks are analyzed for chemical and radioactive content prior to being discharged. In addition,
8 the LWPS can handle effluent streams that typically do not contain radioactive material, but that
9 may, on occasion, become radioactive (e.g., steam generator blowdown as a result of steam
10 generator tube leakage). Any planned releases from the system are evaluated in conjunction
11 with all other radioactive liquid releases to ensure that the total release does not exceed the
12 ODCM limits. The liquid effluent normally discharges from the plant into the cooling water
13 system, which dilutes the effluent and transports it to the Savannah River. Liquid releases to
14 the Savannah River are controlled and limited to satisfy the dose objectives of Appendix I to 10
15 CFR Part 50.

16
17 The NRC staff reviewed the VEGP radioactive effluent release reports for 2002 through 2006 for
18 liquid effluents (SNC 2003a, 2004a, 2005a, 2006b, 2007b). There were no unplanned releases
19 from either unit in 2006. The amount of radioactivity discharged in liquid releases, excluding
20 gases, tritium, and alpha, totaled $9.02 \text{ E-}02$ curies (Ci) ($3.33 \text{ E+}03$ megabecquerel [MBq]), from
21 the VEGP site in 2006. A total of $2.00 \text{ E+}03$ Ci ($7.40 \text{ E+}07$ MBq) of tritium were released from
22 the VEGP site in 2006. A total of $1.48 \text{ E-}03$ Ci ($5.47 \text{ E+}01$ MBq) of dissolved and entrained
23 gases from the VEGP site in 2006. There were no releases of gross alpha radioactivity from the
24 VEGP site in 2006 (SNC 2007b). The liquid discharges for 2006 are consistent with the
25 radioactive liquid effluents discharged from 2002 through 2005. Variations on the amount of
26 radioactive effluents released from year to year are expected based on the overall performance
27 of the plant and the number and scope of outages. The liquid radioactive wastes reported by
28 VEGP are reasonable and no unusual trends were noted. Based on the applicant's assertion
29 that there are no refurbishment activities planned, similar quantities of radioactive liquid
30 effluents are expected from VEGP during the license renewal term.

31 32 **2.1.4.2 Gaseous Waste Processing Systems and Effluent Controls**

33
34 The gaseous radioactive waste processing system (GWPS) and the plant ventilation exhaust
35 system control, collect, process, store, and dispose of gaseous radioactive wastes generated as
36 a result of normal operation. The GWPS consists mainly of two closed loops comprised of a
37 waste gas compressor, a catalytic hydrogen recombiner, and seven gas waste gas decay tanks
38 to accumulate the fission product gases. All pipes containing radioactive gases are shielded as
39 necessary, and no piping is run through normally occupied areas. Gaseous effluents at VEGP
40 are currently discharged through the following locations or systems: Unit 1 and Unit 2 plant
41 vents (which includes discharges from containment purge system, gaseous radioactive waste

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1 system, fuel handling building heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC), and auxiliary
2 building HVAC), the condenser air ejector, Unit 1 and Unit 2 steam packing exhausters systems,
3 Radwaste Processing Facility, and the Dry Active Waste Building. The primary source of the
4 radioactive gas to the GWPS is the volume control tank purge. Smaller quantities of radioactive
5 gas are received via the vent connections from the reactor coolant drain tank, the pressurizer
6 relief tank, and the recycle holdup tanks. The operation of the GWPS reduces the fission gas
7 concentration in the reactor coolant system which, in turn, reduces the release of fission gases
8 from the reactor coolant system during maintenance operations or through equipment leakage
9 (SNC 2006a).

10
11 Gaseous wastes are collected in the vent header. These gases are withdrawn from the vent
12 header by one of the two compressors and sent to the waste gas decay tanks. The gases are
13 monitored and pass through a pre-filter, high efficiency particulate filter, charcoal filter, and
14 another high efficiency particulate filter in series which reduce the amount of particulate
15 radioactive material to very low levels. Although the system is designed to accommodate
16 continuous operation without atmospheric releases, the VEGP GWPS design permits controlled
17 discharges of gas from the system to the atmosphere. Before a waste gas decay tank is
18 released to the atmosphere through the plant vent, the gas must be analyzed to determine and
19 document the amount of radioactivity being released. When the contents of the tank are being
20 released to the atmosphere, a trip valve in the discharge line will close automatically if activity
21 above a predetermined level is detected by the plant vent radiation monitor (SNC 2006a).

22
23 VEGP maintains radioactive gaseous effluents in accordance with the procedures and
24 methodology described in the ODCM. The GWPS is used to reduce radioactive materials in
25 gaseous effluents before discharge to meet the ALARA dose objectives in Appendix I to 10 CFR
26 Part 50 (SNC 2007b).

27
28 The NRC staff reviewed the VEGP radioactive effluent release reports for 2002 through 2006 for
29 gaseous effluents (SNC 2003a, 2004a, 2005a, 2006b, 2007b). There were five (5) unplanned
30 releases from the VEGP site in 2006. Analysis by the applicant's staff showed that none of the
31 unplanned releases exceeded regulatory dose limits. The amount of radioactivity discharged in
32 form of fission and activation gaseous from the VEPG site in 2006, totaled 2.95 Ci (1.09 E+05
33 MBq). A total of 81.5 Ci (3.01 E+06 MBq) of tritium were released from the VEPG site in 2006.
34 A total of 2.55 E-07 Ci (9.43 E-03 MBq) of radioiodines and 7.68 E-05 Ci (2.84 MBq) of
35 particulates were released from the VEPG site in 2006 (SNC 2007b). The gaseous discharges
36 for 2006 are consistent with the radioactive gaseous effluents discharged from 2003 through
37 2005. Variations on the amount of radioactive effluents released from year to year are expected
38 based on the overall performance of the plant and the number and scope of outages. The
39 gaseous radioactive wastes reported by VEPG are reasonable and no unusual trends were
40 noted.

1 Based on the applicant's assertion that there are no refurbishment activities planned, similar
2 quantities of radioactive gaseous effluents are expected from VEPG during the license renewal
3 term.
4

5 **2.1.4.3 Solid Waste Management System** 6

7 The solid waste management system (SWMS) is designed to collect, process, and package
8 low-level radioactive wastes generated as a result of normal plant operation. The SWMS is
9 designed and operated in a manner to keep radiation exposure to plant personnel as low as
10 reasonably achievable (ALARA). The SWMS equipment is located in the radioactive waste
11 processing facility and the dry active waste (DAW) facility. The DAW facility is also capable of
12 storing the packaged waste until it is shipped off-site to a waste processor for treatment and/or
13 disposal or directly to a licensed burial site. Transportation and disposal of solid radioactive
14 wastes are performed in accordance with the requirements of 10 CFR Part 71 and 10 CFR Part
15 61, respectively. To minimize worker's radiation exposure, access to the process equipment
16 and solid radioactive waste storage areas is controlled by barriers such as locked doors, gates,
17 or control cards.
18

19 The SWMS consists of a wet process stream used to collect, process, dewater, and solidify wet
20 solid wastes, and a dry process stream used to collect and package dry solid wastes. Wet solid
21 wastes include spent resins, filter cartridges, and filter crud. Dry solid wastes include
22 contaminated rags, clothing, paper, outage equipment, and other radioactively contaminated
23 equipment (SNC 2006a).
24

25 In 2006, VEGP made a total of 31 shipments of solid waste. The class A, B, and C, solid non-
26 compacted waste volume was 96.60 cubic meters (3.41 E+03 cubic feet) of dry compressible
27 waste and contaminated equipment, with an activity of 3.37 E+02 Ci (1.24 E+07 MBq) (SNC
28 2007b). Volume reduction of the waste prior to final disposal is performed by a contractor at an
29 off-site location. No shipments of spent resins, irradiated fuel, or irradiated components were
30 made in 2006. The solid waste volumes and radioactivity amounts generated in 2006 are
31 typical of annual waste shipments made by VEGP. Variations on the amount of solid
32 radioactive waste generated and shipped from year to year are expected based on the overall
33 performance of the plant and the number and scope of maintenance work and outages. The
34 volume and activity of solid radioactive waste reported by VEPG are reasonable and no unusual
35 trends were noted. Based on the applicant's assertion that there are no refurbishment activities
36 planned, similar quantities of radioactive solid radioactive wastes are expected from VEPG
37 during the license renewal term.
38

39 The State of South Carolina's licensed low-level radioactive waste disposal facility, located in
40 Barnwell, SC, may limit access after June, 2008 from radioactive waste generators located in
41 states that are not part of the Atlantic Low-Level Waste Compact. This may impact VEGP's

1 ability to dispose of its low-level solid radioactive waste. However, VEGP is aware of this
2 situation and is developing several design concepts to provide for on-site low-level radioactive
3 waste storage. One design concept being considered is to use a shielded storage pad with
4 individual compartments for the placement of high integrity containers containing radioactive
5 wastes. The shielding is designed to ensure that the off site dose does not exceed any of the
6 Federal limits specified in 10 CFR Part 20, as well as the EPA's radiation standards in 40 CFR
7 Part 190 (SNC 2007d).

8 9 **2.1.5 Nonradioactive Waste Systems**

10
11 VEGP generates solid, hazardous, universal, and mixed waste from routine facility operations
12 and maintenance activities.

13 14 **2.1.5.1 Nonradioactive Waste Streams**

15
16 VEGP generates solid waste, as defined by the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
17 (RCRA), as part of routine plant maintenance, cleaning activities, and plant operations. These
18 solid waste streams include non-radioactive resins and sludges, putrescible wastes, recyclable
19 wastes, and concrete, bricks, and rubble. The non-radioactive resins and sludge are disposed
20 of offsite in a permitted industrial landfill, with a total volume of six roll-off containers disposed in
21 2006. Putrescible wastes also are disposed offsite in a permitted landfill (SNC 2006c).
22 Materials that are collected for local recycling include paper, aluminum cans, scrap metal (300
23 tons per year), used oil, and antifreeze (SNC 2006c). Construction materials such as concrete,
24 bricks, and rubble are disposed onsite in a facility called the Private Industrial Landfill, which is
25 permitted by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GDNR; SNC 2006c).

26
27 Hazardous waste is nonradioactive waste that is listed by the EPA as hazardous waste or that
28 exhibits characteristics of ignitability, corrosivity, reactivity, or toxicity (40 CFR Part 261). RCRA
29 regulates the treatment, storage, and/or disposal of hazardous waste and requires a hazardous
30 waste permit for facilities that treat or store large quantities of hazardous waste for more than 90
31 days and for entities that dispose of hazardous waste at the facility. RCRA regulations are
32 administered in Georgia by the GDNR, Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GEPD).
33 VEGP is a small quantity generator, but manages wastes in a manner consistent with the
34 regulatory requirements for large quantity generators (SNC 2006c). In both 2006 and 2007,
35 VEGP disposed of a total of approximately 600 pounds of RCRA hazardous waste.

36
37 Universal waste is hazardous waste that has been specified as universal waste by the EPA.
38 Universal waste, including mercury-containing equipment, batteries, lamps, and pesticides, has
39 specific regulations (40 CFR Part 273) to ensure proper collection and recycling or treatment.
40 VEGP generates batteries, capacitors, and fluorescent light bulbs as universal wastes from
41 normal facility operations. These wastes are accumulated in satellite areas and then shipped

1 off-site for disposal in accordance with universal waste regulations. On an annual basis, VEGP
2 generates an average of 18 drums of light bulbs, 28 drums of capacitors, and 50 pallets of
3 batteries (SNC 2006c).

4
5 Low-level mixed waste (LLMW) is waste that exhibits hazardous characteristics and contains
6 low levels of radioactivity. LLMW has been regulated under multiple authorities. EPA or State
7 agencies regulate the hazardous component of LLMW through RCRA and the NRC regulates
8 the radioactive component. VEGP generates LLMW from routine maintenance, refueling
9 outages, health protection activities, and from operations in the radiochemical laboratory. The
10 facility generates small volumes of LLMW, and maintains procedures for safe management,
11 storage, and offsite disposal (SNC 2006c).

12
13 The VEGP facility has two sanitary treatment systems which operate under a NPDES permit.
14 These systems generate sludge as a solid waste. The sludge is disposed of offsite through the
15 Burke County wastewater treatment facility (SNC 2006c).

16 17 **2.1.5.2 Pollution Prevention and Waste Minimization**

18
19 Currently, VEGP has a Waste Minimization Plan designed to reduce the amount and toxicity of
20 waste generated and disposed of in a landfill (SNC 2006c). The plan includes procedures for
21 evaluating and reducing the generation of the following types of wastes: oily rags and resins;
22 light bulbs; batteries and capacitors; asbestos; and used oil.

23 24 **2.1.6 Facility Operation and Maintenance**

25
26 Maintenance activities conducted at VEGP include inspection, testing, and surveillance to
27 maintain the current licensing basis of the facility and to ensure compliance with environmental
28 and safety requirements. Various programs and activities currently exist at VEGP to maintain,
29 inspect, test, and monitor the performance of facility equipment. These maintenance activities
30 include inspection requirements for reactor vessel materials, boiler and pressure vessel in-
31 service inspection and testing, maintenance structures monitoring program, and maintenance of
32 water chemistry.

33
34 Additional programs include those implemented to meet technical specification surveillance
35 requirements, those implemented in response to the NRC generic communications, and various
36 periodic maintenance, testing, and inspection procedures. Certain program activities are
37 performed during the operation of the unit, while others are performed during scheduled
38 refueling outages. SNC refuels VEGP on an 18 month fueling cycle (SNC 2007a).

1 **2.1.7 Power Transmission System**

2
3 VEGP is currently connected to the electric power grid via two 500-kV and five 230-kV
4 transmission lines, all of which are owned, operated, and maintained by SNC (SNC 2007a).
5 The FES for the operation of the VEGP site (NRC 1985) discusses the seven transmission lines
6 intended to connect the VEGP site with the regional transmission grid. Transmission lines
7 considered in scope for license renewal are those constructed to connect the facility to the
8 transmission system (10 CFR 51.53(c)(3)(ii)(H)); a discussion of the seven in scope
9 transmission lines follows. The characteristics of these lines and their ROWs are summarized
10 in Table 2-1. Figure 2-4 is a map of the transmission system.

- 11
- 12 • Scherer Line – The 500-kV line is 154 miles (248 km) long and runs generally westward
13 from the VEGP site to Plant Scherer, which is located north of Macon, Georgia. It crosses
14 portions of Burke, Jefferson, Washington, Hancock, Putnam, Baldwin, Jones, and Monroe
15 Counties. The Scherer Line ROW is 150 feet (46 meters [m]) wide for the majority of its
16 length, but occasionally has a width of 400 feet (122 m). The ROW crosses terrain that is
17 mainly flat to rolling (SNC 2007a).
18
 - 19 • West McIntosh (Thalmann) Line – The 500-kV line is 159 miles (256 km) long and runs from
20 the VEGP site to a substation near Brunswick. The line first runs south from VEGP for 69
21 miles (111 km) to the West McIntosh substation near Savannah. It then continues south for
22 an additional 90 miles (145 km) to its termination at the Thalmann substation, near
23 Brunswick. The line has a 150 foot (46 m) wide ROW. The terrain traversed by the ROW is
24 gently rolling to flat and includes many low, wet areas (TRC 2006; SNC 2007a).
25
 - 26 • Goshen (Black) and Goshen (White) Line – The two 230-kV Goshen lines run approximately
27 19 miles (31 km) northwest from the VEGP site to the Goshen substation south of Augusta.
28 The line has a 275 foot (84 m) wide ROW. The two Goshen lines, plus 17 miles (27 km) of
29 the Augusta Newsprint line, described below, share the ROW. The ROW crosses terrain
30 that is generally flat (SNC 2007a).
31
 - 32 • Augusta Newsprint Line – The 230-kV line runs approximately 20 miles (32 km) from the
33 VEGP site to the Augusta Newsprint substation where it serves a large paper mill located in
34 southeast Richmond County. The Augusta Newsprint and Goshen lines share a 275 foot
35 (84 m) wide ROW until the Augusta Newsprint line diverges east from the two Goshen lines
36 at mile 17 (km 27). The ROW of the Augusta Newsprint line is 100 to 125 feet (30 to 38 m)
37 wide for the remaining 3 miles (5 km). The terrain traversed by the ROW is generally flat
38 (SNC 2007a).

Table 2-1. VEGP Transmission Lines and ROWs

Transmission Line	Voltage kV	Approximate Line Length		ROW Width		ROW Area	
		km	mi	m	ft	hectares	ac
Scherer	500	248	154	46	150	1,133	2,800
West McIntosh (Thalman)	500	257	160	46	150	1,177	2,909
Goshen (Black)	230	31	19	84	275	140	346
Goshen (White)	230	31	19	Shared with Black		Shared with Black	
Augusta Newsprint	230	27	17	Shared with Goshen		Shared with Goshen	
	230	5	3	38	125	18	45
SCE&G	230	7.2	4.5	38	125	28	68
	230	27	17	30	100	83	206
Wilson	230	2.3	1.4	46	150	10	25
Totals		636	395			2,585	6,395

Adapted from: SNC 2007a

- SCE&G Line – The 230-kV line runs north and east from the VEGP site for 4.5 miles (7.2 km) where it crosses the Savannah River, then runs an additional 17 miles (27 km) to a substation on SRS, which is maintained and managed by SCE&G. The line has a 125 foot (38 m) wide ROW within Georgia and a 100 foot (30 m) wide ROW within South Carolina. The part of the line and its ROW in South Carolina is entirely within the SRS. The ROW crosses terrain that is mostly flat (SNC 2007a).
- Wilson Line – The 230-kV line runs southeast from the VEGP switchyard for 1.4 miles (2.3 km) to Plant Wilson. The line and ROW are entirely on VEGP property and maintain a 150 foot (46 m) wide ROW. The ROW crosses terrain that is mostly flat. The Wilson line would provide offsite power to the VEGP site in the event of an emergency (SNC 2007a).

SNC owns and operates 395 miles (636 km) of transmission lines and maintains 6395 acres (2585 hectares [ha]) of ROW associated with the transmission lines. The ROWs are generally on agricultural land and forests, and occasionally cross swamps and wetlands. Much of the farmland the ROWs cross is currently active. The Oconee National Forest is crossed by the Scherer line northeast of Plant Scherer. Additionally, the West McIntosh (Thalman) line crosses three significant natural areas: the Yuchi Wildlife Management Area, which is adjacent to the VEGP site, the Tuckahoe Wildlife Management Area, which is approximately 30 miles (48 km) south of the VEGP site, and one privately owned swamp, the Ebenezer Creek Swamp,

1 which is designated as a National Natural Landmark and is crossed by the line near the West
2 McIntosh plant (SNC 2007a).

3
4 SNC maintains the ROW for all seven transmission lines, in accordance with established
5 procedures, to prevent vegetation from interfering with the lines (GPC 1997). The vegetative
6 maintenance program includes selected backpack spraying of approved herbicides on dry
7 ground and stream crossings every other year; in non-spraying years, SNC follows a four-year
8 mowing cycle (SNC 2007a; TRC 2006). If danger trees are identified at any time during the
9 maintenance cycle, they are trimmed and sprayed as needed. On wetland areas, no herbicides
10 are used, the area is not mowed, and only hand clearing is allowed. ROWs that cross farmland
11 are not maintained, as the land is cultivated by the local farmers. The transmission lines were
12 built in conjunction with the construction of the plant in the mid-1980s and in accordance with
13 the National Electrical Safety Code (NESC). SNC plans to maintain these ROWs whether or
14 not VEGP has its license renewed, and has stated that the transmission lines play a role in the
15 overall transmission system (SNC 2007a).

17 **2.2 Plant Interaction with the Environment**

19 **2.2.1 Land Use**

20
21 The VEGP facility occupies a 3169-ac site. The two nuclear units (Units 1 and 2 including
22 containment and turbine buildings, as well as shared auxiliary, control, and fuel handing
23 buildings), two natural draft cooling towers, supporting facilities such as service water cooling
24 towers, a water treatment building, switchyard, and training center, parking lots, roads,
25 transmission ROWs, and Plant Wilson occupy approximately 800 acres. The undeveloped
26 portion of the site includes approximately 1634 acres of pine forest, 612 acres of hardwood
27 forest, and 96 acres of open areas including mowed grass (NRC 2007). The forested acreage
28 is covered by a land management plan developed to ensure effective management of timber
29 and wildlife resources (SNC 2007a). Figure 2-3 depicts the VEGP property boundary and
30 general facility layout.

31
32 VEGP is located in and pays property taxes to Burke County. Burke County guides land use by
33 means of a comprehensive plan and land development code, but does not currently have
34 zoning regulations.

35
36 Seven transmission lines with a total length of approximately 395 miles connect the VEGP
37 facility to the electric power grid. These transmission lines are described in detail in Section
38 2.1.7. The transmission line ROWs, which occupy approximately 6395 acres, traverse primarily
39 agricultural and forest lands. The primary land use classifications traversed by the ROWs are:
40 Scherer line – agricultural 29 percent, forest 63 percent; West McIntosh (Thalmann) –
41 agricultural 32 percent, forest 29 percent for VEGP to West McIntosh substation, and

1 agricultural 5 percent, forest 68 percent for West McIntosh substation to Thalmann substation;
2 Goshen/Augusta Newsprint – agricultural 14 percent, forest 75 percent; SCE&G – agricultural 4
3 percent, forest 69 percent (SNC 2007a).
4

5 Section 307(c)(3)(A) of the Coastal Zone Management Act (16 USC 1456(c)(3)(A)) requires that
6 applicants for Federal licenses to conduct an activity in a coastal zone provide to the licensing
7 agency a certification that the proposed activity is consistent with the enforceable policies of the
8 State's coastal zone program. A copy of the certification is also to be provided to the State.

9 Within six months of receipt of the certification, the State is to notify the Federal agency whether
10 the State concurs with or objects to the applicant's certification. The VEGP site is not located in
11 a coastal zone. However, one transmission line, the West McIntosh (Thalmann) line, runs
12 through several coastal counties. This line is within Georgia's coastal zone for purposes of the
13 Coastal Zone Management Act.
14

15 SNC's certification that renewal of the VEGP license would be consistent with the Georgia
16 coastal zone management program will be provided to GDNR concurrent with NRC issuing this
17 draft SEIS (SNC 2007a).
18

19 **2.2.2 Water Use**

20 **2.2.2.1 Hydrology**

21 This section describes the surface water and groundwater features of the area that could be
22 impacted by the proposed relicensing of VEGP.
23

24 **2.2.2.1.1 Surface Water**

25 The VEGP facility is located on the southern bank of the Savannah River, which serves as the
26 border between Georgia and South Carolina. VEGP uses water from the river to provide make-
27 up water to the facility's cooling tower system. The Savannah River watershed is approximately
28 10,579 square miles. The upstream end of the Savannah River is the confluence of the Seneca
29 and Tugaloo Rivers, which is a part of Hartwell Lake (USACE 1996). The Savannah River flows
30 288.9 miles from the Hartwell Dam to the Atlantic Ocean at the mouth of the river in Savannah,
31 Georgia. The facility is located at RM 151, directly across the river from the DOE's SRS (SNC
32 2006c).
33

34 Flow in the Savannah River is primarily controlled by releases from three upstream dams and
35 reservoirs operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), including the Hartwell Dam
36 (RM 288.9), Richard B. Russell Dam (RM 259.1), and J. Strom Thurmond Dam (RM 221.6).
37 Between the J. Strom Thurmond Dam and the VEGP site are the Stevens Creek Dam (RM
38 208.1), the city of Augusta (approximately RM 200), the New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam
39
40
41

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1 (RM 187.7), and the mouths of several small creeks (SNC 2006d). The factor most directly
2 affecting river flow rates at RM 151 is the releases from J. Strom Thurmond Reservoir, which is
3 located 72 miles upstream of the VEGP facility (SNC 2006c). The annual mean flow volume of
4 the Savannah River near Augusta from 1952 to 2004 was 9157 cfs (Gotvald et al. 2005).

5
6 The Savannah River adjacent to the VEGP site is relatively straight with very few bends. The
7 substrate in the deep sections of the Savannah River ranges from "brown poorly graded gravel
8 with sand" to "poorly graded gravel" (SNC 2006d).

9
10 Channel modifications have been made to the Savannah River to allow for a 9-ft deep by 90-ft
11 wide navigation channel from the Savannah Harbor to the city of Augusta. Maintenance of the
12 channel was discontinued in 1980; therefore, discharges from J. Strom Thurmond Dam are
13 based on the needs of downstream water supply withdrawals without concern for navigation
14 (USACE 2006). U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) flow gage 02197320 is located near Jackson,
15 South Carolina, approximately 6 miles upstream of the VEGP site at Savannah (RM 156.8)
16 (USGS 2002).

17
18 Water releases from the J. Strom Thurmond Dam are governed by the USACE's Drought
19 Contingency Plan for the Savannah River, which requires releases of a minimum of 3800 cfs to
20 the Savannah River to maintain flows for downstream water users, unless the reservoir's level
21 falls below the bottom of the conservation pool, which is at an elevation of 312 feet above msl
22 (USACE 2007a). If the water level in the reservoir falls below 312 feet above msl, then the
23 Drought Contingency Plan requires that releases be made at the same flow rate as inflows to
24 the reservoir (USACE 2007a). The minimum flow of 3800 cfs is based on Georgia's instream
25 flow guidelines for the Savannah River, established by the GEPD for the regulation of surface
26 water withdrawals. The instream flow guidelines were established in 2006 and are based on the
27 7Q10 value (SNC 2007b), which is the lowest average stream flow expected to occur for seven
28 consecutive days with an average frequency of once in ten years (UGA Carl Vinson Institute of
29 Government 2006).

30
31 Long-term daily flow records for the Savannah River at Augusta, recent flow records for the
32 Savannah River at VEGP (a site referred to as "Savannah River near Waynesboro"), release
33 rates from the J. Strom Thurmond Dam, and lake levels in J. Strom Thurmond Reservoir were
34 reviewed to estimate average and low-flow conditions in the Savannah River. A review of the
35 USACE data for J. Strom Thurmond Dam shows that the level of the reservoir has never fallen
36 below 312 feet above msl since operation of VEGP began in 1987 (USACE 2007b). However,
37 releases of flows less than 3800 cfs are not uncommon and occurred on 76 separate days
38 between October 2006 and October 2007 (USACE 2007c). Instream flow data for the
39 Savannah River near the Waynesboro station at VEGP are available only since 2005.
40 However, these limited data show that the flow rate near the VEGP facility has not dropped
41 below 3900 cfs even though this portion of Georgia is currently considered to be in a state of

1 severe hydrologic drought (USGS 2007a and USGS 2007b). Reviews of the available USGS
2 stream flow data for the Savannah River at Augusta (22 miles upstream of VEGP; USGS
3 2007c) indicate that actual flows of less than 3800 cfs are rare. Since 1987, the lowest annual
4 average stream flow recorded in the Savannah River at Augusta was 4470 cfs in 2002 (USGS
5 2007d).

6
7 The following water temperature statistics were generated for the period from January 30, 1973,
8 to August 13, 1996: minimum = 5.0°C (41.0°F), average = 17.4°C (63.4°F), median = 18.0°C
9 (64.4°F), and maximum = 27.2°C (81.0°F) (SNC 2006d). Savannah River water temperature
10 data were collected by the GDNR at Shell Bluff Landing, approximately 11 RM upstream of the
11 VEGP site.

12 13 **2.2.2.1.2 Groundwater**

14
15 The VEGP facility exists within the Coastal Plain Physiographic Province. At the facility
16 location, the subsurface geology consists of more than 1000 feet of Coastal Plain sediments
17 overlying Triassic Basin rock and Paleozoic crystalline rock. Within these rock units, three
18 distinct hydrogeologic aquifers underlie the facility: the Cretaceous aquifer, Tertiary aquifer, and
19 Water Table aquifer.

20
21 The lower aquifer is the Cretaceous aquifer, which is approximately 700 feet thick at the facility
22 (SNC 2007a). The Cretaceous aquifer consists of sediments of the Cape Fear Formation, Pio-
23 Nonno Formation, Galliard Formation, Black Creek Formation, and Steel Creek Formation (SNC
24 2007a). The Cretaceous aquifer is a good water source, and is capable of producing up to 5
25 billion gallons per day throughout its extent (SNC 2005b). The Cretaceous aquifer is the
26 primary aquifer, in the local region, from which municipal and industrial water supplies are
27 derived. A review of the registered groundwater users within 50 miles of the VEGP site shows
28 that the majority of permitted wells (124 out of 171) derive their water supply from the
29 Cretaceous aquifer (SNC 2006c). The largest user of groundwater in the local area is the SRS,
30 which withdraws water from the Cretaceous aquifer at a rate of 5000 gpm (SNC 2007a).
31 According to the facility's Updated UFSAR (SNC 2005b), the withdrawals at the SRS do not
32 have an impact on groundwater conditions at VEGP.

33
34 The Cretaceous aquifer is overlain by the Tertiary aquifer, which consists of permeable sands of
35 the Still Branch and Congaree Formations, and is approximately 100 feet thick (SNC 2006c).
36 Groundwater recharge in both aquifers occurs through rainfall in the area where the aquifers
37 crop out, northwest of the VEGP site. At the VEGP site, both the Cretaceous and Tertiary
38 aquifers are overlain and confined by the Blue Bluff marl, but they are in hydraulic contact with
39 each other. Further downdip, to the south, the Cretaceous and Tertiary aquifers become
40 separated by impermeable silts and clays of the Huber and Ellenton Formations (SNC 2006c).
41 The regional flow direction in both aquifers is to the southeast, in the direction of dip.

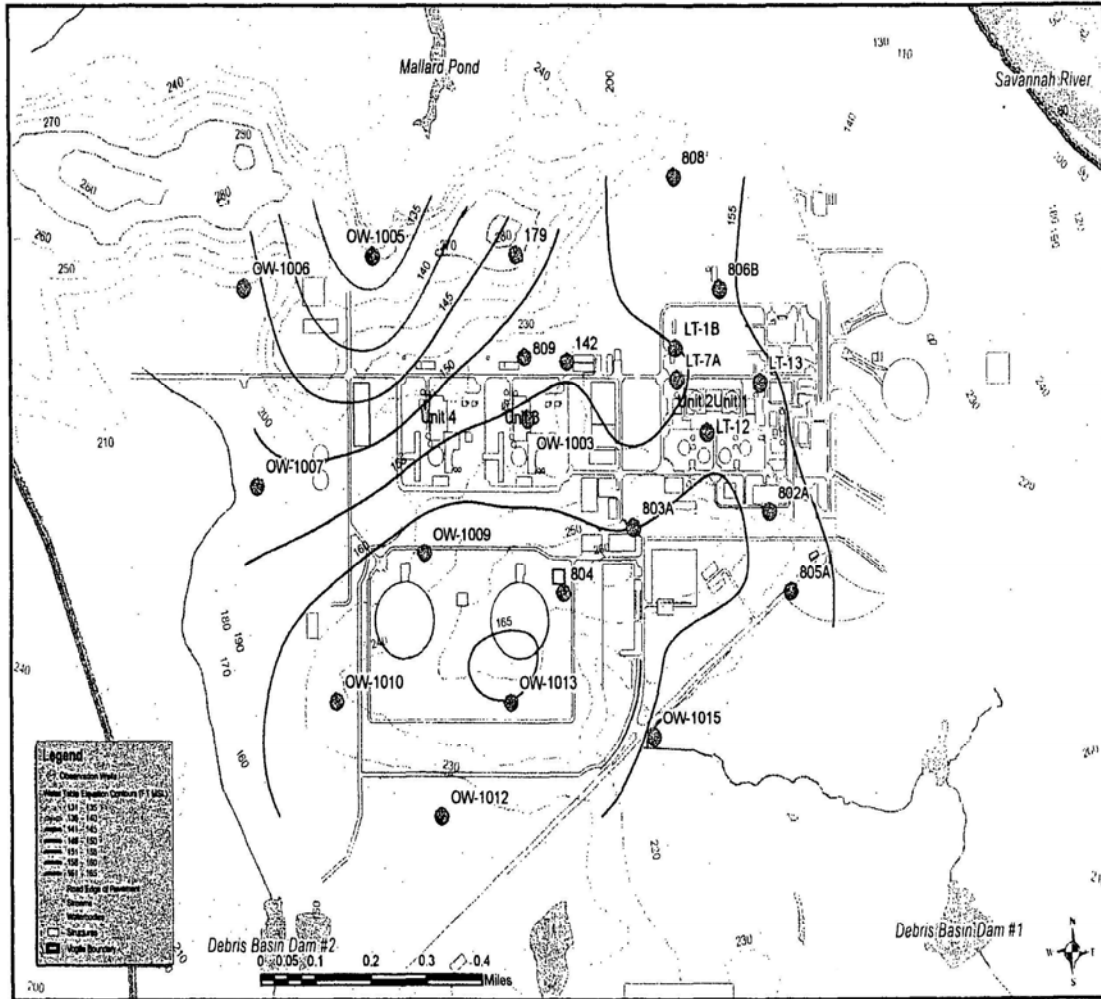
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1 The Water Table aquifer is unconfined, and is present within sands of the Barnwell Group.
2 Although present at the VEGP site, it is not continuous throughout the area, and does not
3 provide a substantial groundwater source in the local area (SNC 2006c).

4
5 Hydraulic monitoring data has been collected in both the Water Table aquifer and Tertiary
6 aquifer by VEGP. Beginning in 1979, water levels were measured in observation wells in the
7 Water Table aquifer to monitor dewatering associated with plant construction. Water levels
8 were measured monthly in these wells through 1988, then quarterly from 1995 to 2005, and
9 then monthly again (with 10 newly installed observation wells) from 2005 to present. Water
10 levels were also monitored in two wells in the Tertiary aquifer from 1971 to 1975, and 1979 to
11 1985. Five new observation wells were installed in the Tertiary aquifer in 2005, and their water
12 levels have been monitored monthly since that time. No observation wells exist in the
13 Cretaceous aquifer, which is separated from the Tertiary aquifer by a leaky confining unit. The
14 15 new observation wells installed in 2005 were installed for the purpose of collecting
15 groundwater flow direction data to support the proposed construction of two additional units at
16 VEGP (SNC 2006c).

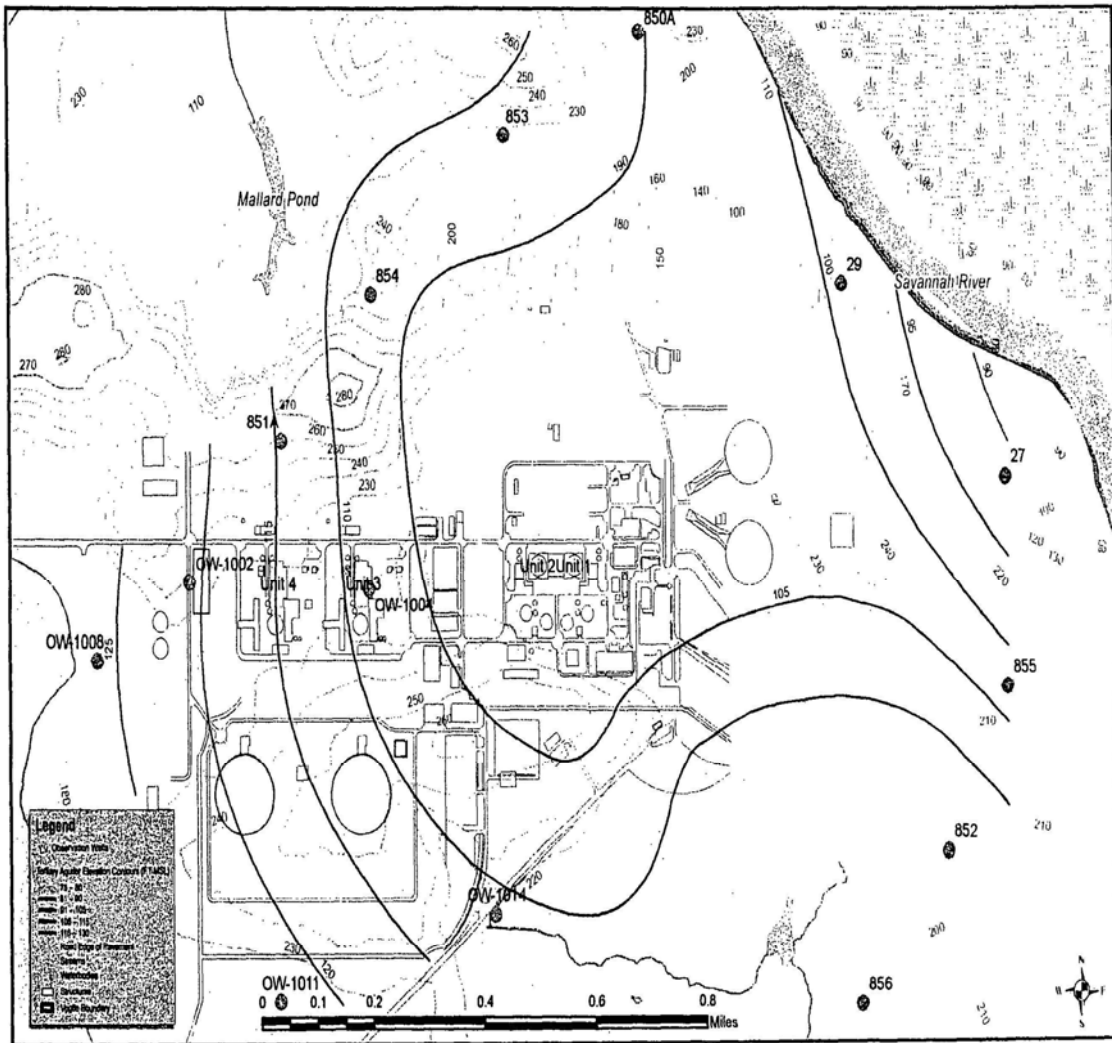
17
18 The hydraulic monitoring data for the Water Table aquifer shows that the flow direction on the
19 VEGP site is radial, apparently driven by the topography of the site. The potentiometric surface,
20 shown in Figure 2-5, has a high that is coincident with the highest land surface elevation on the
21 site, and the groundwater flow direction is to the north, east, south, and west of this high (SNC
22 2006c). The potentiometric surface for the Tertiary aquifer, shown in Figure 2-6, shows that the
23 flow direction is to the northeast, in the direction of the Savannah River. This is in contrast to
24 the general regional flow direction, which is southeast, and reflects the fact that the Savannah
25 River has eroded down through the Blue Bluff marl and indicates that there is a potential for
26 discharge from the Tertiary aquifer to the Savannah River in the area of the VEGP facility. Pre-
27 operational and post-operational groundwater levels were measured in the Water Table Aquifer
28 from 1979 to 1988, and again from 1995 to present (SNC 2006c). Groundwater levels were
29 also measured in Tertiary Aquifer wells from 1971 to 1985, and again from 2005 to present
30 (SNC 2006c). A review of the potentiometric surface in the area near withdrawal well MU-1
31 indicates a lowering of groundwater levels by about 15 feet between 1971 and 2006. However,
32 water levels in nearby observation wells (such as well 27 and 29) do not appear to indicate any
33 long-term trend, such as gradually falling water levels, that may indicate that facility operations
34 are having a widespread impact on groundwater resources.

1
2



Source: SNC 2006c

Figure 2-5. Potentiometric Map – Water Table Aquifer



Source: SNC 2006c

Figure 2-6. Potentiometric Map – Tertiary Aquifer

2.2.2.2 Facility Water Use

For facility operations, VEGP uses both surface water and groundwater resources to supply the cooling water and auxiliary water systems, as well as potable water supply and other miscellaneous water systems.

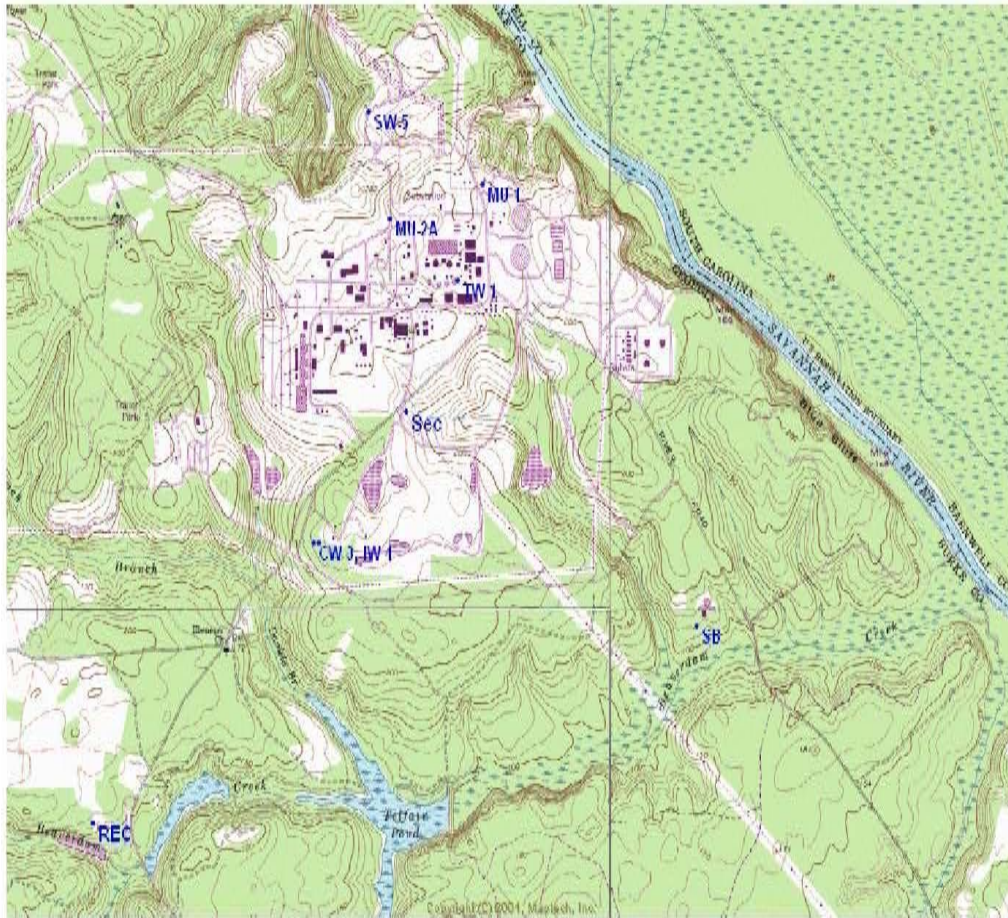
2.2.2.2.1 Surface Water

The cooling water system is the CWS, a closed-cycle system used for removing waste heat from the steam condensers associated with the power generation system (SNC 2007a). The CWS is supplied by a surface water intake which acquires water from the Savannah River. The water is obtained through a 365-ft long intake canal, and placed into a closed-loop system in which the water is heated at the steam condensers, and cooled in two natural draft cooling towers. To avoid buildup of minerals within the cooling tower water, blowdown water is discharged, along with liquid radioactive waste treatment effluents, through a pipe located approximately 500 feet downstream of the intake canal (SNC 2007a).

Although a closed system, the system does lose water through evaporative losses, drift, and blowdown, resulting in net usage of water from the Savannah River (SNC 2007a). The VEGP ER reports that the capacity of the intake system is 89 cfs (SNC 2007a), of which an estimated 66.8 cfs (about 75 percent) is consumed through evaporative losses and drift (NRC 1985). In 2006, the actual reported maximum monthly average for water withdrawal was 103.8 cfs (SNC 2007e). Using the same 75 percent consumption ratio, the maximum monthly average consumptive use in 2006 was 77.9 cfs for the entire facility.

2.2.2.2.2 Groundwater

Groundwater is used by the facility to supply the Nuclear Service Cooling Water (NSCW) system, demineralized water treatment plant, potable water, utility water, and fire protection water (SNC 2007f). The groundwater supply source is a network of nine wells. The location of the wells is shown in Figure 2-7, and details regarding the construction and capacity of the wells are provided in Table 2-2. The groundwater wells are permitted under a single withdrawal permit (Groundwater Use Permit #017-0003) from the GEPD (SNC 2007f). The total permitted annual average withdrawal volume for all purposes is 5.5 million gallons per day (mgd), while the actual annual average withdrawal volume since 2000 is 1.05 mgd (SNC 2007a).



Source: SNC 2006c

Figure 2-7. Location of Groundwater Supply Wells

2.2.3 Water Quality

2.2.3.1 Surface Water

Contaminant concentrations in the aquatic environment at VEGP are monitored on an ongoing basis by personnel of the Georgia Power Company (GPC) Environmental Laboratory (EL), the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC), the GDNR, and the SRS. These organizations operate sampling programs to evaluate any potential impacts of facility operations on surface water, sediment, and aquatic life. Samples collected to monitor for potential releases of radionuclides to surface water include surface water samples, drinking water samples, shoreline sediment samples, and fish tissue samples. Sample collection and analytical frequencies vary depending on the exposure pathway and constituent.

Table 2-2. Groundwater Wells Used at VEGP

Well Identification Number	Depth (ft)	Capacity (gpm)	Primary Purpose
MU-1	851	2,000	Service water, potable and sanitary water, fire protection, plant water, irrigation
MU-2A	884	1,000	Back-up for MU-1
TW-1	860	1,000	Back-up for production well make-up system
SW-5	200	20	Water for old security tactical training area
REC	265	150	Potable water for recreation facility
CW-3	220	Not Available	Water supply for Nuclear Operations Garage
IW-4	370	120	Irrigation well for vegetation
SEC	320	10	Non-potable water supply for lavatory at plant entrance security building
SB	340	50	Potable water for Training Facility

Source: SNC 2007a

The impact of VEGP operations on water quality within the Savannah River is evaluated by monitoring associated with the facility's Radiological Environmental Monitoring Program (REMP). Samples collected to monitor for potential releases of radionuclides to surface water include surface water samples, drinking water samples, shoreline sediment samples, and fish tissue samples. The VEGP program is operated in accordance with the VEGP ODCM and the results are documented within the Annual Radiological Environmental Operating Reports. REMP sampling began in 1981, providing more than 5 years of pre-operational water quality data (SNC 2007g).

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1 The most recent REMP report was completed in 2007 for the calendar year 2006 (SNC 2007g).
 2 The components of the VEGP monitoring program related to surface water quality are described
 3 in Table 2-3.

4
 5 **Table 2-3.** Summary of 2006 VEGP Surface Water Quality Monitoring Program
 6

Sample Type	Location Number and Location	Indicator or Control	Number of Samples in 2006 Program	Analytes
Surface Water	Savannah River, RM 151.2, Location 82	Control	12	Gamma isotopic (monthly), tritium (quarterly)
Surface Water	Savannah River, RM 150.4, Location 83	Indicator	12	Gamma isotopic (monthly), tritium (quarterly)
Surface Water	Savannah River, RM 149.5, Location 84	Indicator	12	Gamma isotopic (monthly), tritium (quarterly)
Drinking Water	Beaufort-Jasper Water Treatment Plant, Location 87	Indicator	12	Gamma isotopic and gross beta (monthly), tritium (quarterly), I-131 when dose dictates
Drinking Water	Cherokee Hill Water Treatment Plant, Location 88	Indicator	12	Gamma isotopic and gross beta (monthly), tritium (quarterly), I-131 when dose dictates
Drinking Water	Purrysburg Water Treatment Plant, Location 89	Indicator	12	Gamma isotopic and gross beta (monthly), tritium (quarterly), I-131 when dose dictates
Shoreline Sediment	Savannah River, RM 150.2 (usually), Location 83	Indicator	2	Gamma isotopic (semi annually)
Fish Tissue	Savannah River, RM 153 to 158, Location 81	Control	2	Gamma isotopic (semi annually)
Fish Tissue	Savannah River, RM 144 to 149.4, Location 85	Indicator	2	Gamma isotopic (semi-annually)

7

1 The results from the 2006 REMP program report indicate that tritium releases from VEGP may
2 have resulted in increases of tritium concentrations in river water in the Savannah River near
3 the facility (SNC 2007g). In 2006, total tritium releases from the facility were higher than normal
4 due to several outages (SNC 2007g). In addition, drought conditions resulted in a lower volume
5 of water present in the river (SNC 2007g). These resulted in tritium concentrations in water
6 samples ranging from 1140 to 3870 picoCuries/liter (pCi/l). Because the indicator sample tritium
7 concentrations were higher than the control sample concentrations, the tritium concentrations
8 could be indicative of plant releases (SNC 2007g). These values are still well below the EPA
9 Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) of 20,000 pCi/l tritium for drinking water. Also, the report
10 notes that the Savannah River is not used as a drinking water source for more than 100 miles
11 downstream of VEGP (SNC 2007g). Tritium concentrations in samples collected from pre-
12 treated and treated water at these drinking water sources (Beaufort-Jasper, Cherokee Hill, and
13 Purrysburg) were not statistically different from the tritium concentrations at the control location
14 (Augusta) (SNC 2007g).

15
16 REMP sampling results for sediment detected two man-made radionuclides (Cs-137 and Co-60)
17 that may be attributed to VEGP operations or other sources (SNC 2007g). The plots of
18 historical Cs-137 and Co-60 concentrations at these sampling locations do not show any
19 increasing or decreasing trend (SNC 2007g).

20
21 The REMP program included sampling of fish tissue samples at both control and indicator
22 locations, with the results analyzed only for gamma isotopic analysis (not tritium). The results
23 did not identify any radionuclides that had a statistical difference between the indicator and
24 control samples, so there is no discernable impact from facility operations (SNC 2007g).

25
26 The GEDP Program is similar in scope to the VEGP annual program and the results are
27 reported in the GDNR's Environmental Radiation Surveillance Report. The most recent
28 finalized version of this report covers the period from 2000 to 2002 (GDNR 2004). Due to the
29 proximity of VEGP and SRS, the GDNR Environmental Radiation Surveillance Monitoring
30 Program includes the collection and analysis of samples whose locations were selected to
31 provide an assessment of radiation releases and water quality potentially impacted by both
32 facilities. The program includes the collection of samples from air, rain, vegetation, crops,
33 game, milk, groundwater, surface water, soil, sediment, drinking water, and fish. A summary of
34 the tritium results are in Table 2-4.

35
36 In addition to the tritium detections, elevated concentrations of Cs-137 and Sr-90 were also
37 detected in fish tissue in the samples collected adjacent to SRS, with concentrations that
38 exceeded the NRC reporting limit (GDNR 2004). Several radionuclides were also detected in
39 sediment samples up to 100 miles downstream of SRS, including Co-60, Sr-90, Cs-137, Pu-
40 238, and Pu-239. The GDNR report stated that a portion of the Co-60 may have been

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1 attributable to VEGP releases, but the remainder were attributed to SRS, as well as global
 2 fallout (GDNR 2004).

3
 4 **Table 2-4.** Summary of 2000 to 2002 GDNR Surface Water Tritium Results
 5

Sample Type	Location	Average Tritium Concentration	Maximum Tritium Concentration	Maximum as a % of the MCL
Surface Water	Savannah River, SRS Outfall	5,700 pCi/L	60,000 pCi/L	300%
Surface Water	Savannah River, VEGP Outfall	2,200 pCi/L	11,000 pCi/L	55%
Surface Water	Savannah River, downstream	1,000 pCi/L	3,300 pCi/L	17%
Drinking Water	Savannah	900 pCi/L	2,300 pCi/L	12%
Fish	Savannah River, SRS Outfall	2,000 pCi/kg	47,000 pCi/kg	0.7%
Fish	Savannah River, VEGP Outfall	1,100 pCi/kg	2,500 pCi/kg	0.04%
Fish	Savannah River, downstream	600 pCi/kg	1,880 pCi/kg	0.03%

Source: GDNR 2004

6
 7 The only other radionuclide detected in fish tissue samples collected by GPC during VEGP's
 8 operation was I-131. Historically, I-131 was detected in 1989 at one downstream station at 18
 9 pCi/kg-wet, and it was detected in 1990 at one downstream station at 13 pCi/kg-wet and one
 10 upstream control station at 12 pCi/kg-wet. All three of these detections were below the
 11 minimum detectable concentration (MDC) for I-131 of 53 pCi/kg-wet (SNC 2007g). GPC does
 12 not analyze fish tissue samples for tritium.

13
 14 SRS has collected freshwater fish from nine locations on the Savannah River – from above SRS
 15 at Augusta, Georgia to the coast at Savannah, Georgia. SRS found the radionuclides Cs-137, I-
 16 129, and TC-99 in Savannah River edible fish composites. Sr-89, Sr-90, and tritium were
 17 detected at most of the SRS freshwater river locations. Pu-238 was found slightly above the
 18 MDC in composites from eight freshwater locations. Cs-137 and Sr-89/90 concentrations in
 19 2006 were similar to those of previous years (Westinghouse Savannah River Company Inc.
 20 2007).

21
 22 The primary conclusion from both the VEGP and GEPD monitoring programs is that releases of
 23 radionuclides have occurred from both the SRS and VEGP facilities into the Savannah River.

1 However, SRS is believed to be the primary source of the radionuclides, with VEGP contributing
2 up to 10 percent of the tritium detected in the Savannah River (GDNR 2004).

3
4 Pursuant to the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (also known as the Clean Water Act
5 [CWA]), VEGP effluent discharges are regulated by a NPDES permit. The current permit,
6 Number GA0026786, was issued by the GDNR on June 30, 1999. The current permit expiration
7 date was May 31, 2004, and was extended indefinitely by GDNR on that date. Sample
8 collection to demonstrate compliance with this NPDES permit is the only requirement of the
9 non-radiological Annual Environmental Operating Report required by NRC (SNC 2007h).

10
11 The quantitative effluent limitations regulated under the VEGP NPDES permit are shown in
12 Table 2-5. There are eleven separate outfalls regulated under this permit. Of these, Outfall 001
13 is designated as the Final Plant Discharge into the Savannah River, through the underground
14 discharge pipe. Most of the other Outfalls (002 through 011) consist of discharges of various
15 water systems into Outfall 001. The only exceptions are:

- 16
- 17 • Outfalls 002A and 003A, which are emergency overflows to storm drains;
- 18 • Outfall 006, which is the emergency overflow from the Sewage Treatment Plant to the
19 Savannah River; and
- 20 • Outfall 011, which is the backwash from the Intake Screens directly into the Savannah River
21 at the intake screen location (SNC 2007a).
- 22

23 The effluent limitations for each outfall are provided in Table 2-5.

24
25 The NPDES permit does not regulate the discharge of radionuclides from the facility, and does
26 not require routine monitoring of the temperature of the discharge to the Savannah River (SNC
27 2007a).

28
29 A review of the quarterly NPDES Discharge Monitoring Reports since 2002 identified a total of
30 six exceedances, or possible exceedances, of permit standards (SNC 2007i). These included
31 two sample results that exceeded permit standards for oil and grease (O&G), two that exceeded
32 standards for Total Suspended Solids (TSS), one that may have exceeded a standard for Total
33 Residual Chlorine, and one event in which influent flow exceeded the capacity of the Waste
34 Water Retention Basins, resulting in a discharge of water that bypassed the required outfall
35 (SNC 2007i). In all cases, these exceedances were relatively minor, did not result in impacts to
36 the Savannah River, and did not result in enforcement action. Also, each event was
37 immediately reported to GDNR, investigated, and corrective actions taken (SNC 2007i).

Table 2-5. Effluent Limitations – NPDES Permit for VEGP

Outfall No.	Outfall Description	Free Available Chlorine (mg/L)		Total Suspended Solids (mg/L)		Oil and Grease (mg/L)		Total Cr (mg/L)	Total Zn (mg/L)	pH	Biochemical Oxygen Demand (mg/L)	
		Daily Avg.	Daily Max.	Daily Avg.	Daily Max.	Daily Avg.	Daily Max.				Daily Avg.	Daily Max.
001	Final Plant Discharge to Savannah River	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	6-9	NA	NA
002	Unit 1 Cooling Tower Blowdown to 001	0.2	0.5	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.2	1.0	NA	NA	NA
002A	Emergency Overflow to Storm Drains	0.2	0.5	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.2	1.0	NA	NA	NA
003	Unit 2 Cooling Tower Blowdown to 001	0.2	0.5	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.2	1.0	NA	NA	NA
003A	Emergency Overflow to Storm Drains	0.2	0.5	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.2	1.0	NA	NA	NA
004	Unit 1 Wastewater Retention Basin to 001	NA	NA	30.0	100.0	15.0	20.0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
005	Unit 2 Wastewater Retention Basin to 001	NA	NA	30.0	100.0	15.0	20.0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Table 2-5. (cont'd)

Outfall No.	Outfall Description	Free Available Chlorine (mg/L)		Total Suspended Solids (mg/L)		Oil and Grease (mg/L)		Total Cr (mg/L)	Total Zn (mg/L)	pH	Biochemical Oxygen Demand (mg/L)	
		Daily Avg.	Daily Max.	Daily Avg.	Daily Max.	Daily Avg.	Daily Max.				Daily Avg.	Daily Max.
006	Sewage treatment Plant Emergency Overflow to Savannah River	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	30.0	45.0
007	Unit 1 Liquid Rad Waste Systems Discharge to 001	NA	NA	30.0	100.0	15.0	20.0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
008	Unit 2 Liquid Rad Waste Systems Discharge to 001	NA	NA	30.0	100.0	15.0	20.0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
009	Nuclear Service Cooling Tower Blowdown to 001	0.2	0.5	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
010	Rad Waste Dilution Flow to 001	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	6-9	NA	NA
011	Intake Screen Backwash to Savannah River	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

mg/l = milligrams per liter

1 **2.2.3.2 Groundwater**

2
3 The VEGP REMP program has not historically required the collection and analysis of
4 groundwater samples (SNC 2007g). However, in 2007, VEGP voluntarily implemented a
5 groundwater sampling program which will consist of samples from 29 wells and one surface
6 water location (SNC 2007j). The results will be provided within future REMP reports, but will not
7 be available until the issuance of the 2007 REMP report in 2008 (SNC 2007j).

8
9 Groundwater samples are included in the GDNR radiological monitoring program (GDNR 2004).
10 This program includes the sampling of 42 monitoring wells and 37 groundwater supply wells.
11 The sampling frequency is once per year, and the samples are analyzed for gross alpha, gross
12 beta, and tritium. The supply well samples have also been analyzed for Cs-137.

13
14 According to the GDNR report, tritium was unexpectedly detected in several relatively deep
15 wells in Burke County, Georgia, in 1991 (GDNR 2004). Tritium had been expected to be
16 present in Water Table aquifer wells, due to the history of releases of tritium from SRS, but it
17 was not expected to be present in the confined Tertiary or Cretaceous aquifers. Based on these
18 data, GDNR partnered with the DOE to perform an extensive, regional groundwater study. The
19 results of this study concluded that no significant tritium was present in the deeper aquifers.

20
21 During the 2000 to 2002 study, tritium concentrations in the Water Table aquifer averaged less
22 than 1,000 pCi/L, compared to the MCL of 20,000 pCi/L. The distribution of tritium in the Water
23 Table aquifer indicated that its source was likely to be airborne or precipitation-related tritium
24 from SRS (GDNR 2004). No other radionuclides were detected in the GDNR groundwater
25 samples.

26
27 The VEGP facility does perform groundwater monitoring associated with two landfills on the
28 property. Landfill #2 is operated by VEGP under Solid Waste Permit #017-006D(L)(I), and is
29 used for the disposal on non-putrescible, non-liquid solid waste such as office waste,
30 construction and demolition debris, pallets, and concrete (SNC 2007k). Groundwater
31 monitoring began at Landfill #2 in 2002, through the sampling of four wells screened in the
32 uppermost Water Table aquifer (SNC 2007k). The monitoring samples are analyzed for total
33 metals and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). This sampling program has not identified any
34 statistically significant releases of any contaminants to the groundwater.

35
36 Landfill #3 is operated by VEGP under Solid Waste Permit #017-007D(L)(I), and began
37 operations in 1987 (SNC 2007l). Since 1992, Landfill #3 has been used the disposal of only
38 construction and demolition debris. The groundwater monitoring program consists of samples
39 from nine Water Table Aquifer wells, which are analyzed for total metals and VOCs. The results
40 from Landfill #3 have documented the presence of barium, mercury, and VOCs

1 (trichlorofluoromethane, 1,1-dichloroethene, 1,1-dichloroethane, chlorobenzene, and cis-1,2-
2 dichloroethene) (SNC 2007I).

3 4 **2.2.4 Meteorology and Air Quality**

5
6 VEGP is located in Burke County, Georgia. This region has a humid subtropical climate
7 characterized by long periods of mild sunny weather in the autumn, short mild winters,
8 somewhat more windy but mild weather in the spring, and long hot humid summers (SNC
9 2005b). The Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean are approximately 250 miles south-
10 southwest and 100 miles southeast, respectively. Both the Appalachian chain of mountains and
11 these two nearby maritime bodies exert an important influence on the climate. The mountains
12 to the north tending to retard the southward movement of Polar air masses. The Bermuda High
13 pressure areas of the Atlantic Ocean have a dominant effect on the weather, particularly in the
14 summer months. East or northeast winds produce the most unpleasant weather although
15 southerly winds are quite humid during the summer (NOAA 2004).

16
17 Georgia has a mild climate, with an average temperature of 63°F. The mountainous north has
18 cooler summers and fairly cold winters. For example, northern mountains are generally colder
19 than the rest of the state, with an average temperature of 78° F in July and 45° F in January.
20 The southern portion of the state has a July average of 82°F and a January average of 54°F.
21 The highest temperature ever recorded in the state was 112°F at Greenville, GA on August 20,
22 1983. The lowest recorded temperature, -17°F, occurred in Floyd County on January 27, 1940
23 (World Book Encyclopedia 2006).

24
25 The state's precipitation (in forms of rain, melted snow, and other forms of moisture) averages
26 50 inches per year. The greatest amount of precipitation occurs in mid summer. The rainiest
27 months are July and August, and the driest are October and November. Rainfall ranges from
28 approximately 56 inches a year in the north to about 48 inches near the east and central
29 portions of Georgia. About one inch of snow falls yearly in the state (World Book Encyclopedia
30 2006).

31
32 VEGP is located in a region of relatively low tornado activity and is far enough inland that the
33 strong winds associated with tropical storms and hurricanes are greatly reduced, although these
34 storms can cause heavy precipitation in late summer (SNC 2005b).

35
36 There are no Class I areas designated by the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife
37 Service (FWS), or the U.S. Forest Service within 50 miles of the site. Class I areas, as defined
38 in the Clean Air Act, are the following areas that were in existence as of August 7, 1977:
39 national parks over 6000 acres, national wilderness areas and national memorial parks over
40 5000 acres, and international parks (NPS 2006a). The closest Class I area is Cohutta

1 Wilderness Area, Georgia and Shining Rock Wilderness Area, North Carolina – both
2 approximately 200 miles northwest and north northwest, respectively, of VEGP (NPS 2006b).
3

4 All areas within the Augusta-Aiken area are classified as achieving attainment with the National
5 Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS; 40 CFR 81.311 and 40 CFR 81.341). The NAAQS
6 define ambient concentration criteria for sulfur dioxide (SO₂), particulate matter with
7 aerodynamic diameters of 10 microns or less (PM₁₀), particulate matter with aerodynamic
8 diameters of 2.5 microns or less (PM_{2.5}), carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂),
9 ozone (O₃), and lead (Pb). These pollutants are generally referred to as “criteria pollutants.”
10 Areas of the United States having air quality as good as or better than the NAAQS are
11 designated by the EPA as attainment areas. Areas having air quality that is worse than the
12 NAAQS are designated by EPA as non-attainment areas. The nearest non-attainment area to
13 VEGP is the Columbia, South Carolina metropolitan area, a non-attainment area under the 8-
14 hour O₃ standard, located approximately 80 miles northeast of the plant (SNC 2005b). The
15 currently designated non-attainment areas for all criteria pollutants for areas in Georgia are as
16 follows:

- 17
- 18 • Atlanta, GA – 8-hour O₃ and PM 2.5
- 19 • Macon, GA – 8-hour O₃ and Pm 2.5
- 20 • Rome, GA – PM 2.5
- 21 • Chattahoochee National Forest Mountains in Murray County – 8-hour O₃
22

23 The non-attainment areas of South Carolina are as follows:

- 24
- 25 • Columbia, SC – 8-hour O₃
- 26 • Greenville-Spartanburg-Anderson – 8-hour O₃ (EPA 2006)
27

28 **2.2.5 Aquatic Resources**

29

30 The aquatic resources relevant to the operation of VEGP are those of the Savannah River. The
31 location of VEGP and the river is shown in Figure 2-3. This section describes the aquatic biota
32 of the Savannah River in the vicinity of the VEGP site, as well as other water bodies in the
33 transmission line ROWs, that potentially could be affected by the future operation and
34 maintenance of VEGP and the associated transmission lines.
35

36 **2.2.5.1 Savannah River**

37

38 The Savannah River is the largest and most important aquatic resource in the vicinity of the
39 VEGP site. The river borders the VEGP site on the north and east, and the site is located
40 between RM 150 and 152. This area is within the reach referred to as the middle Savannah
41 River, which has been defined as the river segment from the Fall Line (a line along which

1 waterfalls occur at the transition from the Piedmont to the Coastal Plain) just above Kiokee
2 Creek in Columbia County at RM 221 (between Augusta and J. Strom Thurmond Lake) south to
3 the mouth of Brier Creek at RM 97 in Screven County (Figure 2-4). The middle Savannah River
4 basin, which includes this reach of the Savannah River and all the tributaries that empty into this
5 reach, is typical of southeastern river basins – it is home to a diverse fish community and, like
6 other southeastern rivers, its watershed is increasingly affected by a growing human population.
7 The Savannah River provides several habitat types for fish, including the main river channel,
8 “cutoff bends” or “dead rivers” (former channels still connected to the main channel), and
9 streams or smaller tributaries that empty into the river. Additional fish habitat is provided by
10 swamps (such as the Savannah River Swamp along the river mainly on the SRS) and
11 floodplains during high water. The main river channel within this reach generally has a
12 substrate of sand, but other substrate types also are present, including gravel where there is
13 moderate flow and mud and plant detritus in backwaters (Marcy et al. 2005). The aquatic
14 organisms inhabiting the Savannah River include fish, benthic macroinvertebrates (including
15 mussels, clams, and aquatic insects), aquatic macrophytes, attached algae, and diatoms.

16
17 The aquatic community of the area of the Savannah River adjacent to the VEGP site has been
18 extensively studied over a long period of time because of the presence of the SRS, as
19 discussed in Section 2.1. The five SRS reactors, which operated intermittently during the period
20 from the mid-1950s to 1988, employed once-through cooling systems that used cooling water
21 from the Savannah River and discharged heated water to tributaries of the river. Baseline
22 ecological studies of the Savannah River began in 1951 prior to construction, numerous studies
23 were performed during the more than 30 years of reactor operation, and other studies are
24 ongoing (Reed et al. 2002).

25
26 The Academy of Natural Sciences (ANS) in Philadelphia was initially selected to conduct the
27 baseline ecological studies at SRS, and since 1951 it has continued to conduct biological and
28 water-quality studies of this reach of the Savannah River to assess the effects of SRS on the
29 aquatic community. The results provide one of the most comprehensive ecological data sets
30 available for any river in the world (ANS 2003). The ANS assessments were focused in the
31 vicinity of the SRS between RM 161 and RM 122. Until 1997, these assessments included
32 comprehensive studies at sites in the Savannah River along the SRS, cursory studies in the
33 Savannah River in the vicinity of the SRS, and independent monitoring of two locations near the
34 VEGP site. The comprehensive studies included a twice-per-year assessment every 4 years of
35 all study components and all sampling locations. The cursory studies were annual assessments
36 with four sampling periods per year of fewer study components and fewer sample locations.
37 Studies in the vicinity of the VEGP site, which included the same components as the
38 comprehensive surveys but different sampling locations, were initiated in 1985 in order to
39 assess potential impacts from VEGP so they could be separated from potential SRS impacts.
40 For this purpose, the ANS included studies starting in 1985 at two stations adjacent to the
41 VEGP site. A station upstream of VEGP (Station 2A) was located at RM 151.2, and a

1 downstream station (Station 2B) was located approximately 1.0 miles below the VEGP cooling
 2 water discharge at RM 149.8. From 1985 through 1996, studies were performed approximately
 3 every 2 years (ANS 2003).

4
 5 Starting in 1997, the sampling design was simplified to an annual, early fall assessment of
 6 diatoms, attached algae and aquatic macrophytes, aquatic insects, non-insect
 7 macroinvertebrates, and fish at four stations. The four stations included a reference station
 8 upstream of SRS and VEGP (Station 1), and three downstream stations potentially exposed to
 9 the influence of SRS and VEGP (Stations 2B, 5 and 6). The sampling design began another
 10 transition in 2001, the last year in which fish were sampled at Station 2B (ANS 2003).

11 **Fish Community**

12
 13
 14 As discussed above, the fish community and other aquatic resources of the middle Savannah
 15 River basin have been characterized by numerous studies, the most comprehensive of which is
 16 documented in the series of reports by the ANS. The latest fish survey performed by the ANS,
 17 which included samples from stations upstream and downstream of VEGP, was in the fall of
 18 2001 (ANS 2003).

19
 20 The fish community of the middle Savannah River basin includes approximately 84 native
 21 species and 13 introduced species (Marcy et al. 2005). Comparison of this community to those
 22 of four other river drainages in the region indicates that the Savannah River is not unusual in its
 23 species composition or number of species (Marcy et al. 2005). The fishes of the middle
 24 Savannah River basin can be grouped into three main categories based on their life histories: 1)
 25 resident freshwater species (present in the area throughout all life stages), 2) diadromous
 26 species (migratory species present only during certain life stages), and 3) marine/estuarine
 27 species (sometimes found in the river upstream of the saltwater-freshwater interface) (Marcy et
 28 al. 2005). A listing of the native resident, diadromous, and marine fish species that occur in the
 29 middle Savannah River basin is provided in Table 2-6.

30
 31 **Table 2-6.** Native Resident, Diadromous, and Marine Fish Species of the
 32 Middle Savannah River Basin
 33

Family	Common Name	Scientific Name
Resident Species		
Lepisosteidae (gars)	longnose gar	<i>Lepisosteus osseus</i>
	Florida gar	<i>Lepisosteus platyrhincus</i>
Amiidae (bowfin)	bowfin	<i>Amia calva</i>

Table 2-6. (cont'd)

Family	Common Name	Scientific Name
Clupeidae (herrings & shads)	gizzard shad	<i>Dorosoma cepedianum</i>
Cyprinidae (minnows)	bannerfin shiner	<i>Cyprinella leedsii</i>
	whitefin shiner	<i>Cyprinella nivea</i>
	eastern silvery minnow	<i>Hybognathus regius</i>
	rosyface chub	<i>Hybopsis rubrifrons</i>
	bluehead chub	<i>Nocomis leptocephalus</i>
	golden shiner	<i>Notemigonus crysoleucas</i>
	ironcolor shiner	<i>Notropis chalybaeus</i>
	dusky shiner	<i>Notropis cummingsae</i>
	spottail shiner	<i>Notropis hudsonius</i>
	yellowfin shiner	<i>Notropis lutipinnis</i>
	taillight shiner	<i>Notropis maculatus</i>
	coastal shiner	<i>Notropis petersoni</i>
	pugnose shiner	<i>Opsopoeodus emiliae</i>
	lowland shiner	<i>Pteronotropis stonei</i>
creek chub	<i>Semotilus atromaculatus</i>	
Catostomidae (suckers)	quillback	<i>Carpiodes cyprinus</i>
	highfin carsucker	<i>Carpiodes velifer</i>
	creek chubsucker	<i>Erimyzon oblongus</i>
	lake chubsucker	<i>Erimyzon sucetta</i>
	northern hogsucker	<i>Hypentelium nigricans</i>
	spotted sucker	<i>Minytrema melanops</i>
	notchlip redhorse	<i>Moxostoma collapsum</i>
	robust redhorse	<i>Moxostoma robustum</i>
	brassy jumprock	<i>Scartomyzon</i> sp.
Ictaluridae (bullhead catfishes)	snail bullhead	<i>Ameiurus brunneus</i>
	white catfish	<i>Ameiurus catus</i>
	yellow bullhead	<i>Ameiurus natalis</i>
	brown bullhead	<i>Ameiurus nebulosus</i>
	flat bullhead	<i>Ameiurus platycephalus</i>
	tadpole madtom	<i>Noturus gyrinus</i>
	margined madtom	<i>Noturus insignis</i>
	speckled madtom	<i>Natures leptacanthus</i>
Esocidae (pikes & pickerels)	redfin pickerel	<i>Esox americanus</i>
	chain pickerel	<i>Esox niger</i>
Umbridae (mudminnows)	eastern mudminnow	<i>Umbra pygmaea</i>
Aphredoderidae (pirate perch)	pirate perch	<i>Aphredoderus sayanus</i>
Amblyopsidae (cave fishes)	swampfish	<i>Chologaster cornuta</i>

Table 2-6. (cont'd)

Family	Common Name	Scientific Name
Fundulidae (top minnows)	golden topminnow	<i>Fundulus chrysotus</i>
	lined topminnow	<i>Fundulus lineolatus</i>
Poeciliidae (livebearers)	eastern mosquitofish	<i>Gambusia holbrooki</i>
Atherinopsidae (New World silversides)	brook silverside	<i>Labidesthes sicculus</i>
Centrarchidae (sunfishes)	mud sunfish	<i>Acantharchus pomotis</i>
	flier	<i>Centrarchus macropterus</i>
	blackbanded sunfish	<i>Enneacanthus chaetodon</i>
	bluespotted sunfish	<i>Enneacanthus gloriosus</i>
	banded sunfish	<i>Enneacanthus obesus</i>
	redbreast sunfish	<i>Lepomis auritus</i>
	pumpkinseed	<i>Lepomis gibbosus</i>
	warmouth	<i>Lepomis gulosus</i>
	bluegill	<i>Lepomis macrochirus</i>
	dollar sunfish	<i>Lepomis marginatus</i>
	redeer sunfish	<i>Lepomis microlophus</i>
	spotted sunfish	<i>Lepomis punctatus</i>
	redeye bass	<i>Micropterus coosae</i>
	largemouth bass	<i>Micropterus salmoides</i>
	black crappie	<i>Pomoxis nigromaculatus</i>
Elassomatidae (pygmy sunfishes)	Everglades pygmy sunfish	<i>Elassoma evergladei</i>
	bluebarred pygmy sunfish	<i>Elassoma okatie</i>
	banded pigmy sunfish	<i>Elassoma zonatum</i>
Percidae (darters & perches)	Savannah darter	<i>Etheostoma fricksium</i>
	swamp darter	<i>Etheostoma fusiforme</i>
	Christmas darter	<i>Etheostoma hopkinsi</i>
	turquoise darter	<i>Etheostoma inscriptum</i>
	tessellated darter	<i>Etheostoma olmstedii</i>
	sawcheek darter	<i>Etheostoma serrifer</i>
	blackbanded darter	<i>Percina nigrofasciata</i>
Diadromous Species		
Acipenseridae (sturgeons)	shortnose sturgeon	<i>Acipenser brevirostrum</i>
	Atlantic sturgeon	<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus</i>
Anguillidae (freshwater eels)	American eel	<i>Anguilla rostrata</i>
Clupeidae (herrings & shads)	blueback herring	<i>Alosa aestivalis</i>
	hickory shad	<i>Alosa mediocris</i>
	American shad	<i>Alosa sapidissima</i>

Table 2-6. (cont'd)

Family	Common Name	Scientific Name
Moronidae (temperate basses)	striped bass	<i>Morone saxatilis</i>
Marine Species		
Megalopidae (tarpon)	tarpon	<i>Megalops atlanticus</i>
Belonidae (needle fish)	Atlantic needlefish	<i>Strongylura marina</i>
Mugilidae (mulletts)	mountain mullet	<i>Agonostomus monticola</i>
	striped mullet	<i>Mugil cephalus</i>
Achiridae (American soles)	hogchoker	<i>Trinectes maculatus</i>

Adapted from Marcy et al. 2005

Freshwater Resident Fishes

The results of the 2000 ANS study illustrate the freshwater resident fish species that are most abundant in the fish community of the middle Savannah River. A total of 4599 individuals of 50 species of fish were collected. The species most frequently collected were the spottail shiner (*Notropis hudsonius*; 36.5 percent of the total number of fish caught), followed by the bannerfin shiner (*Cyprinella leedsi*; 11.7 percent) and bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*; 10.8 percent). The brook silverside (*Labidesthes sicculus*, 6.7 percent) and whitefin shiner (*Cyprinella nivea*; 6.5 percent) also were relatively common. These five species together made up approximately 72 percent of the total catch. Other commonly collected species were the redbreast sunfish (*Lepomis auritus*), rosyface chub (*Hybopsis rubrifrons*), coastal shiner (*Notropis petersoni*), largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*), and spotted sucker (*Minytrema melanops*). No statistically significant differences were found between stations for species richness, species diversity, or density. These results were similar to the 1999 study results and were concluded to provide no evidence of impacts on the fish community of the river (ANS 2001).

In the 2001 ANS study, a total of 3951 specimens of 48 species of fish were collected, and the species composition was similar to the 2000 results. The most common species was the spottail shiner (24.4 percent of the total number of fish), followed by the taillight shiner (*Notropis maculatus*, 19.5 percent). The bluegill (5.1 percent), bannerfin shiner (5.0 percent), and whitefin shiner (4.1 percent) also were relatively common. These five species together made up approximately 58 percent of the total catch (ANS 2003). Results from the 2001 ANS study indicated that species richness at the sampling location downstream of the VEGP cooling water discharge was significantly higher than at the upstream location. However, neither species diversity nor the densities of common species differed significantly between stations and, in general, there was greater temporal than spatial variation in fish assemblages between the study sites. These results were similar to the 2000 study results and were concluded to provide no evidence of impacts on the fish community of the river (ANS 2003).

1 The Savannah River and the mouths of creeks flowing into the river also were sampled
2 intensively as part of a study of the SRS during the period 1983 to 1985. Electrofishing
3 collections from this period were dominated by Centrarchids, which made up approximately 60
4 percent of all fish collected. Redbreast sunfish, bluegill, and largemouth bass appeared most
5 frequently in the collections, representing 17, 14, and 9 percent, respectively, of fish collected.
6 They were followed in frequency by spotted sucker (8 percent), spotted sunfish (*Lepomis*
7 *punctatus*; 8 percent), chain pickerel (*Esox niger*; 5 percent), and bowfin (*Amia calva*; 5
8 percent). In the same study, hoop net collections were numerically dominated by flat bullhead
9 (*Ameiurus platycephalus*; 29 percent), channel catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*; 21 percent),
10 redbreast sunfish (10 percent), and white catfish (*Ameiurus catus*; 9 percent). These species
11 are habitat generalists that are all commonly found in large southeastern Coastal Plain river
12 systems in habitats that include sloughs, backwaters, oxbow lakes, small tributary streams, and
13 small impoundments on these tributaries (SNC 2007a).

14
15 The 1983-1984 study also included separate surveys of smaller fish species that serve as prey
16 for larger predators, including predators of recreational importance such as largemouth bass,
17 black crappie (*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*), striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*), white bass (*Morone*
18 *chrysops*), and hybrid bass (*Morone saxatilis* X *Morone chrysops*). The small fish collected in
19 the surveys predominantly were shiners (genus *Notropis*), which made up 89 percent of all fish
20 collected, and other species collected regularly were brook silversides, lined topminnow
21 (*Fundulus lineolatus*), golden shiner (*Notemigonus crysoleucas*), and mosquitofish (*Gambusia*
22 spp.), all of which are common residents of swamps, bayous, and streams in the southeastern
23 U.S. The 1983-1984 study did not distinguish between the various species of *Notropis*
24 collected; however, a follow-up survey of small, minnow-like fish in the Savannah River and its
25 tributaries found that more than two-thirds of those collected consisted of three Notropid
26 species: the coastal shiner (40 percent), dusky shiner (*Notropis cummingsae*; 17 percent), and
27 spottail shiner (10 percent) (SNC 2007a).

28
29 Thus, the resident freshwater fishes of the middle Savannah River include a variety of mainly
30 minnows (family Cyprinidae), sunfish (family Centrarchidae), suckers (family Catostomidae),
31 catfish (family Ictaluridae), and darters (family Percidae).

32 Diadromous Fishes

33
34
35 Diadromous fishes of the middle Savannah River include sturgeons (family Acipenseridae),
36 shad and herrings (family Clupeidae), temperate basses of the genus *Morone*, and one eel
37 (family Anguillidae) (SNC 2007a). Species within these groups are mainly anadromous
38 (spawning and beginning life in freshwater but mostly living and growing to sexual maturity in
39 estuaries or the ocean) except the eel, which is catadromous (growing to sexual maturity in
40 freshwater but migrating to the ocean to spawn) (Marcy et al. 2005). Several of these species
41 are or historically have been important commercially. There is no essential fish habitat (EFH)

1 designated by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in the reach of the Savannah
2 River near the site. EFH is defined as those waters and substrate necessary for spawning,
3 breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity of marine, estuarine, or anadromous animals. NMFS
4 designates EFH in accordance with the provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery
5 Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act, 16 USC 1801 et seq.). Although
6 this reach of the Savannah River has no designated EFH, the diadromous fishes that occur in
7 the middle Savannah River and have designated EFH in the south Atlantic region off the coast
8 of the Carolinas, Georgia, or Florida are discussed below.

9 10 *Sturgeons*

11
12 The Savannah River is among the spawning rivers used by the two species of anadromous
13 sturgeon that occur on the east coast of the United States, the shortnose sturgeon (*Acipenser*
14 *brevirostrum*) and Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus*). The shortnose sturgeon is an
15 endangered species and is discussed in Section 2.2.5.4. The Atlantic sturgeon is considered a
16 species of concern by National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration (NOAA). A species of
17 concern is not protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (16 USC 1531), but
18 concerns about its status indicate that it may warrant listing in the future (NMFS 1998).

19
20 The Atlantic sturgeon inhabits the Atlantic coast from New Brunswick, Canada to north Florida
21 and is the largest fish to inhabit freshwaters on the east coast of the United States. It is an
22 anadromous species that ascends coastal rivers to spawn in the early spring, typically spawning
23 in flowing water between the salt front and the fall line of large rivers (NMFS 2007). Atlantic
24 sturgeons enter the Savannah River in February to March and remain there through October,
25 spawning when the current is strong in the spring and fall, with all adults leaving the river by the
26 end of October (Meyer et al. 2003). Historically, it is believed that Atlantic sturgeon occurred
27 throughout the Savannah River, including upstream shoal habitats. Although presently used
28 spawning sites in the Savannah River have not been identified, locations used may be similar to
29 those used by the shortnose sturgeon, which also spawns over hard substrates at river bends
30 (Meyer et al. 2003). Eggs are demersal and adhesive and usually attach to the substrate or
31 submerged vegetation. Young-of-the-year move downstream to nursery areas in the lower
32 portions of rivers and the associated estuaries and young may spend several years in fresh and
33 brackish water before migrating to sea. The Atlantic sturgeon feeds on a variety of benthic
34 macroinvertebrates as a juvenile in estuaries and as an adult in the Atlantic Ocean (SAFMC
35 1998).

36
37 Although historically the Atlantic sturgeon supported important subsistence and commercial
38 fisheries, stocks are depressed range-wide, and in 1990 a Fishery Management Plan (FMP)
39 instituted by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) required Atlantic coastal
40 states to enact a closure or moratorium on harvest in order to revive population numbers

1 (ASMFC 1990). This coast-wide moratorium was implemented in 1998, and NMFS followed this
2 with a similar moratorium for Federal waters (NMFS 2007).

3 4 *Shad and River Herrings*

5
6 Three clupeids migrate from the ocean up the Savannah River to spawn in its middle reaches:
7 the American shad (*Alosa sapidissima*), hickory shad (*Alosa mediocris*), and blueback herring
8 (*Alosa aestivalis*). Two other clupeids, the gizzard shad (*Dorosoma cepedianum*) and threadfin
9 shad (*Dorosoma petenense*), also spawn in the middle Savannah River, but remain in fresh to
10 brackish water and do not migrate between the river and the ocean; thus, they are not strictly
11 anadromous. Gizzard shad are found in brackish water as adults while threadfin shad tend to
12 remain in freshwater (SNC 2007a, Marcy et al. 2005)

13
14 The American shad, the largest member of the herring family, has a long history of supporting
15 commercial and recreational fisheries along the east coast since the early 1800s, and it was the
16 most valuable food fish on the east coast prior to World War II. There have been reduced
17 commercial harvests (NRC 2007), and the sport fishery for this species has recently become
18 more important economically than the commercial fishery. As a result, the species has become
19 the focus of major restoration programs (SAFMC 1998). American shad forage mostly offshore
20 for a variety of invertebrates but depend on riverine systems for spawning, often returning to
21 their natal streams (Weiss-Glanz et al. 1986). American shad spawn in the Savannah River
22 between January and April (Meyer et al. 2003), when water temperatures are approximately 57
23 to 70°F (14 to 21°C; SAFMC 1998). The eggs are released into the water column and are
24 demersal but not adhesive, so they tend to sink and are slowly carried downstream. Larvae drift
25 downstream to the estuary probably between February and June (Weiss-Glanz et al. 1986, Stier
26 and Crance 1985). Juveniles remain in fresh to brackish waters of lower rivers and their
27 estuaries until temperatures begin to drop in late fall, when they migrate to sea. Most adults
28 from southeastern rivers die after spawning (Marcy et al. 2005). A considerable number of
29 American shad likely pass the VEGP during their annual spawning run. A study in 2001 and
30 2002 developed estimates of the American shad population size in the middle Savannah River
31 by examining their movement through the New Savannah River Bluff Lock and Dam, located
32 below Augusta, Georgia, and approximately 36 miles upstream of VEGP at RM 187. The
33 estimated population of American shad that reached this point in the river was 158,000 in 2001
34 and 217,000 in 2002 (Bailey et al. 2004).

35
36 The hickory shad is a medium-sized clupeid that is most abundant in the mid-Atlantic region of
37 the east coast. Historically, the hickory shad had no importance in commercial fisheries, but the
38 species has become popular with recreational fishermen in some southeastern rivers. Its
39 biology and life history are not as well known as other shads and herrings. The hickory shad is
40 usually the first of the anadromous clupeids to ascend spawning rivers in late winter or early
41 spring, when water temperatures are 54 to 55°F (12 to 13°C). Spawning can occur from March

1 to early May in southeastern rivers. The most frequently used spawning habitat is well up
2 coastal rivers in creeks, ponds, lakes, and backwaters (Marcy et al. 2005, SAFMC 1998).
3 Juveniles leave the freshwater and brackish portions of natal rivers in early summer and migrate
4 to nursery areas in the associated estuaries. Their distribution and migration once they enter
5 the ocean is essentially unknown. Adults feed primarily on fish and also consume invertebrates,
6 but they do not feed during the spawning migration (SAFMC 1998).

7
8 The blueback herring is smaller than the American and hickory shads and is an important forage
9 fish for other fish species. It is a schooling species that spawns in tributary rivers of estuaries
10 along the east coast from Nova Scotia to Florida. Historically, it has been the basis of an
11 important commercial fishery (SAFMC 1998). Adults and larger juveniles are marine. Adults
12 enter freshwater portions of rivers to spawn in fresh or slightly brackish water with a bottom of
13 sand, gravel, or boulders. They probably return to their natal stream to spawn. The spring
14 spawning period begins in the Carolinas in March to early May, but adults may begin migrating
15 into fresh water in late winter. After spawning, adult fish return to the sea almost immediately.
16 Juveniles may remain in the lower river reaches or may move upstream in summer before
17 migrating downstream in late fall. Adults feed mainly on zooplankton and sometimes fish, but
18 forage little during the spawning run while in freshwater (Marcy et al. 2005).

19 20 *Striped bass*

21
22 The striped bass is a wide-ranging species of substantial recreational and commercial
23 importance. All striped bass stocks in rivers of the southeastern United States are anadromous,
24 and the species spawns in estuarine and riverine habitats. In the Savannah River, the degree
25 of anadromy is greatly reduced. Savannah River striped bass tend to spawn in the lower,
26 tidally-influenced areas of the river. Spawning ranged historically from the estuary to the shoals
27 near Augusta, Georgia, but this degree of upstream migration is now prevented by the New
28 Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam (Meyer et al. 2003, SAFMC 1998). Currently, the Savannah
29 River estuary appears to be the most productive area for striped bass reproduction and rearing
30 (Meyer et al. 2003). Striped bass migrate upriver for spring spawning mainly in March, April,
31 and May. Spawning occurs in strong currents of large rivers when the temperature is above
32 57.9°F (14.4°C) and in areas above the salt wedge of the estuary. The eggs are released into
33 the water column and drift downstream with the current from March to April. The presence of
34 sufficient current to keep the eggs in the water column and to facilitate downstream transport of
35 eggs and larvae influences recruitment success (Marcy et al. 2005, Meyer et al. 2003).
36 Juveniles move downstream to nursery areas that may include tidally-influenced fresh waters
37 and estuaries. The diet of the striped bass initially is planktonic invertebrates and changes
38 gradually with growth to larger invertebrates and fish (SAFMC 1998).

39
40 The population of striped bass drastically declined in the 1980s throughout its range on the
41 Atlantic coast. The decline of the fishery in the Savannah River was attributed largely to the

1 Savannah River harbor modifications and operation of a tide gate installed in the lower estuary
2 in 1977 that altered the habitat of the estuary spawning grounds (GDNR 2007a; Reinert et al.
3 2005). The alterations changed the flow patterns of the river and increased the salinity levels in
4 parts of the river that were vital for striped bass. Because of the declines in striped bass
5 numbers in the river, a moratorium was placed on the harvest of striped bass in the Savannah
6 River by the State of Georgia in 1988 and the State of South Carolina in 1991. The moratorium
7 affected the free-flowing part of the river up to the New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam below
8 Augusta at approximately RM 194. Restoration activities that began in the 1990s included
9 efforts to restore salinity and flow patterns, including discontinuation of tide gate operation and
10 closure of the diversion canal. Stock enhancement programs were also modified in the early
11 1990s to increase fish stocking. The dramatic increase in the catch-per-unit effort of adult
12 striped bass since 1990 appears to be primarily the result of stocking, as 70 percent or more of
13 the catch annually has consisted of stocked fish (Reinert et al. 2005 in NRC 2007). The number
14 of naturally reproducing striped bass remains low. However, in October 2005, the successful
15 restoration efforts led to the end of the harvest moratorium on Savannah River striped bass that
16 was in place since 1991 (Creel 2005).

17 *American eel*

18
19
20 The American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*) is the only catadromous fish that occurs in the South
21 Atlantic region, living in freshwater as an adult but returning to the Atlantic Ocean where it was
22 spawned to complete its life cycle (SAFMC 1998). It occurs in fresh, brackish and Atlantic coast
23 waters from Greenland to northeastern South America. The wide geographic range over which
24 American eels exist is directly attributable to their hardiness, tolerance of pollution, ease of
25 transplantation, and ability to traverse damp ground and wet vertical surfaces such as dams
26 (Facey and Van Den Avyle 1987). The American eel supports valuable commercial and limited
27 recreational fisheries throughout its range, and it is an important prey species for larger
28 freshwater and marine fishes (SAFMC 1998). During the fall and winter, sexually mature adults
29 migrate hundreds of miles to the Sargasso Sea to spawn once and then die. Eels have a
30 diverse diet that varies with their life history and consists mainly of invertebrates as well as fish
31 (Meyer et al. 2003).

32
33 The life cycle of the American eel is complex and includes oceanic, estuarine, and riverine
34 phases. After hatching, larvae drift with ocean currents for a year before developing into glass
35 eels and moving into freshwater. As they approach coastal areas, glass eels experience a
36 change in pigmentation to dark brown or black. This stage is called an elver. During late winter
37 or spring (or earlier in southern rivers), elvers migrate away from estuarine areas they occupy
38 near the salt-fresh water interface and begin ascending coastal rivers. The end of this migration
39 marks the point when elvers begin to metamorphose into the next stage, yellow eels. Yellow
40 eels are formed in an estuary or river and remain there for up to 14 years before migrating back

1 to the Atlantic Ocean to spawn. During the fall season prior to this migration, yellow eels
2 undergo metamorphosis into the final stage, silver eels (SAFMC 1998).

3
4 In the middle Savannah River basin, the most common life stage of the American eel are
5 female, fully pigmented juveniles (yellow eels) (Marcy et al. 2005). High densities of yellow eels
6 were observed in the middle region of the Savannah River, specifically in shallow, non-
7 navigable areas characterized by rocky pool-riffle habitats with submerged aquatic vegetation
8 (McCord 2004). Specifically in the areas surrounding VEGP, eels are found in the mainstem of
9 the Savannah River, the Savannah River swamp, tributary systems, and in impoundments
10 associated with these tributaries (Marcy et al. 2005). Limited information exists on current
11 population trends of the American eel in South Carolina and Georgia, but between 1983 and
12 1995, commercial landings of eels in Georgia declined more than 80 percent (ASMFC 2000).
13 American eels have historically exhibited high abundance in East Coast streams, composing
14 approximately 25 percent of the total fish biomass (ASMFC 2000). However, in response to
15 steady population declines in the 1980s and 1990s, the ASMFC issued an "Interstate Fishery
16 Management Plan for American Eel" in April 2000 (ASMFC 2000) that proposed several
17 protective measures to help ensure the species' recovery and continued viability. Declining
18 populations are thought to be the result of a variety of factors, including: overfishing of stock;
19 loss of spawning habitat or eggs due to seaweed harvesting in the Sargasso Sea; loss of adult
20 habitat from dams, dredging, and wetland destruction; and impingement and entrainment at
21 water intakes (ASMFC 2000, McCord 2004, Haro et al. 2000). However, at the SRS during a
22 10-month period in 1977, biweekly samples revealed only one eel impinged on water intake
23 screens (McFarlane et al. 1978).

24
25 In 2004, an apparent ongoing decline in the commercial eel harvest prompted a request to FWS
26 and NMFS by ASMFC to review the status of the American eel. This request was granted in
27 September 2004 and in December the two Services announced their intention to consider
28 protecting the American eel under the ESA (FWS 2008a). The FWS initiated a status review in
29 2005 and in 2007 determined that listing the American eel as a threatened or endangered
30 species was not warranted (FWS 2007a).

31 Marine/Estuarine Fishes

32
33
34 Marine/estuarine fishes have been collected sporadically in the vicinity of VEGP. The most
35 frequently collected species has been the hogchoker (*Trinectes maculatus*); the striped mullet
36 (*Mugil cephalus*) and Atlantic needlefish (*Strongylura marina*) also have been collected. The
37 numbers of these marine fish that have been collected are small relative to the freshwater
38 resident and diadromous species (ANS 2003, ANS 2001, Marcy et al. 2005). Thus, they are
39 considered a minor component of the fish community of the Savannah River in the vicinity of the
40 site and are of little commercial or recreational importance (SNC 2007a).

1 Introduced Fishes

2
3 Introduced, or non-native, fish species occurring in the middle Savannah River basin are listed
4 in Table 2-7. Introduced species that clearly have become established in the river include the
5 threadfin shad, common carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), channel catfish, and yellow perch (*Perca*
6 *flavescens*). The table also lists nine other introduced species that are not established or that
7 are rare. None of the introduced fish species are considered nuisance species (Marcy et al.
8 2005).

9
10 **Table 2-7.** Introduced Fish Species in the Middle Savannah River Basin
11 and Their Establishment Status
12

Family	Common Name	Scientific Name
Clearly established		
Clupeidae (herrings & shads)	threadfin shad	<i>Dorosoma petenense</i>
Cyprinidae (carps & minnows)	common carp	<i>Cyprinus carpio</i>
Ictaluridae (bullhead catfishes)	channel catfish	<i>Ictalurus punctatus</i>
Percidae (darters and perches)	yellow perch	<i>Perca flavescens</i>
Rare and possibly not established		
Cyprinidae (carps & minnows)	goldfish	<i>Carassius auratus</i>
Moronidae (temperate basses)	white perch	<i>Morone americana</i>
	white bass	<i>Morone chrysops</i>
Centrarchidae (sunfishes)	green sunfish	<i>Lepomis cyanellus</i>
	white crappie	<i>Pomoxis annularis</i>
Clearly not established		
Cyprinidae (carps & minnows)	grass carp	<i>Ctenopharyngodon idella</i>
Salmonidae (trouts and salmon)	rainbow trout	<i>Oncorhynchus mykiss</i>
Too little information to determine status		
Ictaluridae (bullhead catfishes)	blue catfish	<i>Ictalurus furcatus</i>
	flathead catfish	<i>Pylodictis olivaris</i>
Adapted from Marcy et al. 2005		

13
14 Commercially or Recreationally Important Fishes

15
16 Among the above categories of native fishes inhabiting the Savannah River are several species
17 that currently are or historically have been harvested commercially or recreationally. Fishes
18 allowed to be caught commercially in the middle Savannah River include the American shad,
19 hickory shad, channel catfish, white catfish (Marcy et al. 2005), and American eel (GDNR

1 2007b). A fishery also existed previously for the Atlantic sturgeon; however, all Atlantic coastal
2 states have enacted a closure or moratorium on the harvest of Atlantic sturgeon. Although no
3 herring are taken in Georgia because of netting restrictions, a commercial blueback herring
4 fishery formerly existed in South Carolina portions of the Savannah River (Marcy et al. 2005).
5 Sport fishermen are the principal consumers of fish from the middle Savannah River. The
6 fishes principally harvested include largemouth bass, black crappie, sunfishes (*Lepomis* spp.),
7 American shad, chain pickerel, larger catfishes such as white and channel catfish, and striped
8 bass and its hybrids. The striped bass is classified as a game fish in South Carolina and
9 Georgia, and no commercial striped bass fishery is allowed in the Savannah River (Marcy et al.
10 2005).

11
12 Georgia has issued advisories for the Savannah River above and below the New Savannah
13 Bluff Lock and Dam (located south of Augusta) that recommend a limit of one meal per week of
14 largemouth bass and spotted sucker due to risk from mercury. In addition, Georgia has issued
15 a special advisory for the Savannah River from the New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam
16 downstream to the estuary, recommending a limit of one meal per month of striped bass 27
17 inches and greater in length due to risk from mercury, noting that small children and women
18 who are pregnant or nursing may want to further limit their consumption of striped bass from this
19 area (GDNR 2007c).

20
21 South Carolina has issued advisories for the Savannah River from Stevens Creek in Edgefield
22 County north of Augusta to Jasper County in the Coastal Plain. The advisories are due to
23 mercury risk, and South Carolina also notes that some fish in the Savannah River contain the
24 radionuclides cesium-137 and strontium-90. The species affected and consumption
25 recommendations are the following: bowfin – do not eat, largemouth bass – one meal per
26 month, and chain pickerel and spotted sucker – one meal per week (SCDHEC 2007).

27 28 ***Invertebrate Community***

29
30 As discussed above, the invertebrate community and other aquatic resources of the middle
31 Savannah River basin have been characterized by numerous studies, the most comprehensive
32 of which is documented in the series of reports by the ANS. The latest invertebrate surveys with
33 results reported by the ANS, which included samples from stations upstream and downstream
34 of VEGP, were performed in the fall of 2001 (ANS 2003).

35 36 *Aquatic Insects*

37
38 Aquatic insect abundance and diversity are particularly useful bioindicators of water quality.
39 Aquatic insects are abundant, have limited mobility and relatively long life spans, and their
40 responses to environmental changes can be easily measured and analyzed (ANS 2003). The
41 ANS long-term monitoring survey on the Savannah River, upstream and downstream of VEGP,

1 shows a trend of increasing abundance of aquatic insects beginning in the early 1980s (Wike et
2 al. 2006) as well as increased taxa richness (SNC 2007a). Biodiversity (number of species)
3 was greater downstream of SRS (and VEGP) than upstream (Wike et al. 2006), and the number
4 of pollutant-tolerant species was greater upstream, suggesting higher water quality downstream
5 of SRS and VEGP than in the vicinity of the upstream cities of Augusta and North Augusta
6 (SNC 2007a).

7
8 ANS investigations in 2001 of insect species composition provided results similar to previous
9 years, with the dipterans (47 taxa), beetles (28 taxa), dragonflies and damselflies (15 taxa),
10 mayflies (17 taxa), and caddisflies (14 taxa) being the most species-rich groups (ANS 2003).
11 Overall, the natural spatial variation found in all rivers and streams was considered to explain
12 the detected differences among sites that were found in the 2001 aquatic insect study (ANS
13 2003). Statistical analyses of the quantitative samples revealed that the condition of aquatic
14 insect assemblages at stations potentially exposed to the influences of SRS and VEGP tended
15 to be at least as good as conditions at the reference station situated upstream of the SRS and
16 VEGP (ANS 2003). Studies conducted in 1999 and 2000 reported similar conclusions. The
17 2001 ANS biomonitoring study concluded that the biological communities in the Savannah River
18 were not being impacted, either by the SRS or VEGP (ANS 2003).

19 20 Non-Insect Macroinvertebrates

21
22 The Savannah River is characterized by the presence of four dominant non-insect
23 macroinvertebrate groups; bivalves, snails, crustaceans, and leeches (ANS 2003). The 2001
24 ANS study (ANS 2003) reported fewer species in the four dominant non-insect
25 macroinvertebrate groups, as well as fewer species overall, were collected compared to studies
26 conducted in the mid to late 1990s. This trend first became evident in 1999 and may be
27 attributable to drought conditions in the basin and subsequent lower flows in the Savannah
28 River (ANS 2003). Other possible contributing factors are the reduced number of sampling
29 stations after 1998 and the use of quadrat sampling for mussel collection in 2000 and 2001
30 (ANS 2003).

31
32 A good deal of information is provided in the 2001 ANS study on the abundance or diversity of
33 Annelids (in particular, leeches) in the Savannah River. In 2001, 5 species of leeches were
34 collected (from stations 1 and 6 only); not counting at least one additional unidentified species
35 that was collected from station 5. This total of 6 leech species matches the most taxa ever
36 collected during a study, with the exception of the 1972 study in which 10 leech taxa were
37 observed, due to areas of submerged aquatic vegetation (ANS 2003).

38
39 Three species of crustaceans were found in the Savannah River in 2001: a crayfish
40 (*Procambarus enoplosternum*), a riverine grass shrimp (*Palaemonetes paludosus*), and an
41 amphipod (*Hyalella azteca*; ANS 2003). These three species of crustaceans, which prefer a

1 variety of habitats such as root mats, logs, alligator weed, and leaf litter, were all present at
2 stations 1 (upstream reference) and 6 (farthest downstream) (ANS 2003). Four crustacean taxa
3 were collected in 2000; the three collected in 2001 plus an unknown amphipod species of the
4 genus *Gammarus*. The mean number of crustacean taxa calculated from values of crustaceans
5 collected at four Savannah River stations was 5.1, and the range in the number of crustacean
6 taxa from previous studies was 4 to 7 (ANS 2003).

7 8 *Molluscs* 9

10 Four locations on the Savannah River were sampled for molluscs during the most recent ANS
11 study, one upstream from VEGP, one immediately downstream of VEGP, and two farther
12 downstream. An average 7.6 snail species were collected in each study that was conducted
13 from 1972 to 2000. Nine species were collected (from stations 1 and 6 only) in 2001, second
14 only to the 10 species collected in 1997 and the 11 collected in 1972. The high number of snail
15 taxa observed in 1972 coincided with a eutrophic period with increased numbers of submerged
16 vascular plants (ANS 2003). Bivalves found near VEGP include mussels, fingernail clams,
17 peaclams, and the Asian clam (*Corbicula fluminea*; ANS 2001).

18
19 Given that mussels are considered the most endangered invertebrate group in North America
20 (Williams et al. 1993), the survey in August 2001 was entirely devoted to mussel fauna.
21 Quadrat sampling was used in place of the comprehensive, qualitative hand collections of
22 earlier studies and, as a result, fewer mussels were collected in 2000 and 2001 compared to
23 previous studies (ANS 2003). Fewer taxa were collected in 2001 compared to earlier studies
24 (1993 to 1999), and this decline in diversity may be related to drought conditions in the basin
25 (since June 1998) and the resultant low-flow condition of the Savannah River (ANS 2003).
26 Early studies (1951 to 1968) found the Carolina slabshell (*Elliptio congarea*), eastern elliptio
27 (*Elliptio complanata*), Atlantic spike (*Elliptio producta*), variable spike (*Elliptio icterina*), yellow
28 lamp mussel (*Lampsilis cariosa*), and rayed pink fatmucket (*Lampsilis splendida*) to be the most
29 abundant species (ANS 2001). Hand collections during the August to October period from 1972
30 to 2000 revealed an average of 11 species of mussels were collected per survey (ANS 2003).
31 Of the 16 different mussel species that were collected between 1951 and 2000, none was a
32 Federally or State listed species.

33
34 According to the 2000 ANS survey (ANS 2001), the Savannah River mussel community
35 experienced several changes from 1951 to 2000 including differing taxa dominance from year to
36 year, an increasing presence of "hardier forms," and a scarcity of juvenile mussels. It has been
37 hypothesized that construction-related changes in the flow of the Savannah River and increased
38 competition from the non-native Asian clam contributed to these changes (ANS 2001).

39
40 There is no question that the introduction of the Asian clam has adversely affected the mussel
41 community. Surveys by the ANS show the presence of this non-native clam at all sample

1 stations by 1976. Widely abundant and able to utilize a variety of substrates in the Savannah
2 River, the Asian clam comprised 96 to 98 percent of the bivalves collected (ANS 2001). Of the
3 1877 molluscs collected in 2001, 85 percent were Asian clams. These data indicate that the
4 numerical dominance of the Asian clam in macrobenthic habitats of the Savannah River has
5 been affecting the mussel fauna of the river by competing for space and food resources (ANS
6 2001).

7 8 **Plant Community** 9

10 As discussed above, the aquatic plant community and other aquatic resources of the middle
11 Savannah River basin have been characterized by numerous studies, the most comprehensive
12 of which is documented in the series of reports by the ANS. The latest plant surveys with
13 results reported by the ANS, which included samples from stations upstream and downstream
14 of VEGP, were performed in 2003. Much of the aquatic flora of riverine systems is comprised of
15 algae and macrophytes, which make up the base of an aquatic ecosystem's food web and
16 provide shelter and habitat for aquatic fauna. Attached algae and aquatic macrophytes were
17 collected by hand from natural substrates as part of the ANS surveys through 2001 (ANS 2003).
18 The Savannah River, with reaches in the vicinity of SRS and VEGP, is a deep and relatively
19 swift river that does not provide substantial habitat for macrophyte beds of notable area or
20 biomass (Wike et al. 2006), and no significant beds of submerged aquatic vegetation were
21 observed in the ANS studies (ANS 2003).
22

23 In most aquatic systems, diatoms (algae with cell walls of silica) are the most common type of
24 attached algae (periphyton) and can be used as bioindicators of adverse impacts on water
25 quality. The ANS studies have included since 1951 investigations of diatom diversity, richness
26 and evenness in the river. The water quality upstream and downstream of VEGP is assessed
27 based on comparison of diatom assemblages (ANS 2003). In recent years, diatoms were
28 generally the most abundant algal group collected in the river. The dominant diatom species
29 generally were *Melosira varians*, which is tolerant of pollution, and *Gomphonema parvulum*,
30 which is common in the presence of organic pollution. Other commonly found diatoms included
31 *Nitzschia kuetzingiana*, *Cymbella minuta*, *Eunotia pectinalis v. undulata*, *Navicula*
32 *neoventricosa*, *Navicula pelliculosa*, *Achnanthes biporoma*, and *Navicula confervacea* (Wike et
33 al. 2006).
34

35 In general, diatom assemblages at all stations exhibited similar species composition and
36 pollution tolerance. Nutrient enrichment, likely from sources upstream of VEGP, was evident at
37 all stations, and diatom flora did not differ significantly among the downstream stations (ANS
38 2003). The 2003 diatom study found that the diatom assemblages upstream (Station 1) and
39 downstream of SRS and VEGP (Station 6) were similar, including the dominance of a few
40 species of *Gomphonema* and the low abundance of the majority of species. Ecological
41 tolerances of the diatom species found were similar for the dominant species at both stations.

1 Nearly all of the dominant diatom species found historically in the Savannah River in the vicinity
2 of SRS and VEGP have been characteristic of alkaline waters with moderately high nutrient
3 concentrations (ANS 2005).

4
5 The most common algae collected in the ANS studies other than diatoms include the green
6 algae *Oedogonium* sp., *Stigeoclonium lubricum*, which is associated with pollution, *Closterium*
7 *moniliferum*, *Spirogyra* sp. and *Mougeotia* sp.; the blue-green algae *Schizothrix calcicola*,
8 *Microcoleus vaginatus*, *Schizothrix arenaria*, *Porphyrosiphon splendidus*, *Schizothrix friesii*, and
9 *Microcoleus lyngbyaceus*, many of which are associated with pollution; the yellow-green algae
10 *Vaucheria* sp.; and the red algae *Audouinella violacea*, *Compsopogon coeruleus*, and
11 *Batrachospermum* sp. The number of recorded species other than diatoms ranged from 7 to 19
12 from 1985 through 1995. At all stations, the average numbers of species were greater during
13 the fall surveys than the spring surveys (Wike et al. 2006).

14
15 In general, the algal community of the middle Savannah River has remained fundamentally
16 similar through the ANS surveys since 1951. Algal growth in recent years has been light to
17 moderate at all stations. The dominant algae are species characteristic of moderate to high
18 nutrient levels and typical of southeastern coastal plain rivers. Algae at the upstream station
19 and stations downstream of SRS and VEGP showed evidence of organic pollution, apparently
20 from an upstream source. Study results have showed no evidence of an adverse impact on
21 algal community due to SRS or VEGP operations (Wike et al. 2006).

22 23 **2.2.5.2 Beaverdam Creek**

24
25 Beaverdam Creek is a 6-mi-long, blackwater creek that is located just south of the site
26 boundary. It drains much of area south and west of the VEGP facility and enters the Savannah
27 River approximately 2 miles downstream of the intake structure. Two studies evaluated the fish
28 community of Beaverdam Creek in 1977 and 1978 to assess the effects of the construction of
29 VEGP on resident fish populations and on anadromous fish that spawn in the creek. The study
30 of resident fish in the creek collected 2435 fish representing 39 species. Collections were
31 dominated by minnows, sunfish, and darters, principally the dusky shiner, bluegill, mosquitofish,
32 and blackbanded darter (*Percina nigrofasciata*). These four species made up 68 percent of all
33 fish collected during the study. The Savannah darter (*Etheostoma fricksium*) was also observed
34 in smaller numbers (31 individuals in a 2-year period) (Wiltz 1982a). The study of anadromous
35 fish collected 674 individual fish (including eggs and larvae) from 29 species in Beaverdam
36 Creek and concluded that the creek was a minor contributor to spawning of blueback herring
37 (*Alosa aestivalis*). Although the habitat was suitable for hickory shad (*Alosa mediocris*), only 17
38 individuals were found, and none were observed spawning (Wiltz 1982b). No further studies
39 have been conducted on Beaverdam Creek since the late 1970s.

2.2.5.3 Water Bodies in Transmission Line ROWs

The transmission lines within the six ROWs associated with the VEGP site cross numerous water bodies that provide a variety of aquatic habitats from the Piedmont to the Coastal Plain (see Section 2.1.7 and Figure 2-4). The SCE&G line crosses the Savannah River, which is discussed in detail above. The Goshen, Augusta Newsprint, and Wilson lines do not cross any notable water bodies. The two longest VEGP transmission lines, the Scherer line and the West McIntosh (Thalmann) line, cross several major rivers, a lake, and many smaller water bodies, and are further discussed below.

The Scherer transmission line is approximately 154 mile long, and its ROW is mainly 150 feet wide but up to 400 feet wide in some locations. The Scherer line runs west from VEGP and crosses Brier Creek and surrounding forested wetlands (USGS 2007e and Trails.com 2007) in Burke County and the Ogeechee River in Jefferson County. It then runs northwest and crosses the Oconee River in the area of Lake Sinclair on the border of Hancock and Putnam Counties. From there, it runs generally southwest and crosses the Ocmulgee River approximately 0.5 miles south of Zellner Island in Monroe County before terminating at Plant Scherer (USGS 2007e).

The West McIntosh (Thalmann) line is nearly 150 mile long, and its ROW is 150 feet wide. This line runs south-southeast from VEGP until it nears the Savannah River in Screven County. There it turns south and crosses Brier Creek upstream of its confluence with the Savannah River and continues southeast to the West McIntosh Substation in Effingham County. The Thalmann portion of the line runs southwest as it leaves the substation and generally continues in this direction until it terminates at the Thalmann Substation in Glynn County. As this line runs southwesterly along the Coastal Plain, it crosses multiple creeks and swamps and the Altamaha River near the convergence of McIntosh, Wayne, and Glynn Counties. The Altamaha River is the largest river of the Georgia coast (Georgia Rivers LMER 2007).

Marcy et al. (2005) compared the aquatic communities of the Savannah River system to the Ogeechee-Altamaha River system. The Ogeechee and the Altamaha, like the Savannah, drain the Piedmont and Coastal Plain of Georgia. A species similarity index of nearly 71 percent was calculated (Marcy et al. 2005), indicating a substantial degree of similarity between the aquatic communities of the Ogeechee and Altamaha River systems and the aquatic community of the Savannah River described above.

2.2.5.4 Protected Aquatic Species

Aquatic species that are Federally listed as endangered or threatened or State-listed and legally protected in Georgia or South Carolina and have been recorded as occurring on or in the vicinity of the VEGP site are identified in Table 2-8. This table includes Federally listed or Georgia

1 State listed species with recorded occurrences in Burke County within approximately 10 miles of
 2 the site (GDNR 2008) and Federally listed or South Carolina State-listed species occurring
 3 within approximately 10 miles of the site in Aiken or Barnwell Counties (SCDNR 2008). The
 4 Federally or State-listed species with recorded occurrences in the counties crossed by the
 5 existing transmission line ROWs beyond 10 miles of the site are identified in Table 2-9, based
 6 on the lists for each of the 18 counties (GDNR 2007d, SCDNR 2007). Omitted from the table
 7 are marine species (whales and sea turtles) that would not occur in the inland areas where the
 8 ROWs are located. Both tables show for each species the counties in which the species occurs
 9 and the listing status of the species in that state. There are no designated or proposed critical
 10 habitats for aquatic Federally listed species on or in the vicinity of the VEGP site or the
 11 transmission line ROWs (SNC 2007b).

12
 13 **Table 2-8.** Federally and State Listed Aquatic Species with Recorded Occurrences
 14 in the Vicinity of the VEGP Site ^(a)
 15

Scientific Name	Common Name	Federal Status ^(b)	State Status ^(c)	County of Occurrence
Fish				
<i>Acipenser brevirostrum</i>	shortnose sturgeon	FE	SE	Burke
<i>Moxostoma robustum</i>	robust redhorse		SE	Burke ^(d)
Invertebrates				
<i>Anodonta couperiana</i>	barrel floater		SC	Barnwell (SC)
<i>Elliptio congaraea</i>	Carolina slabshell		SC	Barnwell (SC)
<i>Fusconaia masoni</i>	Atlantic pigtoe		SE	Burke
<i>Lampsilis cariosa</i>	yellow lampmussel		SC	Barnwell (SC)
<i>Lampsilis splendida</i>	rayed pink fatmucket		SC	Barnwell (SC)
<i>Pyganodon cataracta</i>	eastern floater		SC	Barnwell (SC)
<i>Toxolasma pullus</i>	Savannah lilliput		ST, SC	Burke, Barnwell (SC) ^(e)
<i>Utterbackia imbecillis</i>	paper pondshell		SC	Barnwell (SC)

(a) Occurrences considered in the vicinity are within approximately 10 miles of the VEGP site in Burke County, Georgia, or Barnwell or Aiken Counties, South Carolina (SC). State occurrence data and distances obtained from GDNR (2008) and SCDNR (2007a, 2008) unless noted otherwise.

(b) Federal listing status definitions: FE = Endangered (FWS 2004)

(c) State listing status definitions: SE = State Endangered, ST = State Threatened, SC = Species of Concern in South Carolina (GDNR 2008; SCDNR 2007)

(d) The robust redhorse has been found in the Savannah River near the VEGP site (RRCC 2008).

(e) The Savannah lilliput has been found in the Savannah River near the VEGP site (ANS 2003).

16

Table 2-9. Federally and State Listed Aquatic Species with Recorded Occurrences in the Counties Crossed by the Transmission Line ROWs ^(a)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Federal Status ^(b)	State Status ^(c)	County of Occurrence
Plants				
<i>Amphianthus pusillus</i>	pool sprite	FT	ST	Hancock, Putnam
<i>Eleocharis robbinsii</i>	Robbins spikerush		SC	Barnwell (SC)
<i>Eleocharis tricostata</i>	three-angle spikerush		SC	Barnwell (SC)
<i>Isoetes tegetiformans</i>	mat-forming quillwort	FE	SE	Hancock, Putnam
<i>Ptilimnium nodosum</i>	harperella	FE	SE	Barnwell (SC)
<i>Utricularia floridana</i>	Florida bladderwort		SC	Barnwell (SC)
<i>Utricularia olivacea</i>	Piedmont bladderwort		SC	Barnwell (SC)
<i>Vallisneria americana</i>	eelgrass		SC	Barnwell (SC)
Mammals				
<i>Trichechus manatus</i>	West Indian manatee	FE	SE	Bryan, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn, Liberty, McIntosh
Fish				
<i>Acipenser brevirostrum</i>	shortnose sturgeon	FE	SE	Bryan, Burke, Chatham, Glynn, Long, McIntosh, Screven
<i>Cyprinella xaenura</i>	Altamaha shiner		ST	Jones, Monroe, Putnam
<i>Elassoma okatie</i>	bluebarred pygmy sunfish		SE	Richmond
<i>Etheostoma parvipinne</i>	goldstripe darter		SR	Jones
<i>Lucania goodie</i>	bluefin killifish		SR	McIntosh
<i>Moxostoma robustum</i>	robust redhorse		SE	Baldwin, Hancock, Putnam, Washington
Invertebrates				
<i>Alasmidonta arcula</i>	Altamaha arc mussel		ST	Long
<i>Anodonta couperiana</i>	barrel floater		SC	Barnwell (SC)
<i>Cambarus truncatus</i>	Oconee burrowing crayfish		ST	Washington
<i>Elliptio congaraea</i>	Carolina slabshell		SC	Barnwell (SC)
<i>Elliptio spinosa</i>	Altamaha spiny mussel	FC	SE	Long, McIntosh
<i>Fusconaia masoni</i>	Atlantic pigtoe		SE	Burke, Jefferson, Richmond, Screven

Table 2-9. (cont'd)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Federal Status ^(b)	State Status ^(c)	County of Occurrence
<i>Lampsilis cariosa</i>	yellow lampmussel		SC	Barnwell (SC)
<i>Lampsilis splendida</i>	rayed pink fatmucket		SC	Barnwell (SC)
<i>Pyganodon cataracta</i>	eastern floater		SC	Barnwell (SC)
<i>Utterbackia imbecillis</i>	paper pondshell		SC	Barnwell (SC)
<i>Villosa delumbis</i>	eastern creekshell		SC	Barnwell (SC)
<i>Villosa vibex</i>	southern rainbow		SC	Barnwell (SC)

(a) Counties crossed by ROWs include: Baldwin, Bryan, Burke, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn, Hancock, Jefferson, Jones, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, Monroe, Putnam, Richmond, Screven, and Washington in Georgia; and Barnwell in South Carolina (SC). Marine species (whales, sea turtles) that would not occur in the inland areas where the ROWs are located were omitted. State occurrence data obtained from GDNR (2008) and SCDNR (2007a). Federal occurrence data obtained from FWS (2004) and SCDNR (2007a).

(b) Federal listing status definitions: FE = Endangered, FT = Threatened, FC = Candidate species (FWS 2004)

(c) State listing status definitions: SE = State Endangered, ST = State Threatened, SR = State Rare, SC = Species of Concern (GDNR 2008; SCDNR 2007)

2.2.5.4.1 Site Vicinity

The only Federally listed aquatic species with recorded occurrences in the vicinity of the VEGP site is the shortnose sturgeon, which inhabits the Savannah River (NMFS 1998; NRC 2007). In addition, there are two aquatic species that are State-listed as endangered or threatened and known to occur in the vicinity of VEGP, the robust redhorse (*Moxostoma robustum*) and the Savannah lilliput (*Toxolasma pullus*). These three species are described below.

Shortnose Sturgeon

The shortnose sturgeon is a member of the Family Acipenseridae, an ancient group of long-lived, anadromous and freshwater fishes. The shortnose sturgeon is an anadromous fish that spawns in large Atlantic coastal rivers of eastern North America from New Brunswick, Canada, to northern Florida. It is the smallest of the three sturgeon species that occur in eastern North America, reaching maturity at fork lengths of 18 to 20 inches and having a maximum total length of approximately 4 feet and a weight of up to 50 pounds (lbs). Shortnose sturgeon grow slowly, reach sexual maturity late in life, and most live 15-20 years (longevity record was 67 years). The shortnose sturgeon was a species of commercial importance around the turn of the century, and it was commonly taken in the fishery for the closely related and more commercially valuable Atlantic sturgeon and as bycatch in the shad fishery. The substantial decline in shortnose

1 sturgeon populations has been attributed to overfishing as well as the impoundment of rivers
2 and water pollution, and the species now is endangered. Natural recruitment rates appear to be
3 too low to replenish depleted populations (NMFS 1998, NOAA 2007, Marcy et al. 2005).
4

5 The shortnose sturgeon was originally listed by FWS as an endangered species under the
6 Endangered Species Preservation Act (32 FR 4001) in 1967. That act was the predecessor of
7 the ESA of 1973 (16 USC 1531) under which the sturgeon currently is protected. NMFS
8 assumed jurisdiction over the shortnose sturgeon in 1974. NMFS is the agency responsible for
9 most anadromous and marine species under the ESA. Although the shortnose sturgeon was
10 originally listed as endangered throughout its range, NMFS currently recognizes 19 distinct
11 populations occurring in 19 different river systems from New Brunswick, Canada, to northern
12 Florida. Life history studies indicate that populations from these river systems are substantially
13 isolated reproductively and should be considered discrete. NMFS has determined that the loss
14 of a single shortnose sturgeon population constitutes the permanent loss of unique genetic
15 information that is potentially critical to the survival and recovery of the species. Accordingly,
16 the species is managed based on protection of the distinct population segments in each of
17 these river systems, including the Savannah River (NMFS 1998).
18

19 Shortnose sturgeon spend most of their lives in their natal river systems and only rarely enter
20 the ocean. The species is estuarine anadromous in the southern part of its range. Thus, adult
21 shortnose sturgeon in the Savannah River forage near the freshwater-saltwater boundary in the
22 estuary throughout the year except during spawning runs, when they migrate upstream from
23 late January to March. Most adults return to the lower river by early May. Probable spawning
24 sites in the Savannah River were identified by monitoring the movement of adult shortnose
25 sturgeon and identifying reaches that repeatedly were the destinations of migrating adult fish
26 and that were occupied for several days during the spawning season (Meyer et al. 2003). The
27 probable spawning sites are in sharp curves of the channel over substrates of rocks, gravel,
28 sand, and logs in two principal reaches: from RM 111 to 118 and from RM 170 to 172 (NMFS
29 1998, Meyer et al. 2003). The VEGP site adjoins the Savannah River between RM 150 and
30 152, an area that has not been identified as a known or suspected spawning site.
31

32 Spawning occurs usually during peak flood tide in February or March in or adjacent to deep
33 areas of the river with significant currents when water temperatures are between 50 and 62°F
34 (9.8 and 16.5°C). Adults spawn at 2- to 5-year intervals. Fertilized eggs are heavier than water
35 (demersal) and extremely adhesive after fertilization, sinking quickly and adhering to hard
36 substrates such as rocks and logs. Eggs hatch in 1 to 2 weeks. Larvae and early juveniles are
37 weak swimmers; they stay near the bottom for about 2 weeks drifting with the current, then
38 slowly migrate downstream (Marcy et al. 2005). When they reach the estuary, juveniles remain
39 in the reach between RM 29 and 19 near the saltwater-freshwater interface, moving into the
40 upstream area in summer and the downstream area in winter (Meyer et al. 2003). The age of
41 sexual maturity appears to be 8 to 15 years in the north and younger in the south. The diet of

1 juvenile shortnose sturgeon is mainly aquatic insects and small crustaceans, while adults feed
2 primarily on molluscs but also consume insects and crustaceans (Marcy et al. 2005).

3
4 As part of a state/federal recovery program, over 97,000 hatchery-spawned shortnose sturgeon
5 (18 percent of which were tagged) were stocked in the Savannah River between 1984 and
6 1992, and many were recaptured (Marcy et al. 2005). Over 35 percent of juvenile shortnose
7 sturgeon captured in the Savannah River from 1990 to 1993 were identified as stocked fish
8 (Wike 1998). Based on records of marked fish and results from tagging studies, it was
9 estimated that 38 percent of the adult population in the Savannah River during the 1997 to 2000
10 time frame consisted of stocked fish (Marcy et al. 2005). These findings indicate that
11 recruitment into the local population was occurring (Wike 1998). The most recent estimate (in
12 1999) of the shortnose sturgeon population of the Savannah River was 3000 fish (NMFS 2006).

13 14 Robust Redhorse

15
16 The robust redhorse is a member of the sucker family, Catostomidae. It is State-listed in
17 Georgia as endangered and has no legal status in South Carolina. It was first described in 1870
18 based on a specimen collected in North Carolina. Subsequently, the species remained
19 essentially unknown and was presumed extinct for more than 120 years until a population was
20 discovered and identified in 1991 in the Oconee River in central Georgia. Since then, wild
21 populations have been found in the Savannah River, the Ocmulgee and Oconee rivers in
22 Georgia, and the Pee Dee River in South and North Carolina (Robust Redhorse Conservation
23 Committee [RRCC] 2008). The robust redhorse is the largest sucker species in North America
24 (FWS 2001a). Its average adult size is 25 inches in length and 9 lbs in weight, though it can
25 reach 30 inches and 17 lbs. It is long-lived, with a maximum known age of 27 years (RRCC
26 2008). It uses large, molar-like pharyngeal teeth to crush its prey of mussels and clams. Its
27 habitat is rivers. Non-spawning adults occur primarily in deep areas with moderate current and
28 in association with tree snags and woody debris near shore. Spawning takes place in swift
29 current where the substrate is coarse gravel (RRCC 2008; Self and Bettinger 2006). Efforts to
30 estimate the size of the Savannah River population of the robust redhorse are ongoing, but the
31 population seems to be substantial (Self and Bettinger 2006). In 1997, a single adult was
32 collected from the Savannah River near VEGP (Hendricks 2000). Surveys subsequently found
33 a population in the Savannah River near Augusta, Georgia, and at numerous locations between
34 Augusta and U.S. Highway 301, which crosses the river approximately 20 mi southeast of
35 VEGP. Spawning locations have been identified near Augusta (Hendricks 2002). A study in the
36 Savannah River found that the robust redhorse moved an average of at least 24 km (15 mi) per
37 season. These migrations generally were downstream except in the spring and were related to
38 seasonal changes in water temperature. The upstream migrations to spawning areas in spring
39 began when the water temperature reached about 12°C (54°F). Tracking of daily movements
40 found that the robust redhorse is active mainly during the day and uses a limited area within
41 approximately a 1 km (0.6 mi) reach of the river (Grabowski and Isely 2006).

1 Savannah Lilliput

2
3 The Savannah lilliput is State-listed as threatened in Georgia and as a species of concern in
4 South Carolina. It is a small mussel that occurs in shallow water habitats, usually in silty sand
5 or mud near the margins of rivers, streams, and lakes. Occurrences have been reported from
6 the Neuse River in North Carolina to the Altamaha in Georgia, but only a few disjunct
7 populations remain within this range. The Savannah River population extends several miles
8 along the river and may be the largest population (NatureServe 2007). Its presence has been
9 documented in the reach of the river adjacent to VEGP and SRS (ANS 2003).

10 11 **2.2.5.4.2 Transmission Line ROWs**

12
13 The Federally listed aquatic species with recorded occurrences in at least one of the 18
14 counties crossed by the transmission line ROWs include three plants, one mammal, and the
15 shortnose sturgeon. The listed aquatic plants are the threatened pool sprite (*Amphianthus*
16 *pusillus*) and the endangered mat-forming quillwort (*Isoetes tegetiformans*) and harperella
17 (*Ptilimnium nodosum*). The aquatic mammal is the endangered West Indian manatee
18 (*Trichechus manatus*). The endangered shortnose sturgeon, which is discussed above based
19 on its occurrence in the Savannah River near the VEGP site, also occurs in other rivers that are
20 crossed by the West McIntosh (Thalman) line, the Ogeechee and Altamaha Rivers (NMFS
21 1998).

22
23 In addition, a mussel occurring in two of the counties is a candidate for listing. The Altamaha
24 spiny mussel (*Elliptio spinosa*) occurs in the Altamaha River in Long and McIntosh Counties,
25 which are crossed by the West McIntosh (Thalman) line. The southern borders of these
26 counties follow the channel of the river.

27 28 **2.2.6 Terrestrial Resources**

29 30 **2.2.6.1 Terrestrial Resources at the VEGP site**

31
32 The VEGP site (and its associated transmission lines) is within the Atlantic Coastal Plain 25 mi
33 (40 km) east of the Piedmont and 30 mi (48 km) south of the Fall Line. The overall terrain of the
34 VEGP site consists of low, rolling, mostly sandy hills with the minimum elevation occurring along
35 the Savannah River at 80 ft (24 m) above mean sea level (msl) and a maximum elevation of 280
36 ft (85 m) above msl along the hilltops (SNC 2007a). The entire VEGP site encompasses 3169
37 ac (1282 ha) (SNC 2007a). The buildings associated with generation and maintenance, parking
38 lots, and on-site roads, occupy approximately 1400 ac (567 ha) of the overall site. The
39 remaining 1769 ac (716 ha) are covered mainly by pine and hardwood dominated forests (SNC
40 2007a). Terrestrial resources found within the VEGP site and associated transmission line
41 ROWs include the upland, riparian, and bottomland forest communities, as well as ponds,

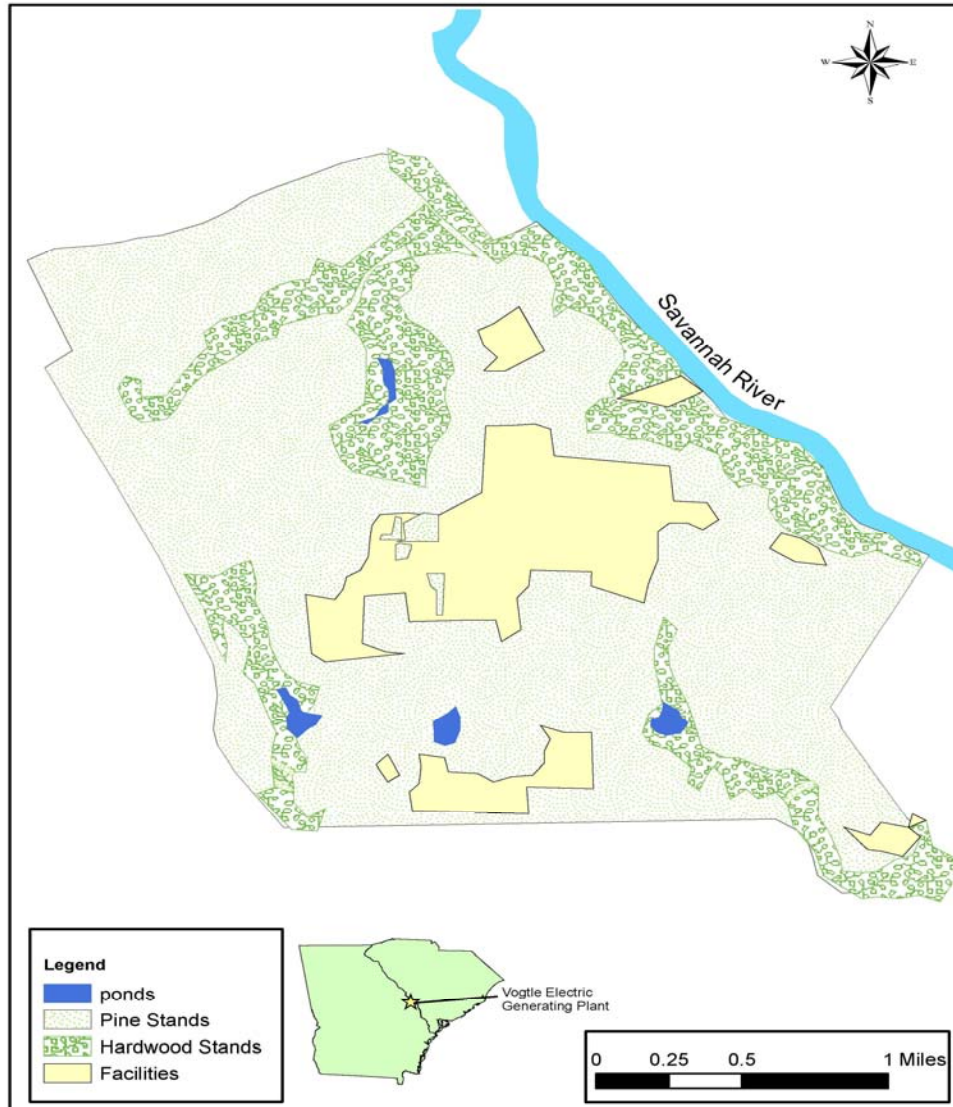
1 streams, and wetlands. Included are descriptions of the characteristic flora and fauna of these
2 communities as well as the rare species that may occur there.

3
4 GPC manages several wildlife strategies at the VEGP site. These strategies seek to promote
5 diverse habitats, manage pine tree species populations through thinning and burning, and
6 maintain wildlife food plots. The VEGP has been designated a Certified Wildlife Habitat by the
7 Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC), a non-profit organization. To maintain this designation, GPC
8 employs a continuous wildlife habitat maintenance program that is certified by the WHC every 3
9 years (SNC 2007a). GPC also manages wildlife habitat within some of the transmission line
10 ROWs by employing a GDNR program called Wildlife Incentive for Non-Game and Game
11 Species (WINGS). This program aims to assist private land owners in the conversion of
12 transmission line ROWs into wildlife habitat areas.

13
14 Pre-settlement vegetation at the VEGP site and its associated transmission lines consisted of
15 pine and oak forested land with isolated streams, ponds, and wetlands. After the construction of
16 the VEGP site, much of the forested areas were disturbed to provide room for the plant facilities.
17 Some of the site has returned to forested areas while the transmission line ROWs require
18 continual maintenance to prevent damage to the lines.

19
20 Upland areas of the VEGP site support terrestrial forests of pine, oak, hickory, and other
21 hardwoods, as well as harvesting pine plantations. The Bluffs on the VEGP site separate the
22 upland forested areas from the areas in the floodplain of the Savannah River. The low areas of
23 the VEGP site along the streams and the Savannah River floodplain support bottomland
24 hardwood forests and wetlands (NRC 2007). Most wetlands occur in conjunction with
25 waterbodies such as streams, rivers, and ponds. In some open areas disturbed by the removal
26 of forest and construction of the VEGP site, grasses and the herb sericea lespedeza
27 (*Lespedeza cuneata*) were planted to prevent erosion (SNC 2006e). Figure 2-8 is a map of the
28 terrestrial plant communities and ponds on the site.

29
30 The two main types of upland forest communities on the VEGP site are identified by their
31 dominant species; the longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) - scrub oak community and the oak -
32 hickory community. The longleaf pine - scrub oak community is found on ridge tops as well as
33 slopes to the south and west in undisturbed areas. Common canopy species in addition to
34 longleaf pine are scrub oaks such as turkey oak (*Quercus laevis*) and bluejack oak (*Quercus*
35 *incana*). The shrub layer in the longleaf pine - scrub oak community include sparkleberry
36 (*Vaccinium arboreum*), dwarf huckleberry (*Gaylussacia dumosa*), and yellow jessamine
37 (*Gelsemium sempervirens*). Herbaceous ground cover diversity varies with canopy closure. In
38 the most shaded region of the community, only clumps of slender woodoats (*Chasmanthium*
39 *laxum*) are present. In the communities more open areas, gopher weed (*Baptisia perfoliata*),
40 jointweed (*Polygonella americana*), tread-softly (*Cnidioscolus stimulosus*), and reindeer lichen
41 (*Cladina rangiferina*) are present. The oak – hickory community is found on both the north and



Source: SNC 2007a

Figure 2-8. Vegetation Communities and Ponds on the VEGP Site

1 east slopes in the undisturbed uplands. The canopy of this community is comprised mainly of
2 white oak (*Quercus alba*) and mockernut hickory (*Carya alba*). White ash (*Fraxinus americana*),
3 flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*), and a few turkey oaks and shortleaf pines (*Pinus echinata*)
4 are also present (TRC 2006).

5
6 The VEGP site allocates 350 ac (142 ha) of land to the Georgia Power Company (GPC) to the
7 development of pine plantations. The GPC is solely responsible for the management and
8 maintenance of the VEGP pine plantations. There are many plantations within the land allotted
9 to pine tree development that are varied in both number of trees and tree density to land ratio. In
10 addition, the plantations vary in pine tree species. The primary pine species include: slash pine
11 (*Pinus elliottii*), loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*), and longleaf pine. The ground cover within the
12 plantations is largely grasses and bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*). Where plantations are
13 less densely populated with pines, there are vast open areas that contain: dog fennel
14 (*Eupatorium capillifolium*), broomsedge (*Andropogon virginicus*), and blackberry bushes (*Rubus*
15 spp.). The plantations populated by longleaf pine are neither cut nor burned so that they may
16 be similar to the 60 to 100 year old native longleaf pines that once grew at this location. The
17 remaining plantations are managed through prescribed burns, cutting, and trimming. Burning
18 occurs on a 3 to 5 year cycle and is limited to 25 to 30 percent of the total remaining pine
19 population (not to include longleaf pines) (TRC 2006; SNC 2006e).

20
21 On the VEGP site, river bluff forests separate the upland forest areas from the intermittently
22 flooded lowland and riparian forested areas. The bluff forests have some of the largest trees on
23 site, with diameters exceeding 3 ft (0.9 m). Common larger trees are oaks, mockernut hickory,
24 American elm (*Ulmus americana*), basswood (*Tilia americana*), and Florida maple (*Acer*
25 *barbatum*). Smaller trees common to bluff forests are tuliptree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*),
26 sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), and pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*). The common shrubs, vines
27 and bushes are hophornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*), American beautyberry (*Callicarpa*
28 *americana*), muscadine (*Vitis rotundifolia*), crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*), and poison ivy
29 (*Toxicodendron radicans*). Herbaceous ground cover varies with the soil of the moisture.
30 Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*) and white snakeroot (*Ageratina altissima*) are
31 common in the drier areas while mottled trillium (*Trillium maculatum*), wild ginger (*Asarum*
32 *canadense*), false nettle (*Boehmeria cylindrica*), and jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*) are
33 common in steeps and other wetter areas (TRC 2006).

34
35 Riparian forests on the VEGP site lie along the Savannah River on the eastern side of the
36 property boundary. Due to the proximity of the forest to the river, riparian forests have large
37 variations in wetness and soil moisture. Water tupelo (*Nyssa aquatica*) and bald cypress
38 (*Taxodium distichum*) are common in the wetter areas, usually closer to the Savannah River.
39 American sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*), boxelder (*Acer negundo*), sugarberry (*Celtis*
40 *laevigata*), and swamp chestnut oak (*Quercus michauxii*) occupy the drier areas, usually further
41 from the Savannah River. Common bushes and shrubs include American holly (*Ilex opaca*),

1 ironwood (*Carpinus caroliniana*), water locust (*Gleditsia aquatica*), giant cane (*Arundinaria*
2 *gigantea*), and buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*). Herbaceous ground cover is sparse
3 and common species include richweed (*Pilea pumila*), lizard's tail (*Saururus cernuus*), sensitive
4 fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*), and Virginia dayflower (*Commelina virginica*). These species tend to
5 be very water tolerant and can survive in shaded areas (TRC 2006).

6
7 There are six perennial streams, 13 intermittent streams, three ephemeral streams, and several
8 ponds on the VEGP site (Eco-Sciences 2007). Mallard Pond is a 5-ac (2-ha) pond in a
9 hardwood cove on the site just northwest of the switchyard. It was on the VEGP site prior to
10 construction and is man-made. The small, unnamed creek that drains Mallard Pond flows north
11 then east into the Savannah River at Hancock Landing, approximately 0.6 mi (1 km) upstream
12 of the intake structure. The creek is approximately 2 to 4 feet (0.6 to 1.2 m) wide and less than
13 1 foot (0.3 m) deep, except in two known locations where beavers (*Castor canadensis*) have
14 created additional dams and ponds. Another creek, draining the northwest corner of the site,
15 joins this creek and flows from Mallard Pond approximately one-third of the way to the
16 Savannah River (SNC 2007b).

17
18 Two stormwater retention ponds, referred to as Debris Basin #1 and #2, were created in the
19 early stages of the construction of VEGP. The ponds were built south of the developed area of
20 the site to retain sediment from stormwater. Debris Basin #1 drains south via a small creek to
21 Beaverdam Creek south of the site boundary and halfway between an offsite pond (Telfair
22 Pond) and the Savannah River. Debris Basin #2 drains via a small creek into Daniels Branch
23 and then into Telfair Pond. Debris Basin #1 is about 6 ac (2.4 ha) in area, and Debris Basin #2
24 has an area of about 5 ac (2 ha). There is also a smaller runoff catch pond between these two
25 ponds that was formed from a depression left after the construction of VEGP. The runoff pond
26 is about 3 ac (1.2 ha) in size and retains water throughout the year (SNC 2007b).

27
28 The US Army Corps of Engineers issues guidance for jurisdictional delineations based on three
29 wetland characteristics: hydrophilic vegetation, hydric soils, and overall hydrology. In
30 December 2006, SNC surveyed the VEGP site and delineated 48 distinct, on-site wetlands
31 totaling approximately 170 ac (69 ha). The majority of the wetlands on the VEGP site are along
32 or near the Savannah River, with some wetlands occurring near the ponds and associated
33 streams. On-site wetlands vary in surface water depth and vegetation canopy. Common trees
34 occurring in the on-site wetlands are bald cypress, water oak, red maple, sweetgum, black
35 willow (*Salix nigra*), and blackgum (*Nyssa sylvatica*). Vines and shrubs are commonly found in
36 wetlands on-site and consist primarily of giant cane, trumpet creeper (*Campsis radicans*),
37 muscadine, and American holly. Ground cover includes a herbaceous layer consisting primarily
38 of cinnamon fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*) and royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*) (TRC 2006, Eco-
39 Sciences 2007).

1 The terrestrial fauna of the VEGP site consists mainly of wildlife species commonly found in
 2 eastern Georgia, including mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians. Mammals common to the
 3 VEGP site include white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), Virginia
 4 opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*), gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*), eastern cottontail
 5 (*Sylvilagus floridanus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), small
 6 insectivores (moles, shrews, and bats) and rodents (mice and voles) (SNC 2007b).

7
 8 The VEGP site has a variety of songbirds, upland game birds, waterfowl, and raptors that are
 9 located on and in the vicinity of the site. At least 143 species of birds were identified on the
 10 VEGP site during 2007. Common birds at the site include the northern bobwhite (*Colinus*
 11 *virginianus*), blue jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*), Carolina chickadee (*Poecile carolinensis*), mourning
 12 dove (*Zenaidura macroura*), black vulture (*Coragyps atratus*), song sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*),
 13 dark-eyed junco (*Junco hyemalis*), northern cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*), eastern bluebird
 14 (*Sialia sialis*), red-bellied woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*), American woodcock (*Scolopax*
 15 *minor*), wood duck (*Aix sponsa*), and wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) (SNC 2006e, SNC
 16 2007b).

17
 18 Several bird species including the wood duck and bluebird have monitoring programs developed
 19 by the GPC for the VEGP site. Wood duck and bluebird boxes are located throughout the site
 20 and wood duck fledglings have been recorded annually (SNC 2007a).

21
 22 Sixty species of reptiles and amphibians have been identified onsite, including the American
 23 alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*), green anole (*Anolis carolinensis carolinensis*), bullfrog
 24 (*Rana catesbeiana*), snakes, turtles, lizards, salamanders, and toads (SNC 2006e).

25 26 **2.2.6.2 Threatened and Endangered Terrestrial Species**

27
 28 Seven federally listed threatened or endangered species have been found to potentially occur in
 29 the vicinity of the VEGP site and associated transmission lines: the smooth coneflower
 30 (*Echinacea laevigata*), the Canby's dropwort (*Oxypolis canbyi*), the relict trillium (*Trillium*
 31 *reliquum*), the wood stork (*Mycteria americana*), the red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides*
 32 *borealis*), the flatwoods salamander (*Ambystoma cingulatum*), and the American alligator
 33 (*Alligator mississippiensis*). Five state listed threatened or endangered species have been
 34 found to potentially inhabit the VEGP site and associated transmission lines: the bay star-vine
 35 (*Schisandra glabra*), the pond spice (*Litsea aestivalis*), the gopher tortoises (*Gopherus*
 36 *polyphemus*), the spotted turtle (*Clemmys guttata*), and the hooded pitcher plants (*Sarracenia*
 37 *minor*) (TRC 2006; SNC 2007a). Table 2-10 shows the federally listed species known to
 38 potentially occur on the VEGP site, Table 2-11 shows the Federally listed species with
 39 occurrence in the counties that are crossed by transmission lines, Table 2-12 shows the rare
 40 terrestrial species that are State listed as either threatened or endangered and have potential to
 41 occur in the vicinity of the site, and Table 2-13 shows the rare terrestrial species that are State

1 listed as either threatened or endangered and have the potential to occur in the vicinity of the
 2 associated transmission line ROWs.

4 Federally Protected Species

5
 6 On July 9, 2007, the FWS issued a *Federal Register Notice* announcing the removal of the bald
 7 eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife
 8 (72 FR 37346). The bald eagle has been known to nest along the Savannah River. The eagle
 9 is a large bird, and can weigh more than 6 kg (13 lb.) as an adult. Juvenile eagles are
 10 completely brown and remain so until 5 to 6 years old, when they develop a white head. The
 11 species feed primarily on fish, as well as other small animals. There are no designated or
 12 proposed critical habitats for eagles on or in the vicinity of the VEGP site.

13
 14 **Table 2-10.** Federally Listed Terrestrial Species with Recorded Occurrences or
 15 Potentially Occurring in the Vicinity of the VEGP Site ^(a)
 16

Scientific Name	Common Name	Federal Status ^(b)	County of Occurrence	Distance from the VEGP Site ^(c)	Habitat ^(d)
Plants					
<i>Echinacea laevigata</i>	smooth coneflower	FE	Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	< 10 mi (16 km)	Wooded upland areas on crystalline mineral soils
<i>Oxypolis canbyi</i>	Canby's dropwort	FE	Burke	>10 mi (16 km)	Cypress pond peat and muck, sinkhole depressions, and wet pine savannas
<i>Trillium reliquum</i>	relict trillium	FE	Aiken (SC)	>10 mi (16 km) ^(e)	Moist hardwood forests and forested sinkholes
Birds					
<i>Mycteria Americana</i>	wood stork	FE	Burke, Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	<3.2 km (2 mi)	Marshes, river swamps, and cypress/gum ponds
<i>Picoides borealis</i>	red-cockaded woodpecker	FE	Burke, Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	10 mi (16 km)	Open longleaf pine savannas and flatwoods with mixed understory

1
2

Table 2-10. (cont'd)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Federal Status ^(b)	County of Occurrence	Distance from the VEGP Site ^(c)	Habitat ^(d)
Amphibians and Reptiles					
<i>Alligator mississippiensis</i> ^(f)	American alligator	FT(S/A)	Burke, Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Occurs onsite ^(g)	Lakes, rivers, swamps, marshes, and ponds
<i>Ambystoma cingulatum</i>	flatwoods salamander	FT	Burke	>10 mi (16 km)	Isolated cypress/gum wetlands, wet pine flatwoods, moist savannas, and longleaf pine wetlands

- (a) Species included in this table have suitable habitat on the VEGP site and satisfy at least one of the following criteria:
 - species has been recorded on the VEGP site
 - species has been recorded within 10 miles (16 km) of the VEGP site in Aiken or Barnwell Counties, South Carolina (SC) (SCDNR 2007, 2008)
 - species is listed by FWS (2004) as occurring or having the potential to occur in Burke County, Georgia
- (b) Federal status rankings determined by the FWS under the Endangered Species Act, FE = Endangered, FT = Threatened, FT(S/A) = Threatened (similarity of appearance) (FWS 2004, SCDNR 2007)
- (c) NRC 2007
- (d) GDNR 2008
- (e) Suitable habitat exists for the relict trillium onsite (NRC 2007)
- (f) The alligator is Federally listed for protection of the similar, endangered American crocodile. The alligator is not State-listed in Georgia or SC and is not tracked by county. Based on its range (Conant and Collins 1998), the alligator is expected to occur in all three counties.
- (g) SNC 2007a

3
4
5
6

Table 2-11. Federally Listed Terrestrial Species Potentially Occurring in Counties Crossed by the Transmission Line ROWs ^(a)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Federal Status ^(b)	Counties of Occurrence ^(a)	Habitat ^(c)
Plants				
<i>Echinacea laevigata</i>	smooth coneflower	FE	Barnwell (SC)	Wooded upland areas on crystalline mineral soils
<i>Lindera melissifolia</i>	pond spicebush	FE	Chatham, Effingham, Screven	Wet savannas and on the margins of standing water bodies

Table 2-11. (cont'd)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Federal Status ^(b)	Counties of Occurrence ^(a)	Habitat ^(c)
<i>Oxypolis canbyi</i>	Canby's dropwort	FE	Burke, Screven, Barnwell (SC)	Cypress pond peat and muck, sinkhole depressions, and wet pine savannas
<i>Trillium reliquum</i>	relict trillium	FE	Jones	Moist hardwood forests and forested sinkholes
Birds				
<i>Charadrius melodus</i>	piping plover	FT	Bryan, Chatham, Glynn, Liberty, McIntosh	Sandy beaches and tidal flats
<i>Dendroica kirtlandii</i>	Kirtland's warbler	FE	Glynn	Species present on a temporary seasonal basis in spring and fall, multiple habitats
<i>Mycteria americana</i>	wood stork	FE	Bryan, Burke, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn, Jefferson, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, Richmond, Screven	Marshes, river swamps, and cypress/gum ponds
<i>Picoides borealis</i>	red-cockaded woodpecker	FE	Bryan, Burke, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn, Jefferson, Jones, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, Putnam, Richmond, Screven, Washington, Barnwell (SC)	Open longleaf pine savannas and flatwoods with mixed understory
<i>Vermivora bachmanii</i>	Bachman's warbler	FE	Bryan, Chatham, Glynn, Liberty, Long, McIntosh	Canebrake swamps, hardwood bottomlands, and wet hardwood forests

Table 2-11. (cont'd)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Federal Status ^(b)	Counties of Occurrence ^(a)	Habitat ^(c)
Amphibians and Reptiles				
<i>Alligator mississippiensis</i> ^(d)	American alligator	FT(S/A)	All	Lakes, rivers, swamps, marshes, and ponds
<i>Ambystoma cingulatum</i>	flatwoods salamander	FT	Bryan, Burke, Chatham, Effingham, Jefferson, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, Screven	Isolated cypress/gum wetlands, wet pine flatwoods, moist savannas, and longleaf pine wetlands
<i>Drymarchon couperi</i>	eastern indigo snake	FT	Bryan, Chatham, Glynn, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, Screven	Longleaf pine forests and pine flatwoods in the sandhills

(a) Counties crossed by ROWs include: Baldwin, Bryan, Burke, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn, Hancock, Jefferson, Jones, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, Monroe, Putnam, Richmond, Screven, and Washington in Georgia; and Barnwell in South Carolina. Federal occurrence data obtained from FWS (2004), GDNR (2008), and SCDNR (2007a).

(b) Federal listing status definitions: E = Endangered, T = Threatened, FT(S/A) = Threatened (similarity of appearance) FWS 2004)

(c) GDNR 2008

(d) The alligator is Federally listed for protection of the similar, endangered American crocodile. The alligator is not State listed in Georgia or SC and is not tracked by county. Based on its range (Conant and Collins 1998), the alligator is expected to occur in all 18 counties.

3
4 The smooth coneflower was listed by FWS as endangered in 1992 (57 FR 46340). There are
5 24 known populations of smooth coneflower in four southeastern states: three in Georgia (FWS
6 1995). The smooth coneflower prefers dry habitats such as open woods, roadsides, and
7 limestone bluffs which have lots of sunlight and little competition from other herbaceous plant
8 species, as wells as areas in post-burn succession stages (FWS 1995). Smooth coneflower
9 prefers soils that have a neutral or basic pH and are rich in calcium and/or magnesium (NRC
10 2007). There is no known historical documentation of smooth coneflower on the VEGP site or
11 in the associated transmission line ROWs, and suitable habitat for the species on the VEGP site
12 is unlikely (NRC 2007; TRC 2006).

1 Canby's dropwort was listed as endangered by FWS in 1986 (51 FR 6690). Canby's dropwort is
2 a perennial plant with quill-like leaves and small white or pink-tinged flowers and thick, corky
3 wings extending from the margins of the plant's fruit (SCDNR undated). It occurs in a variety of
4 wetland habitats, including cypress-dominated ponds. Canby's dropwort is generally found in
5 areas with shallow and infrequent inundations [2 to 12 in. (5 to 30 cm)], and hydric soils (FWS
6 1990a). There have been no historical occurrences of Canby's dropwort recorded within 10 mi
7 (16 km) of the site, and suitable habitat for the species on the VEGP site is unlikely (TRC 2006).
8

9 The relict trillium was listed as endangered by FWS in 1988 (53 FR 10879). This perennial
10 species has three green leaves growing from the stem that is 2 to 10 in. (5 to 25 cm) long
11 (USACE 2008). The purple to greenish yellow flower has no stalk and arises from the top of the
12 stem (USACE updated). The species prefers moist hardwood forest habitats with sandy soils
13 (FWS 1990b). There have been no known historical occurrences of relict trillium on the VEGP
14 site or associated transmission lines, and suitable habitat for the species on the VEGP site is
15 unlikely (SNC 2006f; TRC 2006).
16

17 The wood stork was listed as an endangered species in 1984 (49 CFR 7332). The species
18 stands 2 to 4 ft (0.6 to 1.2 m) tall, weighs 7 to 10 lbs (3 to 4.5 kg), and can have a wingspan of 5
19 to 6 ft (1.5 to 1.8 m). The stork has a long, curved beak, no feathers on its neck, white feathers
20 throughout the body and wings, and a black feathered tail. Since the species has no muscles
21 attached to its vocal box, the bird is very quiet and croaks instead of sings. The wood stork is
22 highly colonial and often remains in the same location for years. The wood stork generally
23 selects groves of medium to tall trees that are either in standing water or are located on islands
24 surrounded by open water. In Georgia, nesting sites are often in blackgum, willow (*Salix* spp.),
25 and button bush. Colonies located in areas of standing water must remain inundated until the
26 nesting period is complete to protect the young against predators and nest abandonment. In
27 Georgia and South Carolina, wood storks lay eggs from March to late May, with fledging
28 occurring in July and August (FWS 1997). The wood stork's diet consists almost entirely of fish
29 (FWS 2007b).
30

31 The closest known stork colony is 28 mi (45 km) from the VEGP site. Individuals have been
32 spotted within 2 mi (3.2 km) of the site (Wike et al. 2006). Additionally, there are two locations
33 along the Scherer line ROW where wood stork have been sighted (TRC 2006). There are no
34 known sightings of wood storks on the VEGP site (TRC 2006). However, it is potential foraging
35 habitat for the species from June to September in wetlands along streams, man-made ponds,
36 drainage ditches, and the cypress wetlands along the Savannah River near the VEGP site
37 (NRC 2007).
38

39 Potential habitat for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker is located within the VEGP site.
40 The woodpecker prefers to nest in mature pine forests, especially longleaf pine. The bird's diet
41 is composed mainly of insects, which include ants, beetles, wood-boring insects, caterpillars,

1 and worms. The diet may also be supplemented with wild fruit. Red-cockaded woodpeckers
2 use a cooperative breeding system, called a group. Groups typically consist of a breeding pair
3 and potentially non-breeding helpers, which usually are males and non-breeders (FWS 2003a).
4 Although there have been no known historical occurrences on the VEGP site (SNC 2006e, SNC
5 2007b, TRC 2006), SNC is in the process of enrolling the VEGP site in the GDNR Safe Harbor
6 Program. Safe Harbor Agreements are arrangements that encourage voluntary management
7 for red-cockaded woodpeckers while protecting the participating landowners and their rights for
8 development in the event these woodpeckers become established on the private property.
9

10 The flatwoods salamander was listed by FWS as threatened in 1999 (64 FR 15691). The
11 relatively small salamander is black or dark grey, with white, net-like streaks covering the top of
12 the species from head to tail. The species prefers open woodlands dominated by longleaf or
13 slash pine with herbaceous ground cover and wetland areas (72 FR 5856). The salamander
14 breeds from October to December, and borrows during the remainder of the year. There have
15 been no known historical occurrences of the species within 10 mi (16 km) of the VEGP site or
16 associated transmission line ROWs, however, suitable habitat may exist (TRC 2006).
17

18 The American alligator is a large, semi-aquatic reptile that is similar in size and appearance and
19 related to the Federally endangered American crocodile. Adults can grow to over 10 ft (3 m) in
20 length. The alligator uses a variety of fresh and brackish water habitats, including marshes,
21 ponds, lakes, rivers, swamps, and bayous. It digs dens below water where it retreats during
22 cold weather or periods of drought. Eggs are laid in large mounded nests of leaves and other
23 rotting vegetation, mud, rocks, and debris located in marshes or near the water's edge. The
24 alligator feeds opportunistically on invertebrates, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals
25 (NatureServe 2007). The American alligator occurs on the VEGP site in regularity. Its
26 populations have recovered with legislative protection and are stable or increasing in most of its
27 range. It is no longer endangered or threatened (NatureServe 2007). However, it has been
28 listed by FWS since 1987 as threatened throughout its entire range due to its similarity in
29 appearance to the endangered American crocodile, which is in greater need of protection (52
30 FR 21059).
31

32 **State-Protected Species**

33

34 One species, listed by the State of Georgia as threatened, the bay star-vine (*Schisandra*
35 *glabra*), was found on the VEGP site (TRC 2006). Bay star-vine grows on understory trees in
36 rich forested areas, especially bottomlands and slopes. Older vines may grow on the trunks of
37 overstory trees or may be rooted while growing along the ground, especially near thickets of
38 mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*). The bay star-vine was found at several locations along the
39 wooded bluff bordering the Savannah River and in a wooded wetland in the southern portion of
40 the VEGP site (SNC 2007b; TRC 2006).

1 Four Georgia State-listed species were found to occur within the associated transmission line
 2 ROWs. All occurrences were on the West McIntosh (Thalmann) ROW. Pond spice (*Litsea*
 3 *aestivalis*), State listed as rare in Georgia, was found at one location near the Altamaha River in
 4 McIntosh County. Gopher tortoises (*Gopherus polyphemus*), State listed as threatened, were
 5 found at three locations, two areas near the Altamaha River in McIntosh County and one area in
 6 Effingham County. A spotted turtle (*Clemmys guttata*), State listed as unusual, was found at
 7 one location near Brier Creek in Screven County. Hooded pitcher plants (*Sarracenia minor*),
 8 State listed as unusual, were found at five locations in Chatham, Liberty, and McIntosh Counties
 9 (TRC 2006).

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 11 **Table 2-12.** State Listed Terrestrial Species with Recorded Occurrences in the
 12 Vicinity of the VEGP Site ^(a)
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Scientific Name	Common Name	Georgia State Status ^(b)	South Carolina State Status ^(b)	County of Occurrence ^(a)	Habitat ^(d)
Plants					
<i>Agalinis linifolia</i>	flaxleaf false foxglove		SC	Aiken (SC)	Wetlands ⁽³⁾
<i>Allium cuthbertii</i>	striped garlic		SC	Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Sandy coastal plains and granite outcrop areas of the Piedmont ⁽⁵⁾
<i>Astragalus michauxii</i>	sandhills milk-vetch		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Turkey-oak sandhill scrub and longleaf pine-wiregrass savannas ⁽¹⁾
<i>Astragalus villosus</i>	bearded milk-vetch		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Understory of scrub-oak sandhills and in dry open pinelands ⁽⁴⁾
<i>Baptisia lanceolata</i>	lance-leaf wild-indigo		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Scrub oak barrens, coarse sand ridges, and turkey oak sandhills ⁽⁴⁾
<i>Carex cherokeensis</i>	Cherokee sedge		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Riparian forests, bottomland hardwoods, wet seeps, swamp forests, and stream banks ⁽⁵⁾
<i>Carex decomposita</i>	cypress-knee sedge		SC	Barnwell (SC)	On rafted wood debris and floating logs in swamps and along lake margins ⁽¹⁾
<i>Carex socialis</i>	social sedge		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Floodplain forests of rivers and streams ⁽¹⁾
<i>Coreopsis rosea</i>	rose coreopsis		RC	Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Damp depressions with sandy organic substrates ⁽⁶⁾

Table 2-12. (cont'd)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Georgia State Status ^(b)	South Carolina State Status ^(b)	County of Occurrence ^(a)	Habitat ^(d)
<i>Croton elliotii</i>	Elliott's croton		SC	Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Wet savannas, swamps, and pond margins ⁽¹⁾
<i>Echinacea laevigata</i>	smooth coneflower	SE	SE	Burke, Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Wooded upland areas on crystalline mineral soils ⁽¹⁾
<i>Echinodorus parvulus</i>	dwarf burhead		SC	Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Sinkhole ponds, depressions, and shallow inundated areas ⁽¹⁾
<i>Elliottia racemosa</i>	Georgia plume	ST		Burke	Forested scrub, open forests with shallow rock, and rock outcrops ⁽¹⁾
<i>Epidendrum conopseum</i>	greenfly orchid		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Typically growing on limbs of evergreen hardwoods, also in cracks and crevices of rock outcrops ⁽¹⁾
<i>Gaura biennis</i>	biennial gaura		SC	Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Dry open woods and prairies ⁽⁷⁾
<i>Ilex amelanchar</i>	sarvis holly		SC	Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Cypress-gum swamps and densely vegetated wet sands ⁽¹⁾
<i>Lindera subcoriacea</i>	bog spicebush		RC	Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Forested seeps, wet slopes, and forested depressions ⁽¹⁾
<i>Ludwigia spathulata</i>	spatulate seedbox		SC	Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Wooded bogs, cypress-gum ponds, sinkhole ponds, and pools on granite outcrops ⁽¹⁾
<i>Macbridea caroliniana</i>	Carolina bird-in-a-nest		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Riparian woodlands, marshes, and swamps ⁽¹⁾
<i>Monarda didyma</i>	Oswego tea		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Moist open woods, riparian woodlands, and stream banks ^(3,6)
<i>Nestronia umbellula</i>	Indian olive	SR	SC	Burke, Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Along ecotones between flatwoods and uplands, in shrubby areas of mixed pine-hardwoods ⁽¹⁾
<i>Nolina georgiana</i>	Georgia beargrass		SC	Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Open sandy pine savannas and turkey-oak forests ⁽⁵⁾
<i>Paronychia americana</i>	American nailwort		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Open areas and open pine-hardwoods and mixed forests ⁽⁵⁾
<i>Quercus sinuate</i>	Durand's white oak		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Limestone slopes adjacent to streams and in bluff forests ⁽¹⁾

Table 2-12. (cont'd)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Georgia State Status ^(b)	South Carolina State Status ^(b)	County of Occurrence ^(a)	Habitat ^(d)
<i>Rhododendron flammeum</i>	Piedmont azalea		SC	Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Dry oak-hickory woodlands on well-drained rocky or sandy soils ⁽²⁾
<i>Rhynchospora inundata</i>	drowned hornedrush		SC	Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Terraces within lower coastal plain wetlands ⁽⁵⁾
<i>Rorippa sessiliflora</i>	stalkless yellowcress		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Inundated shallow depressions, wetlands, and marshes ⁽⁷⁾
<i>Sagittaria isoetiformis</i>	slender arrowhead		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Shores of sandy-bottomed lakes in the Coastal Plain ⁽⁵⁾
<i>Sarracenia rubra</i>	sweet pitcherplant	ST		Burke	Wet meadows and sphagnum moss cedar swamps ⁽¹⁾
<i>Scutellaria ocmulgee</i>	Ocmulgee skullcap	ST		Burke	Bluff forests and moist hardwood forests ⁽¹⁾
<i>Trepocarpus aethusae</i>	Aethusa-like trepocarpus		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Alluvial forests and woodlands ⁽¹⁾
Mammals					
<i>Condylura cristata</i>	star-nosed mole		SC	Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Wet soils in flood plains, swamps, meadows, and other openings near water ⁽²⁾
<i>Corynorhinus rafinesquii</i>	Rafinesque's big-eared bat	SR	SE	Burke, Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Mixed forests, abandoned buildings, caves, and cavity snags ⁽¹⁾
<i>Geomys pinetis</i>	southeastern pocket gopher	ST		Burke	Long-leaf pine woods in deep, dry, loose sands with a rich herbaceous and grass understory ⁽²⁾
<i>Neotoma floridana</i>	eastern woodrat		SC	Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Rock ledges and high-elevation forests ⁽¹⁾
<i>Spilogale putorius</i>	eastern spotted skunk		SC	Aiken (SC)	Rock outcrops in densely forested areas or habitats with significant cover and brushy areas ⁽²⁾
Birds ^(c)					
<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	bald eagle	ST	SE	Burke, Barnwell (SC)	Shorelines of large water bodies, marshes, and seacoasts ⁽¹⁾
<i>Mycteria americana</i>	wood stork	SE	SE	Burke, Barnwell (SC)	Marshes, river swamps, and cypress/gum ponds ⁽¹⁾

Table 2-12. (cont'd)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Georgia State Status ^(b)	South Carolina State Status ^(b)	County of Occurrence ^(a)	Habitat ^(d)
<i>Picoides borealis</i>	red-cockaded woodpecker	SE	SE	Burke, Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Open longleaf pine savannas and flatwoods with mixed understory ⁽¹⁾
Amphibians and Reptiles					
<i>Ambystoma tigrinum tigrinum</i>	eastern tiger salamander		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Upland pine forests, open fields, and isolated wetlands ⁽¹⁾
<i>Heterodon simus</i>	southern hognose snake	ST	SC	Burke, Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Fallow fields and longleaf pine-turkey oak forests in the Sandhills ⁽¹⁾
<i>Hyla avivoca</i>	bird-voiced treefrog		SC	Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Densely wooded swamps and floodplain forests ⁽²⁾
<i>Micrurus fulvius</i>	eastern coral snake		SC	Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Under cover in pine-oak woodlands, pine flatwoods, and mixed hardwoods with sandy soils ⁽²⁾
<i>Pituophis melanoleucus</i>	pine snake		SC	Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Dry pine forests or pine-hardwood forests ⁽¹⁾
<i>Rana capito</i>	gopher frog	SR	SE	Burke, Barnwell (SC), Aiken (SC)	Isolated wetlands and adjacent areas in dry pine flatwoods on sandy soils ⁽¹⁾

(a) Occurrences considered in the vicinity are within approximately 10 miles of the VEGP site in Burke County, Georgia, or Barnwell or Aiken Counties, South Carolina (SC). State occurrence data and distances obtained from (GDNR 2007d, 2008) and (SCDNR 2007, 2008).

(b) State status determined by the GDNR and SCDNR: SE = State Endangered, ST = State Threatened, SR = State Rare, SU = State Unusual, RC = Of Concern Regionally, SC = Species of Concern (GDNR 2007d; SCDNR 2007)

(c) The bald eagle, wood stork, and red-cockaded woodpecker are listed as occurring in Burke County (FWS 2004). However, there are no records of these species in Burke County within 10 miles of the VEGP site.

(d) Habitat information sources:

¹ GDNR 2008

² NatureServe 2007

³ NRCS 2008

⁴ USF 2008

⁵ FNA Editorial Committee 1993+

⁶ Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center NPIN 2008

⁷ Robert W. Freckmann Herbarium 2008

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3**Table 2-13.** State Listed Terrestrial Species with Recorded Occurrences in the Counties Crossed by the Transmission Line ROWs ^(a)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Georgia State Status ^(b)	South Carolina State Status ^(b)	Counties of Occurrence ^(a)	Habitat ^(c)
Plants					
<i>Allium cuthbertii</i>	striped garlic		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Sandy coastal plains and granite outcrop areas of the Piedmont ⁽⁵⁾
<i>Amphicarpum muehlenbergianum</i>	blue maiden cane		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Open areas within wet flatwoods on the outer margins of herb-dominated marshes ⁽⁴⁾
<i>Astragalus michauxii</i>	sandhill milk-vetch	ST	SC	Richmond, Screven, Washington, Barnwell (SC)	Turkey-oak sandhill scrub and longleaf pine-wiregrass savannas ⁽¹⁾
<i>Astragalus villosus</i>	bearded milk-vetch		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Understory of scrub-oak sandhills and in dry open pinelands ⁽⁴⁾
<i>Balduina atropurpurea</i>	purple honeycomb head	SR		Liberty, Long	Pocosins, pitcherplant bogs, and wet savannas ⁽¹⁾
<i>Baptisia lanceolata</i>	lance-leaf wild indigo		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Scrub oak barrens, coarse sand ridge, and turkey oak sandhills ⁽⁴⁾
<i>Carex dasycarpa</i>	velvet sedge	SR		Liberty, Long, McIntosh	Moist hardwood forests and evergreen hammocks ⁽¹⁾
<i>Carex decomposita</i>	cypress-knee sedge		SC	Barnwell (SC)	On rafted wood debris and floating logs in swamps and along lake margins ⁽¹⁾
<i>Carya myristiciformis</i>	nutmeg hickory		RC	Barnwell (SC)	Flatwoods with calcareous soils ⁽¹⁾
<i>Ceratiola ericoides</i>	sandhill rosemary	ST		Burke	Sandy, well-drained, acidic soils in dry open pinelands, scrub oak woods, and scrubby flatwoods ^(6,10)
<i>Chamaecyparis thyoides</i>	Atlantic white cedar	SR		Richmond	Within the sandhills region in clearwater streams and swamps ⁽¹⁾
<i>Coreopsis integrifolia</i>	floodplain tickseed	ST		Glynn	Along streambanks and in riparian areas and alluvial forests ⁽¹⁾

Table 2-13. (cont'd)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Georgia State Status ^(b)	South Carolina State Status ^(b)	Counties of Occurrence ^(a)	Habitat ^(c)
<i>Croton ellioti</i>	Elliot's croton		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Wet savannas, swamps, and pond margins ⁽¹⁾
<i>Cuscuta harperi</i>	Harper's dodder	SE		Washington	Herbaceous communities on rock outcrops, often with dwarf blazing star as a host species ⁽¹⁾
<i>Cypripedium acaule</i>	pink lady'slipper	SU		Richmond	Upland pine forests and mixed oak-hickory-pine forests ⁽¹⁾
<i>Dicerandra radfordiana</i>	Radford's mint	SE		McIntosh	Sand ridges ⁽¹⁾
<i>Echinacea laevigata</i>	smooth coneflower		SE	Barnwell (SC)	Wooded upland areas on crystalline mineral soils ⁽¹⁾
<i>Echinodorus parvulus</i>	dwarf burhead		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Sinkhole ponds, depressions, and shallow inundated areas ⁽¹⁾
<i>Elliottia racemosa</i>	Georgia plume	ST		Bryan, Burke, Long	Forested scrub, open forests with shallow rock, and rock outcrops ⁽¹⁾
<i>Epidendum conopseum</i>	greenfly orchid	SU		Bryan, Effingham, Glynn, Liberty, Long, McIntosh	Typically growing on limbs of evergreen hardwoods, also in cracks and crevices of rock outcrops ⁽¹⁾
<i>Eriocaulon koernickianum</i>	dwarf hatpins	SE		Hancock	Rock outcrops ⁽¹⁾
<i>Forestiera segregata</i>	Florida wild privet	SR		Chatham, Glynn, McIntosh	Coastal scrub forest shell mounds and barrier islands ⁽¹⁾
<i>Fothergilla gardenia</i>	dwarf witch alder	ST		Long	Swamps and open wooded areas in topographic depressions ⁽¹⁾
<i>Gaura biennis</i>	biennial gaura		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Dry open woods and prairies ⁽⁷⁾
<i>Halesia parviflora</i>	small-flowered silverbell tree		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Moist acidic organic soils, typically in partial shade ⁽⁹⁾

Table 2-13. (cont'd)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Georgia State Status ^(b)	South Carolina State Status ^(b)	Counties of Occurrence ^(a)	Habitat ^(c)
<i>Helenium brevifolium</i>	shortleaf sneezeweed		RC	Barnwell (SC)	Pitcher plant bogs and seepage depressions ⁽¹⁾
<i>Helenium pinnatifidum</i>	southeastern sneezeweed		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Wetlands and open swamps ⁽⁴⁾
<i>Hypericum adpressum</i>	creeping St. John's wort		RC	Barnwell (SC)	Swamps and sparsely wooded wetlands ⁽¹⁾
<i>Ipomopsis rubra</i>	standing cypress		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Dry soils with sand, gravel, or rocky composition ⁽⁶⁾
<i>Leitneria floridana</i>	corkwood	ST		Glynn, McIntosh	Saw palmetto marshes, pocosins, and cabbage palm wetlands ⁽¹⁾
<i>Lindera melissifolia</i>	pond spicebush	SE		Chatham, Effingham, Screven	Wet savannas and on the margins of standing water bodies ⁽¹⁾
<i>Lindera subcoriacea</i>	bog spicebush		RC	Barnwell (SC)	Forested seeps, wet slopes, and forested depressions ⁽¹⁾
<i>Litsea aestivalis</i>	pond spice	SR		Bryan, Effingham, Glynn, Long, McIntosh	Swamp margins, pocosins, and cypress ponds ⁽¹⁾
<i>Lobelia boykinii</i>	Boykin's lobelia		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Cypress pond peat and muck, sinkhole depressions, and wet pine savannas, often with Canby's dropwort ⁽¹⁾
<i>Ludwigia spathulata</i>	spatulate seedbox		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Wooded bogs, cypress-gum ponds, sinkhole ponds, and pools on granite outcrops ⁽¹⁾
<i>Macbridea caroliniana</i>	Carolina bird-in-a-nest		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Riparian woodlands, marshes, and swamps ⁽¹⁾
<i>Marshallia ramose</i>	pineland Barbara buttons	SR		Washington	Open forests overlying shallow rock and rock outcrops ⁽¹⁾

Table 2-13. (cont'd)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Georgia State Status ^(b)	South Carolina State Status ^(b)	Counties of Occurrence ^(a)	Habitat ^(c)
<i>Matelea pubiflora</i>	trailing milkvine	SR		Long, McIntosh	Sandridge areas and on exposed sandy soils ⁽¹⁾
<i>Menispermum canadense</i>	Canada moonseed		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Alluvial hardwood forests and bluff forests ⁽⁵⁾
<i>Monarda didyma</i>	Oswego tea		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Moist open woods, riparian woodlands, and stream banks ^(3,6)
<i>Nolina georgiana</i>	Georgia beargrass		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Open sandy pine savannas and turkey-oak forests ⁽⁵⁾
<i>Oxypolis canbyi</i>	Canby's dropwort	SE	SE	Burke, Screven, Barnwell (SC)	Cypress pond peat and muck, sinkhole depressions, and wet pine savannas, often found with Boykin's lobelia ⁽¹⁾
<i>Paronychia americana</i>	American nailwort		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Open areas and open mixed pine-hardwoods ⁽⁵⁾
<i>Penstemon dissectus</i>	cutleaf beardtongue	SR		Jefferson, Long	Rock outcrops and pine savannas near shallow rock outcrops ⁽¹⁾
<i>Platanthera lacera</i>	green-fringed orchid		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Wet depressions, bogs, riparian meadows, hydric sand flats, alluvial forests, swamps, stream banks, and wet prairies ⁽⁵⁾
<i>Pteroglossaspis ecristata</i>	crestless plume orchid	ST		Liberty, Long, McIntosh	Longleaf pine savannas, pine grasslands, and grassy saw palmetto barrens ⁽¹⁾
<i>Quercus sinuate</i>	Durand's white oak		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Limestone slopes adjacent to streams and in bluff forests ⁽¹⁾
<i>Rhexia aristosa</i>	awned meadowbeauty		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Grass-sedge dominated Carolina bays, wet savannas, depression meadows, sinkhole ponds, and cypress bays ⁽⁸⁾
<i>Rhododendron flammeum</i>	Piedmont azalea		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Dry oak-hickory woodlands on well-drained rocky or sandy soils ⁽²⁾
<i>Rhynchospora inundata</i>	drowned hornedrush		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Terraces within lower coastal plain wetlands ⁽⁵⁾

Table 2-13. (cont'd)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Georgia State Status ^(b)	South Carolina State Status ^(b)	Counties of Occurrence ^(a)	Habitat ^(c)
<i>Rhynchospora tracyi</i>	Tracy's beakrush		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Emergent in freshwater marshes, ditches and swales, or in cypress dome shallows ⁽⁵⁾
<i>Sageretia minutiflora</i>	climbing buckthorn	ST		Bryan, Glynn, McIntosh	Maritime forests over shell mounds and calcareous bluff forests ⁽¹⁾
<i>Sagittaria isoetiformis</i>	slender arrowhead		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Shores of sandy-bottomed lakes in the Coastal Plain ⁽⁵⁾
<i>Sarracenia flava</i>	yellow flytrap	SU		Effingham, Long	Wet savannas and pitcher plant bogs ⁽¹⁾
<i>Sarracenia minor</i>	hooded pitcherplant	SU		Bryan, Burke, Chatham, Glynn, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, Screven	Wet savannas and pitcher plant bogs ⁽¹⁾
<i>Sarracenia rubra</i>	sweet pitcherplant	ST		Burke, Jefferson, Richmond	Wet meadows and sphagnum moss cedar swamps ⁽¹⁾
<i>Schisandra glabra</i>	bay star vine	ST		Washington	Stream terraces and lower slopes within rich woodlands ⁽¹⁾
<i>Scleria reticularis</i>	reticulated nutrush		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Wet savannas and swales, and pond and lake margins ⁽⁵⁾
<i>Scutellaria ocmulgee</i>	Ocmulgee skullcap	ST		Burke, Richmond	Bluff forests and moist hardwood forests ⁽¹⁾
<i>Sideroxylon macrocarpum</i>	Ohoopie bumelia	SR		Long	Dry pine flatwoods and savanna with oak understory, often hidden in wiregrass ⁽¹⁾
<i>Sideroxylon thornei</i>	swamp buckthorn	SR		Liberty	Calcareous swamps and forested sinkhole depressions ⁽¹⁾

Table 2-13. (cont'd)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Georgia State Status ^(b)	South Carolina State Status ^(b)	Counties of Occurrence ^(a)	Habitat ^(c)
<i>Stewartia malacodendron</i>	silky camellia	SR		Bryan, Burke, Effingham, Hancock, Liberty, Richmond, Screven, Washington	Beech hardwood forests along streams and on lower slopes ⁽¹⁾
<i>Stillingia aquatica</i>	corkwood		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Old-growth pond cypress depressions ⁽⁴⁾
<i>Stylisma pickeringii</i> var. <i>pickeringii</i>	Pickering's morning glory	ST		Richmond	Sandhill oak scrub ⁽¹⁾
<i>Symphotrichum georgianum</i>	Georgia aster	ST		Richmond	Open areas of mixed upland forests with mineral soils, sometimes with smooth purple coneflower ⁽¹⁾
<i>Trautvetteria caroliniensis</i>	Carolina tassel rue		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Wet meadows, stream banks, bogs, and wooded seepage slopes ⁽⁵⁾
<i>Trillium reliquum</i>	relict trillium	SE		Jones	Moist hardwood forests and forested sinkholes ⁽¹⁾
Birds					
<i>Aimophila aestivalis</i>	Bachman's sparrow	SR		Bryan, Liberty, Long, McIntosh	Open woods, brushy areas, and old fields ⁽¹⁾
<i>Ammodramus henslowii</i>	Henslow's sparrow	SR		Glynn	Wet grasslands ⁽¹⁾
<i>Charadrius melodus</i>	piping plover	ST		Chatham, Glynn, Liberty, McIntosh	Sandy beaches and tidal flats ⁽¹⁾
<i>Charadrius wilsonia</i>	Wilson's plover	ST		Chatham, Glynn, Liberty, McIntosh	Sandy beaches and tidal flats ⁽¹⁾
<i>Egretta caerulea</i>	little blue heron		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Marshes, lakes, and ponds ⁽¹⁾

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Table 2-13. (cont'd)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Georgia State Status ^(b)	South Carolina State Status ^(b)	Counties of Occurrence ^(a)	Habitat ^(c)
<i>Elanoides forficatus</i>	swallow-tailed kite	SR		Bryan, Effingham, Glynn, Long, McIntosh, Screven	Marshes and floodplain swamps ⁽¹⁾
<i>Falco sparverius paulus</i>	southeastern American kestrel	SR		Long	Open pine grasslands with snags ⁽¹⁾
<i>Haematopus palliatus</i>	American oystercatcher	SR		Chatham, Glynn, McIntosh	Salt marshes, tidal flats, and sandy beaches ⁽¹⁾
<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	bald eagle	ST	ST	Baldwin, Bryan, Chatham, Glynn, Hancock, Jefferson, Jones, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, Monroe, Barnwell (SC)	Shorelines of large water bodies, marshes, and seacoasts ⁽¹⁾
<i>Picoides borealis</i>	red-cockaded woodpecker	SE	SE	Bryan, Chatham, Effingham, Jones, Liberty, Long, Putnam, Washington, Barnwell (SC)	Open longleaf pine savannas and flatwoods with mixed understory ⁽¹⁾
<i>Rynchops niger</i>	black skimmer	SR		Chatham, Glynn, McIntosh	Tidal ponds and sandy beaches ⁽¹⁾
<i>Sterna antillarum</i>	least tern	SR		Chatham, McIntosh	Sandy beaches and sandbars ⁽¹⁾
<i>Sterna nilotica</i>	gull-billed tern	ST		Glynn, McIntosh	Salt marshes and sandy beaches ⁽¹⁾
<i>Vermivora bachmanii</i>	Bachman's warbler	SE		Long	Canebrake swamps and bottomland hardwoods ⁽¹⁾

Table 2-13. (cont'd)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Georgia State Status ^(b)	South Carolina State Status ^(b)	Counties of Occurrence ^(a)	Habitat ^(c)
Amphibians and Reptiles					
<i>Ambystoma cingulatum</i>	flatwoods salamander	ST		Bryan, Burke, Chatham, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, Screven	Isolated cypress/gum wetlands, wet pine flatwoods, moist savannas, and longleaf pine wetlands ⁽¹⁾
<i>Clemmys guttata</i>	spotted turtle	SU	ST	Bryan, Burke, Chatham, Effingham, Jefferson, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, Screven, Washington, Barnwell (SC)	Small ponds, marshes, bogs, and heavily vegetated swamps ⁽¹⁾
<i>Drymarchon couperi</i>	eastern indigo snake	ST		Bryan, Glynn, Long, McIntosh	Longleaf pine forests and pine flatwoods in the sandhills ⁽¹⁾
<i>Gopherus polyphemus</i>	gopher tortoise	ST		Bryan, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, Screven, Washington	Longleaf pine-turkey oak woods and pine flatwoods in sandy soils with rich herbaceous communities ⁽¹⁾
<i>Heterodon simus</i>	southern hognose snake	ST		Bryan, Burke, Effingham, Jefferson, Liberty, Long, Richmond, Screven	Fallow fields and longleaf pine-turkey oak forests in the Sandhills ⁽¹⁾
<i>Hyla avivoca</i>	bird-voiced treefrog		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Densely wooded swamps and floodplain forests ⁽²⁾
<i>Notophthalmus perstriatus</i>	striped newt	ST		Bryan, Liberty, Long, Screven	Isolated wetlands in pine savannas and flatwoods ⁽¹⁾
<i>Ophisaurus mimicus</i>	mimic glass lizard	SR		Effingham, Liberty, Long, McIntosh	Seepage bogs, wet pine savannas, and wet flatwoods ⁽¹⁾

1
2

Table 2-13. (cont'd)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Georgia State Status ^(b)	South Carolina State Status ^(b)	Counties of Occurrence ^(a)	Habitat ^(c)
<i>Rana capito</i>	gopher frog	SR	SE	Bryan, Burke, Chatham, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, Richmond, Screven, Barnwell (SC)	Isolated wetlands and adjacent areas in dry pine flatwoods on sandy soils ⁽¹⁾
Insects					
<i>Cordulegaster sayi</i>	Say's spiketail	ST		Effingham, Liberty	Silty-mucky seepage areas and pools of first-order, spring-fed streams ⁽¹⁾
Mammals					
<i>Condylura cristata</i>	star-nosed mole		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Wet soils in flood plains, swamps, meadows, and other openings near water ⁽²⁾
<i>Corynorhinus rafinesquii</i>	Rafinesque's big-eared bat	SR	SE	Liberty, McIntosh, Barnwell (SC)	Mixed forests, abandoned buildings, caves, and cavity snags ⁽¹⁾
<i>Neotoma floridana</i>	eastern woodrat		SC	Barnwell (SC)	Rock ledges and high-elevation forests ⁽¹⁾

(a) Counties crossed by ROWs include: Baldwin, Bryan, Burke, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn, Hancock, Jefferson, Jones, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, Monroe, Putnam, Richmond, Screven, and Washington in Georgia; and Barnwell in South Carolina. State occurrence data and distances obtained from GDNR (2008) and SCDNR (2007a).

(b) State status determined by the GDNR and SCDNR: SE = State Endangered, ST = State Threatened, SR = State Rare, SU = State Unusual, SC = Species of Concern (GDNR 2008; SCDNR 2007).

(c) Habitat information sources:

¹ GDNR 2008

² NatureServe 2007

³ NRCS 2008

⁴ USF 2008

⁵ FNA Editorial Committee 1993+

⁶ Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center NPIN 2008

⁷ Robert W. Freckmann Herbarium 2008

⁸ The Center for Plant Conservation 2008

⁹ Kemper Center for Home Gardening 2008

¹⁰ USDA 2008

2.2.7 Radiological Impacts

Radiological releases, doses to members of the public, and the resultant environmental impacts, are summarized in two VEGP reports: the *Annual Radioactive Effluent Release Report* (SNC 2003a, 2004a, 2005a, 2006b, 2007c) and the *Annual Radiological Environmental Operating Report* (SNC 2003b, 2004b, 2005c, 2006g, 2007m). Limits for all radiological releases are specified in the VEGP ODCM and are used to meet Federal radiation protection limits and standards. The following discussion focuses on 1) the radiological environmental impacts and 2) the dose impacts to the public and the environment, in and around the VEPG site.

1) Radiological Environmental Impacts:

VEGP conducts a radiological environmental monitoring program (REMP) in which radiological impacts to the environment and the public around the VEGP site are monitored, documented, and compared to NRC standards. VEPG summarizes the results of their REMP in an *Annual Radiological Environmental Operating Report* (SNC 2003b, 2004b, 2005c, 2006g, 2007m). The pre-operational stage of the VEPG's REMP began with initial sample collections in August of 1981. The transition from pre-operational to operational stage of VEPG's REMP occurred as Unit 1 reached initial criticality on March 9, 1987. The objectives of the VEPG's REMP are to:

- Measure and evaluate the effects of facility operation on the environs and verify the effectiveness of the controls on radioactive effluents;
- Monitor natural radiation levels in the environs of the VEPG site; and
- Demonstrate compliance with the requirements of applicable Federal regulatory agencies, including technical specifications and the ODCM.

The REMP at VEPG samples environmental media in the environs around the site to analyze and measure the radioactivity levels that may be present. The media samples are representative of the radiation exposure pathways to the public from all plant radioactive effluents. The REMP measures direct radiation, the airborne, and the waterborne pathways for radioactivity in the vicinity of the VEPG site. Direct radiation pathways include radiation from buildings and plant structures and airborne material that may be released from the plant. In addition, the REMP also measures background radiation (i.e., cosmic sources, naturally occurring radioactive material, including radon and global fallout). Thermoluminescent dosimeters (TLDs) are used to measure direct radiation. The airborne pathway includes measurements of radioiodine and particulates in air samples. The waterborne pathway consists of measurements of surface water, drinking water, and sediment from the Savannah River.

During 2006, there were no plant-related activation or fission products detected in airborne samples, milk, and grassy or broadleaf vegetation. Radionuclides attributable to plant operation

1 were detected during 2006 in samples of surface water, fish, drinking water, and shoreline
2 sediment (SNC 2007m). However, the reported data on the radionuclides detected in
3 environmental samples were below applicable NRC reporting levels and showed no significant
4 or measurable impact on the environment from the operation of VEGP.

5
6 The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GEPD) has an extensive environmental
7 radiation monitoring program that routinely conducts sampling and analysis of selected
8 environmental media in conjunction with VEGP. The GEPD's environmental radiation
9 monitoring program includes TLDs for monitoring direct radiation, samples of air, precipitation,
10 soil, vegetation, milk, assorted crops, surface (river) water, groundwater, fish, seafood, and river
11 sediment. The results of the GEPD's 2000 to 2002 environmental radiation monitoring report
12 showed that the levels of radionuclides detected in environmental samples were below
13 applicable NRC reporting levels and showed no significant or measurable impact on the
14 environment from the operation of VEPG (GEPD 2004).

15
16 In addition to the routine REMP, the applicant established an on-site groundwater protection
17 program in 2006. The program is designed to monitor the on-site environment for indication of
18 leaks from plant systems and pipes carrying liquids with radioactive material. The results were
19 reported in the *VEGP 2006 Annual Radiological Environmental Operating Report* (SNC 2007m).
20 The report stated that, in 2006, VEGP sampled onsite drinking water deep wells and onsite
21 makeup water deep wells for tritium and gamma isotopic activity. No detectable activity was
22 found in the water samples. The applicant plans to implement a more extensive radiological
23 groundwater monitoring program that may include additional monitoring wells based on site
24 hydrology information. The results of the monitoring program will be reported each year in the
25 *Annual Radiological Environmental Operating Report*.

26 27 2) Radiological Dose Impacts:

28
29 A review of historical data on radiological releases from VEGP during the period from 2002
30 through 2006 and the resultant dose calculations demonstrate that the dose to a maximally
31 exposed individual in the vicinity of VEGP was a small fraction of the limits and standards
32 specified in 10 CFR Part 20, Appendix I to 10 CFR Part 50, and 40 CFR Part 190. VEPG
33 summarizes the results of their radiological releases and the resultant doses in the *Annual
34 Radioactive Effluent Release Report* (SNC 2003a, 2004a, 2005a, 2006b, 2007c). A summary of
35 the calculated maximum dose to an individual located at the VEGP site boundary from liquid
36 and gaseous effluents released during 2006 is as follows:

37
38 For 2006, dose values for each reactor unit were calculated based on actual liquid and gaseous
39 effluent release data and conservative models to simulate the transport mechanisms. The
40 results are described in the *2006 Annual Radioactive Effluent Release Report* (SNC 2007c).

1 The 2006 calculated maximum whole-body dose to an offsite member of the general public from
2 liquid effluents was 3.01 E-02 millirem (mrem) (3.01 E-04 millisievert [mSv]) for Unit 1 and 2.20
3 E-02 mrem (2.20 E-04 mSv) for Unit 2. These doses are well below the 3 mrem (0.03 mSv) per
4 reactor dose design objective in Appendix I to 10 CFR Part 50.

5
6 The 2006 calculated maximum organ dose to an offsite member of the general public from liquid
7 effluents was 3.40 E-02 mrem (3.40 E-04 mSv) to the liver for Unit 1 and 2.36 E-02 mrem (2.36
8 E-04 mSv) to the lung for Unit 2. These doses are well below the 10 mrem (0.10 mSv) dose
9 design objective in Appendix I to 10 CFR Part 50.

10
11 The 2006 calculated maximum gamma air dose at the site boundary from noble gas discharges
12 was 3.14 E-05 millirad (mrad) (3.14 E-07 milligray [mGy]) for Unit 1 and 6.89 E-05 mrad (6.89 E-
13 07 mGy) for Unit 2. These doses are well below the 10 mrad (0.10 mGy) dose design objective
14 in Appendix I to 10 CFR Part 50.

15
16 The 2006 calculated maximum beta air dose at the site boundary from noble gas discharges
17 was 1.79 E-05 mrad (1.79 E-07 mGy) for Unit 1 and 6.14 E-05 mrad (6.14 E-06 mGy) for Unit 2.
18 These doses are well below the 20 mrad (0.20 mGy) dose design objective in Appendix I to 10
19 CFR Part 50.

20
21 The 2006 calculated maximum organ dose to an offsite member of the general public from
22 gaseous radioiodine, tritium, and particulate effluents was 3.85 E-04 mrem (3.85 E-06 mSv) for
23 Unit 1 and 1.40 E-04 mrem (1.40 E-06 mSv) for Unit 2. These doses are well below the 15
24 mrem (0.15 mSv) dose design objective in Appendix I to 10 CFR Part 50.

25
26 The NRC staff found that the 2006 radiological data are consistent, with reasonable variation
27 due to operating conditions and outages, with the five year historical radiological effluent
28 releases and resultant doses. These results confirm that VEGP is operating in compliance with
29 Federal radiation protection standards contained in Appendix I to 10 CFR Part 50, 10 CFR Part
30 20, and 40 CFR Part 190.

31
32 The applicant does not anticipate any significant changes to the radioactive effluent releases or
33 exposure pathways from VEGP operations during the license renewal term and the impacts to
34 the environment are, therefore, not expected to change. Based on the applicant's assertion that
35 there are no refurbishment activities planned, similar small doses to members of the public and
36 small impacts to the environment are expected over the license renewal term.

37 38 **2.2.8 Socioeconomic Factors**

39
40 This section describes current socioeconomic factors that have the potential to be directly or
41 indirectly affected by changes in operations at VEGP. VEGP and the communities that support

1 it can be described as a dynamic socioeconomic system. The communities provide the people,
 2 goods, and services required by VEGP operations. VEGP operations, in turn, create the
 3 demand and pay for the people, goods, and services in the form of wages, salaries, and
 4 benefits for jobs and dollar expenditures for goods and services. The measure of the
 5 communities' ability to support the demands of VEGP depends on their ability to respond to
 6 changing environmental, social, economic, and demographic conditions.

7
 8 The socioeconomic region of influence (ROI) is defined by the areas where VEGP employees
 9 and their families reside, spend their income, and use their benefits, thereby affecting the
 10 economic conditions of the region. The ROI consists of a three-county area, which is where
 11 approximately 80 percent of VEGP employees reside: Columbia (34 percent), Richmond (26
 12 percent), and Burke (20 percent). The following sections describe the housing, public services,
 13 off-site land use, visual aesthetics and noise, population demography, and the economy in the
 14 ROI surrounding the VEGP site.

15
 16 VEGP employs a permanent workforce of around 860 employees (SNC 2007a). Approximately
 17 90 percent live in Burke, Columbia, Richmond, and Screven Counties, Georgia and Aiken
 18 County, South Carolina (Table 2-14). The remaining 10 percent are divided among 15 counties
 19 in Georgia and 6 counties in South Carolina with numbers ranging from 1 to 16 employees per
 20 county. Given the location of VEGP and the residential locations of VEGP employees, the most
 21 significant impacts of plant operations are likely to occur in Burke, Columbia, and Richmond
 22 counties, Georgia, where approximately 80 percent of the VEGP employees reside. The focus
 23 of the analysis in this draft SEIS is therefore on the impacts of VEGP in these three counties.

24
 25 VEGP schedules refueling outages at 18-month intervals. During refueling outages, site
 26 employment increases by as many as 800 workers for approximately 30 days of temporary duty.
 27 Most of these workers are assumed to be located in the same geographic areas as the
 28 permanent VEGP staff.

29
 30 **Table 2-14.** VEGP Permanent Employee Residence by County in 2005
 31

County ^(a)	Workforce Number	Percent of Workforce	County Population ^(b)
Columbia	289	34	103,490
Richmond	224	26	194,135
Burke	170	20	23,154
Screven	58	7	15,288
Aiken	37	4	150,053
Jenkins	16	2	8,715

Table 2-14. (cont'd)

County ^(a)	Workforce Number	Percent of Workforce	County Population ^(b)
Jefferson	13	2	16,783
Emanuel	12	1	22,186
Bulloch	10	1	62,011
Other Counties	33	3	--
Total	862	100	--

(a) Listed counties are located in Georgia except for Aiken, which is in South Carolina.

(b) Estimated 2005 population.

Source: SNC 2007a and USCB 2007a

2.2.8.1 Housing

Table 2-15 lists the total number of occupied housing units, vacancy rates, and median value in the three-county ROI. According to the 2000 Census, there were nearly 124,500 housing units in the ROI, of which approximately 113,000 were occupied; the median value of owner-occupied units was \$84,900. The vacancy rate was higher in Burke and Richmond Counties (10 percent) and lower in Columbia County (7 percent). The median value was highest in Columbia County (\$118,000).

In 2005, the total number of housing units in Burke County had grown by more than 330 units to 9178 (USCB 2007b).

Table 2-15. Housing in Burke, Columbia, and Richmond Counties, Georgia, in 2000

	Burke	Columbia	Richmond	ROI
Total housing units	8,842	33,321	82,312	124,475
Occupied housing units	7,934	31,120	73,920	112,974
Vacant units	908	2,201	8,392	11,501
Vacancy rate (percent)	10	7	10	9
Median value (dollars)	59,800	118,000	76,800	84,900

Source: USCB 2000a

1 **2.2.8.2 Public Services**

2
3 **2.2.8.2.1 Water Supply**

4
5 Approximately 80 percent of the VEGP employees reside in Columbia (34 percent), Richmond
6 (26 percent), and Burke (20 percent) Counties (SNC 2007a). The major public water suppliers
7 in the three counties, including municipalities, obtain their drinking water supply from surface
8 water and/or groundwater sources. Columbia County lies north of the Fall Line, a geomorphic
9 boundary between the Piedmont and the Coastal Plain. It is characterized by a limited
10 groundwater supply because of the dense, crystalline rock underlying the area. Like most of the
11 large municipal systems above the Fall Line, Columbia County obtains its water from the
12 Savannah River or one of its impoundments (USCB 2000a).

13
14 In the Coastal Plains of Georgia and South Carolina, two major regional aquifer systems can
15 supply about 3 mgd of water: the Cretaceous and the Tertiary. Most counties in the Coastal
16 Plain, including Burke and Richmond, obtain their water from these aquifers; some
17 municipalities use the Savannah River to supplement their supply (CSRARDC 2005). Tables 2-
18 16 and 2-17 provide public water supply information for the Burke, Columbia, and Richmond
19 County community water systems, including permitted capacity and average daily production.
20 Table 2-16 presents information for groundwater withdrawals and Table 2-17 addresses surface
21 water withdrawals. The population served by each system, by water source, is also provided.

22
23 **Table 2-16.** Public Water Supply System Capacity and Usage for Groundwater Withdrawals

24

System Name	Permitted Annual Average Withdrawal (MGD)	Reported Annual Average Withdrawal (MGD)	Population Served
Burke County			
Waynesboro	3.50	0.79	5,813
Sardis	0.40	0.07	1,152
Columbia County			
Columbia County ^(a)	0.58	0.00	77,280
Grovetown	0.90	0.13	6,089
Harlem	0.25	0.02	4,290
Richmond County			
Augusta-Richmond County Water System	17.40	8.40	180,000

Table 2-16. (cont'd)

System Name	Permitted Annual Average Withdrawal (MGD)	Reported Annual Average Withdrawal (MGD)	Population Served
Hephzibah	1.20	0.34	3,011

(a) Columbia County system is withdrawn primarily from surface-water systems

Sources: GEPD 2005 (permitted withdrawal), SNC 2007a (reported withdrawal), and EPA 2007 (population).

Table 2-17. Public Water Supply System Capacity and Usage for Surface Water Withdrawals

System Name	Permitted Monthly Average Withdrawal (MGD)	Reported Monthly Average Withdrawal (MGD)	Population Served
Burke County			
Waynesboro	1.0	0.10 - 0.19	5,813
Sardis ^(a)	--	--	--
Columbia County			
Columbia County	39.0	8.35 - 17.78	77,280
Grovetown ^(a)	--	--	--
Harlem ^(a)	--	--	--
Richmond County			
Augusta-Richmond County Water System	60.0	24.40 - 44.34	180,000
Hephzibah ^(a)	--	--	--

(a) System does not withdraw surface water.

Sources: GEPD 2007(permitted withdrawal), SNC 2007a (reported withdrawal), and EPA 2007 (population).

According to the regional planning agency for the central Savannah River area, Burke, Columbia, and Richmond Counties are adequately served by the existing water supply and it is estimated that the region will have sufficient supply through the planning period (that is, 2005 to 2025) (CSRARDC 2005).

2.2.8.2.2 Education

Burke, Columbia, and Richmond Counties have a total of 96 public primary and secondary schools, with a 2006 to 2007 student enrollment of 58,544 (GOSA 2007). The public school systems in the three-county ROI surrounding the VEGP site are organized by county. The largest of these school districts is Richmond County School District, which has a student enrollment of more than 32,000. Although it has had over-crowding issues for several years, the district now meets the student-teacher ratios mandated by the Georgia Department of Education. The Columbia County School District, with a student enrollment of over 20,000, is the second largest of the three districts. It has had the highest rate of growth of the three districts in recent years. Enrollment grew by more than 1000 students during the 2005 to 2006 school year and an increase of approximately 800 is expected for the 2007 to 2008 year. The district provides educational services to high growth residential areas near the city of Augusta and struggles to meet State-mandated student-teacher ratios. The Columbia County Board of Education has given high priority to new school construction. Burke County School District, the smallest of the three, differs from the two larger districts in that it has excess capacity. The Burke County School District office estimates that it has excess capacity of approximately 17 percent as of the 2006 to 2007 school year, and that their schools could serve 700 to 800 additional students (NRC 2007).

2.2.8.2.3 Transportation

Figures 2-1 and 2-2 show the VEGP site and highways within a 50-mi radius and a 6-mi radius of VEGP. At the larger regional scale, the major highways serving VEGP are:

- (1) Interstate 20 (I-20), located approximately 25 miles north of VEGP, which runs east-west through Augusta and connects Columbia, South Carolina, and Atlanta, Georgia;
- (2) I-520, which is a beltway that partly encircles Augusta to the west and south;
- (3) U.S. Route 25, a major north-south highway which is located approximately 15 miles west of VEGP and runs through the city of Waynesboro;
- (4) The Savannah River Parkway, a new four-lane connector under construction between Augusta and Savannah, which follows U.S. Route 25 in its route through the county (Burke County portion is open to traffic (Burke County 2007)); and
- (4) State Route 56, which connects rural towns in Burke County with Augusta to the north, and State Route 23, located approximately 4 miles west of VEGP, which connects with State Route 56 north of VEGP.

1 Local road access to VEGP is via County Road 59, also known as River Road, which forks off
2 from State Route 56 north of the site and intersects with the VEGP access road. Employees
3 who live to the north of VEGP in Columbia and Richmond Counties travel south on State Route
4 56 and then take River Road to reach the site. Employees living to the west in Richmond
5 County would either connect directly to State Route 56 or use U.S. Route 25 and then take a
6 county road to connect to State Route 56 and from there to River Road. Workers who live in
7 Burke County can use a number of State highways to reach VEGP, including State Routes 56,
8 24, and 80 to State Route 23, which connects to River Road (SNC 2007a).

9
10 The *Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants* (GEIS),
11 NUREG-1437, Volumes 1 and 2 (NRC 1996; 1999)^(a) uses the Transportation Research Board's
12 level of service (LOS) classification system, which characterizes operational conditions on a
13 roadway, to describe existing conditions for local transportation networks. The Georgia
14 Department of Transportation makes LOS determinations for roadways involved in specific
15 projects. However, there are no current LOS determinations for the roadways used by VEGP
16 employees residing in Burke, Columbia, or Richmond Counties (SNC 2007a). In Columbia and
17 Richmond Counties, most of the roads have been assigned an "urban" designation, while in
18 Burke County the roads are all designated "rural." Within the three-county area, traffic volumes
19 are highest on roadways in and around the city of Augusta, with annual average daily traffic
20 counts (two-way) of over 62,000 on I-20 and nearly 80,000 on I-520. Traffic volumes in Burke
21 County are highest around Waynesboro, where annual average daily traffic counts range from
22 nearly 3,500 to over 14,000. In the rest of Burke County, annual average daily traffic counts are
23 generally less than 5000. The traffic count locations closest to VEGP are located on State
24 Route 23 west of the site (2570 to 3020) and on River Road to the north (1370) (GDOT 2007).

25
26 The three-county region is served by two primary railroads, CSX and Norfolk Southern. Within
27 Burke County, a Norfolk Southern rail line runs from Augusta through Waynesboro. There is rail
28 service to VEGP via a 20-mi spur from that Norfolk Southern line, connecting north of
29 Waynesboro (NRC 2007).

30 31 **2.2.8.3 Off-site Land Use**

32
33 VEGP is located in eastern Burke County adjacent to the Savannah River, which is the border
34 between Georgia and South Carolina. Current land use surrounding the VEGP property is
35 primarily forest and agricultural (with a few homes and small farms), including a mixture of row
36 crops and pasture, pine plantations, unused fields, and second-growth forests of hardwoods
37 and mixed pine-hardwoods (SNC 2007a). The nearest permanent residence is located 1.2
38 miles west-southwest of VEGP (SNC 2007m). Features within the vicinity of VEGP (that is,
39 within a 6-mi radius of the site) are shown in Figure 2-2. The crossroads community of Telfair

^(a) The GEIS was originally issued in 1996. Addendum 1 to the GEIS was issued in 1999. Hereafter, all references to the "GEIS" include the GEIS and its Addendum 1.

1 Woods is approximately 5 miles southwest of VEGP. Nearby population centers are the
 2 communities of Girard (population 227) and Sardis (population 1171), which are approximately
 3 8 and 12 miles to the south, respectively (USCB 2000b). Waynesboro, 15 miles to the west, is
 4 the principal city and county seat of Burke County. The SRS is located directly across the
 5 Savannah River from VEGP, in Aiken and Barnwell Counties, South Carolina. It is a large DOE
 6 facility with restricted access. The portion of SRS within the VEGP 6-mi radius contains two
 7 remediated industrial areas and one fossil-fueled power plant, with the balance of the area
 8 forested (SNC 2007a).

9
 10 Approximately 80 percent of current VEGP employees reside in Burke, Columbia, and
 11 Richmond Counties, Georgia. Table 2-18 identifies, for each of the three counties, the acres in
 12 each land use category and the percent of the total land area that each category occupies.

13
 14 **Table 2-18.** Land Use in Burke, Columbia and Richmond Counties, Georgia
 15

Land Uses	Burke County (a) (2007)		Columbia County (b) (2005)		Richmond County (c) (2003)	
	ac	% of Total	ac	% of Total	ac	% of Total
Residential	6,877	1.3	110,529	58.3	54,328	25.8
Commercial	997	0.2	2,142	1.1	5,772	2.7
Industrial	545	0.1	2,103	1.1	9,402	4.5
Transportation / Communications / Utilities	3,970	0.8	331	0.2	11,893	5.7
Public / Institutional	2,955	0.6	1,688	0.9	52,890 ^(e)	25.2
Parks / Open Spaces / Conservation	17,063	3.2	2,936	1.6	5,903	2.8
Agriculture / Forestry / Undeveloped ^(d)	489,845	93.8	69,813	36.8	70,020	33.3
Total	522,352	100	189,542	100	210,208	100.0

(a) Burke County 2007, Figure 3-2

(b) Columbia County 2005

(c) ARCPC 2004, Table L-1

(d) For Burke County only, this category also includes rural residential and "no data".

(e) Includes 44,286 acres at Fort Gordon.

16
 17 Agriculture/forestry/undeveloped is the primary land use category in each county, in particular
 18 Burke County where it occupies 93.8 percent of the total land area.

2.2.8.4 Visual Aesthetics and Noise

Some of the VEGP facility structures can be seen from the immediate surrounding area, which has gently rolling topography. The main vertical components of the VEGP building complex are the natural draft cooling towers (500 feet tall) and the domed reactor containment buildings (180 feet tall). In the vicinity of the site, the cooling towers and the upper portion of the reactor containment can be seen from State Route 56, River Road, and portions of the Savannah River. The plumes, and in some cases the towers themselves, can be seen from across the river in South Carolina in the southern part of Aiken County, in the vicinity of State Highway 125 in Allendale and Barnwell Counties, and along some parts of I-520. The visibility of the plumes is affected by the weather and wind patterns as well as the location of the viewer in relation to local topography (SNC 2007b). Portions of overhead transmission lines are visible, especially as they pass over local roads as well as numerous county, State and U.S. highways on their way to connect to the regional electric power grid. As described in Section 2.1.7 of this draft SEIS, these lines are contained within approximately 360 miles of ROWs that include a total area of approximately 6395 acres.

The VEGP site generates noise, in particular from the cooling towers, transformers and other electrical equipment, circulating water pumps, and public address system. Noise levels produced by VEGP operations have not been directly measured. However, background noise levels were measured at several locations along the site property line in conjunction with the application for the original operating license, and noise emission levels for operating plant conditions have been predicted at those locations. The predicted total noise levels, including background and operational noise, are in the range of 25 to 40 decibels (dBa), which is similar to the average background noise levels of 22 to 39 dBa. Therefore, the noise generated by VEGP operations is expected to decrease to near ambient levels by the time it reaches receptors outside the property boundary (SNC 2007a).

2.2.8.5 Demography

According to the 2000 Census, approximately 43,857 people lived within a 20-mi radius of VEGP, which equates to a population density of 46 persons per square mile (SNC 2007a). This density translates to sparseness Category 2 (40 to 60 persons per square mile and no community with 25,000 or more persons within 20 miles) using the GEIS measure of sparseness.

Approximately 670,000 people live within a 50-mi radius of VEGP (SNC 2007a). This equates to a population density of 89 persons per square mile. Applying the GEIS proximity measures, VEGP is classified as proximity Category 3 (one or more cities with 100,000 or more persons and less than 190 persons per square mile within 50 miles). Therefore, according to the sparseness and proximity matrix presented in the GEIS, the VEGP ranks of sparseness

1 Category 2 and proximity Category 3 result in the conclusion that VEGP is located in a medium
 2 population area.

3
 4 Table 2-19 shows population levels, projections, and growth rates from 1970 to 2050 in Burke,
 5 Columbia, and Richmond counties; population for the state of Georgia is provided for
 6 comparison. Columbia County experienced the greatest rate of growth of the three counties,
 7 with increases of 35 percent to almost 80 percent during the period 1970 to 2000. Except for
 8 Columbia County, the ROI has shown lower growth rates than the State as a whole. Beyond
 9 2000, the population is expected to continue increasing, although at a lower rate. One
 10 exception is Richmond County, whose population is expected to decrease during the period of
 11 2000 to 2010, after which it is expected to increase moderately.

12
 13 **Table 2-19.** Population and Percent Growth in Burke, Columbia and Richmond Counties, Georgia, from
 14 1970 to 2000 and Projected for 2010 to 2050
 15

Year	Burke County		Columbia County		Richmond County		Georgia	
	Population	Percent Growth ^(a)	Population	Percent Growth ^(a)	Population	Percent Growth ^(a)	Population	Percent Growth ^(a)
1970 ^(b)	18,255	--	22,327	--	162,437	--	4,589,575	--
1980 ^(b)	19,349	6.0	40,118	79.7	181,629	11.8	5,463,105	19.0
1990 ^(b)	20,579	6.4	66,031	64.6	189,719	4.5	6,478,216	18.6
2000 ^(c)	22,243	8.1	89,288	35.2	199,775	5.3	8,186,453	26.4
2010 ^(d)	24,561	10.4	116,642	30.6	193,914	-2.9	9,864,970	20.5
2020 ^(e)	25,649	4.4	138,221	18.5	209,825	8.2	10,898,705	10.5
2030 ^(e)	27,200	6.0	162,001	17.2	217,935	3.9	12,226,119	12.2
2040 ^(e)	28,750	5.7	185,781	14.7	226,045	3.7	13,553,533	10.8
2050 ^(e)	30,301	5.4	209,561	12.8	234,155	3.6	14,880,947	9.8

- (a) Percent growth rate is calculated over the previous decade.
- (b) USCB 1995
- (c) USCB 2000c
- (d) State of Georgia 2005
- (e) Projected population data for 2020 to 2050 were calculated.

16
 17 The 2000 demographic profile of the region of influence population is included in Table 2–20.
 18 Persons self-designated as minority individuals comprise approximately 45 percent of the
 19 combined total population of these three counties. This minority population is composed largely
 20 of Black or African American residents who reside in Burke and Richmond counties.

21
 22 **2.2.8.5.1 Transient Population**
 23

24 Within 50 miles (80 kilometers) of VEGP, colleges and recreational opportunities attract daily
 25 and seasonal visitors who create demand for temporary housing and services. In 2000 in Burke

1 and Columbia counties, 1.2 and 1.0 percent, respectively, of all housing units are considered
 2 temporary housing for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. By comparison, temporary
 3 housing accounts for only 0.4 percent and 0.2 percent of total housing units in Richmond
 4 County and Georgia, respectively (USCB 2000b). In 2006, there were approximately 43,700
 5 students attending colleges and universities within 50 miles of VEGP (NCES 2007).

7 **2.2.8.5.2 Migrant Farm Workers**

8
 9 Migrant farm workers are individuals whose employment requires travel to harvest agricultural
 10 crops. These workers may or may not have a permanent residence. Some migrant workers
 11 may follow the harvesting of crops, particularly fruits and vegetables, throughout the
 12 southeastern U.S. rural areas. Others may be permanent residents near VEGP who travel from
 13 farm to farm harvesting crops.

14
 15 **Table 2-20.** Demographic Profile of the Population in the VEGP Region of Influence
 16

	Burke County	Columbia County	Richmond County	Region of Influence
Total Population (2000)	22,243	89,288	199,775	311,306
Race (2000) (percent of total non-Hispanic population)				
White	47.1	83.3	45.6	56.6
Black or African American	51.5	11.4	50.8	39.5
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3
Asian	0.2	3.4	1.5	2.0
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
Some other race	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2
Two or more races	0.9	1.3	1.5	1.4
Ethnicity				
Hispanic or Latino	316	2,313	5,545	8,174
Percent of total population	1.4	2.6	2.8	2.6
Minority Population (including Hispanic or Latino ethnicity)				
Total minority population	11,907	16,850	111,115	139,872
Percent minority	53.5	18.9	55.6	44.9

Source: USCB 2000d

17
 18 Migrant workers may be members of minority or low-income populations. Because they travel
 19 and can spend a significant amount of time in an area without being actual residents, migrant
 20 workers may be unavailable for counting by census takers. If uncounted, these workers would

1 be “underrepresented” in U.S. Census Bureau (USCB) minority and low-income population
2 counts.

3
4 Information of migrant workers was collected for the first time in the 2002 Census of Agriculture.
5 Table 2-21 provides information on temporary farm workers, farms with temporary workers, and
6 farms that reported hired workers that are migrant workers. Information is included for the
7 counties within a 50-mi radius of the VEGP site. The counties within the VEGP region host
8 relatively small numbers of migrant workers. According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture
9 estimates, 3478 temporary farm laborers (those working fewer than 150 days per year) were
10 employed on 872 farms in the counties within a 50-mi radius of the VEGP site. The county with
11 the largest number of temporary workers (949 on 76 farms) is Edgefield, in South Carolina. In
12 Georgia, Burke County had the greatest number of temporary workers (258 on 110 farms).
13 Farm operators were asked whether any hired workers were migrant workers, defined as a farm
14 worker whose employment required travel that prevented the migrant worker from returning to
15 his/her permanent place of residence the same day. A total of 87 farms in the VEGP region
16 reported hired migrant workers. Aiken County, South Carolina, had the greatest number of
17 farms (21) with hired migrant workers, followed by Barnwell County, South Carolina, with 16
18 farms. Only 9 farms in Burke County, Georgia reported hired migrant workers (USDA 2004a
19 and 2004b).

20
21 **Table 2-21.** Farms that Employ Migrant Labor within 50 miles of VEGP ^(a)
22

County	Total Farms ^(b)	Temporary Workers ^(c)	Farms with Temporary Workers ^(d)	Farms with Hired Migrant Workers ^(e)
Georgia				
Burke	494	258	110	9
Richmond	140	59	20	0
Columbia	196	93	32	0
Jenkins	240	146	45	2
Screven	347	218	83	4
Emanuel	554	219	81	5
Jefferson	388	185	69	1
McDuffie	296	191	37	2
Total	2,655	1,369	477	23
South Carolina				
Aiken	929	229	120	21
Edgefield	325	949	76	9

Table 2-21. (cont'd)

County	Total Farms ^(b)	Temporary Workers ^(c)	Farms with Temporary Workers ^(d)	Farms with Hired Migrant Workers ^(e)
Allendale	156	190	25	5
Barnwell	370	245	91	16
Bamberg	340	281	42	13
Hampton	248	215	41	0
Total	2,368	2,109	395	64
Region Total	5,023	3,478	872	87

(a) Includes counties with approximately more than half their area within a 50-mi radius of VEGP.

(b) From Table 1 (USDA 2004a and 2004b).

(c) Workers that have worked less than 150 days - from Table 7 (USDA 2004a and 2004b).

(d) Farms with workers that have worked less than 150 days - from Table 7 (USDA 2004a and 2004b).

(e) Migrant farm labor on farms with hired labor - from Table 7 (USDA 2004a and 2004b).

2.2.8.6 Economy

This section contains a discussion of the economy, including employment and income, unemployment, and taxes.

2.2.8.6.1 Employment and Income

Between 2000 and 2006, the civilian labor force in Burke County increased 10.0 percent to the 2006 level of 10,141. The civilian labor force in Columbia County grew 21.1 percent to the 2006 level of 57,433 and in Richmond County the civilian labor force grew 3.5 percent to 90,641 in 2006 (GADL 2007a).

In 2006, employment in the services industry represented the largest sector of employment in all three counties followed closely by government, and the retail trade and manufacturing industries. Southern Nuclear Operating Company, with 862 permanent employees (see Table 2-20), is one of the largest employers in Burke County. The other top five employers in Burke County in 2006 were Brentwood Terrace Health Care, Galaxy Distribution, Health Span Llp, and Wal-Mart Associates Inc (GADL 2007b). Two of the largest employers in the Central Savannah River Area are Fort Gordon (U.S. Army), primarily in Richmond County, with 12,000 military and 5,000 civilian workers (CSRA AFG 2003), and Savannah River Site (U.S. Department of Energy) in South Carolina with 10,700 workers (WSRC 2007).

1 Income information for Burke, Columbia, and Richmond counties is presented in Table 2–22.
 2 Income levels are similar in Burke and Columbia counties. The median household and per
 3 capita incomes in Burke and Richmond counties are both well below the Georgia average.
 4 Columbia County has income levels that are above the State average and well above the other
 5 two counties. In 1999, 28.7 percent of the population in Burke County and 19.6 percent in
 6 Richmond County were living below the official poverty level, while in Columbia County only 5.1
 7 percent of the population was living below the poverty level. In comparison, the State average
 8 was 13.0 percent living below the poverty level (USCB 2000a).

9
 10 **Table 2-22.** Income Information for the VEGP Region of Influence
 11

	Burke County	Columbia County	Richmond County	Georgia
Median household income 1999 (dollars)	27,877	55,682	33,086	42,433
Per capita income 1999 (dollars)	13,136	23,496	17,088	21,154
Percent of persons below the poverty line (2000)	28.7	5.1	19.6	13.0

Source: USCB 2000a

12 **2.2.8.6.2 Unemployment**

13
 14
 15 In 2006, the annual unemployment average in Burke and Richmond counties were 6.7 and 6.2
 16 percent, respectively, which were higher than the annual unemployment average of 4.1 and 4.6
 17 percent, respectively, for Columbia County and Georgia (USCB 2007c).

18 **2.2.8.6.3 Taxes**

19
 20
 21 VEGP pays annual real estate taxes to Burke County. From 2000 through 2007, SNC and the
 22 VEGP site's co-owners paid between \$23.7 and \$25.3 million annually in property taxes to
 23 Burke County (see Table 2–23). This represented between 74 and 82 percent of the county's
 24 total annual tax revenue. Each year, Burke County retains a portion of this tax money for
 25 county operations and disburses the remainder to the state, the school district, and
 26 fire/emergency management/public safety services to fund their respective operating budgets.
 27 As shown in Table 2-23, the local public school system, Burke County School District, receives
 28 approximately 60 percent of the total county property tax revenue (SNC 2007a and Burke
 29 County Tax Commission 2008).

30
 31 At present, the State of Georgia has taken no action on deregulation, which could, if enacted,
 32 affect tax payments to Burke County. However, any changes to VEGP property tax rates due to
 33 deregulation would be independent of license renewal.

1 Tax payments from SNC and VEGP are a major source of income to Burke County and the
 2 School District operating budgets. Any changes to this revenue stream would affect their ability
 3 to invest in infrastructure and to attract industry and new residents.

4
 5 **Table 2-23.** Property Tax Information for Burke County (2000-2006)
 6

Year	Total Burke County Property Tax Revenue	Burke County Tax Revenue Disbursed to the Burke County School District	Property Tax Paid by SNC and VEGP Co-Owners (\$)	Percent of Total Property Taxes Paid by SNC and VEGP Co-Owners
2000	30,329,024	19,116,331	24,930,927	82.2
2001	30,758,563	18,691,850	25,276,404	82.2
2002	29,713,972	18,022,492	23,699,476	79.8
2003	30,029,880	18,160,393	24,341,247	81.1
2004	29,805,738	17,838,847	24,358,042	81.7
2005	30,963,918	18,266,740	23,737,300	76.7
2006	31,922,862	18,929,556	24,457,550	76.6
2007	34,138,733	19,437,324	25,348,161	74.3

Sources: 2000 to 2004 data from SNC 2007a; 2005 to 2007 data from Burke County Tax Commission 2008.

7 8 **2.2.9 Historic and Archaeological Resources**

9
 10 This section presents a brief summary of the region's cultural background and a description of
 11 known historic and archaeological resources at the VEGP site and its immediate vicinity.
 12 Information was collected from area repositories, the Georgia and South Carolina State Historic
 13 Preservation Offices (SHPO), and the applicant's Early Site Permit Application (SNC 2007b).

14 15 **2.2.9.1 Cultural Background**

16 17 ***Prehistoric Overview***

18 19 Paleoindian Period (13,000 to 9,000 Years Ago)

20
 21 Paleoindian people in the southeastern United States ranged over large areas of land traveling
 22 in small bands. Early Paleoindian groups are thought to have lived in small centralized
 23 communities for varying periods throughout the year. Over the course of the Paleoindian era,
 24 occupation of fixed communities gave way to foraging, with bands frequently moving their
 25 camps as they exhausted the food supply in their immediate area (Anderson and Sassman,

1 1996). No large Paleoindian sites have been excavated in Georgia to date and very few
2 Paleoindian sites have been excavated in the Savannah River drainage (Anderson and
3 Sassman, 1996).

4 5 Archaic Period (9,000 to 3,000 Years Ago)

6
7 Early Archaic people were hunters and gatherers who, generally, lived a nomadic life. They
8 traveled in small groups or "bands" of twenty to fifty people hunting wild game and collecting
9 seasonal and perennial edible flora (O'Steen et. al., 2002). They erected small, simple shelters
10 located close to water sources and food resources, however, there is little archaeological
11 evidence that they stored food or remained in settlements for extended periods (Kane and
12 Keeton, 1993).

13
14 It is believed that the climate of the southeastern United States was significantly drier and
15 warmer during the Middle Archaic Period than it is today. The Paleoindian subsistence pattern
16 of hunting and gathering continued through the Middle Archaic, with very little change from the
17 preceding period (O'Steen et. al., 2002). It is thought that, due to the expanding territories of
18 rival bands, Middle Archaic people began to rely more on locally available resources (Kane and
19 Keeton, 1993). At present, no long-term Middle Archaic habitation sites have been found in
20 Georgia.

21
22 During the Late Archaic Period, people in Georgia were drawn to the rivers and other major
23 water sources by the abundance of subsistence resources. As territories began to shrink in size
24 some groups built semi-permanent settlements along the rivers and their tributaries (O'Steen et.
25 al., 2002). One of the best examples of an Archaic riverine site is the Stallings Island site on the
26 Savannah River near Augusta, about 30 miles upriver from the VEGP site.

27 28 Woodland Period (3,000 to 1,200 Years Ago)

29
30 This period witnessed the development of many subsistence and technological trends that had
31 their genesis during the preceding Late Archaic Period. During the Woodland Period, people
32 began to develop more settlements, increased their social stratification, and developed more
33 elaborate rituals and ceremonies (Pluckhan, 2003). Horticulture gained importance during the
34 Woodland Period as growing populations increased the need for food resources. Additionally,
35 during this period people used local plants for food with increasing regularity (Kane and Keeton,
36 1993).

37
38 The Early Woodland subperiod is marked by a continuation of many of the innovations that
39 began during the preceding Late Archaic. Most settlements from this period were very small and
40 were likely only used on a seasonal basis (Pluckhan, 2003). The reliance on horticulture
41 increased during this period.

42
43 During the Middle Woodland subperiod settlements appear to have become larger and more
44 permanent. Archaeological evidence indicates that shelters were more sturdily constructed and
45 appear to have been built to last for long periods of time (Kane and Keeton, 1993). The Middle

1 Woodland subperiod gave rise to an increase in ritual and ceremonialism as evidenced by the
2 earthen and rock mounds constructed in Georgia during this time (Pluckhan, 2003).

3
4 The Late Woodland subperiod saw diminished mound construction that some attribute to a
5 decrease in population (Kane and Keeton, 1993). The increase in corn agriculture during the
6 Late Woodland subperiod and technological advances in weaponry set the stage for the final
7 period in Georgia prehistory, the Mississippian Period (Pluckhan, 2003).

8 9 Mississippian Period (1,200. to 550 Years Ago)

10
11 The Mississippian Period witnessed the development of some of the most socially and
12 technologically complex aboriginal societies that ever existed in North America (King, 2002).
13 During the Middle Mississippian subperiod in Georgia, populations were organized into
14 chiefdoms that were centered around large mound towns (King 2002). Horticulture thrived
15 during this period as people planted large crops in the fertile soil that lined the watercourses of
16 the Southeastern United States (Kane and Keeton, 1993). Near the end of this period, from
17 1539 to 1543, Hernando Desoto and his army of Spaniards traveled through the Southeast in
18 search of riches.

19 20 **Historic Overview**

21
22 Since prehistoric times, the Savannah River has been used as a major transportation route
23 between the Atlantic Coast and the Piedmont (SNC 2007b). Burke County is one of Georgia's
24 eight original counties and was known as the Halifax District at the time the Georgia colony was
25 established in 1732 (Cooksey, 2007). In 1758 Georgia was divided into parishes, and the
26 Halifax District became the parish of St. George. Burke County was formed from St. George
27 Parish in 1777 and was named for Edmund Burke, an English spokesman for American liberty.
28 The county currently encompasses an area of 831 square miles after portions of it were
29 incorporated into Screven (1793), Jefferson (1796), Richmond (1841), and Jenkins (1905)
30 counties (Cooksey, 2007).

31
32 Most of the county's early settlers came from the older American colonies to the north. They
33 were enticed by the proximity to the Savannah and Ogeechee Rivers, which provided
34 transportation and water for their livestock (Cooksey, 2007). By the mid-eighteenth century
35 Georgia had lifted its ban on slavery and greater numbers of settlers began to flood into Burke
36 County. By the end of the eighteenth century, a plantation system had been established and
37 Burke County became a prime cotton producing area. By the end of the Civil War many of the
38 plantations were destroyed and production of cotton shifted to a small farm system using tenant
39 labor (Cooksey, 2007).

40
41 Edward Telfair, who was Georgia's governor from 1786 to 1791, was the largest landowner in
42 the vicinity of VEGP in the late eighteenth century. By 1830 the U.S. census shows no Telfair
43 landowners in the VEGP area, however, several landowners named Utl[e]y began to appear

1 (SNC 2007b). The first Utley to own land in the area is said to have been an overseer for
2 Governor Telfair. Today, several features on the VEGP property bear the name Utley.

3 4 **2.2.9.2 Historic and Archaeological Resources at the VEGP Site**

5 6 **Previously Identified Resources**

7 8 ***Resources in the Vicinity of the VEGP Site***

9
10 The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) lists seven sites in Burke County (NRHP
11 2008). The closest NRHP listed site to VEGP is the Sapp Plantation, about 10 miles to the south
12 of the plant site. The Savannah River Site (SRS), a cold war-era nuclear materials processing
13 center located directly across the Savannah River from VEGP, is considered eligible for NRHP
14 listing. The SRS property also contains 22 recorded archaeological sites that have been
15 determined eligible for NRHP listing.

16
17 Shell Bluff Landing, approximately 7 miles north northwest of the VEGP site, has both historic
18 and prehistoric significance. It was the site of the original grave of Dr. Lyman Hall, a signer of
19 the Declaration of Independence, and was important during the era of steamboat river traffic
20 (GPC 1972). Shell Bluff was named for an Eocene-era fossil bed of giant oysters
21 (*Crassostreagigantissima*). A prehistoric village site containing Archaic Period artifacts is
22 located between Shell Bluff and Boggy Gut Creek, approximately 7.5 miles upstream of VEGP
23 (GPC 1972).

24 25 ***Resources on the VEGP Site***

26
27 In the early 1970's, prior to construction at the VEGP site, an archaeological assessment was
28 conducted and submitted to the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission (Honerkamp, 1973). A total of
29 seven archaeological sites were identified, four along the river bluff, two on the plateau west of
30 Mallard Pond, and one in the location currently occupied by a barge slip. At the time of that
31 study, the State Archaeologist considered the archaeological resources of the VEGP site to
32 have been sufficiently characterized and did not recommend further work.

33
34 In 2005 and 2006 a partial survey of the VEGP site was conducted by New South Associates
35 (NSA) to assess potential impacts of the construction of new units. (NSA 2006a and 2006b)
36 This survey work identified 17 archaeological sites (3 historic and 14 prehistoric) and 8 isolated
37 finds. None of the seven sites identified during the 1972 survey were observed during the 2005 -
38 2007 survey effort. Of the 17 new archaeological sites identified during the 2005 - 2006 effort,
39 two are considered eligible (9BK416 and 9BK423) and two potentially eligible (9BK419 and
40 9BK420) for listing on the NRHP. Two additional sites, 9BK421 and 9BK422, were said to
41 require further evaluation (NSA 2006a and b). In June of 2007 modifications to the proposed

1 water intake structure necessitated additional testing in the vicinity (NSA 2007). No new sites
2 were recorded during the course of this survey, however, further testing near site 9BK416
3 confirmed that it is a multi-component prehistoric site, eligible for NRHP listing. NSA
4 recommended that the site be avoided.

6 **Potential Archaeological Resources**

7
8 Due to disturbances associated with site preparation and construction, the main generating
9 station area has little or no potential for archaeological resources. There are other areas within
10 the VEGP property that appear to have been only minimally disturbed and are comprised of
11 landforms that may have been attractive during prehistory for varied resource exploitation.
12 Archaeological surveys conducted in 2005 and 2006 demonstrated potential for archaeological
13 resources to be present in the portions of the VEGP property that have not been disturbed by
14 previous construction activity (NSA 2006a, 2006b). These surveys identified several historic and
15 prehistoric archaeological sites, including two prehistoric sites that have been determined NRHP
16 eligible. Additionally, several NRHP eligible archaeological sites have been recorded
17 immediately across the Savannah River from the plant property at the SRS in South Carolina.

19 **2.2.10 Related Federal Project Activities and Consultations**

20
21 The NRC staff reviewed the possibility that activities of other Federal agencies might impact the
22 renewal of the operating licenses for VEGP. Any such activities could result in cumulative
23 environmental impacts and the possible need for the Federal agency to become a cooperating
24 agency for preparation of this draft SEIS.

25
26 The NRC staff has reviewed Federally owned facilities in the local area near Waynesboro and
27 Augusta, Georgia, and has determined that there are no Federal project activities that would
28 make it desirable for another Federal agency to become a cooperating agency for preparing this
29 draft SEIS. The known Federal projects in the area are the operation of three reservoirs by the
30 USACE (Hartwell, Richard B. Russell, and J. Strom Thurmond) and operation of the SRS by
31 the DOE.

32
33 NRC is required under Section 102(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as
34 amended to consult with and obtain the comments of any Federal agency that has jurisdiction
35 by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved. NRC consulted
36 with the National Marine Fisheries, FWS, NOAA, EPA, and USACE. No comments were
37 submitted by these agencies during the scoping process.

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3.0 Environmental Impacts of Refurbishment

Environmental issues associated with refurbishment activities are discussed in the *Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants* (GEIS), NUREG-1437, Volumes 1 and 2 (NRC 1996, 1999).^(a) The GEIS includes a determination of whether the analysis of the environmental issues could be applied to all plants and whether additional mitigation measures would be warranted. Issues are then assigned a Category 1 or a Category 2 designation. As set forth in the GEIS, Category 1 issues are those that meet all of the following criteria:

- (1) The environmental impacts associated with the issue have been determined to apply either to all plants or, for some issues, to plants having a specific type of cooling system or other specified plant or site characteristics.
- (2) A single significance level (i.e., SMALL, MODERATE, or LARGE) has been assigned to the impacts (except for collective off-site radiological impacts from the fuel cycle and from high-level waste and spent fuel disposal).
- (3) Mitigation of adverse impacts associated with the issue has been considered in the analysis, and it has been determined that additional plant-specific mitigation measures are likely not to be sufficiently beneficial to warrant implementation.

For issues that meet the three Category 1 criteria, no additional plant-specific analysis is required in this draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) unless new and significant information is identified.

Category 2 issues are those that do not meet one or more of the criteria for Category 1; therefore, additional plant-specific review of these issues is required.

License renewal actions may require refurbishment activities for the extended plant life. These actions may have an impact on the environment that requires evaluation, depending on the type of action and the plant-specific design. Environmental issues associated with refurbishment that were determined to be Category 1 issues are listed in Table 3-1.

Environmental issues related to refurbishment considered in the GEIS for which these conclusions could not be reached for all plants, or for specific classes of plants, are Category 2 issues. These are listed in Table 3-2.

^(a) The GEIS was originally issued in 1996. Addendum 1 to the GEIS was issued in 1999. Hereafter, all references to the "GEIS" include the GEIS and its Addendum 1.

Environmental Impacts of Refurbishment

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Table 3-1. Category 1 Issues for Refurbishment Evaluation

ISSUE—10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1	GEIS Sections
SURFACE WATER QUALITY, HYDROLOGY, AND USE (FOR ALL PLANTS)	
Impacts of refurbishment on surface water quality	3.4.1
Impacts of refurbishment on surface water use	3.4.1
AQUATIC ECOLOGY (FOR ALL PLANTS)	
Refurbishment	3.5
GROUND-WATER USE AND QUALITY	
Impacts of refurbishment on ground-water use and quality	3.4.2
LAND USE	
Onsite land use	3.2
HUMAN HEALTH	
Radiation exposures to the public during refurbishment	3.8.1
Occupational radiation exposures during refurbishment	3.8.2
SOCIOECONOMICS	
Public services: public safety, social services, and tourism and recreation	3.7.4; 3.7.4.3; 3.7.4.4; 3.7.4.6
Aesthetic impacts (refurbishment)	3.7.8

3

4 Category 1 and Category 2 issues related to refurbishment that are not applicable to Vogtle
5 Electric Generating Plant (VEGP) because they are related to plant design features or site
6 characteristics not found at VEGP are listed in Appendix F.

7

8 The potential environmental effects of refurbishment actions would be identified, and the
9 analysis would be summarized within this section, if such actions were planned. Southern
10 Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (SNC) indicated that it has performed an evaluation of
11 structures and components pursuant to Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part
12 54, Section 54.21 to identify activities that are necessary to continue operation of VEGP during
13 the requested 20-year period of extended operation. These activities include replacement of
14 certain components as well as new inspection activities, and are described in the Environmental
15 Report (SNC 2007).

1
2

Table 3-2. Category 2 Issues for Refurbishment Evaluation

ISSUE—10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1	GEIS Sections	10 CFR 51.53 (c)(3)(ii) Subparagraph
TERRESTRIAL RESOURCES		
Refurbishment impacts	3.6	E
THREATENED OR ENDANGERED SPECIES (FOR ALL PLANTS)		
Threatened or endangered species	3.9	E
AIR QUALITY		
Air quality during refurbishment (nonattainment and maintenance areas)	3.3	F
SOCIOECONOMICS		
Housing impacts	3.7.2	I
Public services: public utilities	3.7.4.5	I
Public services, education (refurbishment)	3.7.4.1	I
Offsite land use (refurbishment)	3.7.5	I
Public services, transportation	3.7.4.2	J
Historic and archaeological resources	3.7.7	K
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE		
Environmental justice	Not addressed ^(a)	Not addressed ^(a)
<p>(a) Guidance related to environmental justice was not in place at the time the GEIS and the associated revision to 10 CFR Part 51 were prepared. If an applicant plans to undertake refurbishment activities for license renewal, environmental justice must be addressed in the applicant's environmental report and the Staff's environmental impact statement. The Commission issued a <i>Final Policy Statement on the Treatment of Environmental Justice Matters in NRC Regulatory and Licensing Actions</i> in 2004 (NRC 2004).</p>		

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However, VEGP stated that the replacement of these components and the additional inspection activities are within the bounds of normal plant component replacement and inspections; therefore, they are not expected to affect the environment outside the bounds of plant operations as evaluated in the final environmental statement (NRC 1985). In addition, SNC's evaluation of structures and components as required by 10 CFR 54.21 did not identify any major plant refurbishment activities or modifications necessary to support the continued operation of VEGP beyond the end of the existing operating licenses. Therefore, refurbishment is not considered in this draft SEIS.

3.1 References

- 1
2
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4 Protection Regulations for Domestic Licensing and Related Regulatory Functions.”
5
6 10 CFR Part 54. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 10, *Energy*, Part 54, “Requirements for
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27 Numbers 50-424 and 50-425.

4.0 Environmental Impacts of Operation

Environmental issues associated with operation of a nuclear power plant during the renewal term are discussed in the *Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants* (GEIS), NUREG-1437, Volumes 1 and 2 (NRC 1996; 1999).^(a) The GEIS includes a determination of whether the analysis of the environmental issues could be applied to all plants and whether additional mitigation measures would be warranted. Issues are then assigned a Category 1 or a Category 2 designation. As set forth in the GEIS, Category 1 issues are those that meet all of the following criteria:

- (1) The environmental impacts associated with the issue have been determined to apply either to all plants or, for some issues, to plants having a specific type of cooling system or other specified plant or site characteristics.
- (2) A single significance level (i.e., SMALL, MODERATE, or LARGE) has been assigned to the impacts (except for collective off-site radiological impacts from the fuel cycle and from high-level waste and spent fuel disposal).
- (3) Mitigation of adverse impacts associated with the issue has been considered in the analysis, and it has been determined that additional plant-specific mitigation measures are likely not to be sufficiently beneficial to warrant implementation.

For issues that meet the three Category 1 criteria, no additional plant-specific analysis is required unless new and significant information is identified.

Category 2 issues are those that do not meet one or more of the criteria for Category 1 and, therefore, additional plant-specific review of these issues is required. Eleven of 12 Category 2 issues related to operational impacts during the renewal term, as well as environmental justice and chronic effects of electromagnetic fields, are discussed in detail in this chapter of the draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS). The twelfth Category 2 issue, which involves the severe accident mitigation alternatives, is addressed Chapter 5.

This chapter addresses the issues related to operation during the renewal term that are listed in Table B-1 of Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B and are applicable to Vogtle Electric Generating Plant (VEGP). Section 4.1 addresses issues applicable to the VEGP cooling system. Section 4.2 addresses issues related to transmission lines and on-site land use. Section 4.3 addresses the radiological impacts of normal operation and Section 4.4 addresses issues related to the socioeconomic impacts of normal operation during the renewal term. Section 4.5 addresses issues related to groundwater use and quality

^(a) The GEIS was originally issued in 1996. Addendum 1 to the GEIS was issued in 1999. Hereafter, all references to the "GEIS" include the GEIS and its Addendum 1.

Environmental Impacts of Operation

1 while Section 4.6 discusses the impacts of renewal-term operations on threatened and
2 endangered species. Section 4.7 addresses potential new information that was identified during
3 the scoping period and Section 4.8 discusses cumulative impacts. The results of the evaluation
4 of environmental issues related to operation during the renewal term are summarized in
5 Section 4.9. Finally, Section 4.10 lists the references for Chapter 4. Category 1 and Category 2
6 issues that are not applicable to VEGP because they are related to plant design features or site
7 characteristics not found at VEGP are listed in Appendix F.
8

9 **4.1 Cooling System**

10
11 Category 1 issues in Table B-1 of 10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, that are applicable to
12 VEGP cooling system operation, during the renewal term, are listed in Table 4-1. Southern
13 Nuclear Operating Company (SNC) stated in its Environmental Report (SNC 2007a) that it is not
14 aware of any new and significant information associated with the renewal of the VEGP
15 operating licenses. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff also has not
16 identified any new and significant information during its independent review of the SNC
17 Environmental Report, the Staff's site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation of other
18 available information. For all of the Category 1 issues, the Staff concluded in the GEIS that the
19 impacts would be SMALL, and additional plant-specific mitigation measures are not likely to be
20 sufficiently beneficial to be warranted.
21

22 **Table 4-1.** Category 1 Issues Applicable to the Operation of the VEGP
23 Cooling System During the Renewal Term
24

ISSUE—10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1	GEIS Sections
SURFACE WATER QUALITY, HYDROLOGY, AND USE (FOR ALL PLANTS)	
Altered current patterns at intake and discharge structures	4.2.1.2.1; 4.3.2.2; 4.4.2
Temperature effects on sediment transport capacity	4.2.1.2.3; 4.4.2.2
Scouring caused by discharged cooling water	4.2.1.2.3; 4.4.2.2
Eutrophication	4.2.1.2.3; 4.4.2.2
Discharge of chlorine or other biocides	4.2.1.2.4; 4.4.2.2
Discharge of sanitary wastes and minor chemical spills	4.2.1.2.4; 4.4.2.2
Discharge of other metals in wastewater	4.2.1.2.4; 4.3.2.2; 4.4.2.2

1

Table 4-1. (cont'd)

AQUATIC ECOLOGY (FOR ALL PLANTS)	
Accumulation of contaminants in sediments or biota	4.2.1.2.4; 4.3.3; 4.4.2.2; 4.4.3
Entrainment of phytoplankton and zooplankton	4.2.2.1.1; 4.3.3; 4.4.3
Cold shock	4.2.2.1.5; 4.3.3; 4.4.3
Thermal plume barrier to migrating fish	4.2.2.1.6; 4.4.3
Distribution of aquatic organisms	4.2.2.1.6; 4.4.3
Premature emergence of aquatic insects	4.2.2.1.7; 4.4.3
Gas supersaturation (gas bubble disease)	4.2.2.1.8; 4.4.3
Low dissolved oxygen in the discharge	4.2.2.1.9; 4.3.3; 4.4.3
Losses from predation, parasitism, and disease among organisms exposed to sublethal stresses	4.2.2.1.10; 4.4.3
Stimulation of nuisance organisms	4.2.2.1.11; 4.4.3
AQUATIC ECOLOGY (FOR PLANTS WITH COOLING TOWER-BASED HEAT DISSIPATION SYSTEMS)	
Entrainment of fish and shellfish in early life stages for plants with cooling tower heat dissipation systems	4.3.3
Impingement of fish and shellfish in early life stages for plants with cooling tower heat dissipation systems	4.3.3
Heat shock for plants with cooling tower heat dissipation systems	4.3.3
TERRESTRIAL RESOURCES	
Cooling tower impacts on crops and ornamental vegetation	4.3.4
Cooling tower impacts on native plants	4.3.5.1
Bird collisions with cooling towers	4.3.5.2
HUMAN HEALTH	
Microbiological organisms (occupational health)	4.3.6
Noise	4.3.7

2

3

A brief description of the Staff's review and the GEIS conclusions, as codified in Table B-1, for each of these Category 1 issues follows:

4

5

6

- Altered current patterns at intake and discharge structures. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

7

Environmental Impacts of Operation

1 Altered current patterns have not been found to be a problem at operating nuclear
2 power plants and are not expected to be a problem during the license renewal term.
3

4 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
5 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation
6 of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no
7 impacts of altered current patterns at intake and discharge structures during the renewal
8 term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.
9

- 10 • Temperature effects on sediment transport capacity. Based on information in the GEIS,
11 the Commission found that:

12 The GEIS determined that there is no evidence that temperature effects on sediment
13 transport capacity have caused adverse environmental effects at any existing plant, and
14 that it is not expected to be a problem during the license renewal term.
15

16
17 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
18 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation
19 of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no
20 impacts from temperature effects on sediment transport capacity during the renewal term
21 beyond those discussed in the GEIS.
22

- 23 • Scouring caused by discharged cooling water. Based on information in the GEIS, the
24 Commission found that:

25 Scouring has not been found to be a problem at most operating nuclear power plants
26 and has caused only localized effects at a few plants. It is not expected to be a problem
27 during the license renewal term.
28

29
30 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
31 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation
32 of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no
33 impacts of scouring caused by discharged cooling water during the renewal term beyond
34 those discussed in the GEIS.
35

- 36 • Eutrophication. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

37 Eutrophication has not been found to be a problem at operating nuclear power plants
38 and is not expected to be a problem during the license renewal term.
39

1 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
2 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, review of
3 monitoring programs, or evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff
4 concludes that there would be no impacts of eutrophication during the renewal term beyond
5 those discussed in the GEIS.

- 6
7 • Discharge of chlorine or other biocides. Based on information in the GEIS, the
8 Commission found that:

9
10 Effects are not a concern among regulatory and resource agencies and are not expected
11 to be a problem during the license renewal term.

12
13 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
14 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation
15 of other available information including the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
16 (NPDES) permit for VEGP. Therefore, the Staff has determined that there would be no
17 significant impacts of discharge of chlorine or other biocides during the renewal term beyond
18 those discussed in the GEIS.

- 19
20 • Discharge of sanitary wastes and minor chemical spills. Based on information in the
21 GEIS, the Commission found that:

22
23 Effects are readily controlled through the NPDES permit and periodic modifications, if
24 needed, and are not expected to be a problem during the license renewal term.

25
26 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
27 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation
28 of other available information including the NPDES permit for VEGP. Therefore, the Staff
29 has determined that there would be no significant impacts of discharge of sanitary wastes
30 and minor chemical spills during the renewal term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.

- 31
32 • Discharge of other metals in wastewater. Based on information in the GEIS, the
33 Commission found that:

34
35 These discharges have not been found to be a problem at operating nuclear power
36 plants with cooling-tower-based heat dissipation systems and have been satisfactorily
37 mitigated at other plants. They are not expected to be a problem during the license
38 renewal term.

39
40 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
41 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation

Environmental Impacts of Operation

1 of other available information including the NPDES permit for VEGP. Therefore, the Staff
2 concludes that there would be no impacts of discharges of other metals in wastewater
3 during the renewal term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.
4

- 5 • Accumulation of contaminants in sediments or biota. Based on information in the GEIS,
6 the Commission found that:

7
8 Accumulation of contaminants has been a concern at a few nuclear power plants but has
9 been satisfactorily mitigated by replacing copper alloy condenser tubes with those of
10 another metal. It is not expected to be a problem during the license renewal term.
11

12 No non-radiological analysis of sediment or biota samples is required by the Annual
13 Environmental Operating Program (SNC 2007b).
14

15 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
16 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation
17 of available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no impacts of
18 accumulation of contaminants in sediments or biota during the renewal term beyond those
19 discussed in the GEIS.
20

- 21 • Entrainment of phytoplankton and zooplankton. Based on information in the GEIS, the
22 Commission found that:

23
24 Entrainment of phytoplankton and zooplankton has not been found to be a problem at
25 operating nuclear power plants and is not expected to be a problem during the license
26 renewal term.
27

28 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
29 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, review of
30 monitoring programs, or evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff
31 concludes that there would be no impacts of entrainment of phytoplankton and zooplankton
32 during the renewal term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.
33

- 34 • Cold shock. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

35
36 Cold shock has been satisfactorily mitigated at operating nuclear plants with once-
37 through cooling systems, has not endangered fish populations or been found to be a
38 problem at operating nuclear power plants with cooling towers or cooling ponds, and is
39 not expected to be a problem during the license renewal term.

1 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
2 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation
3 of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no
4 impacts of cold shock during the renewal term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.
5

- 6 • Distribution of aquatic organisms. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission
7 found that:

8
9 Thermal discharge may have localized effects but is not expected to affect the larger
10 geographical distribution of aquatic organisms.
11

12 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
13 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, review of
14 monitoring programs, or evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff
15 concludes that there would be no impacts on distribution of aquatic organisms during the
16 renewal term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.
17

- 18 • Premature emergence of aquatic insects. Based on information in the GEIS, the
19 Commission found that:

20
21 Premature emergence has been found to be a localized effect at some operating nuclear
22 power plants but has not been a problem and is not expected to be a problem during the
23 license renewal term.
24

25 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
26 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation
27 of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no
28 impacts of premature emergence of aquatic insects during the renewal term beyond those
29 discussed in the GEIS.
30

- 31 • Gas supersaturation (gas bubble disease). Based on information in the GEIS, the
32 Commission found that:

33
34 Gas supersaturation was a concern at a small number of operating nuclear power plants
35 with once-through cooling systems but has been satisfactorily mitigated. It has not been
36 found to be a problem at operating nuclear power plants with cooling towers or cooling
37 ponds and is not expected to be a problem during the license renewal term.
38

39 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
40 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, review of
41 monitoring programs, or evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff

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1 concludes that there would be no impacts of gas supersaturation during the renewal term
2 beyond those discussed in the GEIS.

- 3
4 • Low dissolved oxygen in the discharge. Based on information in the GEIS, the
5 Commission found that:

6
7 Low dissolved oxygen has been a concern at one nuclear power plant with a once-
8 through cooling system but has been effectively mitigated. It has not been found to be a
9 problem at operating nuclear power plants with cooling towers or cooling ponds and is
10 not expected to be a problem during the license renewal term.

11
12 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
13 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, review of
14 monitoring programs, or evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff
15 concludes that there would be no impacts of low dissolved oxygen during the renewal term
16 beyond those discussed in the GEIS.

- 17
18 • Losses from predation, parasitism, and disease among organisms exposed to
19 sublethal stresses. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

20
21 These types of losses have not been found to be a problem at operating nuclear power
22 plants and are not expected to be a problem during the license renewal term.

23
24 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
25 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the Staff's site visit, the scoping process, or
26 evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be
27 no impacts of losses from predation, parasitism, and disease among organisms exposed to
28 sub-lethal stresses during the renewal term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.

- 29
30 • Stimulation of nuisance organisms. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission
31 found that:

32
33 Stimulation of nuisance organisms has been satisfactorily mitigated at the single nuclear
34 power plant with a once-through cooling system where previously it was a problem. It
35 has not been found to be a problem at operating nuclear power plants with cooling
36 towers or cooling ponds and is not expected to be a problem during the license renewal
37 term.

38
39 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
40 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation
41 of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no

1 impacts of stimulation of nuisance organisms during the renewal term beyond those
2 discussed in the GEIS.

- 3
4 • Entrainment of fish and shellfish in early life stages for plants with cooling tower heat
5 dissipation systems. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

6
7 In general, the relatively small volumes of water used for cooling tower-based cooling
8 systems result in low levels of entrainment, and as a result, cooling tower systems are
9 often recommended as a mitigation measure to reduce impacts from entrainment.

10 Based on reviews of literature, operational monitoring reports, consultations with utilities
11 and regulators, and comments on the draft GEIS, the GEIS concluded that entrainment
12 had not been shown to cause reductions in aquatic populations associated with any
13 plant with a closed-cycle cooling system.

14
15 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
16 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation
17 of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no
18 impacts due to entrainment of fish and shellfish in early life stages during the renewal term
19 beyond those discussed in the GEIS.

- 20
21 • Impingement of fish and shellfish for plants with cooling tower heat dissipation systems.
22 Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

23
24 In general, the relatively small volumes of water used for cooling tower-based cooling
25 systems result in low levels of impingement, and as a result, cooling tower systems are
26 often recommended as a mitigation measure to reduce impacts from impingement.

27 Based on reviews of literature, operational monitoring reports, consultations with utilities
28 and regulators, and comments on the draft GEIS, the GEIS concluded that impingement
29 had not been shown to cause reductions in aquatic populations associated with any
30 plant with a closed-cycle cooling system.

31
32 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
33 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation
34 of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no
35 impacts due to impingement of fish and shellfish during the renewal term beyond those
36 discussed in the GEIS.

- 37
38 • Heat shock for plants with cooling tower heat dissipation systems. Based on information
39 in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

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1 In general, the relatively small volumes of water used for cooling tower-based cooling
2 systems result in low levels of heat shock, and as a result, cooling tower systems are
3 often recommended as a mitigation measure to reduce impacts from heat shock.
4 Based on reviews of literature, operational monitoring reports, consultations with
5 utilities and regulators, and comments on the draft GEIS, the GEIS concluded that
6 heat shock had not been shown to cause reductions in aquatic populations
7 associated with any plant with a closed-cycle cooling system.
8

9 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
10 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation
11 of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no
12 impacts due to heat shock during the renewal term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.
13

- 14 • Cooling tower impacts on crops and ornamental vegetation. Based on information in the
15 GEIS, the Commission found that:

16
17 The GEIS evaluated the potential for cooling tower operations to impact crops and
18 ornamental vegetation due to exposure to salts, ice, or increased humidity. The analysis
19 revealed no instances where cooling tower operations had caused measurable
20 productivity losses to crops or damage to ornamental vegetation. Therefore, this is not
21 expected to be a problem during the license renewal term.
22

23 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
24 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation
25 of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no cooling
26 tower impacts on crops or ornamental vegetation during the renewal term beyond those
27 discussed in the GEIS.
28

- 29 • Cooling tower impacts on native plants. Based on information in the GEIS, the
30 Commission found that:

31
32 The GEIS evaluated the potential for cooling tower drift to native vegetation in the vicinity
33 of nuclear power plants due to exposure to salts, ice, or increased humidity. The
34 analysis revealed no instances where cooling tower operations had caused measurable
35 degradation of the health of natural plant communities. Therefore, this is not expected to
36 be a problem during the license renewal term.
37

38 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
39 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation
40 of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no cooling

1 tower impacts on native plants during the renewal term beyond those discussed in the
2 GEIS.

- 3
4 • Bird collisions with cooling towers. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission
5 found that:

6
7 The GEIS evaluated avian mortality studies from plants with natural draft cooling towers,
8 and concluded that the mortality occurred in sufficiently small numbers that it was
9 unlikely that the losses would threaten the stability of native populations, or impair the
10 function of these species within the local ecosystems. Therefore, this is not expected to
11 be a problem during the license renewal term.

12
13 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
14 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation
15 of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no
16 impacts due to bird collisions with cooling towers during the renewal term beyond those
17 discussed in the GEIS.

- 18
19 • Microbiological organisms (occupational health). Based on information in the GEIS, the
20 Commission found that:

21
22 Occupational health impacts are expected to be controlled by continued application of
23 accepted industrial hygiene practices to minimize worker exposures.

24
25 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
26 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation
27 of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no
28 impacts of microbiological organisms on occupational health during the renewal term
29 beyond those discussed in the GEIS.

- 30
31 • Noise. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

32
33 Noise has not been found to be a problem at operating plants and is not expected to be
34 a problem at any plant during the license renewal term.

35
36 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
37 review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation
38 of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no
39 impacts of noise during the license renewal term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.

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The Category 2 issues related to cooling system operation during the renewal term that are applicable to VEGP are discussed in the sections that follow, and are listed in Table 4-2.

Table 4-2. Category 2 Issues Applicable to the Operation of the VEGP Cooling System During the Renewal Term

ISSUE—10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1	GEIS Sections	10 CFR 51.53(c)(3)(ii) Subparagraph	Draft SEIS Section
SURFACE-WATER QUALITY, HYDROLOGY, AND USE (FOR ALL PLANTS)			
Water use conflicts (plants with cooling towers and cooling ponds using makeup water from a small river with low flow)	4.3.2.1; 4.4.2.1	A	4.1.1
HUMAN HEALTH			
Microbiological organisms (public health) (plants using a lake, canal, or cooling towers or cooling ponds that discharge to a small river)	4.3.6	G	4.1.2

4.1.1 Water Use Conflicts

For plants with cooling tower systems that are supplied with make-up water from a small river with low flow, the potential impact on instream and riparian communities is considered a Category 2 issue, thus requiring a site-specific assessment for license renewal review. Since 1953 (the year of the opening of the J. Strom Thurmond Dam), the mean annual flow volume of the Savannah River at Augusta (22 miles [mi] upstream from VEGP) has ranged from 4,470 to 16,580 cubic feet per second (cfs; USGS 2007a). This volume meets the NRC definition of a small river of 100,000 cfs (3.15×10^{12} cubic feet per year [ft³/yr] listed in 10 CFR Part 51.53(c)(3)(ii)(A)), resulting in water use conflicts being a potentially applicable issue for relicensing of VEGP.

In order to evaluate potential impacts related to water withdrawal from the Savannah River, and the potential for impacts to instream and riparian communities associated with the Savannah River, the Staff independently reviewed the VEGP Environmental Report, visited the site, consulted with Federal and State resource agencies, and reviewed the applicant's existing NPDES permit and other existing literature.

The GEIS considered surface water use conflicts to be a Category 2 issue for two separate reasons:

- 1) Consumptive water use can adversely affect riparian vegetation and instream aquatic communities in the stream. Reducing the amount of water available to either the riparian zones or instream communities could result in impacts to threatened and endangered species, wildlife, and recreational uses of the water body. In addition, riparian vegetation performs several important ecological functions, including stabilizing channels and floodplains, influencing water temperature and quality, and providing habitat for aquatic and terrestrial wildlife (NRC 1996).
- 2) Continuing operation of these facilities depends on the availability of water within the river from which they are withdrawing water. For facilities that are located on small bodies of water, the volume of water available is expected to be susceptible to droughts and to competing water uses within the basin. In cases of extreme drought, these facilities may be required to curtail operations if the volume of water available is not sufficient (NRC 1996).

An additional potential effect of the withdrawal of water from a small river is that the withdrawal may have an impact on groundwater levels and, therefore, result in groundwater use conflicts (NRC 1996). This is considered to be a separate Category 2 issue, and is evaluated in Section 4.5.2 of this draft SEIS.

The VEGP facility withdraws water from the Savannah River for use as make-up water to the cooling tower system. The water is withdrawn under a Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GDNR) permit, Number 017-0191-05, which currently expires in 2010 (SNC 2007a). The permitted volume of water withdrawal under this permit is 131 cfs (85 million gallons per day [mgd] monthly average; GDNR 2007a). The VEGP Environmental Report reports that the actual capacity of the intake system is 89 cfs (SNC 2007a), of which an estimated 66.8 cfs is consumed through evaporative losses and drift (NRC 1985). The actual surface water withdrawal reports provide a different estimate. In 2006, the highest average monthly withdrawal rate was in May, with a daily average of 67.26 mgd (103.8 cfs; SNC 2007c). Using the same consumption ratio reported in the Environmental Report (75 percent), this would translate to an average consumptive use of 77.9 cfs.

The hypothetical minimum flow volume in the river during the most extreme drought is projected to be 957 cfs (SNC 2006a), but this estimate was based on river conditions before the construction of the reservoirs. In reality, the most likely minimum flow volume in the Savannah River would be 3,800 cfs, which is the minimum volume that is to be released from Thurmond Dam, if the water level in the reservoir remains above 312 feet (ft) above mean sea level (msl; USACE 2007). The water level in the reservoir has never dropped that low. There have been days on which the flow volume was less than 3,800 cfs; these have been isolated events (USGS 2007b). Although the state of Georgia is currently considered to be in a period of severe

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1 drought (USGS 2007c), the flow volume at the Waynesboro measuring station has not dropped
2 below 3,900 cfs since measurements began in early 2005 (USGS 2007d).

3
4 Based on these values, the highest volume that is expected to be consumed by facility
5 operations (77.9 cfs) represents about 2.05 percent of the lowest expected flow volume (3,800
6 cfs), and only 8 percent of the hypothetical minimum flow volume. This withdrawal is not
7 expected to represent a volume large enough to adversely affect riparian vegetation and
8 instream aquatic communities in the Savannah River. In addition, it does not appear that flow
9 volumes in the Savannah River, even under the current severe drought conditions, could be
10 reduced to the point where it would affect facility operations. In the unlikely event that drought
11 conditions reduced flow volumes even further, the facility could continue to operate at flow
12 volumes down to 500 cfs (SNC 2006a). At this volume, VEGP consumptive water use would
13 still represent only about 15 percent of the flow volume in the river. Therefore, the Staff has
14 determined that impacts associated with future water use conflicts are SMALL.

15
16 The staff identified a variety of measures that could mitigate potential water use impacts
17 resulting from continued operation of VEGP cooling water system. Potential mitigation
18 measures for the effects of the cooling water system on water use impacts include reduction in
19 the use of river water, or additional recycling of cooling water. These mitigation measures could
20 reduce water use impacts by reducing the consumptive use of water within the Savannah River.

21
22 The staff did not identify any cost benefit studies applicable to these mitigation measures. The
23 volume of consumptive water use for the facility is authorized under a Permit to Withdraw,
24 Divert, or Impound Surface Water issued by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division
25 (GEPD), and NRC expects that analysis of the costs and benefits of any mitigation measures
26 would be evaluated by GEPD as part of that permitting program.

27 28 **4.1.2 Microbiological Organisms (Public Health)**

29
30 The effects of thermophilic microbiological organisms on human health are listed in 10 CFR Part
31 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1, as a Category 2 issue and require plant-specific
32 evaluation before license renewal for those plants with closed-cycle cooling on a small river.

33 The average annual flow of the Savannah River at the nearest measuring station to VEPG
34 (Augusta, at river mile [RM] 187.4) is approximately 2.89×10^{11} t³/yr (8.2×10^9 cubic meters per
35 year [m³/yr]) (Gotvald et al. 2005). This is less than the 3.15×10^{12} ft³/yr (9×10^{10} m³/yr)
36 threshold value in 10 CFR 51.53(c)(3)(ii)(G) for thermal discharge to a small river.

37 Nevertheless, recreational uses of the Savannah River in the vicinity of the plant, which include
38 boating, fishing, and canoeing, create the potential for human exposure to thermophilic
39 microbiological organisms. Hence, the effects of the VEGP cooling water discharge on
40 microbiological organisms must be addressed for VEPG license renewal.

1 The Category 2 designation is based on the magnitude of the potential public health impacts
2 associated with thermal enhancement of enteric pathogens such as *Salmonella* spp. and
3 *Shigella* spp., the *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* bacterium, the pathogenic strain of the free-living
4 amoebae *Naegleria* spp., and a number of species from genus *Legionella* (NRC 1996).
5 Thermophilic biological organisms generally occur at temperatures of 77 to 176 degrees
6 Fahrenheit (°F) (25 to 80 degrees Celsius [°C]), with optimal growth occurring between 122 and
7 150°F (50 and 66°C) and minimum tolerance of 68°F (20°C) (Joklik and Willett 1976). However,
8 thermal preferences and tolerances vary across bacterial groups. Pathogenic thermophilic
9 microbiological organisms that are of concern in nuclear power reactor operation typically have
10 optimal growing temperatures of approximately 99°F (37°C) (Joklik and Smith 1972).

11
12 *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* is an opportunistic pathogen that causes serious and sometimes fatal
13 infections in immuno-compromised individuals by producing and releasing toxins. It has an
14 optimal growth temperature of 99°F (37°C) (Todar 2007). The genus *Legionella* consists of at
15 least 46 species and 70 serogroups and is responsible for Legionnaires' disease, which begins
16 with the onset of pneumonia in the first two weeks of exposure. Risk groups for *Legionella* spp.
17 include the elderly, cigarette smokers, persons with chronic lung or immuno-compromising
18 disease, and persons receiving immuno-suppressive drugs. *Legionella* spp. grow best at 90 to
19 105°F (32 to 41°C) (CDC 2007a). *Salmonella typhimurium* and *S. enteritidis* are two of the
20 more common species of Enterobacteriaceae that cause fever, abdominal cramps, and
21 diarrhea. *Salmonella* spp. can occasionally establish localized infection (e.g., septic arthritis) or
22 progress to sepsis. All ages can be affected, but groups at greatest risk for severe or
23 complicated disease include infants, the elderly, and persons with compromised immune
24 systems. *Salmonella* spp. occur at temperatures between 50 and 120°F (10 and 49°C)
25 (Aserkoff et al. 1970; CDC 2007b), with optimal growth occurring at 95 to 99°F (35 to 37°C)
26 (ESR 2002). The pathogenic amoeba flagellate *Naegleria fowleri* is the causative agent of
27 human primary amoebic meningoencephalitis (PAM). All ages can be affected, but groups at
28 greatest risk for severe or complicated disease include infants, the elderly, and persons with
29 compromised immune systems. *Naegleria* spp. are ubiquitous in nature and can be enhanced
30 in thermally altered water bodies at temperatures ranging from 95 to 106°F (35 to 41°C) or
31 higher, but this organism is rarely found in water cooler than 95°F (35°C), and infection rarely
32 occurs at this water temperature (Tyndall et al. 1989).

33
34 The maximum temperature of the discharge stream (below the discharge outfall) in the summer
35 is approximately 92°F (33.4°C) with a maximum ambient river temperature of 79°F (26.1°C)
36 (NRC 1985). As described in the NUREG-1437 (NRC 1996), nuclear power plants that use
37 cooling ponds, lakes, or canals and those that discharge to "small rivers" have the greatest
38 chance of affecting the public by increases in thermophilic microbiological organism populations.
39 A small river is defined as one with a monthly average flow rate of less than 2,800 cubic meters
40 per second (cms) (100,000 cfs). The annual average flow rate of the Savannah River at the
41 nearest measuring station to VEPG (Augusta, at RM 187.4) is approximately 2.89×10^{11} ft³/yr

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1 (8.2 × 10⁹ m³/yr), which equates to 259 cms (9,146 cfs) (Gotvald et al. 2005). The monthly
2 average flow rates of the Savannah River between the years 1985 and 2005 ranged from about
3 200 to 400 cms (7,000 to 14,000 cfs), which meets the criterion of a small river (SNC 2007b).
4 The average cooling tower blowdown flow rate from current operation is about 5,000 gallons per
5 minute (11.4 cfs), per unit. This flow rate equates to 10,000 gallons per minute (22.8 cfs) for the
6 VEPG site (SNC 2007b). This flow rate is less than 1 percent of the minimum monthly average
7 flow rate of the Savannah River. Thus, at a given volume of the discharge stream with a
8 maximal temperature of 92°F (33.4°C), there will be approximately 100 equivalent diluting
9 volumes of Savannah River water with a maximal temperature of 79°F (26.1°C). The Zeroth
10 Law of Thermodynamics dictates that when a higher temperature system comes in physical
11 contact with a lower temperature system, there will be a net transfer of heat from the higher
12 temperature system to the lower temperature system. This happens until the two systems have
13 reached thermal equilibrium (Adkins 1984). Therefore, when the discharge stream temperature
14 is at its maximum and the ambient Savannah River water is at its maximum, the temperature
15 range of the Savannah River (below the discharge outfall) would be between 79°F (26.1°C) and
16 92°F (33.4°C) (NRC 1985). This temperature range is well outside the optimal growth
17 temperature range of thermophilic microbiological organisms between 99°F and 150°F (37 and
18 66°C), and is not expected to cause any significant public health risks.

19
20 SNC consulted the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
21 (SCDHEC), Aquatic Biology Section, to determine whether there was any concern about the
22 potential occurrence of thermophilic microbiological organisms in the Savannah River at the
23 VEPG location (SNC 2007a). The SCDHEC has indicated that it currently does not monitor for
24 *N. fowleri* in the waters of the State of South Carolina and no information is available from
25 SCDHEC concerning the potential health effects in South Carolina associated with *N. fowleri*
26 and its associated disease (SNC 2007a).

27
28 Available data assembled by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the
29 years 1996 to 2005 (CDC 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002a, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007c), and
30 from the States of Georgia and South Carolina for the years 2001 to 2006 (GDHR 2002, 2006;
31 SCDHEC 2007), report a single occurrence of a waterborne disease in August 2002 resulting in
32 one fatality. The environmental investigation of this incident revealed that it occurred under
33 extreme environmental conditions of high ambient air and water temperatures, low river water
34 level, and low river flow rate. During 1989 to 2000, the CDC waterborne-disease outbreak
35 surveillance system documented 24 fatal cases of PAM in the United States, this being the first
36 case in Georgia since 1987 (CDC 2002b). Outbreaks of Legionellosis, Salmonellosis, or
37 Shigellosis that occurred in Georgia or South Carolina were within the range of national trends
38 (CDC 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002a, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007c) in terms of cases per
39 100,000 population or total cases per year, and the outbreaks were associated with pools, spas,
40 or lakes.

1 Epidemiological reports from the States of Georgia and South Carolina indicate a very low risk
2 of causing outbreaks from thermophilic microbiological organisms associated with thermal
3 discharges (GDHR 2002, 2006; SCDHEC 2007). Notably, there have been up to 40 cases per
4 year of Legionellosis reported statewide in Georgia during the last 10 years and only one case
5 of exposure to *N. fowleri* reported statewide during the last 5 years. During the period 2004 to
6 2006, counties in Georgia within the vicinity of VEGP reported Legionellosis in Jefferson County
7 (6 cases) and Chatham County (9 cases), with no cases reported in Burke, Columbia, Emanuel,
8 Effingham, Jenkins, McDuffie, Richmond, or Screven Counties. In South Carolina, up to 22
9 cases per year of Legionellosis have been reported statewide since 1995. For the South
10 Carolina counties in the vicinity of VEGP, Aiken County reported one case in 2004, and
11 Barnwell County reported one case in 2006, with no cases reported in Allendale, Edgefield,
12 Hampton, or Jasper Counties during 2003 to 2006. No reported cases of exposure to *N. fowleri*
13 in South Carolina were identified during the last 5 years (SCDHEC 2007).

14
15 The Staff independently reviewed the VEPG Environmental Report (SNC 2007a) and visited the
16 VEPG site. Based on the evaluation presented above, thermophilic microbiological organisms
17 are not likely to present a public health hazard as a result of VEPG's discharges to the
18 Savannah River. The Staff concludes that impacts on public health from thermophilic
19 microbiological organisms from continued operation of VEPG in the license renewal period
20 would be SMALL.

21
22
23 The staff identified a variety of measures that could mitigate potential thermophilic
24 microbiological organism impacts resulting from continued operation of the VEPG. These
25 mitigation measures would include periodically monitoring for thermophilic microbiological
26 organisms in the water and sediments near the discharge, as well as not allowing recreational
27 use near the discharge plume. These mitigation measures could reduce human health impacts
28 by minimizing public exposures to thermophilic microbiological organisms. The staff did not
29 identify any cost benefit studies applicable to these mitigation measures

30 31 **4.2 Transmission Lines**

32
33 The seven transmission lines and right-of-ways (ROWs) built in conjunction with the VEGP site
34 are described in section 2.1.7 and mapped on figure 2-4. The lines total 395 mi (636 kilometers
35 [km]) in length, and have ROW widths varying from 100 ft (30.5 meters [m]) to 275 ft (84 m).
36 The transmission lines operate with 500-kilovolt (kV) lines and 230-kV lines. The transmission
37 line ROWs include a total area of 6395 acres (ac) (2588 hectares [ha]) (SNC 2007a).

38
39 SNC maintains the ROW with established procedures to prevent vegetation from interfering with
40 the lines (GPC 1997). The vegetative maintenance program includes selected backpack
41 spraying of approved herbicides on dry ground and stream crossings every other year; SNC

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1 follows a four-year mowing cycle in non-spraying years (SNC 2007a; TRC 2006). On wetland
2 areas, no herbicides are used, the area is not mowed, and only hand clearing is allowed.
3

4 Category 1 issues in 10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1 that are applicable to
5 transmission lines from VEGP are listed in Table 4-3. The NRC staff has not identified any new
6 and significant information during its independent review of the VEGP Environmental Report,
7 the site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation of other available information that would
8 indicate any new and significant information associated with the renewal of the VEGP operating
9 licenses. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no impacts related to these issues
10 beyond those discussed in the GEIS. For all of those issues, the Staff concluded in the GEIS
11 that the impacts would be SMALL.
12

13 **Table 4-3.** Category 1 Issues Applicable to the VEGP Transmission Lines
14 During the Renewal Term
15

ISSUE—10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1	GEIS Sections
TERRESTRIAL RESOURCES	
Power line right-of-way management (cutting and herbicide application)	4.5.6.1
Bird collisions with power lines	4.5.6.2
Impacts of electromagnetic fields on flora and fauna (plants, agricultural crops, honeybees, wildlife, livestock)	4.5.6.3
Floodplains and wetland on power line ROW	4.5.7
AIR QUALITY	
Air quality effects of transmission lines	4.5.2
LAND USE	
On-site land use	4.5.3
Power line right-of-way	4.5.3

16
17 A brief description of the Staff's review and GEIS conclusions, as codified in Table B-1, for each
18 of these issues follows:
19

- 20 • Power line ROW management (cutting and herbicide application). Based on information
21 in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

22
23 The impacts of ROW maintenance on wildlife are expected to be of small significance at
24 all sites.

1 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
2 review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007a), the site audit, the scoping process,
3 consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), or evaluation of other
4 information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no impacts of power line
5 ROW maintenance on wildlife during the renewal term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.
6

- 7 • Bird collisions with power lines. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission
8 found that:

9
10 Impacts are expected to be of small significance at all sites.
11

12 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
13 review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007a), the site audit, the scoping process,
14 consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or evaluation of other information.
15 Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no impacts of bird collisions with power
16 lines during the renewal term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.
17

- 18 • Impacts of electromagnetic fields on flora and fauna (plants, agricultural crops,
19 honeybees, wildlife, livestock). Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission
20 found that:

21
22 No significant impacts of electromagnetic fields on terrestrial flora and fauna have been
23 identified. Such effects are not expected to be a problem during the license renewal
24 term.
25

26 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
27 review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007a), the site audit, the scoping process,
28 or evaluation of other information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no
29 impacts of electromagnetic fields on flora and fauna during the renewal term beyond those
30 discussed in the GEIS.
31

- 32 • Floodplains and wetlands on power line right of way. Based on information in the GEIS, the
33 Commission found that:

34
35 Periodic vegetation control is necessary in forested wetlands underneath power lines
36 and can be achieved with minimal damage to the wetland. No significant impact is
37 expected at any nuclear power plant during the license renewal term.
38

39 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
40 review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007a), the site audit, the scoping process,
41 or evaluation of other information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no

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1 impacts of power line ROW maintenance on floodplains and wetlands during the renewal
2 term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.

- 3
4 • Air quality effects of transmission lines. Based on the information in the GEIS, the
5 Commission found that:

6
7 Production of ozone and oxides of nitrogen is insignificant and does not contribute
8 measurably to ambient levels of these gases.
9

10 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
11 review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007a), the site audit, the scoping process,
12 or evaluation of other information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no air
13 quality impacts of transmission lines during the renewal term beyond those discussed in the
14 GEIS.

- 15
16 • On-site land use. Based on the information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

17
18 Projected on-site land use changes required during the renewal period would be a small
19 fraction of any nuclear power plant site and would involve land that is controlled by the
20 applicant.
21

22 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
23 review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007a), the site audit, the scoping process,
24 or evaluation of other information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no on-
25 site land use impacts during the renewal term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.
26

- 27 • Power line right of way (ROW). Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found
28 that:

29
30 Ongoing use of power line ROWs would continue with no change in restrictions. The
31 effects of these restrictions are of small significance.
32

33 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
34 review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007a), the site audit, the scoping process,
35 or evaluation of other information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no
36 impacts of power line ROWs on land use during the renewal term beyond those discussed
37 in the GEIS.
38

39 Two Category 2 issues exist for the transmission lines. The issue of chronic effects was not
40 categorized in the GEIS, but is being treated as a Category 2 issue in this draft SEIS. The
41 Category 2 issues are listed in Table 4-4 and are discussed in Sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2.

Table 4-4. Category 2 and Uncategorized Issues Applicable to the VEGP Transmission Lines During the Renewal Term

ISSUE—10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1	GEIS Sections	10 CFR 51.53(c)(3)(ii) Subparagraph	SEIS Section
HUMAN HEALTH			
Electromagnetic fields, acute effects (electric shock)	4.5.4.1	H	4.2.1
Electromagnetic fields, chronic effects	4.5.4.2	NA	4.2.2

4.2.1 Electromagnetic Fields-Acute Effects

Based on the GEIS, the Commission found that electric shock resulting from direct access to energized conductors or from induced charges in metallic structures has not been found to be a problem at most operating plants and generally is not expected to be a problem during the license renewal term. However, site-specific review is required to determine the significance of the electric shock potential along the portions of the transmission lines that are within the scope of this draft SEIS.

In the GEIS (NRC 1996), the Staff found that without a review of the conformance of each nuclear plant transmission line with National Electrical Safety Code (NESC; NESC 1997) criteria, it was not possible to determine the significance of the electric shock potential. Evaluation of individual plant transmission lines is necessary because the issue of electric shock safety was not addressed in the licensing process for some plants. For other plants, land use in the vicinity of transmission lines may have changed, or power distribution companies may have chosen to upgrade line voltage. To comply with 10 CFR 51.53(c)(3)(ii)(H), the applicant must provide an assessment of the potential shock hazard if the transmission lines that were constructed for the specific purpose of connecting the plant to the transmission system do not meet the recommendations of the NESC for preventing electric shock from induced currents. An analysis of the conformance of the VEGP transmission lines with the NESC standard was conducted using computer modeled data of induced current under the transmission lines. Objects located near the transmission lines can become electrically charged due to their immersion in the electromagnetic field surrounding the lines. This electrical charge results in a current that flows through the object to the ground. This current is called “induced” because there is no direct connection between the line and the object. The induced current can also flow to the ground through the body of a person who touches the electrically charged object. An object that is insulated from the ground can actually store an electrical charge, becoming what is called “capacitively charged.” A person standing on the ground and touching a vehicle or a fence receives an electrical shock due to the sudden discharge of the capacitive charge through the person’s body to the ground. After the initial discharge, a steady-state current can develop,

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1 with the magnitude of the current depending upon several factors. These factors include the
2 strength of the electric field (dependent on the voltage of the transmission line and its height and
3 geometry), the size of the object on the ground, and the extent to which the object is grounded
4 (SNC 2007a).

5
6 As described above, two 500-kV and five 230-kV transmission lines were built to distribute
7 power from VEGP to the electric grid. SNC began its analysis of these lines by identifying the
8 limiting case for each line; that is, the configuration along each line where the potential for
9 induced-current shock would be greatest. Once the limiting case was identified, the electric field
10 strength for each transmission line was calculated, then the induced current was calculated.
11 SNC calculated electric field strength and induced current using a computer code called
12 ACDCLINE, produced by the Electric Power Research Institute. The results of this program
13 have been field-verified through actual electrostatic field measurements by several utilities. The
14 input parameters for the ACDCLINE program included the design features of the limiting-case
15 scenario, the NESC requirement that line sag be determined at a conductor temperature of
16 120°F, and the maximum vehicle size under the lines (a tractor-trailer). The analysis
17 determined that none of the transmission lines has the capacity to induce greater than 5
18 milliamperes in a vehicle parked beneath the lines (Table 4-5). Therefore, the VEGP
19 transmission lines conform to the NESC provisions for preventing electric shock from induced
20 current (SNC 2007a).

21
22 SNC also analyzed hypothetical spans of a generic 230-kV transmission line and a generic 500-
23 kV transmission line terminating at the VEGP facility (GPC 1997 in SNC 2007a). These
24 hypothetical cases represented the most extreme condition expected on each type of line.
25 Table 4-5 includes the results of these generic analyses (SNC 2007a).

26
27 Georgia Power Company (GPC) and Georgia Transmission Corporation, the owners of the
28 transmission lines, have surveillance and maintenance procedures that provide assurance that
29 design ground clearances will not change. These procedures include routine aerial inspections
30 that check for evidence of clearance problems, including encroachments, broken conductors,
31 broken or leaning structures, and signs of burning trees. In addition, ground-level inspections
32 include examination of clearances at questionable locations, evaluation of the integrity of
33 structures, and surveillance for dead or diseased trees that may fall on the lines. Problems
34 noted during any inspection are identified for corrective action by the appropriate organization
35 (SNC 2007a).

Table 4-5. Results of Induced Current Analysis

Transmission Line	Voltage (kilovolts)	Induced Current^(a) (milliamperes)
Scherer	500	4.7
West McIntosh (Thalman)	500	4.3
Goshen (Black)	230	1.5 ^(b)
Goshen (White)	230	1.5 ^(b)
Augusta Newsprint	230	2.0
SCE&G	230	2.1
Wilson	230	na ^(c)
Generic 500-kV line ^(d)	500	4.7
Generic 500-kV line ^(d)	230	1.4

(a) Conservatively calculated for 212°F sags for all cases except Thalman and SCE&G, for which the line was resagged to 120°F.

(b) Location has combined effects of Goshen (black), Goshen (white), and Augusta Newsprint, which run in parallel.

(c) Not applicable (na) because there are no public road crossings for the Wilson transmission line. It is entirely on GPC property.

(d) Calculation is for a 90-degree crossing – lesser angles could produce higher results.

Source: SNC 2007a

3
4 The Staff has reviewed the available information, including the applicant's evaluation and
5 computational results, the site visit, the scoping process, and other public sources of
6 information. Based on this information, the Staff evaluated the potential impacts of electric
7 shock resulting from operation of VEGP and its associated transmission lines. It is the Staff's
8 conclusion that the potential impacts of electric shock during the renewal term would be SMALL.

9
10 The staff identified a variety of measures that could mitigate potential acute EMF impacts
11 resulting from continued operation of the VEPG transmission lines. These mitigation measures
12 would include limiting public access to transmission line structures, installing road signs at road
13 crossings, and increase transmission line clearances.

14
15 These mitigation measures could reduce human health impacts by minimizing public exposures
16 to electric shock hazards. NESC rules as specified in Part 2, Rules 232C1c and 232D3c contain
17 provisions that are considered necessary for the protection of employees and the public from
18 acute EMF hazards associated with transmission lines, including during the license renewal
19 period. SNC currently meets these rules. The staff did not identify any cost benefit studies
20 applicable to the mitigation measures mentioned above.

1 **4.2.2 Electromagnetic Fields-Chronic Effects**
2

3 In the GEIS, the chronic effects of 60 hertz electromagnetic fields from power lines were not
4 designated as Category 1 or 2, and a designation will not be made until a scientific consensus is
5 reached on the health implications of these fields. The potential for chronic effects from these
6 fields continues to be studied and is not known at this time. The National Institute of
7 Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) directs related research through the U.S. Department
8 of Energy (DOE). The 1999 report of the NIEHS and DOE Working Group (Portier 1999)
9 contains the following conclusion:

10
11 The NIEHS concludes that extremely low frequency-electromagnetic field exposure (ELF-
12 EMF) cannot be recognized as entirely safe because of weak scientific evidence that
13 exposure may pose a leukemia hazard. In our opinion, this finding is insufficient to warrant
14 aggressive regulatory concern. However, because virtually everyone in the United States
15 uses electricity and therefore is routinely exposed to ELF-EMF, passive regulatory action is
16 warranted, such as a continued emphasis on educating both the public and the regulated
17 community on means aimed at reducing exposures. The NIEHS does not believe that other
18 cancers or non-cancer health outcomes provide sufficient evidence of a risk to currently
19 warrant concern.

20
21 This statement is not sufficient to cause the Staff to change its position with respect to the
22 chronic effects of electromagnetic fields. The Staff considers the GEIS finding of "not
23 applicable" still appropriate and continues to follow developments on this issue.
24

25 **4.3 Radiological Impacts of Normal Operations**
26

27 Category 1 issues in 10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1 that are applicable to
28 VEGP in regard to radiological impacts are listed in Table 4-5. SNC stated in its Environmental
29 Report (SNC 2007a) that it is not aware of any new and significant information associated with
30 the renewal of the VEGP Operating License. The Staff has not identified any new and
31 significant information during its independent review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site
32 audit, the scoping process, or its evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff
33 concludes that there would be no impacts related to these issues beyond those discuss in the
34 GEIS. For these issues, the Staff concluded in the GEIS that the impacts are SMALL, and
35 additional plant-specific mitigation measures are not likely to be sufficiently beneficial to be
36 warranted.

Table 4-6. Category 1 Issues Applicable to Radiological Impacts of Normal Operations During the Renewal Term

ISSUE- 10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1	GEIS Sections
Human Health	
Radiation exposures to public (license renewal term)	4.6.2
Occupational radiation exposures (license renewal term)	4.6.3

A brief description of the Staff’s review and the GEIS conclusions, as codified in Table B-1, for each of these issues follows:

Radiation exposures to public (license renewal term). Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

Radiation doses to the public will continue at current levels associated with normal operations.

The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, or its evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no impacts of radiation exposures to the public during the renewal term beyond those discuss in the GEIS.

Occupational exposures to public (license renewal term). Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

Projected maximum occupational doses during the license renewal term are within the range of doses experienced during normal operations and normal maintenance outages, and would be well below regulatory limits.

The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site audit, the scoping process, or its evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there would be no impacts of occupational exposures during the renewal term beyond those discuss in the GEIS.

There are no Category 2 issues related to radiological impacts of routine operations.

4.4 Socioeconomic Impacts of Plant Operations During the License Renewal Term

Category 1 issues in 10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1, which are applicable to socioeconomic impacts during the renewal term are listed in Table 4-7. As stated in the GEIS, the impacts associated with these Category 1 issues were determined to be SMALL, and plant-specific mitigation measures would not be sufficiently beneficial to be warranted.

The Staff reviewed and evaluated the VEGP Environmental Report, scoping comments, other available information, and visited the VEGP site in search of new and significant information that would change the conclusions presented in the GEIS. No new and significant information was identified during this review. Therefore, it is expected that there would be no impacts related to these Category 1 issues during the renewal term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.

Table 4-7. Category 1 Issues Applicable to Socioeconomics During the Renewal Term

ISSUE—10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1	GEIS Section
SOCIOECONOMICS	
Public services: public safety, social services, and tourism and recreation	4.7.3; 4.7.3.3; 4.7.3.4; 4.7.3.6
Public services: education (license renewal term)	4.7.3.1
Aesthetic impacts (license renewal term)	4.7.6
Aesthetic impacts of transmission lines (license renewal term)	4.5.8

The results of the review and brief statement of GEIS conclusions, as codified in Table B-1 of 10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, for each of the socioeconomic Category 1 issues are provided below.

- Public services: public safety, social services, and tourism and recreation. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

Impacts to public safety, social services, and tourism and recreation are expected to be of small significance at all sites.

No new and significant information was identified during the review. Therefore, it is expected that there would be no impacts on public safety, social services, and tourism and recreation during the renewal term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.

- 1 • Public services: education (license renewal term). Based on information in the GEIS, the
2 Commission found that:

3
4 Only impacts of small significance are expected.

5
6 No new and significant information was identified during the review. Therefore, it is
7 expected that there would be no impacts on education during the renewal term beyond
8 those discussed in the GEIS.

- 9
10 • Aesthetic impacts (license renewal term). Based on information in the GEIS, the
11 Commission found that:

12
13 No significant impacts are expected during the license renewal term.

14
15 No new and significant information was identified during the review. Therefore, it is
16 expected that there would be no aesthetic impacts during the renewal term beyond those
17 discussed in the GEIS.

- 18
19 • Aesthetic impacts of transmission lines (license renewal term). Based on information in the
20 GEIS, the Commission found that:

21
22 No significant impacts are expected during the license renewal term.

23
24 No new and significant information was identified during the review. Therefore, it is
25 expected that there would be no aesthetic impacts of transmission lines during the renewal
26 term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.

27
28 Table 4–8 lists the Category 2 socioeconomic issues, which require plant-specific analysis, and
29 an additional issue, environmental justice, which was not addressed in the GEIS.

30 31 **4.4.1 Housing Impacts**

32
33 Appendix C of the GEIS presents a population characterization method based on two factors,
34 sparseness and proximity (GEIS, Section C.1.4). Sparseness measures population density
35 within 20 miles of the site, and proximity measures population density and city size within 50
36 miles. Each factor has categories of density and size (GEIS, Table C.1). A matrix is used to
37 rank the population category as low, medium, or high (GEIS, Figure C.1).

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Table 4–8. Category 2 Issues Applicable to Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice During the Renewal Term

ISSUE—10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1	GEIS Section	10 CFR 51.53(c)(3)(ii) Subparagraph	SEIS Section
SOCIOECONOMICS			
Housing impacts	4.7.1	I	4.4.1
Public services: public utilities	4.7.3.5	I	4.4.2
Off-site land use (license renewal term)	4.7.4	I	4.4.3
Public services: transportation	4.7.3.2	J	4.4.4
Historic and archaeological resources	4.7.7	K	4.4.5
Environmental justice	Not addressed ^(a)	Not addressed ^(a)	4.4.6
(a) Guidance related to environmental justice was not in place at the time the GEIS and the associated revision to 10 CFR Part 51 were prepared. Therefore, environmental justice must be addressed in plant-specific reviews.			

According to the 2000 Census, approximately 43,857 people lived within 20 mi of VEGP, which equates to a population density of 46 persons per square mile (SNC 2007a). This density translates to sparseness Category 2 (40 to 60 persons per square mile and no community with 25,000 or more persons within 20 mi). Approximately 670,000 people live within 50 mi of VEGP (SNC 2007a). This equates to a population density of 89 persons per square mile. Applying the GEIS proximity measures, VEGP is classified as proximity Category 3 (one or more cities with 100,000 or more persons and less than 190 persons per sq mi within 50 mi). Therefore, according to the sparseness and proximity matrix presented in the GEIS, the VEGP ranks of sparseness Category 2 and proximity Category 3 result in the conclusion that VEGP is located in a medium population area.

Table B-1 of 10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, states that impacts on housing availability are expected to be of small significance in medium or high-density population areas where growth-control measures are not in effect. Since VEGP is located in a medium population area and Burke, Columbia, and Richmond Counties are not subject to growth-control measures that would limit housing development, any VEGP employment-related impact on housing availability would likely be small. Since SNC has indicated that there would be no major plant refurbishment and no non-outage employees would be added to support VEGP operations during the license renewal term, employment levels at VEGP would remain relatively constant with no additional demand for housing during the license renewal term. In addition, the number of available housing units has kept pace with or exceeded the low growth in the area population.

1 Based on this information, there would be no impacts on housing during the license renewal
2 term.

4 **4.4.2 Public Services: Public Utility Impacts**

5
6 Impacts on public utility services are considered SMALL if there is little or no change in the
7 ability of the system to respond to demand and thus there is no need to add capital facilities.
8 Impacts are considered MODERATE if service capabilities are overtaxed during periods of peak
9 demand. Impacts are considered LARGE if services (e.g., water, sewer) are substantially
10 degraded and additional capacity is needed to meet ongoing demand. The GEIS indicated that,
11 in the absence of new and significant information to the contrary, the only impacts on public
12 utilities that could be significant are impacts on public water supplies.

13
14 Analysis of impacts on the public water systems considered both facility demand and facility-
15 related population growth. As previously discussed in Section 2.2.2, VEGP obtains its potable
16 water supply directly from groundwater sources. The facility does not purchase water from a
17 public water system. Water usage by VEGP has not stressed the supply source capacity and is
18 not currently an issue. SNC also has no plans to increase Unit 1 and Unit 2 staffing due to
19 refurbishment or new construction activities, and has identified no operational changes during
20 the license renewal term that would increase facility water use.

21
22 VEGP operations during the license renewal term would not increase facility-related population
23 demand for public water services. Given that SNC has indicated that there would be no major
24 plant refurbishment, overall employment levels at Unit 1 and Unit 2 would remain relatively
25 constant during this period with no additional demand for public services. In addition, public
26 water systems in the region would be adequate to provide the capacity required to meet the
27 demand of residential and industrial customers in the area. Based on a review of available
28 public water supply use and capacity information in the region, there would be no impact to
29 public water services during the license renewal term.

30 **4.4.3 Off-site Land Use During Operations**

31
32
33 Off-site land use during the license renewal term is a Category 2 issue. Table B-1 of 10 CFR 51
34 Subpart A, Appendix B notes that "significant changes in land use may be associated with
35 population and tax revenue changes resulting from license renewal."

36
37 Section 4.7.4 of the GEIS defines the magnitude of land-use changes as a result of plant
38 operation during the license renewal term as follows:

39
40 **SMALL** - Little new development and minimal changes to an area's land-use pattern.

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1 MODERATE - Considerable new development and some changes to the land-use pattern.

2
3 LARGE - Large-scale new development and major changes in the land-use pattern.

4
5 Tax revenue can affect land use because it enables local jurisdictions to provide the public
6 services (e.g., transportation and utilities) necessary to support development. Section 4.7.4.1 of
7 the GEIS states that the assessment of tax-driven land-use impacts during the license renewal
8 term should consider (1) the size of the plant's payments relative to the community's total
9 revenues, (2) the nature of the community's existing land-use pattern, and (3) the extent to
10 which the community already has public services in place to support and guide development. If
11 the plant's tax payments are projected to be small relative to the community's total revenue, tax-
12 driven land-use changes during the plant's license renewal term would be SMALL, especially
13 where the community has pre-established patterns of development and has provided adequate
14 public services to support and guide development. Section 4.7.2.1 of the GEIS states that if tax
15 payments by the plant owner are less than 10 percent of the taxing jurisdiction's revenue, the
16 significance level would be SMALL. If the plant's tax payments are projected to be medium to
17 large relative to the community's total revenue, new tax-driven land-use changes would be
18 MODERATE. If the plant's tax payments are projected to be a dominant source of the
19 community's total revenue, new tax-driven land-use changes would be LARGE. This would be
20 especially true where the community has no pre-established pattern of development or has not
21 provided adequate public services to support and guide development.

22 23 Population-Related Impacts

24
25 Since SNC has no plans to add non-outage employees to Units 1 and 2 during the license
26 renewal period, there would be no noticeable change in land use conditions in the vicinity of the
27 VEGP site. Therefore, there would be no land use impacts during the license renewal term.

28 29 Tax-Revenue-Related Impacts

30
31 As previously discussed in Section 2.2.8.6.3, SNC and the VEGP site's co-owners pay annual
32 real estate taxes to Burke County. From 2000 through 2007, the owners paid between \$23.7
33 and \$25.3 million annually in property taxes to Burke County. This represented between 74 and
34 82 percent of the county's total annual tax revenue. Each year, Burke County retains a portion
35 of this tax money for county operations and disburses the remainder to the state, the school
36 district, and fire/emergency management/public safety services to fund their respective
37 operating budgets. The local public school system, Burke County School District, receives
38 approximately 60 percent of the total county property tax revenue.

39
40 At present, the State of Georgia has taken no action on deregulation, which could, if enacted,
41 affect tax payments to Burke County. However, any changes to VEGP property tax rates due to

1 deregulation would be independent of license renewal. Discontinuing the current level of tax
2 revenues would have a significant negative economic impact on the county.

3
4 SNC has indicated that there would be no major plant refurbishment or license renewal-related
5 construction activities necessary to support the continued operation of Unit 1 and Unit 2 during
6 the license renewal period. Accordingly, there would be no increase in the assessed value of
7 VEGP and annual property taxes to Burke County would remain relatively constant throughout
8 the license renewal period. Based on this information, there would be no tax revenue-related
9 land-use impacts during the license-renewal term.

10 11 **4.4.4 Public Services: Transportation Impacts During Operations**

12
13 Table B-1, 10 CFR Part 51 states: "Transportation impacts (level of service) of highway traffic
14 generated... during the term of the renewed license are generally expected to be of small
15 significance. However, the increase in traffic associated with additional workers and the local
16 road and traffic control conditions may lead to impacts of moderate or large significance at some
17 sites." All applicants are required by 10 CFR 51.53(c)(3)(ii)(J) to assess the impacts of highway
18 traffic generated by the proposed project on the level of service of local highways during the
19 term of the renewed license.

20
21 Given that VEGP has no plans to add non-outage employees to Units 1 or 2 during the license
22 renewal period, there would be no noticeable change in traffic volume and levels of service on
23 roadways in the vicinity of the VEGP site. Therefore, there would be no transportation impacts
24 during the license renewal term.

25 26 **4.4.5 Historic and Archaeological Resources**

27
28 The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires that Federal agencies take in to account
29 the effects of their undertakings on historic properties. The historic preservation review process
30 mandated by Section 106 of the NHPA is outlined in regulations issued by the Advisory Council
31 on Historic Preservation at 36 CFR Part 800. Renewal of an operating license is an undertaking
32 that could potentially affect historic properties. Therefore, according to the NHPA, the NRC is to
33 make a reasonable effort to identify historic properties in areas of potential effects. If no historic
34 properties are present or affected, the NRC is required to notify the State Historic Preservation
35 Officer before proceeding. If it is determined that historic properties are present the NRC is
36 required to assess and resolve possible adverse effects of the undertaking.

37 38 **4.4.5.1 Site Specific Cultural Resources Information**

39
40 A review of the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) files shows that there are no
41 National Register listed archaeological or above ground historic resources identified on the

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1 VEGP property. As noted in Section 2.2.9.2, three surveys, conducted in 2005, 2006 and 2007,
2 of specific portions of the VEGP site resulted in the identification of 17 archaeological sites, two
3 of which were eventually determined to be eligible for listing on the Nation Register of Historic
4 Places (NSA 2006a and 2006b).

5
6 There is potential for archaeological resources to be present on other portions of the VEGP site
7 that have not been surveyed. As noted in Section 2.2.9.2, while seven National Register listed
8 resources have been identified in Burke County, none are located within the boundaries of the
9 VEGP.

10 11 **4.4.5.2 Conclusions**

12
13 The staff does not expect any significant impacts on historic and archaeological resources
14 during the license renewal term. Any new ground-disturbing activities that might occur during
15 plant operations would follow SNC's procedures, which would require further evaluation to
16 determine if additional archaeological review is necessary. Therefore, the staff concludes that
17 the impacts from operations would be SMALL. Some mitigation might be required in the event
18 of an unexpected discovery.

19 20 **4.4.6 Environmental Justice**

21
22 Executive Order (EO) 12898 (59 FR 7629) directs Federal agencies to identify and address, as
23 appropriate, potential disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental
24 impacts on minority and low-income populations. In 2004, the Commission issued a *Policy*
25 *Statement on the Treatment of Environmental Justice Matters in NRC Regulatory and Licensing*
26 *Actions* (69 FR 52040) which states "The Commission is committed to the general goals set
27 forth in EO 12898, and strives to meet those goals as part of its NEPA review process."

28
29 The Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) provides the following information in *Environmental*
30 *Justice: Guidance Under the National Environmental Policy Act* (CEQ 1997):

- 31
32 • Disproportionately High and Adverse Human Health Effects. Adverse health effects are
33 measured in risks and rates that could result in latent cancer fatalities, as well as other
34 fatal or nonfatal adverse impacts on human health. Adverse health effects may include
35 bodily impairment, infirmity, illness, or death. Disproportionately high and adverse
36 human health effects occur when the risk or rate of exposure to an environmental hazard
37 for a minority or low-income population is significant (as defined by the National
38 Environmental Policy Act [NEPA]) and appreciably exceeds the risk or exposure rate for
39 the general population or for another appropriate comparison group (CEQ 1997).

- Disproportionately High and Adverse Environmental Effects. A disproportionately high environmental impact that is significant (as defined by NEPA) refers to an impact or risk of an impact on the natural or physical environment in a low-income or minority community that appreciably exceeds the environmental impact on the larger community. Such effects may include ecological, cultural, human health, economic, or social impacts. An adverse environmental impact is an impact that is determined to be both harmful and significant (as defined by NEPA). In assessing cultural and aesthetic environmental impacts, impacts that uniquely affect geographically dislocated or dispersed minority or low-income populations or American Indian tribes are considered (CEQ 1997).

The environmental justice analysis assesses the potential for disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations that could result from the operation of VEGP during the renewal term. In assessing the impacts, the following CEQ (CEQ 1997) definitions of minority individuals and populations and low-income population were used:

- Minority individuals. Individuals who identify themselves as members of the following population groups: Hispanic or Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or two or more races, meaning individuals who identified themselves on a Census form as being a member of two or more races, for example, Hispanic and Asian.
- Minority populations. Minority populations are identified when (1) the minority population of an affected area exceeds 50 percent or (2) the minority population percentage of the affected area is meaningfully greater than the minority population percentage in the general population or other appropriate unit of geographic analysis.
- Low-income populations. Low-income populations in an affected area are identified with the annual statistical poverty thresholds from the Census Bureau's Current Population Reports, Series P-60, on Income and Poverty.

4.4.6.1 Minority Populations in 2000

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau's (USCB) 2000 census for Georgia identifies 28.7 percent of the state population as Black or African American; 0.3 percent American Indian or Alaskan Native; 2.1 percent Asian; 0.1 percent Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; 2.4 percent some other race; 1.4 percent two or more races; 34.9 percent aggregate of minority races; and 5.3 percent Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (USCB 2000a). For South Carolina, the USCB reports 29.5 percent of the state population as Black or African American; 0.3 percent American Indian or Alaskan Native; 0.9 percent Asian; 0.04 percent Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; 1.0

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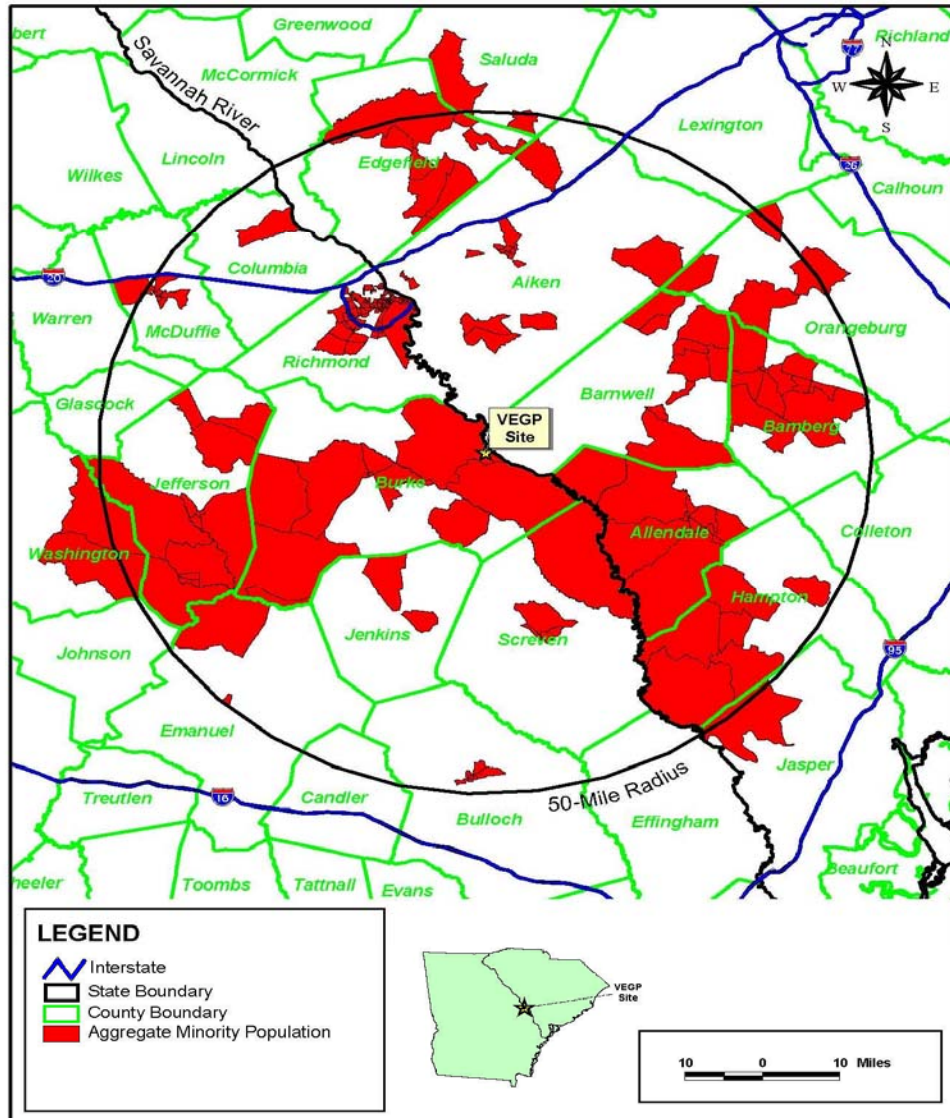
1 percent some other race; 1.0 percent two or more races; 32.8 percent aggregate of minority
2 races; and 2.4 percent Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (USCB 2000a).

3
4 Those census block groups (491) wholly or partly within the 50-mi radius of VEGP were
5 reported in the 2000 census as having a minority population of 275,179 or 42.0 percent of the
6 total population in these block groups. Of those 491 block groups, 168 were reported in the
7 2000 census as having aggregate minority population percentages that exceed the state
8 average by 20 percentage points or more, while 183 census block groups have aggregate
9 minority population percentages that exceed 50 percent. The largest minority group was Black
10 or African American, with 175 block groups that exceed the state average by 20 percent or more
11 and 171 that have Black or African American populations of 50 percent or more. These block
12 groups are located in ten Georgia counties and nine counties in South Carolina. One census
13 block group (in Aiken County, South Carolina) exceeded the state average for Hispanic or
14 Latino ethnicity by 20 percent or more, but no block groups had 50 percent or more. No other
15 minority classifications exceeded either the 20 percent or 50 percent selection criterion (NRC
16 2007).

17
18 Based on 2000 census data, Figure 4-1 shows the block groups with high density minority
19 populations within a 50-mi radius of VEGP.

20 21 **4.4.6.2 Low-Income Populations in 2000**

22
23 According to 2000 census data, 12.6 percent of Georgia households and 14.1 percent of South
24 Carolina households were identified as living below the Federal poverty threshold (USCB
25 2000b). (The 1999 Federal poverty threshold was \$17,029 for a family of four.) A total of
26 108,732 individuals (17.1 percent) and 23,580 families (13.6 percent) residing in the census
27 blocks within a 50-mi radius of VEGP were identified as living below the Federal poverty
28 threshold. Census block groups were considered high density low-income block groups if the
29 percentage of the population living below the Federal poverty threshold exceeded the state
30 average by 20 percent or more, or if 50 percent or more of the households in the block group
31 exceeded the state average. Based on 2000 Census data, there were 72 block groups within a
32 50-mi radius of VEGP that exceeded the state average for low income households by 20
33 percent or more. Of those 72 block groups, 14 had 50 percent or more low-income households
34 (NRC 2007). Figure 4-2 shows low-income census block groups within a 50-mi radius of VEGP.

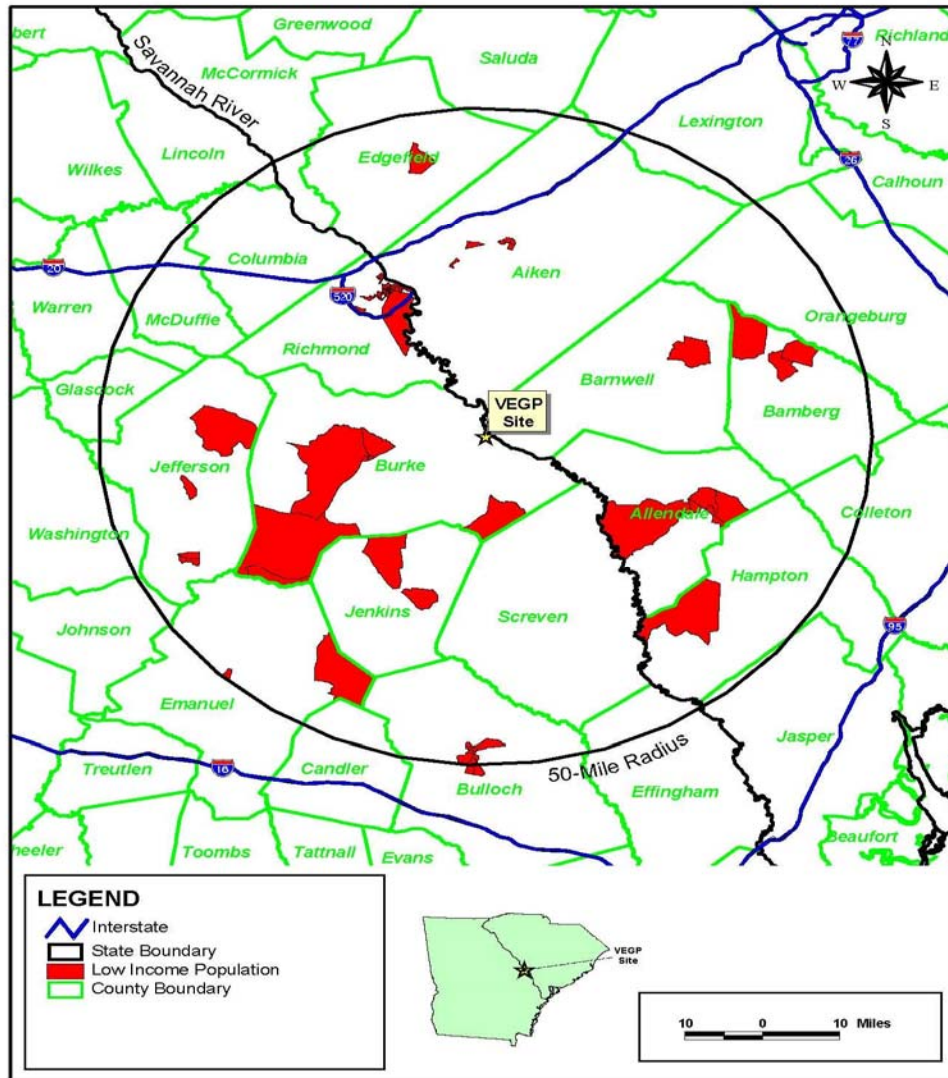


Source: SNC 2007a

1

Figure 4-1. Minority block groups in 2000 within a 50-mi radius of VEGP

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Source: SNC 2007a

1
2
3
4

Figure 4-2. Low-income block groups in 2000 within a 50-mi radius of VEGP

4.4.6.3 Analysis of Impacts

Based on the analysis of impacts for all resource areas presented in this draft SEIS, it was determined that there would be no significant adverse health impacts on members of the public and, therefore, there would be no disproportionate and adverse impacts felt by minority or low-income populations within the region of interest. Similarly, given that the potential environmental effects of continued operation on the physical environment (water, air, aquatic and terrestrial resources) and socioeconomic conditions, there would be no disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority and low-income populations because of negative environmental effects.

NRC also analyzed the risk of radiological exposure through the consumption patterns of special pathway receptors, including subsistence consumption of fish and wildlife. The special pathway receptors analysis is important to the environmental justice analysis because consumption patterns may reflect the traditional or cultural practices of minority and low-income populations in the area.

4.4.6.4 Subsistence Consumption of Fish and Wildlife

Section 4-4 of EO 12898 (59 FR 7629) directs Federal agencies, whenever practical and appropriate, to collect and analyze information on the consumption patterns of populations who rely principally on fish and/or wildlife for subsistence and to communicate the risks of these consumption patterns to the public. In this draft SEIS, NRC considered whether there were any means for minority or low-income populations to be disproportionately affected by examining impacts to American Indian, Hispanic, and other traditional lifestyle special pathway receptors.

Fish advisories issued by the States of Georgia and South Carolina for the Savannah River have indicated that some species, especially predatory species, can carry levels of radioactive contamination that could be harmful if ingested. However, an in-depth evaluation by the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research found that VEGP is responsible for only a small amount of the radiological contamination (principally tritium) in the Savannah River and its organisms (NRC 2007).

SNC has a comprehensive Radiological Environmental Monitoring Plan (REMP) at VEGP to assess the impact of site operations on the environment. Samples are collected from the aquatic and terrestrial pathways applicable to the site. The aquatic pathways include fish, surface waters and sediment. The terrestrial pathways include airborne particulates and radioiodine, milk, fish, grass or leafy vegetation, and direct radiation.

No man-made radionuclides were detected in fish samples in 2006. In 2006, several outages resulted in an increase of the annual curies of tritium released in liquid effluents from the site. The increase in liquid effluents along with drought conditions on the river contributed to a higher annual

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1 tritium average. Although the drinking water stations are much further downstream, the potential
2 dose to someone consuming water near the plant discharge for an entire year (730 liters) would be
3 1.47×10^{-2} millirems (mrem) in a year. The potential dose from tritium in the river to an individual
4 who regularly consumed fish in the vicinity of the plant would be 3.82×10^{-3} mrem in a year. The
5 dose limit to a member of the public due to liquid effluents is 3 mrem per year (SNC 2007d).
6

7 During 2006, analyses were performed on collected samples of environmental media as part of the
8 required REMP and showed no discernible radiological impact from VEGP operations, except for
9 two instances. Cesium-137 and cobalt-60 were found in indicator samples of river sediment.
10 Cesium-137 activity was also detected in control samples, but at lower concentrations than the
11 indicator samples. The presence of cesium-137 in these samples could be attributed to VEGP
12 effluents, the Savannah River Site (SRS), or from fallout from past weapons testing and from the
13 Chernobyl incident. The cobalt-60 activity could be attributable to releases from either SRS or
14 VEGP because it was not detected in the control samples. The associated total body dose in a year
15 to a member of the public expected to receive the highest dose was less than 0.1 percent of the
16 Offsite Dose Calculation Manual annual limit for an operating unit. In summary, the results of the
17 2006 REMP demonstrate that the routine operation at the VEGP site had no adverse radiological
18 impact on the environment or to the public (SNC 2007d).
19

20 Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GEPD) also conducts its own environmental
21 radiation surveillance program of VEGP, which parallels (and partially overlaps) the SNC
22 REMP. The purpose of the surveillance program, instituted in 1976, is to detect, identify, and
23 measure radioactive material released to the environment from the operation of nine facilities in
24 or bordering Georgia. The most extensive monitoring network is focused on an area in Georgia
25 adjacent to and downstream of SRS and VEGP. Similar to REMP, air, surface and ground
26 water, rain, milk, sediment and soil, fish, game animals, crops and vegetation samples are
27 collected by GEPD from the environs surrounding VEGP and SRS. Analyses of environmental
28 samples are performed at the Environmental Radiation Laboratory at Georgia Tech. Georgia
29 Department of Natural Resources has provided deer from five zones in east central Georgia, along
30 the Savannah River. GEPD staff collects several species of sport fish from the Savannah River
31 near VEGP and SRS (GEPD 2004).
32

33 The GEPD found elevated concentrations of cesium-137 and tritium in fish samples taken near
34 VEGP. GEPD attributed less than 10 percent of the tritium to VEGP; the majority was attributed
35 to SRS. Similarly, the cesium-137 levels were attributed to SRS. All fish samples, except one
36 collected near SRS, were below any significant risk level-of-concern. Cesium-137 and tritium
37 were the only man-made radionuclides detected in deer, from samples collected adjacent to
38 SRS and they were considered most likely due to SRS releases. GEPD determined that
39 consumption of deer near SRS would be unlikely to pose a significant long-term radiological
40 risk. Based on these monitoring results, concentrations of VEGP-related contaminants in fish
41 and game animals in areas surrounding VEGP have been quite low (GEPD 2004).

1 Consequently, no disproportionately high and adverse human health impacts would be
 2 expected in special pathway receptor populations in the region as a result of subsistence
 3 consumption of fish and wildlife.

4
 5 **4.5 Groundwater Use and Quality**

6
 7 There are no Category 1 issues related to groundwater use and quality in 10 CFR Part 51,
 8 Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1 that are applicable to VEGP operations. The Category 2
 9 issues related to groundwater use and quality during the renewal term that are applicable to
 10 VEGP are discussed in the sections that follow, and are listed in Table 4-9.

11
 12 **Table 4-9.** Category 2 Issues Applicable to VEGP Groundwater Use and Quality
 13 During the Renewal Term
 14

ISSUE—10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1	GEIS Sections	10 CFR 51.53(c)(3)(ii) Subparagraph	Draft SEIS Section
GROUNDWATER USE AND QUALITY			
Groundwater use conflicts (potable, service water, and dewatering; plants that use > 100 gallons per minute [gpm])	4.8.1.1	C	4.5.1
Groundwater use conflicts (plants using cooling towers withdrawing make-up water from a small river)	4.8.1.3	A	4.5.2

15
 16 **4.5.1 Groundwater Use Conflicts, Plants Using > 100 GPM**

17
 18 For plants that withdraw groundwater to supply potable and service water systems at a rate
 19 greater than 100 gpm, potential groundwater use conflicts are considered a Category 2 issue,
 20 thus requiring a site-specific assessment for license renewal review. VEGP uses an annual
 21 average of approximately 1.05 mgd, equivalent to a rate of 729 gpm. Therefore, groundwater
 22 use conflicts are a potentially applicable issue for relicensing of VEGP. The GEIS considered
 23 groundwater water use conflicts to be a Category 2 issue because of the potential for withdrawal
 24 of groundwater to reduce the volume of groundwater available to other users in the area. The
 25 Staff independently reviewed the VEGP Environmental Report, visited the site, and consulted
 26 with Federal and State resource agencies to evaluate the potential for this withdrawal to impact
 27 the availability of groundwater within the region surrounding VEGP.

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4.5.1.1 Groundwater Users Potentially Impacted

The aquifers located at VEGP are used as a source of water supply for several other groundwater users within the local area. Uses of groundwater within the local area include municipal water supplies, as well as industrial, domestic, and agricultural uses (SNC 2007a). A summary of the local municipalities and industries within Burke County which use groundwater for water supply is provided in Table 4-10.

Table 4-10. Permitted Municipal and Industrial Groundwater Users in Burke County

Permit User Name	Number of Wells	Permitted Withdrawal		Permitted Aquifer
		Monthly Average (mgd)	Annual Average (mgd)	
City of Waynesboro	4	4	3.5	Cretaceous Sand
Southern Nuclear Operating Co – Plant Vogtle	8	6	5.5	Cretaceous Sand
International Paper	2	0.95	0.95	Cretaceous Sand
City of Sardis	2	0.4	0.4	Cretaceous Sand

Source: GDNR 2007b

Other municipal and industrial groundwater users that may be impacted include the towns of Girard and Sylvania, and the Augusta-Richmond Utilities Department (SNC 2007a, GDNR 2007b). The nearest permitted agricultural supply well is located 3.4 mi northwest of VEGP, and the nearest supply well listed in the Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS) is located 4.9 mi to the southwest. Both of these wells produce water from the Tertiary Aquifer (SNC 2006b). The nearest permitted industrial supply well is the International Paper well, which is 8.5 mi to the northwest of VEGP (SNC 2006b). The nearest municipal supply well is the City of Waynesboro system, located 14.5 mi to the southwest (SNC 2006b). Although the nearest reported domestic well is located across River Road from the facility (SNC 2006b), most groundwater use for domestic purposes in eastern Burke County is from private domestic wells that produce less than 10 gpm (SNC 2007a).

4.5.1.2 Effect of Withdrawal on Groundwater Volume Available

As discussed in Section 2.2.3, the facility withdraws groundwater through a total of nine groundwater supply wells. These wells have a permitted capacity of 5.5 mgd, while the actual annual average withdrawal volume since 2000 is 1.05 mgd (SNC 2007a).

1 To evaluate the potential impact of groundwater withdrawal, the applicant performed modeling
2 to calculate the potential drawdown. The calculation was performed using the following
3 assumptions:

- 4
- 5 • Average withdrawal rate of 1.05 mgd;
- 6 • The entire 1.05 mgd is withdrawn from well MU-2A, which is the well closest to the
7 VEGP property boundary (5,700 ft) and to an offsite production well; and
- 8 • The Cretaceous and Tertiary aquifers are hydraulically connected in a “leaky” aquifer
9 scenario.

10
11 The result of this calculation was that the drawdown in the aquifer at the closest property
12 boundary, in the direction of the nearest offsite well, was 1.9 ft after production of 10 years, and
13 remained constant at 1.9 ft through the end of the license renewal term. Because the
14 drawdown is relatively small and constant, the applicant concluded that the impact of VEGP
15 groundwater withdrawals on groundwater resources would be SMALL (SNC 2007a). Similar
16 calculations performed to evaluate the impact of groundwater withdrawal for the potential
17 expansion of the facility, using the same withdrawal rate just for Units 1 and 2, also concluded
18 that the maximum drawdown at 5,700 ft would be 1.9 ft (NRC 2007).

19
20 To evaluate these estimates, the Staff reviewed the assumptions and performed independent
21 calculations of the groundwater drawdown. The Staff verified the assumptions used for the
22 calculations were conservative, which results in developing a worst-case estimate of the
23 potential impacts to groundwater resources. The independent calculations verified the expected
24 amount of drawdown in the aquifer is limited, and therefore the expected impacts to
25 groundwater resources are SMALL.

26 27 **4.5.1.3 Summary of Impacts Related to Groundwater Use Conflicts**

28
29 The Staff has reviewed the potential effect of water withdrawals on the availability of
30 groundwater in the local area near the facility. Based on a review of the available information
31 relative to potential impacts of the use of cooling and service water on the availability of
32 groundwater in the local area, the Staff concludes that the potential impacts from renewal of the
33 operating license would be SMALL.

34
35 The staff identified a variety of measures that could mitigate potential groundwater use impacts
36 resulting from continued operation of the VEGP groundwater withdrawal wells. Potential
37 mitigation measures for the effects of the impact of groundwater use on groundwater resources
38 could include reduction in the ground water withdrawal rates or the possible recycling and
39 treatment of gray water to supplement potable water supplies.

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1 The staff did not identify any cost benefit studies applicable to these mitigation measures. The
2 volume of groundwater withdrawal use for the facility is authorized under a Groundwater Use
3 Permit issued by the GEPD, and NRC expects that analysis of the costs and benefits of any
4 mitigation measures would be evaluated by GEPD as part of that permitting program.
5

6 **4.5.2 Groundwater Use Conflicts, Plants Using Cooling Towers Withdrawing** 7 **Make-Up Water from Small River** 8

9 For plants with cooling tower systems that are supplied with make-up water from a small river
10 with low flow, potential groundwater use conflicts are considered a Category 2 issue, thus
11 requiring a site-specific assessment for license renewal review. Since 1953 (the year of the
12 opening of the J. Strom Thurmond Dam), the mean annual flow volume of the Savannah River
13 at Augusta (22 mi upstream from VEGP) has ranged from 4,470 to 16,580 cfs (USGS 2007a).
14 This volume meets the NRC definition of a small river of 100,000 cfs (3.15×10^{12} ft³/yr listed in
15 10 CFR Part 51.53(c)(3)(ii)(A)), resulting in water use conflicts being a potentially applicable
16 issue for relicensing of VEGP. VEGP withdraws water from the Savannah River to provide
17 make-up water to the cooling tower system. Therefore, groundwater use conflicts are a
18 potentially applicable issue for relicensing of VEGP.
19

20 The GEIS considered groundwater water use conflicts to be a Category 2 issue because of the
21 potential for withdrawal of surface water to lower the volume of groundwater in the aquifers
22 associated with the river, thus reducing the volume of groundwater available to other users in
23 the area. The Staff independently reviewed the VEGP Environmental Report, visited the site,
24 and consulted with Federal and State resource agencies to evaluate the potential for the
25 facility's surface water withdrawals to impact the availability of groundwater within the aquifer
26 system associated with the Savannah River.
27

28 As discussed in Section 4.5.1, the use of groundwater in the immediate vicinity of VEGP is
29 confined to small domestic users. These wells, as well as the industrial and municipal
30 groundwater users in the area, withdraw water from the Cretaceous, Tertiary, and Water Table
31 aquifers. There is no reported use of groundwater from the alluvial aquifer located along the
32 Savannah River, which is the only aquifer that could be impacted by water withdrawal from the
33 river (SNC 2007a).
34

35 In Section 4.1.1 the Staff calculated that VEGP's consumptive water withdrawals from the
36 Savannah River would constitute, at most, about 2 percent of the flow volume of the Savannah
37 River during a severe drought period. This withdrawal rate would not significantly reduce the
38 water level in the Savannah River and would not affect recharge from the river into the aquifer
39 system.

1 Based on a review of the available information relative to potential impacts on groundwater
 2 resources from surface water withdrawals, the Staff concludes that the potential impacts from
 3 renewal of the operating license would be SMALL.

4
 5 The staff identified a variety of measures that could mitigate potential groundwater impacts
 6 resulting from continued operation of VEGP cooling water system. Potential mitigation
 7 measures for the effects of the cooling water system on groundwater resources include
 8 reduction in the use of river water, or additional recycling of cooling water. These mitigation
 9 measures could reduce groundwater resource impacts by reducing the consumptive use of
 10 water within the Savannah River.

11
 12 The staff did not identify any cost benefit studies applicable to these mitigation measures. The
 13 volume of consumptive water use for the facility is authorized under a Permit to Withdraw,
 14 Divert, or Impound Surface Water issued by the GEPD, and NRC expects that analysis of the
 15 costs and benefits of any mitigation measures would be evaluated by GEPD as part of that
 16 permitting program.

17
 18 **4.6 Threatened or Endangered Species**

19
 20 Potential impacts to threatened or endangered species are listed as a Category 2 issue in 10
 21 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1. This issue is listed in Table 4-11.

22
 23 **Table 4-11.** Category 2 Issues Applicable to Threatened or Endangered Species
 24 During the Renewal Term
 25

ISSUE—10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1	GEIS Section	10 CFR 51.53(c)(3)(ii) Subparagraph	Draft SEIS Section
THREATENED OR ENDANGERED SPECIES (FOR ALL PLANTS)			
Threatened or Endangered Species	4.1	E	4.6

26
 27 This issue requires consultation with appropriate agencies to determine whether threatened or
 28 endangered species are present and whether they would be adversely affected by continued
 29 operation of the nuclear facility during the license renewal term. The presence of threatened or
 30 endangered species in the vicinity of the VEGP site is discussed in Sections 2.2.5.4 and 2.2.6.4.
 31 On August 22, 2007, the Staff contacted the National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) and
 32 FWS and to request information on threatened and endangered species and the impacts of
 33 license renewal (NRC 2007). In its response, the NMFS provided a list of Federally protected
 34 species under its jurisdiction for the State of Georgia (NMFS 2007).

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1 Although the NRC staff does not believe that license renewal would adversely affect the
2 Federally listed species, the Staff has prepared a Biological Assessment (BA) for NMFS that
3 documents its review. The BA is provided in Appendix E of this draft SEIS.

4.6.1 Aquatic Threatened or Endangered Species

6
7 Of the Federally listed aquatic species mentioned in Section 2.2.5.4.1, the occurrence of one
8 species, the shortnose sturgeon (*Acipenser brevirostrum*), has been confirmed in the area of the
9 site. The shortnose sturgeon occurs in the Savannah River both upstream and downstream of
10 the VEGP site. There is no designated critical habitat in the vicinity of the VEGP site for the
11 shortnose sturgeon or other Federally listed threatened or endangered species.

12
13 Of the rare aquatic species recorded as occurring in the 18 counties crossed by the 360 mi of
14 transmission line ROWs, Section 2.2.5.4.2 identified five aquatic species that potentially may
15 occur in the ROWs: the endangered shortnose sturgeon and West Indian manatee (*Trichechus*
16 *manatus*) and three Federally listed plant species, the threatened pool sprite (*Amphianthus*
17 *pusillus*), and the endangered mat-forming quillwort (*Isoetes tegetiformans*) and harperella
18 (*Ptilimnium nodosum*). In addition, one Federal candidate species, the Altamaha spiny mussel
19 (*Elliptio spinosa*), was identified as having recorded occurrences in two of the counties. As
20 described in Section 2.2.5.4.2, none of these species is known to or likely to occur within the
21 ROWs. Given that no change in operations, expansion of existing facilities, or disturbance of
22 additional land is anticipated in conjunction with the transmission lines, these Federally listed
23 aquatic species would not be adversely affected by the transmission line ROWs during the
24 renewal period.

25
26 The shortnose sturgeon is the only Federally listed aquatic species with the potential to be
27 adversely affected by continued operation of VEGP during the renewal period. The staff has
28 prepared a Biological Assessment for NMFS under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act,
29 evaluating the potential impacts on shortnose sturgeon related to 1) entrainment and
30 impingement at the VEGP intake structure, and 2) thermal and chemical discharges.

31
32 As described in Section 2.2.5.4, shortnose sturgeon are known to occur in the Savannah River
33 in the vicinity of the site. There are two probable spawning sites, one 32 RM downstream of the
34 VEGP intake and the other 18 RM upstream of the intake. Because the fertilized eggs of
35 shortnose sturgeon are demersal and adhere to hard substrates on the river bottom, they are
36 less likely to be entrained into the cooling water system than eggs of other species. Shortnose
37 sturgeon larvae seek out shelter on the river bottom, and are similarly unlikely to be entrained
38 by the VEGP cooling system. As explained in Section 4.1, the continued operation of VEGP
39 would have no impact on the entrainment of fish in early life stages; this conclusion is also
40 applicable to the shortnose sturgeon.

1 The design and operation of VEGP Units 1 and 2 intake structures results in velocities across
2 the traveling screens of 0.7 feet per second (fps) (0.2 meters per second [m/s]) which is slow
3 enough to allow adult shortnose sturgeon to swim away from the intake without becoming
4 impinged, especially considering their adaptation to swimming in a riverine habitat with strong
5 currents. This is consistent with the conclusion in Section 4.1 that the continued operation of
6 VEGP would have no impact on the impingement of fish.

7
8 The VEGP cooling water system discharges blowdown into the Savannah River downriver of
9 the intake structure. The NRC staff conducted an assessment of the existing thermal plume
10 from Units 1 and 2 (NRC 2007) that shows the area affected by the thermal discharge is small
11 compared to the width of the Savannah River. Therefore, the thermal plume from the existing
12 discharge does not impede the passage of shortnose sturgeon in the vicinity of VEGP site and
13 would have no impact on the species. In addition, the discharge of chemicals into the
14 Savannah River are low in concentration and are further diluted by the river, so that they would
15 not affect the shortnose sturgeon (NRC 2007).

16
17 Continued operation of VEGP Units 1 and 2 during the renewal period is not likely to adversely
18 affect the shortnose sturgeon and therefore the impacts to the shortnose sturgeon would be
19 SMALL.

20
21 The staff identified a variety of measures that could mitigate potential impacts resulting from
22 continued operation of VEGP cooling water system. A few mitigation measures for the potential
23 effects of the cooling water system on the shortnose sturgeon include: installation of a fish
24 return system, derating the facility, and scheduling plant outages during the spawning season.
25 These mitigation measures could reduce impacts by increasing survival of any impinged fish
26 and limiting the amount of water taken in by the cooling system, thereby reducing the likelihood
27 of impingement and entrainment of shortnose sturgeon.

28
29 The staff did not identify any cost benefit studies applicable to these mitigation measures. If, as
30 part of the ongoing ESA Section 7 consultation, NMFS develops a Biological Opinion for the
31 shortnose sturgeon, and if NMFS were to determine that there are reasonable and prudent
32 measures to minimize the impact of the VEGP cooling system on the shortnose sturgeon, these
33 measures would be explained in the terms and conditions of the Biological Opinion.

34 35 **4.6.2 Terrestrial Threatened or Endangered Species**

36
37 As discussed in Section 2.2.6.2, there are seven Federally listed terrestrial species that have
38 the potential to occur at or near the VEGP site or within the associated transmission line ROWs:
39 the smooth coneflower (*Echinacea laevigata*), Canby's dropwort (*Oxypolis canbyi*), relict trillium
40 (*Trillium reliquum*), wood stork (*Mycteria americana*), red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides*

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1 *borealis*), American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*), and flatwoods salamander (*Ambystoma*
2 *cingulatum*).

3
4 The American alligator is the only such species to be found regularly on the VEGP site;
5 however, it is not rare itself but has a listing status of "threatened due to similarity of
6 appearance" in order to protect the endangered American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*). There
7 is no known historical documentation of smooth coneflower or relict trillium on the VEGP site or
8 in the associated transmission line ROWs, and suitable habitat for the species on the VEGP site
9 is unlikely (NRC 2007; TRC 2006). There have been no historical occurrences of Canby's
10 dropwort recorded within 10 mi (16 km) of the site, and suitable habitat for the species on the
11 VEGP site is unlikely (TRC 2006). Suitable habitat for the flatwoods salamander may exist on
12 the site, but there have been no historical occurrences of the species recorded in the vicinity.
13 Habitat capable of supporting the flatwoods salamander could be present within the West
14 McIntosh (Thalman) ROW. The flatwoods salamander would not be adversely affected by
15 ongoing maintenance of the ROW or by future operations. There is no recorded occurrences of
16 red-cockaded woodpecker on or in the vicinity of the VEGP site or associated transmission line
17 ROWs, however, potential suitable habitat does exist. The woodpecker is unlikely to be
18 affected by future operation of the VEGP site. Wood stork individuals have been seen within 2
19 mi (3.2 km) of the VEGP site; however, the closest colony is 28 mi (45 km) away. Additionally,
20 the stork was observed at two locations on the Scherer transmission line ROW (TRC 2006).
21 The wood stork, in particular, is highly mobile and potentially could forage in wetlands on the
22 site. Impacts to the wood stork from operation of the VEGP site would be negligible.

23
24 The NRC Staff reviewed information from the site audit, VEGP's Environmental Report, other
25 reports, and information from FWS. The Staff concludes that the impacts on Federally listed
26 threatened or endangered species of an additional 20 years of operation and maintenance of
27 the VEGP site and associated transmission line ROWs would be SMALL.

29 **4.7 Evaluation of New and Potentially Significant** 30 **Information on Impacts of Operations During the** 31 **Renewal Term**

32
33 The Staff has not identified new and significant information on environmental issues listed in 10
34 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1, related to operation during the renewal term.
35 The Staff also determined that information provided during the public comment period did not
36 identify any new issue that requires site-specific assessment. The Staff reviewed the discussion
37 of environmental impacts associated with operation during the renewal term in the GEIS and
38 has conducted its own independent review, including public scoping meetings, to identify issues
39 with new and significant information. Processes for identification and evaluation of new
40 information are described in Section 1.2.2.

4.8 Cumulative Impacts

The NRC Staff considered potential cumulative impacts on the environment resulting from the incremental impact of license renewal when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. For the purposes of this analysis, past actions are those related to the resources when VEGP was licensed and constructed, present actions are related to the resources during current operations, and future actions are those that are reasonably foreseeable through the end of station operations, including the license renewal term. The geographical area over which past, present, and future actions are assessed is dependent on the affected resource.

The impacts of the proposed action, license renewal, as described in previous sections of Chapter 4, are combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions in the potentially affected area regardless of which agency (Federal or non-Federal) or entity is undertaking the actions. The combined impacts are defined as “cumulative” in 40 CFR 1508.7 and include individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time (CEQ 1997). It is possible that an impact that may be SMALL by itself could result in a MODERATE or LARGE impact when considered in combination with the impacts of other actions on the affected resource. Likewise, if a resource is regionally declining or imperiled, even a SMALL individual impact could be important if it contributes to or accelerates the overall resource decline.

The NRC staff has identified the principal past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions potentially impacting the environment affected by VEGP. These include: the proposed VEGP Units 3 and 4 (future); major SRS facilities, including nuclear reactors (past), the D-Area powerhouse (present), and the Mixed Oxide (MOX) Fuel Fabrication Facility (future); and other users of Savannah River water. VEGP Units 3 and 4 would be located adjacent to Units 1 and 2 and would have similar environmental impacts from operation (NRC 2007).

The principal SRS facilities with a potential to affect the Savannah River due to their water withdrawals and discharges historically were the five production reactors (the C, K, L, P, and R reactors), a coal-fired power plant (the D-Area powerhouse), and a heavy water production facility. During their initial operation, all of these facilities used once-through cooling systems in which water was pumped from the Savannah River, used in secondary cooling, and discharged into the nearest surface stream, which returned the effluent to the river. Numerous changes involving the cooling water systems subsequently occurred, including the construction of two cooling ponds and the shutdowns of the reactors. Use of Savannah River surface water by SRS varied, with estimated withdrawal rates ranging from 8.5 cms to 26.0 cms, depending on the number of reactors in operation and the power levels at which they were operating. Generally, the amount of water withdrawn by SRS was approximately 9 percent of the average annual flow in the Savannah River (DuPont 1987). The heavy water production facility was

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1 placed on standby in 1982 (DuPont 1987), and all five nuclear reactors were shut down and
2 placed on standby prior to 1989 (Reed et al. 2002). Of these SRS facilities, only the D-Area
3 powerhouse is currently operational.
4

5 The D-Area powerhouse is a coal-fired power plant that has been in operation since 1952 (DOE
6 1995). In October 1995, the SRS power generation and production facilities were privatized and
7 transferred to South Carolina Electric & Gas (SCE&G). Condenser cooling water for the
8 powerhouse is withdrawn from the Savannah River through one of the SRS intakes located
9 upstream of the VEGP site. Heated water from the condenser is discharged at the origin of
10 Beaver Dam Creek, which flows south for approximately 3 miles and discharges into the
11 Savannah River floodplain swamp, through which the water flows to the river (DOE 1995). The
12 D-Area powerhouse currently is the only major SRS facility with the potential to contribute to
13 cumulative impacts on the Savannah River in conjunction with the effects of continued operation
14 of VEGP Units 1 and 2.
15

16 The MOX Fuel Fabrication Facility is currently under construction in the F-Area of SRS. Site
17 preparation began in October 2005, and the facility is scheduled to be in operation by 2016.
18 The 41-acre complex will convert an estimated total of 75,000 lbs of weapons-grade plutonium
19 to nuclear reactor fuel during its 20-year licensing period (NRC 2005). No surface water from
20 the Savannah River or other surface water sources will be used during the construction or
21 operation of the MOX facility (groundwater will be used). Discharges from the component
22 facility that will process liquid wastes will be discharged to the Savannah River through a
23 NPDES-permitted outfall. Constituent concentrations in the river are estimated to remain within
24 their current ranges, and impacts are expected to be small (NRC 2005). Thus, construction and
25 future operation of the MOX facility at SRS would not contribute to cumulative impacts on the
26 Savannah River in conjunction with the effects of continued operation of VEGP Units 1 and 2.
27

28 Users of Savannah River water other than VEGP and SRS are identified below.
29

30 **4.8.1 Cumulative Impacts on Water Use and Quality** 31

32 Cumulative water use impacts may occur with respect to the amount of water available for use
33 from the Savannah River or from local groundwater resources. These impacts may occur if
34 operations of VEGP and other facilities are resulting in consumptive water use from the
35 Savannah River or from groundwater aquifers. Cumulative water quality impact issues in the
36 area near VEGP include thermal stresses within the Savannah River, the release of
37 contaminants to the river and to groundwater, saltwater intrusion within the groundwater
38 aquifers, and the detection of tritium in the unconfined aquifer. The geographic scope of the
39 surface water resources that may be impacted by VEGP include the stretch of the Savannah
40 River from Augusta to Savannah, Georgia. Groundwater resource impacts may exist in the

1 local area near the VEGP facility, and also include regional drawdown and contamination
 2 issues.

3
 4 **4.8.1.1 Water Use Impacts**

5
 6 The other known users of water from the Savannah River, and their permitted volumes of
 7 withdrawal, are provided in Table 4-12. A study of water use data near VEGP from 1980 to
 8 2000 indicated that surface water and groundwater withdrawal rates remained constant
 9 (Fanning 2003). However, population growth is expected to increase use of the Savannah
 10 River as a water resource near Savannah, approximately 150 mi downstream of VEGP (NRC
 11 2007).

12
 13 **Table 4-12.** Current, Past, and Potential Future Water Withdrawal Permits within Savannah River Basin
 14

Facility	Location	Maximum Daily Withdrawal (mgd)	Monthly Average Withdrawal (mgd)
Georgia			
Banks County Board of Commissioners	Banks County, GA	1.00	1.00
Southern Nuclear Operating Company (VEGP Units 1 and 2)	Burke County, GA RM 150-152	127.00	85.00
VEGP Units 3 and 4	Burke County, GA RM 151.2	127.00	85.00
City of Waynesboro	Burke County, GA	1.5	1.0
Weyerhaeuser Company	Chatham County, GA	30.50	27.50
Georgia Power Company Port Wentworth	Chatham County, GA	267.00	267.00
International Paper Corporation	Chatham County, GA	58.00	50.00
Kerr-McGee Chemical	Chatham County, GA	30.00	20.00
Columbia County Water System	Columbia County, GA	8.00	8.00
Columbia County Water System	Columbia County, GA	31.00	31.00
Fort James Operating Company	Effingham County, GA RM 44-46	35.00	35.00

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1
2

Table 4-12. (cont'd)

Facility	Location	Maximum Daily Withdrawal (mgd)	Monthly Average Withdrawal (mgd)
Georgia Power Company Plant McIntosh	Effingham County, GA RM 44-46	130.00	130.00
Savannah Industrial and Domestic Water	Effingham County, GA	55.00	50.00
City of Elberton	Elbert County, GA	2.20	1.70
City of Elberton	Elbert County, GA	4.10	3.70
City of Lavonia	Franklin County, GA	1.50	1.50
City of Lavonia	Franklin County, GA	3.00	3.00
City of Royston	Franklin County, GA	1.00	1.00
City of Union Point	Greene County, GA	0.45	0.33
City of Hartwell	Hart County, GA	4.50	3.50
City of Commerce	Jackson County, GA	4.50	4.20
JM Huber - Ready Creek	Jefferson County, GA	5.80	4.00
City of Lincolnnton	Lincoln County, GA	0.63	0.63
Turner Concrete Company	Madison County, GA	0.60	0.30
Thomson-McDuffie County W/S Commission	McDuffie County	3.00	2.00
Thomson-McDuffie County W/S Commission	McDuffie County	2.00	1.50
City of Crawford	Oglethorpe County, GA	0.43	0.25
Clayton-Rabun Co. Water & Sewer Authority	Rabun County, GA	2.00	2.00
Augusta-Richmond County	Richmond County, GA	50.00	45.00
Augusta-Richmond County	Richmond County, GA	21.00	15.00
Avondale Mills – Augusta Canal	Richmond County, GA	1.44	0.65
DSM Chemicals Augusta Inc.	Richmond County, GA	8.20	6.80
Fort Gordon – Butler Creek	Richmond County, GA	5.40	5.00

Table 4-12. (cont'd)

Facility	Location	Maximum Daily Withdrawal (mgd)	Monthly Average Withdrawal (mgd)
Fort Gordon – Cow Branch	Richmond County, GA	0.70	0.60
Fort Gordon – Lietner Lake	Richmond County, GA	0.50	0.40
Fort Gordon – Union Mill Pond	Richmond County, GA	0.25	0.20
General Chemical Corp. Augusta Plant	Richmond County, GA	5.65	5.30
International Paper Augusta Mill	Richmond County, GA	79.00	72.00
PCS Nitrogen Fertilizer, L.P.	Richmond County, GA	21.60	10.80
City of Toccoa	Stephens County, GA	6.00	6.00
City of Toccoa – Lake Toccoa	Stephens County, GA	9.00	9.00
JM Huber Corporation – Brier Creek	Warren County, GA	5.00	2.50
Thiele Kaolin Company	Warren County, GA	0.75	0.50
City of Washington – Clarks Hill	Wilkes County, GA	2.20	2.00
City of Washington – Old Plant	Wilkes County, GA	2.20	1.80
South Carolina			
City of Abbeville	Abbeville County, SC	10.6	-
Mohawk Industries	Abbeville County, SC	4.3	-
City of North Augusta	Aiken County, SC	25.8	-
Graniteville Co.	Aiken County, SC	2.0	-
SCE&G Urquhart Station	Aiken County, SC	82.6	82.6
Anderson Regional, Six and Twenty Creek	Anderson County, SC	43.0	-
SCE&G Area Powerhouse	Barnwell County, SC	44.3	44.3

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1
2

Table 4-12. (cont'd)

Facility	Location	Maximum Daily Withdrawal (mgd)	Monthly Average Withdrawal (mgd)
Savannah River Site K Reactor	Barnwell County, SC	256.00	256.00
Savannah River Site L Reactor	Barnwell County, SC	256.00	256.00
Edgefield County Water and Sewer Authority	Edgefield County, SC	10.0	-
Beaufort-Jasper Water and Sewer Authority	Jasper County, SC	24.00	24.00
McCormick CPW	McCormick County, SC	2.8	-
McCormick CPW	McCormick County, SC	0.5	-
Town of Westminster – Ramsey Creek	Oconee County, SC	3.8	-
Town of Westminster – Chauga River	Oconee County, SC	8.0	-
City of Seneca	Oconee County, SC	18.0	-
City of Walhalla – Coneross Creek	Oconee County, SC	4.3	-
City of Walhalla – Negro Fork	Oconee County, SC	0.1	-
Greenville Water System, Lake Keowee	Pickens County, SC	45.0	-
Town of Pickens – City Reservoir/North Fork	Pickens County, SC	10.6	-
Town of Pickens – Twelvemile Creek	Pickens County, SC	4.0	-
City of Easley	Pickens County, SC	4.0	-

Sources: GDNR 2007a, NRC 2007, SCDHEC 2003

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Surface water use in the vicinity of VEGP during the license renewal period is likely to be dominated by four users: VEGP Units 1 and 2 at a permitted withdrawal rate of 127 cfs; SCE&G's D Area Powerhouse at 44.3 cfs; SCE&G's Urquhart Station at 82.6 cfs; and VEGP proposed Units 3 and 4 at 127 cfs (NRC 2007). These four users are expected to incur a total withdrawal of 380.9 cfs. As discussed in Section 2.2.2, the average flow volume in the Savannah River at Augusta is 9,157 cfs (Gotvald et al. 2005), and the expected low flow volume during drought periods is 3,800 cfs (UGA 2006). Therefore, the total withdrawal from the four

1 largest users in the vicinity of VEGP is expected to range from 5 percent of the normal volume
2 to 12 percent of the low flow volume. These withdrawals are not expected to impact the volume
3 of surface water available for other downstream users. Although water availability for other
4 users and for aquatic resources could hypothetically be impacted by a more extreme drought
5 (flow rate down to 957 cfs; SNC 2006a), these impacts would be the result of naturally low
6 precipitation rates, and would not be caused by the water withdrawals.

7
8 As discussed in Section 4.5, the other large-scale users of groundwater in the area are located
9 many miles from VEGP, and are unlikely to be affected by groundwater withdrawal at VEGP.
10 Domestic groundwater users are located near the facility, but modeling of groundwater
11 withdrawals from current use (Units 1 and 2) and future use (Units 1, 2, 3, and 4) indicates that
12 these withdrawals are not expected to impact the amount of groundwater available to nearby
13 domestic users. The NRC staff concludes that the minimal impacts on surface water and
14 ground water resources from the continued operation of VEGP Units 1 and 2, as well as from
15 the potential construction and operation of Units 3 and 4, would not contribute to an overall
16 decline in the water resources and would be SMALL. Additionally, other past, current, and
17 reasonably foreseeable future actions are estimated to have little impact on water use
18 resources, and therefore, the potential cumulative impact on water resources would be SMALL.

19
20 **4.8.1.2 Water Quality Impacts**

21
22 Cumulative impacts may occur with respect to the quality of water within the Savannah River, or
23 within local groundwater resources. These cumulative water quality impacts may occur if
24 operations of other facilities besides VEGP are degrading water quality in the Savannah River
25 or in groundwater aquifers. Water quality degradation may result from changes to water
26 temperatures, or from the release of contaminants into the water sources.

27
28 Although it was considered to be a Category 1 issue in the GEIS (NRC 1996), and therefore
29 was concluded to have the potential only for SMALL impacts in Section 4.1, cumulative impacts
30 from heat shock could occur if there were others sources of heated discharge to the Savannah
31 River during the license renewal period. Although several other power plants that may
32 discharge heated water exist on the Savannah River, these are expected to be far enough from
33 VEGP that there is no potential for the thermal plumes to overlap with that from VEGP.

34
35 The future operation of VEGP Units 3 and 4 will result in an additional thermal burden on the
36 river at a location near the existing thermal discharge from Units 1 and 2 during the license
37 renewal period. In support of the evaluation of the Early Site Permit (ESP) license for VEGP
38 Units 3 and 4, the NRC Staff performed modeling of the extent of the thermal plume that may
39 result during concurrent operations of all four units. Using a 5°F temperature difference as the
40 standard, this analysis concluded that the maximum possible extent of the plume that would be

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1 generated would be 97 ft long by 15 ft wide (NRC 2007). Therefore, cumulative impacts from
2 the thermal discharges would be SMALL.

3
4 In Section 2.2.3.1, the release of contaminants into the Savannah River from the operation of
5 VEGP Units 1 and 2 was found to be minor. All discharges of non-radiological constituents are
6 monitored and reported under the NPDES permit (SNC 2007b), while discharges of
7 radionuclides are evaluated as part of the facility REMP (SNC 2007d), as well as the
8 corresponding GEDP radiological monitoring program (GDNR 2004). Both non-radiological and
9 radiological releases were found to be non-existing or minor. Although other facilities in the
10 area (such as SRS) discharge radionuclides to the Savannah River, the REMP and GEDP
11 programs did not identify any concentrations that could potentially cause unacceptable dose
12 rates (SNC 2007d; GDNR 2004). The additional releases from the potential future operation of
13 Units 3 and 4 are not likely to change this conclusion.

14
15 Groundwater quality concerns exist in the lower Savannah River basin due to saltwater intrusion
16 into the Floridan Aquifer, resulting from long-term withdrawal of groundwater from this
17 unconfined aquifer near the coast. In 2006, the GDNR issued the "*Coastal Georgia Water and*
18 *Wastewater Permitting Plan for Managing Salt Water Intrusion*" (GEPD 2006). This plan
19 documented the degradation of groundwater due to withdrawal near the coast, and developed a
20 plan for reviewing and managing future groundwater permit applications to reduce the problem.
21 Although Burke County is not near the coast, and is not one of the counties where salt water
22 intrusion has been documented, it is one of the counties where future groundwater applications
23 will be reviewed to verify that a justified need exists, and that the permittee will use aggressive
24 and practical conservation and reuse principles (GEPD 2006). The groundwater withdrawals
25 associated with the operation of VEGP Units 1 and 2 are already governed by the facility's
26 Water Conservation Plan (SNC 2007e), and future withdrawals to support operation of Units 3
27 and 4 will be governed by the Water and Wastewater Permitting Plan for Managing Salt Water
28 Intrusion (GEPD 2006).

29
30 Additional cumulative impacts to groundwater quality could occur should the facility release
31 radionuclides or other contaminants to the groundwater. As discussed in Section 2.2.3,
32 groundwater monitoring has not historically been a requirement of the facility REMP (SNC
33 2007d), but measures have recently been taken to implement a monitoring program (SNC
34 2007f), impacts only existed in the unconfined aquifer, and were the result of atmospheric
35 releases from SRS. There are no known groundwater impacts resulting from VEGP operations,
36 and any future releases from current Units 1 and 2, or from potential future Units 3 and 4, are
37 likely to be strictly monitored according to this new program. While groundwater impacts are
38 known to exist at the SRS, these are not expected to impact the VEGP site across the river. In
39 addition, investigation of elevated tritium concentrations in water wells near VEGP starting in
40 1988 concluded that the majority of tritium impacts were from SRS (GDNR 2004).

1 As described above, the NRC staff concludes that the minimal impacts on water quality from the
2 continued operation of VEGP Units 1 and 2, as well as from potential construction and operation
3 of Units 3 and 4, would not contribute to an overall decline in the condition of water quality and
4 would be SMALL. Additionally, other past, current, and reasonably foreseeable future actions
5 are estimated to have little impact on water quality and therefore, the potentially cumulative
6 impact of water quality would be SMALL.

7 8 **4.8.2 Cumulative Impacts on Aquatic Resources**

9
10 For the purposes of this analysis, the geographic area considered for cumulative impacts on
11 aquatic resources at the VEGP site includes the Savannah River from Augusta to Savannah,
12 Georgia, Beaverdam Creek, and the waterways crossed by transmission line ROWs. As
13 discussed in Section 4.1, the NRC staff found no new and significant information that would
14 indicate that the conclusions regarding the operation of the VEGP closed-cycle cooling system
15 are inconsistent with the conclusions in the GEIS (NRC 1996). The GEIS concludes that the
16 impacts from issues potentially affecting aquatic resources, such as entrainment, impingement,
17 and heat shock, are small for closed-cycle cooling systems. Accordingly, operation of the
18 VEGP cooling system would not contribute significantly to cumulative impacts on aquatic
19 resources of the Savannah River or its tributaries.

20
21 The current and future conditions of the local aquatic resources are influenced by the
22 cumulative effects of past actions. Entrainment and impingement at intake structures of other
23 facilities located on the Savannah River, thermal effects from cooling water discharges,
24 chemical contaminants, environmental changes associated with changes in regional water use,
25 fishing pressures, and habitat modification and loss may have altered the aquatic ecosystem. In
26 addition, changes to water and sediment quality from runoff, urbanization, and industrial
27 activities may act as stressors on the river.

28
29 As shown in table 4-12, several facilities currently intake from or discharge into the Savannah
30 River in the area between Augusta and Savanna, Georgia, including SRS, several electric
31 generation facilities located on the Savannah River, a paper mill, and municipal water supply
32 systems; the permitted withdrawal volumes are also listed. Also included are facilities that no
33 longer operate (K and L Reactors at SRS) and facilities that have a reasonably foreseeable
34 potential to operate during the license renewal period (VEGP Units 3 and 4).

35
36 Studies on the entrainment due to past reactor operations at SRS have been conducted
37 (DuPont 1987). One study found that in 1983 and 1985, 8 to 12 percent of the ichthyoplankton
38 drifting past the three SRS intake pumphouses on the Savannah River were entrained.
39 However, the study concluded that these high levels of entrainment might not be significant,
40 because: there are many spawning sites for the entrained species in the Savannah River,
41 including downstream; ichthyoplankton typically have naturally high rates of mortality; and there

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1 was no evidence to indicate that numbers of ichthyoplankton in the river were decreasing
2 (DuPont 1987). Impingement studies at SRS found very low impingement rates for adult and
3 juvenile fish in general (DuPont 1987), and no impingement of juvenile or adult shortnose
4 sturgeon was found at SRS (Muska and Matthews 1983). The studies conducted in the
5 Savannah River to determine the effects of SRS thermal discharges found no evidence of
6 adverse impacts on the river ecosystem (DuPont 1987). These studies and their conclusions
7 indicate that the historical effects on the aquatic resources of the Savannah River from the
8 operations of SRS facilities were minor, and the current effects of the operation of the D-Area
9 powerhouse are much smaller.

10
11 The largest change that is reasonably foreseeable for the area is the possible construction and
12 operation of two additional nuclear units at VEGP, Units 3 and 4. If the units are built, the
13 potential impacts to the Savannah River could include the intake and consumption of water, the
14 discharge of heated effluents, the discharge of chemicals, and the physical impact of some
15 bottom scouring from the discharge. However, due to the design of the new units, including a
16 closed-cycle cooling system, the impact of the potential construction and operation of the new
17 units on the aquatic resources would be minor.

18
19 The NRC staff concludes that the minimal impacts on aquatic resources of the Savannah River
20 from the continued operation of VEGP Units 1 and 2, as well as from the potential construction
21 and operation of Units 3 and 4, would not contribute to an overall decline in the condition of the
22 aquatic habitat and associated species, and would be SMALL. Additionally, other past, current,
23 and reasonably foreseeable future actions are estimated to have little impact on aquatic
24 resources, and therefore, the potential cumulative impact on the aquatic resources would be
25 SMALL.

26 27 **4.8.3 Cumulative Impacts on Terrestrial Resources**

28
29 This section addresses past, present, and future actions that could result in cumulative impacts
30 on terrestrial resources, including wildlife populations, vegetation communities of uplands,
31 wetlands, and riparian zones, protected species, and land use. For purposes of this analysis,
32 the geographic area considered includes the VEGP site, its immediate surroundings, and its
33 associated transmission line ROWs.

34
35 Prior to construction of the VEGP site, terrestrial communities supported forest habitat,
36 floodplain habitat, riparian areas, wetlands, and waterbodies. Construction of the VEGP site
37 caused impacts in the past to terrestrial resources through habitat loss. The clearing of forest
38 communities for the construction of the transmission line ROWs resulted in a subsequent
39 change to the wildlife and plant habitats present at the time and contributed to habitat
40 fragmentation. Habitat fragmentation is a process in which previously contiguous habitats, such
41 as forest, become separated, by clearing of land for roads, agriculture, ROWs, and other

1 development (Franklin, Noon, and George 2002). The six current transmission line ROWs,
2 totaling 6395 ac (2588 ha) of area, traverse mainly agricultural and forest lands and are
3 maintained through a vegetation management program (SNC 2007a). ROW maintenance has
4 likely had impacts on the terrestrial habitats, which may include the spraying of chemicals,
5 prevention of natural succession stages, an increase in edge species, a decrease in interior
6 species, and an increase in invasive species.

7
8 There are four generating stations within 90 mi (145 km) of the VEGP site: the SCE&G
9 Urquhart station, 21 mi (34 km) from the VEGP site; the SCE&G D area powerhouse station, 20
10 mi (32 km) from the VEGP site; the GPC plant McIntosh, 83 mi (134 km) from the VEGP site;
11 and the GPC Port Wentworth, 77 mi (124 km) from the VEGP site. Fossil plants release carbon
12 dioxide, mercury, nitrous oxides, and sulfur dioxide, among other air emissions. Nitrous oxides
13 and sulfur dioxides can combine with water to form acid rain, which can lead to erosion and
14 changes in soil pH levels. Mercury can deposit on soils and surface water, which may then be
15 taken up by terrestrial plant and animal species, and poses the risk of bioaccumulation. For
16 these reasons, the four generating stations are likely to have current and future impacts to the
17 environment on the VEGP site and surrounding area.

18
19 There are three non-power generating plants that are on the Savannah River within the
20 geographic area: the International Paper Corporation, the Savannah Industrial and Domestic
21 Water plant and the Beaufort-Jasper Water and Sewer authority wastewater treatment plant.
22 Chemical discharges and the resulting bioaccumulation from these plants have the potential to
23 have impacts on the surrounding area, including vegetation, wildlife, and wetlands.

24
25 The SRS, discussed at the beginning of section 4.8, could have impacts on terrestrial habitats.
26 Included in the SRS facility are former nuclear reactors, current operational coal-fired generating
27 plant, and a proposed facility to convert weapons-grade plutonium into nuclear reactor fuel.
28 SRS, when originally constructed, added runoff from additional roads and impervious surfaces,
29 increased development on wetlands and riparian zones, and caused a decrease in the forest
30 habitat. Current operations at SRS, through chemical discharges and water withdrawal, could
31 also have a cumulative impact on the geographic area. Future actions, such as additional
32 construction and maintenance of buildings and facilities could affect the VEGP site and
33 surrounding area.

34
35 SNC applied for an ESP for up to two new reactor units (VEGP Units 3 and 4) in 2006 that
36 would be primarily located on previously disturbed land adjacent to the two current units (NRC
37 2007). In 2007, NRC staff completed an ESP Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for
38 the two new reactors, including a detailed evaluation of the impacts to terrestrial resources, from
39 the construction of new facilities and disturbance of additional land both on-and off-site (NRC
40 2007). If the new units are built, one new transmission line ROW would be constructed from the
41 VEGP site to a substation west of Augusta, Georgia. This new transmission line would have a

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1 length of 60 mi (96 km) and its associated ROW would have a width of 150 ft (46 m) (NRC
2 2007). Terrestrial and wetland habitats and the wildlife they support could potentially be
3 affected in the areas where these facilities are constructed.
4

5 The NRC staff concludes that the minimal impacts on terrestrial habitat and associated species
6 from the continued operation of VEGP Units 1 and 2, as well as from the potential construction
7 and operation of Units 3 and 4, would not contribute to an overall decline in the condition of the
8 terrestrial resource, and would be SMALL. Additionally, other past, current, and reasonably
9 foreseeable future actions are estimated to have little impact on terrestrial resources, and
10 therefore, the potential cumulative impact on the terrestrial resource would be SMALL.
11

12 **4.8.4 Cumulative Human Health Impacts**

13
14 Cumulative adverse impacts on human health potentially could occur as a result of thermophilic
15 microbiological organisms, electromagnetic fields associated with the transmission lines, and
16 radiological exposures.
17

18 **4.8.4.1 Cumulative Thermophilic Microorganism Impacts**

19
20 The continued operation of VEPG has a low risk of causing outbreaks from thermophilic
21 microbiological organisms associated with thermal discharges (GDHR 2002, 2006; SCDHEC
22 2007). Outbreaks of legionellosis, salmonellosis, or shigellosis that occurred in Georgia or
23 South Carolina were within the range of national trends (CDC 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002a,
24 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007c) in terms of cases per 100,000 population or total cases per
25 year, and the outbreaks were associated with pools, spas, or lakes. As part of its evaluation of
26 cumulative impacts, the NRC staff also considered the effects of thermal discharges from other
27 facilities producing thermal effluents that could promote the growth of thermophilic
28 microbiological organisms. Although several other power plants may discharge heated water to
29 the Savannah River, including the D-Area powerhouse on SRS, these are far enough from
30 VEGP that there is a negligible potential for the thermal plumes to overlap with that from VEGP
31 and result in significant thermal enhancement of the thermophilic microbiological organism
32 populations in the vicinity of VEPG. SNC has indicated that it intends to add additional nuclear
33 power reactors on the VEGP site. The maximum projected cooling tower blowdown from
34 operating two new units is about 1.81 cms (64 cfs), which, when combined with the current
35 blowdown rate of 0.65 cms (22.8 cfs), is still less than 1 percent of the minimum monthly
36 average flow rate of the Savannah River (SNC 2007b). Modeling performed by SNC (SNC
37 2007b) using the CORMIX mixing zone model predicted a maximum blowdown temperature of
38 33.1°C (91.5°F). Therefore, this discharge would not cause significant thermal enhancement of
39 the thermophilic microbiological organism populations in the vicinity of VEPG.

1 On the basis of these considerations, NRC staff has determined that the cumulative impacts to
2 public health from thermophilic microbiological organisms resulting from the VEGP thermal
3 discharge to the aquatic environment or in the vicinity of the site, will be SMALL.
4

5 **4.8.4.2 Cumulative Electromagnetic Field Impacts**

6
7 The NRC staff has determined that the electric-field-induced currents from the VEGP
8 transmission lines are below the NESC recommendations for preventing electric shock from
9 induced currents. Therefore, the VEGP transmission lines do not significantly affect the overall
10 potential for electric shock from induced currents within the analysis area. The separation
11 distances between VEGP transmission lines and other transmission lines are substantial and
12 prevent cumulative acute effects from electric-field-induced currents.
13

14 With respect to chronic effects from electromagnetic fields, although the NRC staff considers the
15 GEIS finding of “not-applicable” to be appropriate in regard to VEGP, the VEGP transmission
16 lines do not significantly contribute to human exposures to extremely low frequency electric and
17 magnetic fields in the region. Therefore, the NRC staff has determined that the cumulative
18 impacts of the continued operation of the VEGP transmission lines will be SMALL.
19

20 **4.8.4.3 Cumulative Radiological Impacts**

21
22 The radiological dose limits for protection of the public and workers have been developed by the
23 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and NRC to address the cumulative impact of
24 acute and long-term exposure to radiation and radioactive material. These dose limits are
25 codified in 10 CFR Part 20 and 40 CFR Part 190. For the purpose of this analysis, the area
26 within a 50-mi (80-km) radius of the VEGP site was included. The radiological environmental
27 monitoring program conducted by SNC in the vicinity of the VEGP site measures radiation and
28 radioactive materials from all sources, including the SRS; therefore, the monitoring program
29 measures cumulative radiological impacts. Within the 50-mi (80.4 km) radius of the VEGP site
30 is the SRS. SRS was constructed during the early 1950s to produce basic materials (such as
31 plutonium-239 and tritium) used in nuclear weapons. The site covers approximately 310 square
32 miles (803 square kilometers) in South Carolina and borders the Savannah River. As part of
33 normal operations, SRS also releases radioactive effluents, contributing to the cumulative dose
34 impacts to members of the public and the environment.
35

36 Monitoring results for the 5-year period from 2002 to 2006 were reviewed as part of the
37 cumulative impacts assessment. In section 2.2.7 and 4.3, the staff concluded that impacts of
38 radiation exposure from VEGP’s operation during the renewal term to the public and workers
39 (occupational) are SMALL. The NRC and the State of Georgia would regulate any future
40 actions in the vicinity of the VEGP site that could contribute to cumulative radiological impacts.

Environmental Impacts of Operation

1 SNC has indicated that it intends to add additional nuclear power reactors on the VEGP site.
2 However, cumulative radiological impacts from all uranium fuel cycle facilities, within a 50-mi
3 (80.4 km) radius of the VEGP site, are limited by the dose limits codified in 10 CFR Part 20 and
4 40 CFR Part 190.

5
6 Therefore, the staff concludes that cumulative radiological impacts of continued operations of
7 VEGP are SMALL.

8 9 **4.8.5 Cumulative Socioeconomic Impacts**

10
11 As discussed in Section 4.4 of this draft SEIS, the continued operation of VEGP during the
12 license renewal term would have no impact on socioeconomic conditions in the region beyond
13 those already being experienced. Since SNC has indicated that there would be no major plant
14 refurbishment, overall expenditures and employment levels at VEGP would remain relatively
15 constant with no additional demand for housing, public utilities, and public services. In addition,
16 since employment levels and the value of VEGP would not change, there would be no
17 population and tax revenue-related land use impacts. There would also be no
18 disproportionately high or adverse health or environmental impacts on minority and low-income
19 populations in the region. Based on this and other information presented in this draft SEIS,
20 there would be no cumulative socioeconomic impacts from VEGP operations during the license
21 renewal term.

22
23 If SNC decides to proceed and construct one or two new nuclear power plant units at the VEGP
24 site, the cumulative short-term construction impacts of this action could be MODERATE to LARGE
25 in counties located in the immediate vicinity of VEGP. These impacts would be caused by the short-
26 term increased demand for rental housing and other commercial and public services used by
27 construction workers during the years of power plant construction. During peak construction periods
28 there would be a noticeable increase in the number and volume of construction vehicles on roads in
29 the immediate vicinity of the VEGP site.

30
31 The cumulative long-term operations impacts of this action during the operation of the new power
32 plant unit(s) would be SMALL to MODERATE. These impacts would be caused by the increased
33 demand for permanent housing and other commercial and public services, such as schools, police
34 and fire, and public water and electric services, by the addition of operations workers at the VEGP
35 site during the years of new plant operations. During shift changes there would be a noticeable
36 increase in the number of commuter vehicles on roads in the immediate vicinity of the VEGP site.

37
38 Since Burke County is relatively small with less housing and public services available to handle the
39 influx of construction workers in comparison to Columbia and Richmond counties, the cumulative
40 short-term socioeconomic construction impacts on Burke County would likely be MODERATE to
41 LARGE. Over the long-term, cumulative operations impacts on Burke County would likely be

1 SMALL to MODERATE since new operations workers would likely reside in the same counties and
2 in the same pattern as the current VEGP workforce. Most of the operations workers would be
3 expected to settle where there is more readily available housing in Columbia and Richmond
4 counties.

5
6 Because Columbia County is one of the fastest growing counties in the region, the cumulative
7 socioeconomic construction and operations impact are likely to be SMALL when combined with all
8 of the other ongoing public and commercial development projects in the region. Since the majority
9 of the current VEGP workforce and available housing reside in Columbia and Richmond counties,
10 most cumulative socioeconomic impacts would be experienced in these two counties. For the
11 foreseeable future, members of the public would also continue to experience the cumulative
12 socioeconomic impacts from the rapid development of Columbia County. If SNC decides to
13 construct one or two new nuclear power plant units at the VEGP site, the cumulative impacts of this
14 action would likely be SMALL on the three-county socioeconomic region of influence.

15
16 The specific impact of this action will ultimately depend on the actual design, characteristics, and
17 construction practices proposed by the applicant. Such details are not available at this time, but if
18 the combined license application is submitted to NRC, the detailed socioeconomic impacts of this
19 action at the VEGP site would be analyzed and addressed in a separate NEPA document that
20 would be prepared by NRC.

21 22 **4.9 Summary of Impacts of Operations During the Renewal** 23 **Term**

24
25 Neither SNC nor the NRC staff is aware of information that is both new and significant related to
26 any of the applicable Category 1 issues associated with the VEGP operation during the renewal
27 term. Consequently, the Staff concludes that the environmental impacts associated with these
28 issues are bounded by the impacts described in the GEIS. For each of these issues, the GEIS
29 concluded that the impacts would be SMALL and that additional plant-specific mitigation
30 measures are not likely to be sufficiently beneficial to warrant implementation.

31
32 Twelve Category 2 issues (including eleven Category 2 issues plus the severe accident
33 mitigation alternatives [SAMAs] issue from Chapter 5) related to operational impacts and
34 postulated accidents during the renewal term, as well as environmental justice and chronic
35 effects of electromagnetic fields, are discussed in detail in this draft SEIS. For the 12 Category
36 2 issues and environmental justice, the Staff concludes that the potential environmental effects
37 are of SMALL significance in the context of the standards set forth in the GEIS.

38 Research is continuing in the area of chronic effects of electromagnetic fields, and a scientific
39 consensus has not been reached. Therefore, the Staff did not conduct an evaluation of this
40 issue.

Environmental Impacts of Operation

1 Cumulative impacts of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions were
2 considered, regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such
3 other actions. The Staff concluded that cumulative impacts of VEGP license renewal would be
4 SMALL for all potentially affected resources.

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5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF POSTULATED ACCIDENTS

Environmental issues associated with postulated accidents are discussed in the Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants (GEIS), NUREG-1437, Volumes 1 and 2 (NRC 1996, 1999).^(a) The GEIS includes a determination of whether the analysis of the environmental issue could be applied to all plants and whether additional mitigation measures would be warranted. Issues are then assigned a Category 1 or a Category 2 designation. As set forth in the GEIS, Category 1 issues are those that meet all of the following criteria:

- (1) The environmental impacts associated with the issue have been determined to apply either to all plants or, for some issues, to plants having a specific type of cooling system or other specified plant or site characteristics.
- (2) A single significance level (i.e., SMALL, MODERATE, or LARGE) has been assigned to the impacts (except for collective off-site radiological impacts from the fuel cycle and from high-level waste and spent fuel disposal).
- (3) Mitigation of adverse impacts associated with the issue has been considered in the analysis, and it has been determined that additional plant-specific mitigation measures are likely not to be sufficiently beneficial to warrant implementation.

For issues that meet the three Category 1 criteria, no additional plant-specific analysis is required unless new and significant information is identified.

Category 2 issues are those that do not meet one or more of the criteria for Category 1, and therefore, additional plant-specific review of these issues is required.

This chapter describes the environmental impacts from postulated accidents that might occur during the license renewal term.

5.1 Postulated Plant Accidents

Two classes of accidents are evaluated in the GEIS. These are design-basis accidents (DBAs) and severe accidents, as discussed below.

^(a) The GEIS was originally issued in 1996. Addendum 1 to the GEIS was issued in 1999. Hereafter, all references to the "GEIS" include the GEIS and its Addendum 1.

Postulated Accidents

5.1.1 Design-Basis Accidents

In order to receive U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) approval to operate a nuclear power facility, an applicant for an initial operating license must submit a Safety Analysis Report (SAR) as part of its application. The SAR presents the design criteria and design information for the proposed reactor and comprehensive data on the proposed site. The SAR also discusses various hypothetical accident situations and the safety features that are provided to prevent and mitigate accidents. The NRC staff reviews the application to determine whether the plant design meets the Commission's regulations and requirements and includes, in part, the nuclear plant design and its anticipated response to an accident.

DBAs are those accidents that both the licensee and the NRC staff evaluate to ensure that the plant can withstand normal and abnormal transients, and a broad spectrum of postulated accidents, without undue hazard to the health and safety of the public. A number of these postulated accidents are not expected to occur during the life of the plant, but are evaluated to establish the design basis for the preventive and mitigative safety systems of the facility. The acceptance criteria for DBAs are described in Title 10, Part 50 and Part 100, of the Code of Federal Regulations (10 CFR Part 50 and 10 CFR Part 100).

The environmental impacts of DBAs are evaluated during the initial licensing process, and the ability of the plant to withstand these accidents is demonstrated to be acceptable before issuance of the operating license. The results of these evaluations are found in license documentation such as the applicant's Final Safety Analysis Report (FSAR), the NRC staff's Safety Evaluation Report (SER), the Final Environmental Statement (FES), and Section 5.1 of this Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS). A licensee is required to maintain the acceptable design and performance criteria throughout the life of the plant, including any extended-life operation. The consequences for these events are evaluated for the hypothetical maximally exposed individual; as such, changes in the plant environment will not affect these evaluations. Because of the requirements that continuous acceptability of the consequences and aging management programs be in effect for license renewal, the environmental impacts as calculated for DBAs should not differ significantly from initial licensing assessments over the life of the plant, including the license renewal period. Accordingly, the design of the plant relative to DBAs during the extended period is considered to remain acceptable, and the environmental impacts of those accidents were not examined further in the GEIS.

The Commission has determined that the environmental impacts of DBAs are of SMALL significance for all plants because the plants were designed to successfully withstand these accidents. Therefore, for the purposes of license renewal, DBAs are designated as a Category 1 issue in 10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1. The early resolution of the DBAs makes them a part of the current licensing basis of the plant; the current licensing basis of the plant is to be maintained by the licensee under its current license and, therefore,

1 under the provisions of 10 CFR 54.30, is not subject to review under license renewal. This
 2 issue, applicable to Vogtle Electric Generating Station (VEGP), is listed in Table 5-1.

3
 4
 5

Table 5-1. Category 1 Issues Applicable to Postulated Accidents During the Renewal Term

ISSUE—10 CFR PART 51, SUBPART A, APPENDIX B, TABLE B-1	GEIS SECTION
POSTULATED ACCIDENTS	
Design basis accidents	5.3.2; 5.5.1

6 Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that

7

8 The NRC staff has concluded that the environmental impacts of design-basis
 9 accidents are of small significance for all plants.

10

11 Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (SNC), stated in its Environmental Report
 12 (SNC 2007a) that it is not aware of any new and significant information associated with the
 13 renewal of the VEGP operating license. The NRC staff has not identified any new and
 14 significant information during its independent review of the VEGP Environmental Report, the site
 15 visit, the scoping process, or the evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the NRC
 16 staff concludes that there are no impacts related to DBAs beyond those discussed in the GEIS.

17

18 **5.1.2 Severe Accidents**

19

20 Severe nuclear accidents are those that are more severe than DBAs because they could result
 21 in substantial damage to the reactor core, regardless of offsite consequences. In the GEIS, the
 22 NRC staff assessed the impacts of severe accidents using the results of existing analyses and
 23 site-specific information to conservatively predict the environmental impacts of severe accidents
 24 for each plant during the renewal period.

25

26 Severe accidents initiated by external phenomena, such as tornadoes, floods, earthquakes,
 27 fires, and sabotage, traditionally have not been discussed in quantitative terms in FESs and
 28 were not specifically considered for the VEGP site in the GEIS (NRC 1996). However, in the
 29 GEIS, the NRC staff did evaluate existing impact assessments performed by the NRC and by
 30 the industry at 44 nuclear plants in the United States and concluded that the risk from beyond-
 31 design-basis earthquakes at existing nuclear power plants is SMALL. Additionally, compliance
 32 with the NRC regulatory requirements under 10 CFR Part 73 provide reasonable assurance that
 33 the risk from sabotage is SMALL. Even if such events were to occur, the Commission would
 34 expect that resultant core damage and radiological releases would be no worse than those
 35 expected from internally initiated events. Based on the above, the Commission concludes that

Postulated Accidents

1 the risk from sabotage and beyond design-basis earthquakes at existing nuclear power plants is
2 small and additionally, that the risks from other external events, are adequately addressed by a
3 generic consideration of internally initiated severe accidents.

4
5 Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

6
7 The probability weighted consequences of atmospheric releases, fallout onto open
8 bodies of water, releases to groundwater, and societal and economic impacts from
9 severe accidents are small for all plants. However, alternatives to mitigate severe
10 accidents must be considered for all plants that have not considered such alternatives.

11
12 Therefore, the Commission has designated mitigation of severe accidents as a Category 2 issue
13 in 10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1. This issue, applicable to VEGP, is listed
14 in Table 5-2.

15
16 **Table 5-2.** Category 1 Issues Applicable to Postulated Accidents During the Renewal Term

ISSUE—10 CFR PART 51, SUBPART A, APPENDIX B, TABLE B-1	GEIS SECTION	10 CFR 51.53(c)(3)(III) SUBPARAGRAPH	SEIS SECTION
POSTULATED ACCIDENTS			
Severe Accidents	5.3.3; 5.3.3.2; 5.3.3.3; 5.3.3.4; 5.3.3.5; 5.4; 5.5.2	L	5.2

18 19 **5.2 Severe Accident Mitigation Alternatives**

20
21 Section 51.53(c)(3)(ii)(L) requires that license renewal applicants consider alternatives to
22 mitigate severe accidents if the Staff has not previously evaluated SAMAs for the applicant's
23 plant in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or related supplement or in an environmental
24 assessment. The purpose of this consideration is to ensure that plant changes (i.e., hardware,
25 procedures, and training) with the potential for improving severe accident safety performance
26 are identified and evaluated. SAMAs have not been previously considered for VEGP; therefore,
27 the remainder of Chapter 5 addresses those alternatives.

28 29 **5.2.1 Introduction**

30
31 This section presents a summary of the Severe Accident and Mitigation Alternative (SAMA)
32 evaluation for VEGP conducted by SNC and the NRC staff's review of that evaluation. The
33 NRC staff's review is available in full in Appendix G; the SAMA evaluation is available in full in
34 SNC's ER (SNC 2007a).

1 The SAMA evaluation for VEGP was conducted with a four-step approach. In the first step SNC
2 quantified the level of risk associated with potential reactor accidents using the plant-specific
3 probabilistic risk assessment (PRA) and other risk models.
4

5 In the second step SNC examined the major risk contributors and identified possible ways
6 (SAMAs) of reducing that risk. Common ways of reducing risk are changes to components,
7 systems, procedures, and training. SNC initially identified 16 potential SAMAs for VEGP. SNC
8 screened out four SAMAs from further consideration because they were determined to provide
9 no measurable benefit or to have estimated costs that would exceed the dollar value associated
10 with completely eliminating all severe accident risk at VEGP. The remaining 12 SAMAs were
11 subjected to further evaluation.
12

13 In the third step SNC estimated the benefits and the costs associated with each of the
14 remaining SAMAs. Estimates were made of how much each SAMA could reduce risk. Those
15 estimates were developed in terms of dollars in accordance with NRC guidance for performing
16 regulatory analyses (NRC 1997). The cost of implementing the proposed SAMAs was also
17 estimated.
18

19 Finally, in the fourth step, the costs and benefits of each of the remaining SAMAs were
20 compared to determine whether the SAMA was cost-beneficial, meaning the benefits of the
21 SAMA were greater than the cost (a positive cost-benefit). SNC found two SAMAs to be
22 potentially cost-beneficial in the baseline analysis, and two additional SAMAs to be potentially
23 cost-beneficial when analysis uncertainties are considered (SNC 2007a). However, based on
24 more realistic estimates of implementation costs and benefits, SNC determined that the latter
25 two SAMAs would not be cost-beneficial (SNC 2007b).
26

27 The potentially cost-beneficial SAMAs do not relate to adequately managing the effects of aging
28 during the period of extended operation; therefore, they need not be implemented as part of
29 license renewal pursuant to 10 CFR Part 54. SNC's SAMA analyses and the NRC's review are
30 discussed in more detail below.
31

32 **5.2.2 Estimate of Risk** 33

34 SNC submitted an assessment of SAMAs for VEGP as part of the ER (SNC 2007a). This
35 assessment was based on the most recent VEGP PRA available at that time, a plant-specific
36 offsite consequence analysis performed using the MELCOR Accident Consequence Code
37 System 2 (MACCS2) computer program, and insights from the VEGP Individual Plant
38 Examination (IPE) (SNC 1992) and Individual Plant Examination of External Events (IPEEE)
39 (SNC 1995).

Postulated Accidents

1 The baseline core damage frequency (CDF) for the purpose of the SAMA evaluation is
 2 approximately 1.55×10^{-5} per year. This CDF is based on the risk assessment for internally-
 3 initiated events. SNC did not include the contribution to risk from external events within the
 4 VEGP risk estimates; however, it did account for the potential risk reduction benefits associated
 5 with external events by increasing the estimated benefits for internal events by a factor of two.
 6 The breakdown of CDF by initiating event is provided in Table 5-3. The results shown are for
 7 Unit 1, but are also representative of those for Unit 2.

8
 9 **Table 5-3. VEGP Core Damage Frequency**

Initiating Event	CDF (Per Year)	% Contribution to CDF
Station Blackout	8.2×10^{-6}	54
Loss of Offsite Power	2.4×10^{-6}	16
Loss of Nuclear Service Water	1.7×10^{-6}	11
LOCA	5.0×10^{-7}	3
Loss of DC Bus	4.3×10^{-7}	3
Loss of 4.16KV Bus	4.0×10^{-7}	3
Loss of Condenser	2.8×10^{-7}	2
Steam Generator Tube Rupture	2.8×10^{-7}	2
Other Transients	2.0×10^{-7}	1
Loss of Feedwater	1.8×10^{-7}	1
Turbine Trip	1.4×10^{-7}	<1
Reactor Trip	1.2×10^{-7}	<1
Spontaneous Reactor Vessel Failure	1.0×10^{-7}	<1
Loss of Seal Injection	9.3×10^{-8}	<1
Secondary Side Steamline Break	8.9×10^{-8}	<1
ATWS	6.2×10^{-8}	<1
Inadvertent SI Injection	6.0×10^{-8}	<1
Interfacing Systems LOCA	3.0×10^{-8}	<1
Loss of ACCW	1.4×10^{-8}	<1
Loss of 120V AC Panels	9.8×10^{-9}	<1
Loss of Instrument Air	3.7×10^{-9}	<1
Total CDF (internal events)	1.55×10^{-5}	100

10

As shown in Table 5-3, events initiated by station blackout, loss of offsite power, and loss of nuclear service water are the dominant contributors to CDF.

SNC estimated the dose to the population within 80 kilometers (50 miles) of the VEGP site to be approximately 0.0156 person-sievert (Sv)(1.56 person-rem) per year. The breakdown of the total population dose by containment release mode is summarized in Table 5-4. Containment over-pressure failures and containment bypass sequences, such as a steam generator tube rupture accidents, are the dominant contributors to population dose risk at VEGP.

Table 5-4. Breakdown of Population Dose by Containment Release Mode

Containment Release Mode	Population Dose(Person-Rem ¹ Per Year)	% Contribution
Intact containment	Negligible	<<1
Containment isolation failure (early)	0.019	1
Containment bypass - ISLOCA (early)	0.166	11
Containment bypass - SGTR (early)	0.337	22
Containment bypass - SGTR (late)	0.198	13
Containment over-pressure failure (late)	0.587	37
Basemat melt-through (late)	0.248	16
Total	1.56	100

¹One person-rem = 0.01 person-Sv

The NRC staff has reviewed SNC's data and evaluation methods and concludes that the quality of the risk analyses is adequate to support an assessment of the risk reduction potential for candidate SAMAs. Accordingly, the Staff based its assessment of offsite risk on the CDFs and offsite doses reported by SNC.

5.2.3 Potential Plant Improvements

Once the dominant contributors to plant risk were identified, SNC searched for ways to reduce that risk. In identifying and evaluating potential SAMAs, SNC considered insights from the plant-specific PRA, and SAMA analyses performed for other operating plants that have submitted license renewal applications. SNC identified 16 potential risk-reducing improvements (SAMAs) to plant components, systems, procedures and training.

SNC removed four SAMAs from further consideration because they were determined to provide no measurable benefit or to have estimated costs that would exceed the dollar value associated

Postulated Accidents

1 with completely eliminating all severe accident risk at VEGP. A detailed cost-benefit analysis
2 was performed for each of the 12 remaining SAMAs.

3
4 The Staff concludes that SNC used a systematic and comprehensive process for identifying
5 potential plant improvements for VEGP, and that the set of potential plant improvements
6 identified by SNC is reasonably comprehensive and, therefore, acceptable.

7 8 **5.2.4 Evaluation of Risk Reduction and Costs of Improvements**

9
10 SNC evaluated the risk-reduction potential of the remaining 12 SAMAs. The majority of the
11 SAMA evaluations were performed in a bounding fashion in that the SAMA was assumed to
12 completely eliminate the risk associated with the proposed enhancement.

13
14 SNC estimated the costs of implementing the 12 candidate SAMAs through the application of
15 engineering judgment, and use of other licensees' estimates for similar improvements. The cost
16 estimates conservatively did not include the cost of replacement power during extended
17 outages required to implement the modifications, nor did they generally include contingency
18 costs associated with unforeseen implementation obstacles.

19 The Staff reviewed SNC's bases for calculating the risk reduction for the various plant
20 improvements and concludes that the rationale and assumptions for estimating risk reduction
21 are reasonable and generally conservative (i.e., the estimated risk reduction is similar to or
22 somewhat higher than what would actually be realized). Accordingly, the Staff based its
23 estimates of averted risk for the various SAMAs on SNC's risk reduction estimates.

24
25 The Staff reviewed the bases for the applicant's cost estimates. For certain improvements, the
26 Staff also compared the cost estimates to estimates developed elsewhere for similar
27 improvements, including estimates developed as part of other licensees' analyses of SAMAs for
28 operating reactors and advanced light-water reactors. The Staff found the cost estimates to be
29 reasonable, and generally consistent with estimates provided in support of other plants'
30 analyses.

31
32 The Staff concludes that the risk reduction and the cost estimates provided by SNC are
33 sufficient and appropriate for use in the SAMA evaluation.

34 35 **5.2.5 Cost-Benefit Comparison**

36
37 The cost-benefit analysis performed by SNC was based primarily on NUREG/BR-0184 (NRC
38 1997) and was executed consistent with this guidance. NUREG/BR-0058 has recently been
39 revised to reflect the agency's revised policy on discount rates. Revision 4 of NUREG/BR-0058
40 states that two sets of estimates should be developed – one at three percent and one at seven

1 percent (NRC 2004). SNC provided both sets of estimates (SNC 2007a, SNC 2007b, SNC
2 2008).

3
4 SNC identified two potentially cost-beneficial SAMAs in the baseline analysis contained in the
5 ER (using a three percent discount rate). The potentially cost-beneficial SAMAs are:

- 6
7 • SAMA 2 – Maintain full-time black start capability of the Plant Wilson combustion
8 turbines.
9 • SAMA 4 – Prepare procedures and operator training for cross-tying an opposite unit
10 diesel generator.

11
12 SNC performed additional analyses to evaluate the impact of parameter choices and
13 uncertainties on the results of the SAMA assessment (SNC 2007a). If the benefits are
14 increased by a factor of 2 to account for uncertainties, two additional SAMA candidates were
15 determined to be potentially cost-beneficial:

- 16
17 • SAMA 6 – Implementation of a bypass line for the cooling tower return isolation valves.
18 • SAMA 16 – Enhance procedures for Interfacing Systems Loss of Coolant Accidents
19 (ISLOCA) response.

20 However, based on more realistic estimates of implementation costs and benefits, SNC
21 determined that the latter two SAMAs would not be cost-beneficial (SNC 2007b). The Staff
22 concludes that, with the exception of the potentially cost-beneficial SAMAs discussed above, the
23 costs of the SAMAs evaluated would be higher than the associated benefits.

24
25 **5.2.6 Conclusions**

26
27 The Staff reviewed SNC's analysis and concluded that the methods used and the
28 implementation of those methods were sound. The treatment of SAMA benefits and costs
29 support the general conclusion that the SAMA evaluations performed by SNC are reasonable
30 and sufficient for the license renewal submittal. Although the treatment of SAMAs for external
31 events was somewhat limited by the unavailability of an external event PRA, the likelihood of
32 there being cost-beneficial enhancements in this area was minimized by improvements that
33 have been realized as a result of the IPEEE process, and increasing the estimated SAMA
34 benefits for internal events by a factor of two to account for potential benefits in external events.
35 Based on its review of the SAMA analysis, the Staff concurs with SNC's identification of areas in
36 which risk can be further reduced in a cost-beneficial manner through the implementation of all
37 or a subset of potentially cost-beneficial SAMAs. Given the potential for cost-beneficial risk
38 reduction, the Staff considers that further evaluation of the two potentially cost-beneficial
39 SAMAs by SNC is warranted. However, none of the potentially cost-beneficial SAMAs relate to

Postulated Accidents

1 adequately managing the effects of aging during the period of extended operation. Therefore,
2 they need not be implemented as part of the license renewal pursuant to 10 CFR Part 54.

3 4 **5.3 References**

5
6 10 CFR Part 50. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 10, *Energy*, Part 50, "Domestic Licensing of
7 Production and Utilization Facilities."

8
9 10 CFR Part 51. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 10, *Energy*, Part 51, "Environmental
10 Protection Regulations for Domestic Licensing and Related Regulatory Functions."

11
12 10 CFR Part 54. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 10, *Energy*, Part 54, "Requirements for
13 Renewal of Operating Licenses for Nuclear Power Plants."

14
15 10 CFR Part 73. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 10, *Energy*, Part 73, "Physical Protection of
16 Plants and Materials."

17
18 10 CFR Part 100. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 10, *Energy*, Part 100, "Reactor Site
19 Criteria."

20
21 Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). 1996. *Generic Environmental Impact Statement for*
22 *License Renewal of Nuclear Power Plants*. NUREG-1437 Volumes 1 and 2, Washington, DC.
23 Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). 1997. *Regulatory Analysis Technical Evaluation*
24 *Handbook*. NUREG/BR-0184, Washington, D.C.

25
26 Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). 1999. *Generic Environmental Impact Statement for*
27 *License Renewal of Nuclear Plants Main Report*, "Section 6.3 – Transportation, Table 9.1,
28 *Summary of findings on NEPA issues for license renewal of nuclear power plants.*" NUREG-
29 1437 Volume 1, Addendum 1, Washington, DC.

30
31 Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). 2004. *Regulatory Analysis Guidelines of the U.S.*
32 *Nuclear Regulatory Commission*. NUREG/BR-0058, Rev. 4, Washington, D.C.

33
34 Southern Nuclear Operating Company (SNC). 1992. "Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Unit 1
35 and 2, Individual Plant Examination Report," November 1992.

36
37 Southern Nuclear Operating Company (SNC). 1995. "Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Unit 1
38 and 2, Individual Plant Examination of External Events," November 1995.

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- 1 Southern Nuclear Operating Company (SNC). 2007a. *Applicant's Environmental Report-*
2 *Operating License Renewal Stage for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Units 1 and 2, Appendix*
3 *E - Environmental Report*, Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Birmingham, Alabama. June
4 2007.
5
- 6 Southern Nuclear Operating Company (SNC). 2007b. Letter from Tom E. Tynan, Southern
7 Nuclear Operating Company, to U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Document Control Desk.
8 Subject: "Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Vogtle License Renewal Application, Request
9 for Additional Information Regarding the Analysis of Severe Accident Mitigation Alternatives,"
10 dated December 20, 2007.
11
- 12 Southern Nuclear Operating Company (SNC). 2008. Letter from Tom E. Tynan, Southern
13 Nuclear Operating Company, to U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Document Control Desk.
14 Subject: "Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Vogtle License Renewal Application, Follow
15 Up to Severe Accident Mitigation Alternatives Request for Additional Information, Review
16 Questions," dated February 1, 2008

6.0 Environmental Impacts of the Uranium Fuel Cycle and Solid Waste Management

Environmental issues associated with the uranium fuel cycle and solid waste management are discussed in the *Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants* (GEIS), NUREG-1437, Volumes 1 and 2 (NRC 1996, 1999).^(a) The GEIS includes a determination of whether the analysis of the environmental issue could be applied to all plants and whether additional mitigation measures would be warranted. Issues are then assigned a Category 1 or a Category 2 designation. As set forth in the GEIS, Category 1 issues are those that meet all of the following criteria:

- (1) The environmental impacts associated with the issue have been determined to apply either to all plants or, for some issues, to plants having a specific type of cooling system or other specified plant or site characteristics.
- (2) A single significance level (i.e., SMALL, MODERATE, or LARGE) has been assigned to the impacts (except for collective off-site radiological impacts from the fuel cycle and from high-level waste and spent fuel disposal).
- (3) Mitigation of adverse impacts associated with the issue has been considered in the analysis, and it has been determined that additional plant-specific mitigation measures are likely not to be sufficiently beneficial to warrant implementation.

For issues that meet the three Category 1 criteria, no additional plant-specific analysis is required unless new and significant information is identified.

Category 2 issues are those that do not meet one or more of the criteria for Category 1; therefore, additional plant-specific review of these issues is required.

This chapter addresses the issues that are related to the uranium fuel cycle and solid waste management during the license renewal term that are listed in Table B-1 of Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, and are applicable to Vogtle Electric Generating Plant (VEGP). The generic potential impacts of the radiological and nonradiological environmental impacts of the uranium fuel cycle and transportation of nuclear fuel and wastes are described in detail in the GEIS based, in part, on the generic impacts provided in 10 CFR 51.51(b), Table S-3, "Table of Uranium Fuel Cycle Environmental Data," and in 10 CFR 51.52(c), Table S-4, "Environmental Impact of Transportation of Fuel and Waste to and from One Light-Water-Cooled Nuclear Power Reactor." The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory

^(a) The GEIS was originally issued in 1996. Addendum 1 to the GEIS was issued in 1999. Hereafter, all references to the "GEIS" include the GEIS and its Addendum 1.

Fuel Cycle

1 Commission (NRC) staff also addresses the impacts from radon-222 and technetium-99 in the
2 GEIS.

3 4 **6.1 The Uranium Fuel Cycle**

5
6 Category 1 issues in 10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1 that are applicable to
7 VEGP from the uranium fuel cycle and solid waste management are listed in Table 6-1.

8
9 **Table 6-1.** Category 1 Issues Applicable to the Uranium Fuel Cycle and Solid
10 Waste Management During the Renewal Term
11

ISSUE—10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1	GEIS Section
URANIUM FUEL CYCLE AND WASTE MANAGEMENT	
Off-site radiological impacts (individual effects from other than the disposal of spent fuel and high level waste)	6.1; 6.2.1; 6.2.2.1; 6.2.2.3; 6.2.3; 6.2.4; 6.6
Off-site radiological impacts (collective effects)	6.1; 6.2.2.1; 6.2.3; 6.2.4; 6.6
Off-site radiological impacts (spent fuel and high level waste disposal)	6.1; 6.2.2.1; 6.2.3; 6.2.4; 6.6
Nonradiological impacts of the uranium fuel cycle	6.1; 6.2.2.6; 6.2.2.7; 6.2.2.8; 6.2.2.9; 6.2.3; 6.2.4; 6.6
Low-level waste storage and disposal	6.1; 6.2.2.2; 6.4.2; 6.4.3; 6.4.3.1; 6.4.3.2; 6.4.3.3; 6.4.4; 6.4.4.1; 6.4.4.2; 6.4.4.3; 6.4.4.4; 6.4.4.5; 6.4.4.5.1; 6.4.4.5.2; 6.4.4.5.3; 6.4.4.5.4; 6.4.4.6; 6.6
Mixed waste storage and disposal	6.4.5.1; 6.4.5.2; 6.4.5.3; 6.4.5.4; 6.4.5.5; 6.4.5.6; 6.4.5.6.1; 6.4.5.6.2; 6.4.5.6.3; 6.4.5.6.4; 6.6
On-site spent fuel	6.1; 6.4.6; 6.4.6.1; 6.4.6.2; 6.4.6.3; 6.4.6.4; 6.4.6.5; 6.4.6.6; 6.4.6.7; 6.6
Nonradiological waste	6.1; 6.5; 6.5.1; 6.5.2; 6.5.3; 6.6
Transportation	6.1; 6.3.1; 6.3.2.3; 6.3.3; 6.3.4; 6.6, Addendum 1

12
13 Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (SNC) stated in its Environmental Report
14 (Environmental Report; SNC 2007) that it is not aware of any new and significant information
15 associated with the renewal of the VEGP operating license. The Staff has not identified any

1 new and significant information during its independent review of the VEGP Environmental
2 Report (SNC 2007), the site audit, the scoping process, or evaluation of other available
3 information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there are no impacts related to these issues
4 beyond those discussed in the GEIS. For these issues, the Staff concluded in the GEIS that the
5 impacts are SMALL except for the collective off-site radiological impacts from the fuel cycle and
6 from high-level waste and spent fuel disposal, as discussed below, and that additional plant-
7 specific mitigation measures are not likely to be sufficiently beneficial to be warranted.

8
9 A brief description of the Staff review and the GEIS conclusions, as codified in Table B-1, 10
10 CFR Part 51, for each of these issues follows:

- 11
12 • Off-site radiological impacts (individual effects from other than the disposal of spent fuel
13 and high level waste). Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

14
15 Off-site impacts of the uranium fuel cycle have been considered by the Commission in
16 Table S-3 of this part (10 CFR 51.51[b]). Based on information in the GEIS, impacts on
17 individuals from radioactive gaseous and liquid releases including radon-222 and
18 technetium-99 are small.

19
20 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
21 review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007), the site audit, the scoping process,
22 or evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there are no
23 off-site radiological impacts of the uranium fuel cycle during the renewal term beyond those
24 discussed in the GEIS.

- 25
26 • Off-site radiological impacts (collective effects). Based on information in the GEIS, the
27 Commission found that:

28
29 The 100 year environmental dose commitment to the U.S. population from the
30 fuel cycle, high level waste and spent fuel disposal excepted, is calculated to be
31 about 14,800 person rem, or 12 cancer fatalities, for each additional 20-year
32 power reactor operating term. Much of this, especially the contribution of radon
33 releases from mines and tailing piles, consists of tiny doses summed over large
34 populations. This same dose calculation can theoretically be extended to include
35 many tiny doses over additional thousands of years as well as doses outside the
36 U.S. The result of such a calculation would be thousands of cancer fatalities
37 from the fuel cycle, but this result assumes that even tiny doses have some
38 statistical adverse health effect which will not ever be mitigated (for example no
39 cancer cure in the next one thousand years), and that these doses projected over
40 thousands of years are meaningful. However, these assumptions are
41 questionable. In particular, science cannot rule out the possibility that there will
42 be no cancer fatalities from these tiny doses. For perspective, the doses are

Fuel Cycle

1 very small fractions of regulatory limits and even smaller fractions of natural
2 background exposure to the same populations.
3

4 Nevertheless, despite all of the uncertainty, some judgement as to the regulatory
5 NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended) implications of
6 these matters should be made and it makes no sense to repeat the same
7 judgement in every case. Even taking the uncertainties into account, the
8 Commission concludes that these impacts are acceptable in that these impacts
9 would not be sufficiently large to require the NEPA conclusion, for any plant, that
10 the option of extended operation under 10 CFR Part 54 should be eliminated.
11 Accordingly, while the Commission has not assigned a single level of significance
12 for the collective effects of the fuel cycle, this issue is considered Category 1.
13

14 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
15 review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007), the Staff's site visit, the scoping
16 process, or its evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that
17 there are no off-site radiological impacts (collective effects) from the uranium fuel cycle
18 during the renewal term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.
19

- 20 • Off-site radiological impacts (spent fuel and high level waste disposal). Based on
21 information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:
22

23 For the high level waste and spent fuel disposal component of the fuel cycle, there are
24 no current regulatory limits for off-site releases of radionuclides for the current candidate
25 repository site. However, if we assume that limits are developed along the lines of the
26 1995 National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report, "Technical Bases for Yucca Mountain
27 Standards" (NAS 1995), and that in accordance with the Commission's Waste
28 Confidence Decision, 10 CFR 51.23, a repository can and likely will be developed at
29 some site which will comply with such limits, peak doses to virtually all individuals will be
30 100 millirem per year or less. However, while the Commission has reasonable
31 confidence that these assumptions will prove correct, there is considerable uncertainty
32 since the limits are yet to be developed, no repository application has been completed or
33 reviewed, and uncertainty is inherent in the models used to evaluate possible pathways
34 to the human environment. The NAS report indicated that 100 millirem per year should
35 be considered as a starting point for limits for individual doses, but notes that some
36 measure of consensus exists among national and international bodies that the limits
37 should be a fraction of the 100 millirem per year. The lifetime individual risk from 100
38 millirem annual dose limit is about 3×10^{-3} .
39

40 Estimating cumulative doses to populations over thousands of years is more problem-
41 atic. The likelihood and consequences of events that could seriously compromise the

1 integrity of a deep geologic repository were evaluated by the Department of Energy in
2 the "Final Environmental Impact Statement: Management of Commercially Generated
3 Radioactive Waste," October 1980 (DOE 1980). The evaluation estimated the 70-year
4 whole-body dose commitment to the maximum individual and to the regional population
5 resulting from several modes of breaching a reference repository in the year of closure,
6 after 1,000 years, after 100,000 years, and after 100,000,000 years. Subsequently, the
7 NRC and other federal agencies have expended considerable effort to develop models
8 for the design and for the licensing of a high level waste repository, especially for the
9 candidate repository at Yucca Mountain. More meaningful estimates of doses to
10 population may be possible in the future as more is understood about the performance
11 of the proposed Yucca Mountain repository. Such estimates would involve very great
12 uncertainty, especially with respect to cumulative population doses over thousands of
13 years. The standard proposed by the NAS is a limit on maximum individual dose. The
14 relationship of potential new regulatory requirements, based on the NAS report, and
15 cumulative population impacts has not been determined, although the report articulates
16 the view that protection of individuals will adequately protect the population for a
17 repository at Yucca Mountain. However, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's
18 (EPA's) generic repository standards in 40 CFR Part 191 generally provide an indication
19 of the order of magnitude of cumulative risk to population that could result from the
20 licensing of a Yucca Mountain repository, assuming the ultimate standards will be within
21 the range of standards now under consideration. The standards in 40 CFR Part 191
22 protect the population by imposing "containment requirements" that limit the cumulative
23 amount of radioactive material released over 10,000 years. Reporting performance
24 standards that will be required by EPA are expected to result in releases and associated
25 health consequences in the range between 10 and 100 premature cancer deaths with an
26 upper limit of 1,000 premature cancer deaths world-wide for a 100,000 metric tonne
27 (MTHM) repository.

28
29 Nevertheless, despite all of the uncertainty, some judgement as to the regulatory NEPA
30 implications of these matters should be made and it makes no sense to repeat the same
31 judgement in every case. Even taking the uncertainties into account, the Commission
32 concludes that these impacts are acceptable in that these impacts would not be
33 sufficiently large to require the NEPA conclusion, for any plant, that the option of
34 extended operation under 10 CFR part 54 should be eliminated. Accordingly, while the
35 Commission has not assigned a single level of significance for the impacts of spent fuel
36 and high level waste disposal, this issue is considered Category 1.

37
38 On February 15, 2002, based on a recommendation by the Secretary of the Department
39 of Energy, the President recommended the Yucca Mountain site for the development of
40 a repository for the geologic disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level waste. The
41 U.S. Congress approved this recommendation on July 9, 2002, in Joint Resolution 87,
42 which designated Yucca Mountain as the repository for spent nuclear waste. On July

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1 23, 2002, the President signed Joint Resolution 87 into law; Public Law 107-200, 116
2 Stat. 735 (2002) designates Yucca Mountain as the repository for spent nuclear waste.
3 This development does not represent new and significant information with respect to the
4 off-site radiological impacts from license renewal related to disposal of spent nuclear fuel
5 and high-level waste.
6

7 The EPA developed Yucca Mountain-specific repository standards, which were
8 subsequently adopted by the NRC in 10 CFR Part 63. In an opinion, issued July 9,
9 2004, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit (the Court) vacated
10 EPA's radiation protection standards for the candidate repository, which required
11 compliance with certain dose limits over a 10,000 year period. The Court's decision also
12 vacated the compliance period in NRC's licensing criteria for the candidate repository in
13 10 CFR Part 63.
14

15 Therefore, for the high-level waste and spent fuel disposal component of the fuel cycle,
16 there is some uncertainty with respect to regulatory limits for off-site releases of
17 radioactive nuclides for the current candidate repository site. However, prior to
18 promulgation of the affected provisions of the Commission's regulations, it was assumed
19 that limits would be developed in line with the 1995 NAS report, *Technical Bases for*
20 *Yucca Mountain Standards* (NAS 1995), and that in accordance with the Commission's
21 Waste Confidence Decision, 10 CFR 51.23, a repository that would comply with such
22 limits could and likely would be developed at some site. Peak doses to virtually all
23 individuals would be 100 mrem per year or less.
24

25 Despite the current uncertainty with respect to these rules, some judgment as to the
26 1969 NEPA implications of off-site radiological impacts of spent fuel and high-level
27 waste disposal should be made. The Staff concludes that these impacts are acceptable
28 in that the impacts would not be sufficiently large to require the NEPA conclusion that
29 the option of extended operation under 10 CFR Part 54 should be eliminated.
30

31 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
32 review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007), the site audit, the scoping process,
33 or evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there are no
34 off-site radiological impacts related to spent fuel and high-level waste disposal during the
35 renewal term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.
36

- 37 • Nonradiological impacts of the uranium fuel cycle. Based on information in the GEIS, the
38 Commission found that:

39
40 The nonradiological impacts of the uranium fuel cycle resulting from the renewal of an
41 operating license for any plant are found to be small.

1 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
2 review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007), the Staff's site visit, the scoping
3 process, or its evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that
4 there are no nonradiological impacts of the uranium fuel cycle during the renewal term
5 beyond those discussed in the GEIS.
6

- 7 • Low-level waste storage and disposal. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission
8 found that:
9

10 The comprehensive regulatory controls that are in place and the low public doses being
11 achieved at reactors ensure that the radiological impacts to the environment will remain
12 small during the term of a renewed license. The maximum additional on-site land that
13 may be required for low-level waste storage during the term of a renewed license and
14 associated impacts will be small. Nonradiological impacts on air and water will be
15 negligible. The radiological and nonradiological environmental impacts of long-term
16 disposal of low-level waste from any individual plant at licensed sites are small. In
17 addition, the Commission concludes that there is reasonable assurance that sufficient
18 low-level waste disposal capacity will be made available when needed for facilities to be
19 decommissioned consistent with NRC decommissioning requirements.
20

21 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
22 review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007), the site audit, the scoping process,
23 or evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there are no
24 impacts of low-level waste storage and disposal associated with the renewal term beyond
25 those discussed in the GEIS.
26

- 27 • Mixed waste storage and disposal. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission
28 found that:
29

30 The comprehensive regulatory controls and the facilities and procedures that are in
31 place ensure proper handling and storage, as well as negligible doses and exposure to
32 toxic materials for the public and the environment at all plants. License renewal will not
33 increase the small, continuing risk to human health and the environment posed by mixed
34 waste at all plants. The radiological and nonradiological environmental impacts of long-
35 term disposal of mixed waste from any individual plant at licensed sites are small. In
36 addition, the Commission concludes that there is reasonable assurance that sufficient
37 mixed waste disposal capacity will be made available when needed for facilities to be
38 decommissioned consistent with NRC decommissioning requirements.
39

40 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
41 review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007), the site audit, the scoping process,
42 or evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there are no

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1 impacts of mixed waste storage and disposal associated with the renewal term beyond
2 those discussed in the GEIS.

- 3
4 • On-site spent fuel. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

5
6 The expected increase in the volume of spent fuel from an additional 20 years of
7 operation can be safely accommodated on site with small environmental effects through
8 dry or pool storage at all plants if a permanent repository or monitored retrievable
9 storage is not available.

10
11 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
12 review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007), the site audit, the scoping process,
13 or evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there are no
14 impacts of on-site spent fuel associated with license renewal beyond those discussed in the
15 GEIS.

- 16
17 • Nonradiological waste. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

18
19 No changes to generating systems are anticipated for license renewal. Facilities and
20 procedures are in place to ensure continued proper handling and disposal at all plants.

21
22 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
23 review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007), the site, the scoping process, or
24 evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there are no
25 nonradiological waste impacts during the renewal term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.

- 26
27 • Transportation. Based on information contained in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

28
29 The impacts of transporting spent fuel enriched up to 5 percent uranium-235 with
30 average burnup for the peak rod to current levels approved by NRC up to 62,000
31 MWd/MTU (megawatt-days per metric ton of uranium) and the cumulative impacts of
32 transporting high-level waste to a single repository, such as Yucca Mountain, Nevada
33 are found to be consistent with the impact values contained in 10 CFR 51.52(c),
34 Summary Table S-4 – Environmental Impact of Transportation of Fuel and Waste to and
35 from One Light-Water-Cooled Nuclear Power Reactor. If fuel enrichment or burnup
36 conditions are not met, the applicant must submit an assessment of the implications for
37 the environmental impact values reported in § 51.52.

38
39 VEGP meets the fuel-enrichment and burnup conditions set forth in Addendum 1 to the
40 GEIS. The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its
41 independent review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007), the site audit, the

1 scoping process, or evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes
2 that there are no impacts of transportation associated with license renewal beyond those
3 discussed in the GEIS.

4
5 There are no Category 2 issues for the uranium fuel cycle and solid waste management.
6

7 **6.2 References**

8
9 10 CFR Part 51. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 10, *Energy*, Part 51, “Environmental
10 Protection Regulations for Domestic Licensing and Related Regulatory Functions.”

11
12 10 CFR Part 54. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 10, *Energy*, Part 54, “Requirements for
13 Renewal of Operating Licenses for Nuclear Power Plants.”

14
15 10 CFR Part 63. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 10, *Energy*, Part 63, “Disposal of High-
16 Level Radioactive Wastes in a Geologic Repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada.”

17
18 40 CFR Part 191. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 40, *Protection of Environment*, Part 191,
19 “Environmental Radiation Protection Standards for Management and Disposal of Spent Nuclear
20 Fuel, High-Level and Transuranic Radioactive Waste.”

21
22 Department of Energy (DOE). 1980. *Final Environmental Impact Statement: Management of*
23 *Commercially Generated Radioactive Waste*. DOE/EIS-0046F, Washington, DC.

24
25 Joint Resolution 87, 2002. Public Law 107-200, 116 Stat 735.

26
27 National Academy of Sciences (NAS). 1995. *Technical Bases for Yucca Mountain Standards*.
28 Washington, DC.

29
30 National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). 42 USC 4321, et. seq.

31
32 Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). 1996. *Generic Environmental Impact Statement for*
33 *License Renewal of Nuclear Power Plants*. NUREG-1437 Volumes 1 and 2, Washington, DC.

34
35 Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). 1999. *Generic Environmental Impact Statement for*
36 *License Renewal of Nuclear Plants Main Report, “Section 6.3 – Transportation, Table 9.1,*
37 *Summary of findings on NEPA issues for license renewal of nuclear power plants.”*
38 NUREG-1437 Volume 1, Addendum 1, Washington, DC.

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- 1 Southern Nuclear Operating Corporation (SNC). 2007. *Applicant's Environmental Report –*
- 2 *Operating License Renewal Stage, Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Units 1 and 2.* Docket
- 3 Numbers 50-424 and 50-425.

7.0 Environmental Impacts of Decommissioning

Environmental impacts from the activities associated with the decommissioning of any reactor before or at the end of an initial or renewed license are evaluated in the *Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Decommissioning of Nuclear Facilities: Supplement 1, Regarding the Decommissioning of Nuclear Power Reactors*, NUREG-0586, Supplement 1 (NRC 2002). The Staff's evaluation of the environmental impacts of decommissioning presented in NUREG-0586, Supplement 1 identifies a range of impacts for each environmental issue.

Additionally, the incremental environmental impacts associated with decommissioning activities resulting from continued plant operation during the renewal term are discussed in the *Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants* (GEIS), NUREG-1437, Volumes 1 and 2 (NRC 1996, 1999).^(a) The GEIS includes a determination of whether the analysis of the environmental issue could be applied to all plants and whether additional mitigation measures would be warranted. Issues were then assigned a Category 1 or a Category 2 designation. As set forth in the GEIS, Category 1 issues are those that meet all of the following criteria:

- (1) The environmental impacts associated with the issue have been determined to apply either to all plants or, for some issues, to plants having a specific type of cooling system or other specified plant or site characteristics.
- (2) A single significance level (i.e., SMALL, MODERATE, or LARGE) has been assigned to the impacts (except for collective offsite radiological impacts from the fuel cycle and from high level waste and spent fuel disposal).
- (3) Mitigation of adverse impacts associated with the issue has been considered in the analysis, and it has been determined that additional plant-specific mitigation measures are likely not to be sufficiently beneficial to warrant implementation.

For issues that meet the three Category 1 criteria, no additional plant-specific analysis is required unless new and significant information is identified.

Category 2 issues are those that do not meet one or more of the criteria for Category 1; therefore, additional plant-specific review of these issues is required. There are no Category 2 issues related to decommissioning.

^(a) The GEIS was originally issued in 1996. Addendum 1 to the GEIS was issued in 1999. Hereafter, all references to the "GEIS" include the GEIS and its Addendum 1.

7.1 Decommissioning

Category 1 issues in Table B-1 of Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B that are applicable to Vogtle Electric Generating Plant (VEGP) decommissioning following the renewal term are listed in Table 7-1. Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (SNC) stated in its Environmental Report (Environmental Report; SNC 2007) that it is not aware of any new and significant information regarding the environmental impacts of VEGP license renewal. The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007), the site visit, the scoping process, or its evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there are no impacts related to these issues beyond those discussed in the GEIS. For all of these issues, the Staff concluded in the GEIS that the impacts are SMALL, and additional plant-specific mitigation measures are not likely to be sufficiently beneficial to be warranted.

Table 7-1. Category 1 Issues Applicable to the Decommissioning of VEGP Following the Renewal Term

ISSUE—10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1	GEIS Section
DECOMMISSIONING	
Radiation doses	7.3.1; 7.4
Waste management	7.3.2; 7.4
Air quality	7.3.3; 7.4
Water quality	7.3.4; 7.4
Ecological resources	7.3.5; 7.4
Socioeconomic impacts	7.3.7; 7.4

A brief description of the Staff's review and the GEIS conclusions, as codified in Table B-1, 10 CFR Part 51, for each of the issues follows:

- Radiation doses. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

Doses to the public will be well below applicable regulatory standards regardless of which decommissioning method is used. Occupational doses would increase no more than 1 man-rem caused by buildup of long-lived radionuclides during the license renewal term.

The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007), the site visit, the scoping process, or

1 its evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there are no
2 radiation dose impacts associated with decommissioning following the license renewal term
3 beyond those discussed in the GEIS.

- 4 • Waste management. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

5
6
7 Decommissioning at the end of a 20-year license renewal period would generate no
8 more solid wastes than at the end of the current license term. No increase in the
9 quantities of Class C or greater than Class C wastes would be expected.

10
11 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
12 review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007), the site visit, the scoping process, or
13 its evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there are no
14 impacts from solid waste associated with decommissioning following the license renewal
15 term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.

- 16
17 • Air quality. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

18
19 Air quality impacts of decommissioning are expected to be negligible either at the
20 end of the current operating term or at the end of the license renewal term.

21
22 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
23 review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007), the site visit, the scoping process, or
24 its evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there are no
25 impacts on air quality associated with decommissioning following the license renewal term
26 beyond those discussed in the GEIS.

- 27
28 • Water quality. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

29
30 The potential for significant water quality impacts from erosion or spills is no
31 greater whether decommissioning occurs after a 20-year license renewal period
32 or after the original 40-year operation period, and measures are readily available
33 to avoid such impacts.

34
35 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
36 review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007), the site visit, the scoping process, or
37 its evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there are no
38 impacts on water quality associated with decommissioning following the license renewal
39 term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.

Environmental Impacts of Decommissioning

- 1 • Ecological resources. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

2
3 Decommissioning after either the initial operating period or after a 20-year
4 license renewal period is not expected to have any direct ecological impacts.
5

6 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
7 review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007), the site visit, the scoping process, or
8 its evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there are no
9 impacts on ecological resources associated with decommissioning following the license
10 renewal term beyond those discussed in the GEIS.
11

- 12 • Socioeconomic Impacts. Based on information in the GEIS, the Commission found that:

13
14 Decommissioning would have some short-term socioeconomic impacts. The
15 impacts would not be increased by delaying decommissioning until the end of a
16 20-year relicense period, but they might be decreased by population and
17 economic growth.
18

19 The Staff has not identified any new and significant information during its independent
20 review of the VEGP Environmental Report (SNC 2007), the site visit, the scoping process, or
21 its evaluation of other available information. Therefore, the Staff concludes that there are no
22 socioeconomic impacts associated with decommissioning following the license renewal term
23 beyond those discussed in the GEIS.
24

25 7.2 References

26
27 10 CFR Part 51. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 10, *Energy*, Part 51, “Environmental
28 Protection Regulations for Domestic Licensing and Related Regulatory Functions.”
29

30 Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). 1996. *Generic Environmental Impact Statement for*
31 *License Renewal of Nuclear Power Plants*. NUREG-1437 Volumes 1 and 2, Washington, DC.
32

33 Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). 1999. *Generic Environmental Impact Statement for*
34 *License Renewal of Nuclear Plants Main Report*, “Section 6.3 – Transportation, Table 9.1,
35 *Summary of findings on NEPA issues for license renewal of nuclear power plants.*”
36 NUREG-1437 Volume 1, Addendum 1, Washington, DC.
37

38 Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). 2002. *Generic Environmental Impact Statement on*
39 *Decommissioning of Nuclear Facilities: Supplement 1, Regarding the Decommissioning of*
40 *Nuclear Power Reactors*. NUREG-0586 Volumes 1 and 2, Supplement 1, Washington, DC.

Environmental Impacts of Decommissioning

- 1 Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (SNC). 2007. *Applicant's Environmental Report –*
- 2 *Operating License Renewal Stage, Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Units 1 and 2.* Docket
- 3 Numbers 50-424 and 50-425.

8.0 Environmental Impacts of Alternatives to License Renewal

In this chapter, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff examines the potential environmental impacts associated with alternatives to renewing the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant (VEGP) Units 1 and 2 operating licenses. NRC staff considers the following alternatives: 1) denying the renewal of an operating license (i.e., the no-action alternative); 2) implementing electric generating sources other than VEGP; 3) relying on conservation to offset a portion of VEGP's capacity; 4) purchasing electric power from other sources; and 5) implementing a combination of generation and conservation measures. In addition, NRC staff briefly discusses other generation alternatives that they deemed incapable of individually replacing the power generated by VEGP.

The NRC staff evaluates environmental impacts across 11 categories (land use, ecology, water use and quality, air quality, waste, human health, socioeconomics, transportation, aesthetics, historical and archaeological resources, and environmental justice) using the NRC's three-level standard of significance—SMALL, MODERATE, or LARGE. NRC developed these standards by using the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) guidelines. NRC staff outlines these standards in the footnotes to Table B-1 of Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR), Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B:

SMALL - Environmental effects are not detectable or are so minor that they will neither destabilize nor noticeably alter any important attribute of the resource.

MODERATE - Environmental effects are sufficient to alter noticeably, but not to destabilize important attributes of the resource.

LARGE - Environmental effects are clearly noticeable and are sufficient to destabilize important attributes of the resource.

The impact categories NRC staff used in this chapter are the same categories NRC staff used in the license renewal Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants (GEIS), NUREG-1437 Volumes 1 and 2 (NRC 1996, 1999)^(a), with the additional impact category of environmental justice.

In examining various energy alternatives for this draft supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS), NRC staff evaluated information presented in the Environmental Report. As part of its independent review, NRC staff conducted additional research and analysis that at

(a) The GEIS was originally issued in 1996. Addendum 1 to the GEIS was issued in 1999. Hereafter, all references to the "GEIS" include the GEIS and its Addendum 1.

1 times led to conclusions that diverge from the applicant's. Where appropriate, these differences
 2 are discussed in this chapter.
 3

4 **8.1 No-Action Alternative**

5
 6 NRC regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended
 7 (NEPA), require NRC staff to discuss the no-action alternative in any NRC environmental impact
 8 statement (EIS, see 10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix A(4)). For license renewal, the no-
 9 action alternative means that NRC does not renew the VEGP operating licenses. The VEGP
 10 operating licenses would then expire in 2027, and 2029 causing Southern Nuclear Operating
 11 Company, Inc. (SNC) to cease plant operations.
 12

13 If, after performing safety and environmental reviews of VEGP's license renewal application,
 14 NRC acts to renew those operating licenses, then SNC may choose to continue operating
 15 VEGP throughout the renewal term. If this occurs, then shutdown of the unit and
 16 decommissioning activities would be postponed for up to an additional 20 years. NRC staff
 17 expects that the impacts of decommissioning after 60 years of operation would not differ
 18 significantly from those that would occur after 40 years of operation.
 19

20 NRC staff addresses the environmental impacts of decommissioning in several documents,
 21 including the *Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Decommissioning of Nuclear*
 22 *Facilities*, NUREG-0586, Supplement 1 (NRC 2002); the license renewal GEIS (NRC 1996);
 23 and Chapter 7 of this draft SEIS. These analyses either directly address or bound the
 24 environmental impacts of decommissioning whenever SNC ceases operating VEGP.
 25

26 These documents do not, however, address environmental impacts that occur after plant
 27 shutdown and before the actual decommissioning process begins. In the following section,
 28 NRC staff considers the immediate impacts from plant shutdown. The impacts are summarized
 29 in Table 8-1.
 30

31 **Table 8-1.** Summary of Environmental Impacts of the No-Action Alternative
 32

Impact Category	Impact	Comment
Land Use	SMALL	Impacts are expected to be SMALL because plant shutdown is not expected to result in changes to onsite or offsite land use.
Ecology	SMALL	Impacts from shutdown are expected to be SMALL because aquatic impacts are generally reduced and terrestrial impacts are not expected because there would not be any land use or maintenance changes.

Table 8-1. (cont'd)

Impact Category	Impact	Comment
Water Use and Quality— Surface Water	SMALL	Impacts are expected to be SMALL because surface water intake and discharges would decrease.
Water Use and Quality— Groundwater	SMALL	The current plant uses groundwater for several services. Shutdown would reduce groundwater withdrawals.
Air Quality	SMALL	Impacts are expected to be SMALL because emissions related to plant operation and worker transportation would decrease.
Waste	SMALL	Impacts are expected to be SMALL because generation of high-level waste would stop, and generation of low-level and mixed waste would decrease.
Human Health	SMALL	Impacts are expected to be SMALL because radiological doses to workers and members of the public, which are currently within regulatory limits, would be reduced.
Socioeconomics	MODERATE to LARGE	Impacts in Burke County because of lost jobs and tax revenue.
Socioeconomics (Transportation)	SMALL	Impacts are expected to be SMALL because of the decrease in commuter traffic to the plant.
Aesthetics	SMALL	Impacts are expected to be SMALL because plant structures would remain in place.
Historic and Archaeological Resources	SMALL	Impacts are expected to be SMALL because shutdown of the plant would not change land use or disturbance.
Environmental Justice	MODERATE to LARGE	Economic impacts in Burke County include loss of jobs and tax revenue, resulting in reduced services available to minority and low-income populations in the county.

• Land Use

Onsite land use would not be affected immediately by the cessation of operations. Plant structures and other facilities would likely remain in place until decommissioning. In the near term, transmission lines associated with VEGP are likely to remain in-place until decommissioning. In the long run, the transmission lines could be used to deliver the output of any new capacity additions made on the VEGP site. As a result, maintenance of the right-of-ways would continue as before. Since continued operations would have no significant impact on onsite and offsite land use, and as plant shutdown would have little or no immediate effect on land use practices, the NRC staff concludes that the impacts to land use from plant shutdown would be SMALL.

Environmental Impacts of License Renewal

- 1 • Ecology

2
3 Ecology would be minimally affected by plant shutdown. VEGP utilizes two natural draft
4 cooling towers rather than once-through cooling; the cooling tower makeup requirements
5 represent approximately one percent of Savannah River discharges (at Augusta, Georgia)
6 under average flow conditions and less than two percent of River discharges under drought
7 conditions. As a result aquatic ecological impacts from continued plant operations are
8 expected to be SMALL (see Chapter 4) and, therefore, the impacts of the No Action
9 Alternative are also expected to be SMALL (but positive). SNC would most likely continue
10 to maintain VEGP's transmission line right-of-ways (ROWs) as discussed above (see Land
11 Use). Since the NRC staff determined that continued operation of VEGP into the license
12 renewal term would have SMALL impacts to ecology, and since few changes would occur to
13 ecological resources following shutdown, the NRC staff concludes that ecological impacts
14 from shutdown of the plant would be SMALL.

- 15
16 • Water Use and Quality—Surface Water

17
18 When the plant stops operating, consumptive water use for cooling tower makeup would
19 immediately cease and VEGP would also cease discharging a cooling tower blow-down
20 stream to the Savannah River. As a consequence, termination of operations at VEGP
21 would have a positive impact to surface water use and quality. Since the NRC staff
22 determined in Chapter 4 that continued operation would have a SMALL impact on surface
23 water quality and use, cessation of these impacts would also be SMALL.

- 24
25 • Water Use and Quality—Groundwater

26
27 VEGP currently relies on surface water from the Savannah River for cooling tower makeup.
28 However, groundwater is used for nuclear service system cooling, plant water treatment, fire
29 protection, potable and sanitary purposes and irrigation. Groundwater is provided from two
30 main production wells and a number of secondary withdrawal points. In the recent past,
31 groundwater withdrawals at VEGP have averaged approximately 1.05 million gallons per
32 day (mgd) while the site is permitted to withdraw 5.5 mgd. If the VEGP license is not
33 renewed and SNC, as a result, shuts the plant down, groundwater needs would significantly
34 diminish but would not entirely cease. Since NRC staff determined in Chapter 4 that
35 continued operation of VEGP would have no impact on groundwater resources, a small,
36 positive impact from plant shutdown would result in a SMALL overall impact to groundwater
37 use and quality from plant shutdown.

1 • Air Quality

2
3 When the plant stops operating, there would be a reduction in emissions from activities
4 related to plant operation such as use of diesel generators and workers' vehicles. In
5 Chapter 4, NRC staff determined that these emissions would have a SMALL impact on air
6 quality during the renewal term. Therefore, if the emissions decrease, the impact to air
7 quality would also decrease and would be SMALL.

8
9 • Waste

10
11 When the plant stops operating, it would stop generating high-level waste, and it would
12 generate less low-level and mixed waste from plant operation and maintenance. Since the
13 NRC staff determined in Chapter 6 that continued low-level and mixed waste generation
14 would have a SMALL impact, a reduction in waste generation would have an even smaller
15 impact. Therefore, the NRC staff concludes that waste impacts from plant shutdown would
16 be SMALL, and less than during operation.

17
18 • Human Health

19
20 After shutdown the plant would release smaller amounts of radioactive gaseous and liquid
21 materials to the environment than it did while operating. In addition, the variety of potential
22 accidents at the plant would decline to a limited set associated with shutdown events and
23 fuel handling. Since NRC staff determined in Chapter 4 that continued plant operations
24 would have a SMALL impact on human health, and since NRC staff also determined in
25 Chapter 5 that potential accidents during the renewal term would have a SMALL impact,
26 then reducing the amounts of gaseous and liquid releases while simplifying and limiting the
27 types of potential accidents the plant may experience would further reduce impacts to
28 human health. Impacts to human health from plant shutdown, then, are SMALL.

29
30 • Socioeconomics

31
32 Should the VEGP operating licenses not be renewed, the loss of local tax revenues could
33 have a MODERATE to LARGE socioeconomic impact within Burke County. These effects
34 could be somewhat offset by the relatively long term decommissioning activities that would
35 accompany shut down. Construction of an alternative energy technology at the site would
36 also tend to offset socioeconomic impacts, as discussed in the following sections. The NRC
37 staff determined in Chapter 4 that continued plant operations would have no effect on
38 socioeconomic conditions in the region since the impacts from plant operations have long
39 since become a part of Burke County and the region's socioeconomic condition. See
40 Appendix J to NUREG-0586, Supplement 1 (NRC 2002), for additional discussion of the
41 potential socioeconomic impacts of plant decommissioning.

Environmental Impacts of License Renewal

- 1 • Transportation

2
3 Cessation of operations would be accompanied by reduced traffic in the vicinity of the plant.
4 This reduction occurs largely because the post-shutdown workforce would be smaller than
5 the operating workforce. Shipments of materials to and from the plant would also decrease.
6 As the NRC staff determined in Chapter 4 that continued operational transportation impacts
7 would have a SMALL impact, a reduction in these effects means that impacts remain
8 SMALL if the plant shuts down.
9

- 10 • Aesthetics

11
12 Plant structures and other facilities are likely to remain in place until decommissioning.
13 Plumes from the cooling towers would cease or greatly decrease after shutdown.
14 Therefore, the NRC staff concludes that the aesthetic impacts of plant closure would be
15 SMALL.
16

- 17 • Historic and Archaeological Resources

18
19 Onsite lands and underlying archaeological resources would not be affected immediately by
20 shutdown, as plant structures and other facilities are likely to remain in place until
21 decommissioning. SNC may continue to maintain the transmission line corridors leading
22 from VEGP, at least through the period of decommissioning, and continue that maintenance
23 activity as part of the process of developing alternative capacity at the site. As NRC staff
24 determined in Chapter 4 that these practices would have a SMALL impact on historic and
25 archaeological resources, then continuation of these practices after plant shutdown would
26 also have SMALL impacts.
27

- 28 • Environmental Justice

29
30 Impacts to minority and low-income populations when VEGP ceases operation would
31 depend on the number of jobs and the amount of tax revenues lost by the communities
32 surrounding the power plant. Closure of VEGP would reduce the overall number of jobs
33 (there are currently 862 permanent positions at the plant) and the tax revenue attributed to
34 plant operations (approximately 75 percent of Burke County's tax revenues are from VEGP).
35 Since VEGP's tax payments represent such a significant percentage of Burke County's total
36 annual property tax revenue, it is likely that economic impacts would range from
37 MODERATE to LARGE should VEGP be shutdown and closed. Therefore, minority and
38 low-income populations in the vicinity of VEGP could experience a disproportionately high
39 and adverse socioeconomic impact from plant shutdown.

8.2 Alternative Energy Sources

In this section, NRC staff discusses the environmental impacts of alternatives to license renewal that would meet system energy needs after the expiration of VEGP's current licenses or whenever SNC elects to cease operating VEGP. These alternatives include alternate sources of electric power (generation alternatives and purchased power), as well as energy conservation. If NRC renews the VEGP operating licenses, the decision of whether to continue operating the plant or whether to rely on an alternative is left to SNC and state-level energy decision makers.

The NRC staff considers the following generation alternatives in detail:

- Supercritical coal-fired generation at the VEGP site and at an alternate site (Section 8.2.1)
- Integrated gasification combined-cycle (IGCC) coal-fired generation at the VEGP site and at an alternate site (Section 8.2.2)
- Natural gas combined-cycle generation at the VEGP site and at an alternate site (Section 8.2.3)
- New nuclear generation at the VEGP site and an alternate site (Section 8.2.4)

The NRC staff considers the following non-generation alternatives to license renewal in detail:

- Utility-sponsored conservation^(b) programs (Section 8.2.5)
- Purchased power (Section 8.2.6)

The order of alternatives does not imply which alternatives the NRC staff considers most likely or most environmentally benign.

The NRC staff addresses other alternatives considered in Section 8.2.7. Section 8.2.8 presents the environmental impacts of a combination of alternatives that the NRC staff determined to be insufficient as stand-alone alternatives to VEGP license renewals, but could potentially replace VEGP when presented collectively.

Each year the Energy Information Administration (EIA), a branch of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), issues the updated *Annual Energy Outlook (AEO)*. The AEO is a forecasting document that analyzes trends and issues in energy production, supply, and consumption in

(b) NRC staff notes that conservation typically refers to all programs that reduce energy consumption, while energy efficiency refers to programs that reduce consumption without reducing services. For this section, NRC staff will use the terms interchangeably.

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1 order to project future energy developments. The projections in the *AEO* vary from year to year
2 based on current events. Its comprehensiveness and policy-neutrality is unique among
3 forecasting documents. In the *Annual Energy Outlook 2007 with Projections to 2030*, EIA
4 projects a continued nationwide increase in energy consumption and generating capacity
5 (DOE/EIA 2007a). Early in this period, through 2010, EIA projects that gas-fired combined-
6 cycle or combustion turbine technology will account for most generating capacity additions. As
7 natural gas prices increase, coal-fired generation begins to account for the largest share of
8 capacity additions. EIA projects that coal will account for the majority (54 percent) of new
9 capacity through 2030. EIA also projects that advanced coal technologies, such as coal-fueled
10 integrated gasification combined-cycle generation, will decline in cost relative to improved
11 natural-gas-fired combined-cycle technologies. EIA projections indicate that U.S. generators
12 will increase total nuclear and renewable generation capacity throughout the forecast term, due
13 partly to tax credits and other incentives. As a proportion of installed capacity, however, nuclear
14 generation will decrease slightly through 2030, while renewables share will remain relatively
15 constant (DOE/EIA 2007a). EIA indicates that changes in electricity generation costs, which are
16 highly dependent on emissions-control costs, will drive utilities' choices in generating
17 technologies.

18
19 EIA asserts that oil-fired plants will account for virtually no new generation capacity in the U.S.
20 through 2030, and furthermore projects a 0.6 percent annual decrease in electric sector oil
21 consumption because of higher fuel costs and lower efficiencies relative to other technologies
22 (DOE/EIA 2007a). Given EIA's analysis, NRC staff will not consider an oil-fired alternative for
23 VEGP.

24
25 VEGP has an approximate net electrical output of 2,301 megawatts electric (MW[e]) total. To
26 simplify the alternatives analysis in the Environmental Report, SNC developed a set of fossil-
27 fueled alternatives that would approximately, but not completely; replace this capacity (SNC
28 2007a). The staff, however, as part of their independent review of the Environmental Report,
29 has decided to consider alternatives that have the capability to deliver the approximate net
30 electrical output of the VEGP units and, thus, has not followed the approach taken in the
31 Environmental Report. This applies to the gas-fired, supercritical coal-fired, and integrated
32 gasification combined-cycle coal-fired alternatives^(c) evaluated in the following sections.

33
34 Given that the VEGP is situated on a 3,169-acre (ac) site, along the Savannah River, and the
35 fact that considerable power plant infrastructure is already in-place there, including transmission
36 facilities, administrative facilities and rail link, the NRC staff believes that the site can readily

(c) While supercritical coal-fired plants rely on conventional boiler technology operated at higher pressures and temperatures, integrated gasification combined-cycle (IGCC) plants use coal (or other solid or liquid feedstock) to produce syngas that burns in a combined-cycle plant similar to that used for natural gas. Thus, an approximation of this sort is also necessary for the IGCC alternative. Boiler-based coal plants of this size are typically built-to-specifications.

1 support construction and operation of the alternatives evaluated herein. NRC staff notes that
2 SNC's plans for two additional nuclear units at the VEGP site would encumber some land area
3 that could potentially be used for the alternatives being considered herein. However, even
4 accounting for those new nuclear units, sufficient land should be available for the development
5 of alternatives. In addition to considering impacts from alternatives developed at the VEGP site,
6 the NRC staff will also generally characterize impacts for alternate sites. These sites could
7 potentially be located on either previously undisturbed land (i.e. greenfield sites) or areas
8 previously used for various commercial or industrial purposes (i.e. brownfield sites). Similarly,
9 alternative sites may be located near either urban or rural areas. As such, the potential impacts
10 outlined for alternative sites capture a range of corresponding impacts.

11
12 Although the operating license renewal period is only 20 years, NRC staff analyzed the impact
13 of operating the coal, gas, and nuclear alternatives for 40 years, as this is a reasonable
14 projection of the operating life of such plants. This means that only half of certain impacts (land
15 use for waste disposal and coal mining, for example) are directly attributable to the 20 year
16 license renewal period.

17 18 **8.2.1 Supercritical Conventional Coal-Fired Generation**

19
20 In this section, NRC staff analyzes new supercritical coal-fired boilers as the first of two coal-
21 fired alternatives. Supercritical coal-fired plants are similar to other coal burners except they
22 operate at somewhat higher temperatures and pressures, which allows for greater thermal
23 efficiency. Supercritical coal-fired boilers are commercially proven and represent an increasing
24 proportion of new coal-fired power plants. In Section 8.2.2, NRC staff presents the second coal
25 based alternative, *i.e.*, an IGCC plant.

26
27 NRC staff considers constructing supercritical coal-fired power plants at both the VEGP site and
28 at an alternate site. Developing a coal-fired facility at an alternate site may involve
29 developments not needed at VEGP such as new transmission lines connecting the alternate site
30 to the SNC system and a new rail connection for coal and lime deliveries. The impacts of
31 building and operating a transmission and rail corridor would vary depending on location of the
32 alternate site.

33
34 NRC staff's analysis assumes a plant efficiency or heat rate of 8,844 British thermal units (BTU)
35 per kilowatt-hour (kWh), the value EIA reports as the heat rate for new, scrubbed coal plants in
36 2005 (DOE/EIA 2006). Additionally, the staff assumes that the alternative technologies
37 evaluated herein would have to be capable of providing the full net electrical capacity of VEGP
38 (2,301 MW[e]).

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1 To do so, three units having an approximate gross capacity of 813 MW(e) (767 MW[e] net
2 output per unit), would need to be constructed when account is taken of the approximately 6
3 percent plant output that would be needed on site.

4
5 The supercritical coal-fired facility with a gross output of approximately 2,439 MW(e) would
6 consume approximately 7 million tons per year (yr) of bituminous coal with an ash content of
7 approximately 8.83 percent (based on averages for Georgia coal consumption; (DOE/EIA
8 2007b) and sulfur content of 0.8 percent. As in SNC's analysis, NRC staff assumed a capacity
9 factor^(d) of 0.85 for the supercritical coal-fired alternative (SNC 2007b).

10
11 At the VEGP site, a coal-fired alternative would likely receive coal and lime (used to scrub sulfur
12 oxides from flue gases) by rail. The coal-fired option would likely receive between 1 and 2 unit
13 trainloads of coal per day (assuming each train has 100 cars with 100 tons of coal per car).
14 SNC would have to improve VEGP's existing rail connection to facilitate these deliveries.
15 Impacts from improving the rail spur onto the VEGP site would be SMALL since the rail line is
16 already in-place and it is not expected that ROW acquisitions would be necessary.

17
18 In evaluating the supercritical coal-fired alternative, the NRC staff assumed that a new plant
19 located at either the VEGP site or an alternate site would use a closed-cycle cooling system, as
20 is the case for the two nuclear units at VEGP. NRC staff discusses the overall impacts of the
21 supercritical coal-fired generating alternative in the following sections and summarizes these
22 impacts in Table 8-2. As mentioned, the extent of impacts at an alternate site would depend on
23 the location and characteristics of the particular site selected.

24
25 **Table 8-2.** Summary of Environmental Impacts of Supercritical Conventional Coal-Fired Generation at
26 VEGP Site and at an Alternate Site Using Closed-Cycle Cooling
27

Impact Category	VEGP Site		Alternate Site	
	Impact	Comments	Impact	Comments
Land Use	MODERATE	Uses approximately 800 additional on-site acres for plant and waste disposal; additional offsite land impacts for coal and limestone mining affects thousands of acres.	MODERATE To LARGE	Uses approximately 1,150 acres for plant, offices, parking, and waste disposal; additional impacts from transmission line, and rail spur, as well as coal and limestone mining.

(d) The capacity factor is the ratio of electricity generated, for the period of time considered, to the energy that could have been generated at continuous full-power operation during the same period.

1
2

Table 8-2. (cont'd)

Impact Category	VEGP Site		Alternate Site	
	Impact	Comments	Impact	Comments
Ecology	MODERATE	Uses undeveloped areas at current VEGP site, plus existing rail and transmission corridors; impacts also dependent on land used for coal and limestone mining.	MODERATE to LARGE	Impact depends on location and ecological value of site, surface water body used for intake and discharge, and transmission line and rail routes; may cause habitat loss and fragmentation, as well as reduced productivity and biological diversity; impact also dependent on coal and limestone mining.
Water Use and Quality—Surface Water	SMALL	Uses existing cooling tower system. Reduced heat rate allows the supercritical coal-fired alternative to use less water than the existing plant.	SMALL to MODERATE	With closed-cycle cooling, the impact would likely be SMALL, though it would depend on the volume of water withdrawn and discharged and the characteristics of the surface water body.
Water Use and Quality—Groundwater	SMALL	A new plant onsite would likely continue to rely on groundwater for only miscellaneous plant services.	SMALL to MODERATE	Impacts would depend on the volume of water withdrawn and discharged and the characteristics of the aquifers, though groundwater would not likely be used for cooling tower makeup purposes.

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1
2

Table 8-2. (cont'd)

Impact Category	VEGP Site		Alternate Site	
	Impact	Comments	Impact	Comments
Air Quality	MODERATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sulfur oxides (5,600 tons/yr) • Nitrogen oxides (1,820 tons/yr) • Total suspended particulates (320 tons/yr) • PM₁₀ (73 tons/yr) • Carbon monoxide (1,820 tons/yr) • Small amounts of mercury and other hazardous air pollutants. 	MODERATE	Potentially the same impacts as the VEGP site, although pollution-control standards may vary.
Waste	MODERATE	Total waste production would be approximately 64,000 tons /yr of ash (after 90 percent recycling) and 304,000 tons/yr scrubber sludge requiring approximately 220 on-site acres for disposal over the 40-year life of the plant. The plant would also generate relatively small amounts of conventional, hazardous, and universal wastes during operation.	MODERATE	Same impacts as at VEGP site; waste disposal constraints may vary.
Human Health	SMALL	Impacts are uncertain, but considered SMALL as the plant would comply with health-informed standards in the Clean Air Act (CAA) and other relevant emissions regulations.	SMALL	Similar impacts to those at the VEGP site.

1
2

Table 8-2. (cont'd)

Impact Category	VEGP Site		Alternate Site	
	Impact	Comments	Impact	Comments
Socioeconomics	SMALL to MODERATE	During construction, impacts would be SMALL to MODERATE. Up to 2,000 workers would be onsite during the peak period of construction, followed by a reduction from the current VEGP work force of 862. Tax base would be preserved and, therefore, long term impacts considered to be SMALL to MODERATE.	SMALL to LARGE	Construction impacts depend on location, but would be MODERATE to LARGE if the plant is located in an area that is rural. Burke County will lose approximately 75 percent of tax revenue resulting in a potentially MODERATE to LARGE impact to the County. Employment loss would be offset over time as regional economy grows. Impacts near an urban area may be SMALL.
Socioeconomics (Transportation)	SMALL to MODERATE	Construction phase transportation impacts would be SMALL to MODERATE. For rail transportation of coal and lime, the impacts would likely affect traffic on roadways along rail corridor at grade crossings.	SMALL to LARGE	Transportation impacts could be SMALL to LARGE, during construction. For rail transportation of coal and lime, the impact is likely to be SMALL to LARGE depending on the routing of coal trains.
Aesthetics	SMALL to MODERATE	Some aesthetic impact due to tall stacks. Current site usage mitigates impacts. Noise impacts of nighttime coal and lime delivery via rail to VEGP site.	SMALL to LARGE	The greatest impacts would be from new transmission lines, plant stacks, and rail lines to transport coal and lime. Impacts range from SMALL to LARGE depending on the nature of the site.

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Table 8-2. (cont'd)

Impact Category	VEGP Site		Alternate Site	
	Impact	Comments	Impact	Comments
Historic and Archeological Resources	SMALL	Most construction would affect previously developed parts of the VEGP site; a cultural resource inventory and mitigation measures would minimize any impacts on undeveloped lands.	SMALL to MODERATE	An alternate location would necessitate cultural resource studies; construction would likely avoid highly sensitive areas. Impacts would be managed or mitigated.
Environmental Justice	SMALL	Impacts on minority and low-income communities would be similar to those experienced by the population as a whole, which are SMALL. Some additional impacts on rental housing may occur during construction, though these likely would not be noticeable.	SMALL to LARGE	Impacts to minority and low income populations in Burke County would be due to lost tax revenue based services and jobs. Impacts at alternate sites would vary depending on population distribution and location of the site.

• Land Use

Using the National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL) 2007 Coal Power Plant Database (NETL 2007) the NRC staff evaluated land requirements for large (greater than 700 MW[e]) coal-fired generating stations. Land requirements were estimated for each large generating station using aerial photography available on-line. As a result of that evaluation NRC staff noted that there appears to be little correlation between plant area and plant capacity. For example, an Ohio plant, W.H. Zimmer, with a net capacity of 1,426 MW(e) has an approximate footprint of 111 acres (0.08 ac/MW[e]) while the Shelburne Station (Minnesota), with a net capacity of 809 MW(e), has an approximate footprint of 1,937 acres (2.4 ac/MW[e]). Inspection of various aerial photos led to the conclusion that plant area was dependent on a number of factors including cooling system type, the extent of on-site coal storage, waste management practices, and the method of fuel delivery, among others. However, by excluding outliers, and plotting data from over 40 relatively large capacity coal burners, it was determined that typically large coal burning generating stations have land area requirements in the range of 0.5 to 1 ac/MW(e) (net).

1 Applying this result to a coal-fired replacement for VEGP (2,301 MW[e] net) results in land
2 requirements in the range of 1,150 to 2,300 acres. In their Environmental Report, SNC
3 estimated that about 800 acres would be needed at the VEGP site to accommodate a coal
4 fired alternate. Given that some of the existing infrastructure at VEGP could be used to
5 support operations of a coal fired complex, (cooling tower system, switch yard, offices,
6 transmission lines, etc.), the 800 acre estimate by SNC is generally consistent with the lower
7 limit of spatial requirements derived by the NRC staff. Thus, for the present analysis, it will
8 be assumed that land requirements for a coal fired alternate at the VEGP site are
9 approximately 800 acres and at an alternate site about 1,150 acres would be needed (based
10 on the staff's lower limit).

11
12 In the GEIS, the NRC staff estimated that supplying coal to a 1,000 MW(e) plant would
13 disturb approximately 22,000 acres (8,900 hectare [ha]) of land for mining the coal and
14 disposing of the wastes during the 40-year operational life. A coal-fired alternative to
15 replace VEGP (a 2,301 MW[e] capacity plant) would thus require approximately 47,380
16 acres (19,138 ha) of land. Coal mining would likely take place in existing coal-mining
17 regions and in accordance with applicable mining regulations. In the GEIS, the NRC staff
18 estimated that approximately 2,300 acres would be affected by the mining and processing of
19 uranium over the operating life of a plant with VEGP's capacity.

20
21 Overall, when consideration is given to the extent of land disturbance associated with both
22 power plant site development and coal mining operations, the NRC staff concludes that
23 impacts to land use of developing a coal-fired alternate to VEGP would be MODERATE if
24 the development occurs at the VEGP site, and MODERATE to LARGE if the development
25 occurs at an alternate site.

26
27 • Ecology

28
29 Locating a coal-fired plant at the VEGP site would affect terrestrial ecological resources
30 since much of the area available for development is covered with secondary growth forest
31 (possibly tree plantations) and old field growth. Also several streams with abutting wetlands
32 meander across the site. However, the undeveloped portions of the VEGP site are not
33 unique in terms of vegetative cover or stream habitat within the larger Savannah River
34 drainage basin. Development of a three unit coal burning facility at the site that utilizes
35 existing infrastructure to the maximum extent practicable is expected to generate terrestrial
36 ecological impacts that are best characterized as MODERATE. At an alternate site, the
37 need to clear land for a transmission line and potentially a rail corridor would increase the
38 scale of terrestrial impacts. At an alternate site the NRC staff characterizes development of
39 a coal fired replacement for VEGP as having MODERATE to LARGE impacts depending on
40 the length of transmission and rail corridors required.

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1 Aquatic impacts of a supercritical coal-fired alternative would likely be similar to impacts of
2 the existing VEGP, facility as the on-site option could make use of the existing cooling,
3 intake and outflow structures. The improved heat rate of the coal-fired alternative compared
4 to the existing nuclear facility means that less cooling water would be withdrawn from the
5 Savannah River and blowdown flows back to the River would also be reduced. Based on
6 the staff's finding that continued operation of the existing VEGP unit would result in SMALL
7 impacts to aquatic ecology, it is reasonable to conclude the supercritical coal-fired option
8 would also result in SMALL aquatic ecology impacts. A coal plant at an alternate site would
9 likely also make use of cooling towers, and would incur similar aquatic impacts, which would
10 range from SMALL to MODERATE, depending on characteristics of the water body used for
11 cooling makeup.

12 • Water Use and Quality

13 Surface Water. NRC staff assumes that the coal-fired alternate at the VEGP site would use
14 cooling towers for condenser cooling (possibly re-using the existing towers) and rely on the
15 Savannah River for makeup. Given the improved heat rate of the supercritical alternative, it
16 would require less cooling makeup than the existing nuclear plant and blowdown flows to
17 the Savannah would also be reduced. Surface-water impacts would be SMALL, and slightly
18 smaller than the proposed action.
19

20
21 The supercritical coal-fired alternative at an alternate site would likely use a closed-cycle
22 cooling system with cooling towers. For alternate sites, impacts to surface waters would
23 depend on the volume of water needed for makeup and the characteristics of the water body
24 from which water is withdrawn. Intake from and discharge to any surface body of water
25 would be regulated by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GDNR), Watershed
26 Protection Branch. These impacts would range from SMALL to MODERATE.
27

28
29 Groundwater. VEGP currently uses approximately 1.05 mgd of groundwater for a variety of
30 plant services and a coal-fired alternative on the VEGP site would likely continue to rely on
31 groundwater for various auxiliary services. On site management of coal piles and coal
32 wastes could, however, have an impact on groundwater resources should runoff from these
33 materials storage and disposal facilities result in discharges of contaminants to groundwater.
34 NRC staff expects, however, that runoff and other potential discharges from on-site coal
35 operations would be regulated by GDNR in a manner similar to regulation of discharges to
36 surface waters. Consequently, impacts of a coal-fired alternative at the VEGP site are
37 expected to be SMALL.

1 At an alternate site, impacts to groundwater would depend on the extent to which the plant
2 would utilize groundwater. NRC considers it unlikely that a coal-fired plant would depend on
3 groundwater for cooling purposes and would likely use groundwater for only domestic and
4 other auxiliary purposes. Consequently, the impact to groundwater resources at an
5 alternate could be SMALL to MODERATE, depending on the nature of the aquifers
6 occurring there.

7
8 • Air Quality
9

10 The air-quality impacts of coal-fired generation can be substantial and include emissions of
11 sulfur oxides (SO_x), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), particulates, carbon monoxide (CO), hazardous
12 air pollutants such as mercury, and naturally occurring radioactive materials. Many of these
13 pollutants, however, can be effectively controlled by various technologies.
14

15 Burke County, and the entire Augusta-Aiken Air Quality Control Region within which the
16 county is situated, meets the National Ambient Air Quality Standards established by U.S.
17 Environmental Protective Agency (EPA) under the CAA (42 United States Code [USC]
18 7491). A new coal-fired generating plant developed at the VEGP site would need to comply
19 with the new source performance standards for coal-fired plants set forth in 40 CFR 60
20 Subpart D(a). The standards establish limits for particulate matter and opacity (40 CFR
21 60.42(a)), SO₂ (40 CFR 60.43(a)), and NO_x (40 CFR 60.44(a)). A coal-fired power plant
22 constructed elsewhere in Georgia would need to comply with applicable provisions of the
23 CAA, as well, based on the attainment status of the selected alternate site.
24

25 Section 169A of the CAA (42 USC 7401) establishes a national goal of preventing future
26 and remedying existing impairment of visibility in mandatory Class I Federal areas when
27 impairment results from man-made air pollution. EPA issued a new regional haze rule in
28 1999 (64 Federal Register [FR] 35714: EPA 1999). The rule specifies that for each
29 mandatory Class I Federal area located within a state, the State must establish goals that
30 provide for reasonable progress towards achieving natural visibility conditions. The
31 reasonable progress goals must provide for an improvement in visibility for the most-
32 impaired days over the period of the implementation plan and ensure no degradation in
33 visibility for the least-impaired days over the same period (40 CFR 51.308(d)(1)). If a coal-
34 fired plant were located close to a mandatory Class I area, additional air pollution control
35 requirements would be imposed. Georgia has three designated Class I wilderness areas
36 and South Carolina has one:

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Table 8-3. Class I Areas in Georgia and South Carolina

State	Class I Area	Size (acres)	Distance to VEGP (miles)
Georgia	Cohutta Wilderness	40,000	190
Georgia	Okefenokee Wilderness	343, 776	146
Georgia	Wolf Island Wilderness	5,126	125
South Carolina	Cape Romaine Wilderness	28,000	119

A coal-fired alternate located at the VEGP site would not likely impact visibility at any Class I areas since the nearest such area, as can be noted from Table 8.3 above, is approximately 119 miles from VEGP. For an alternate site, consideration may have to be given to installation of addition air emission control systems if that site were in proximity to any Class I areas. In addition to regulating under the regional haze rule, EPA also regulates visibility, in general, pursuant to rules at 40 CFR 51, Subpart P.

The State of Georgia regulates air emissions from steam electric utility boilers pursuant to terms of the Georgia Air Quality Act (Part I of Chapter 9 of Title 12 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated [O.C.G.A. Section 12-9-1, et seq.]). Regulations issued by GDNR (Chapter 391-3-1) adopt the EPA's CAA rules, with modifications, to limit power plant emissions of SO_x, NO_x, particulate matter, and hazardous air pollutants, among other matters. Depending where a new coal-fired facility is located within the State that facility will need to comply with the applicable Federal and State air regulations.

The supercritical coal-fired alternative would produce the following quantities of air pollutants:

Sulfur oxides emissions. This coal-fired alternative at the VEGP site would likely use wet, lime-based scrubbers to remove SO_x. EPA indicates that this technology can remove more than 95 percent of SO_x from flue gases (EPA 2002). NRC staff projects total SO_x emissions would be 5,600 tons per year.

SO_x emissions from a new coal-fired power plant would be subject to the requirements in Title IV of the Clean Air Act. Title IV was enacted to reduce emissions of sulfur dioxide (SO₂) and NO_x, the two principal precursors of acid rain, by restricting emissions of these

1 pollutants from power plants. Title IV caps aggregate annual power plant SO₂ emissions
2 and imposes controls on SO₂ emissions through a system of marketable allowances. EPA
3 issues one allowance for each ton of SO₂ that a unit is allowed to emit. New units do not
4 receive allowances, but are required to have allowances to cover their SO₂ emissions.
5 Owners of new units must therefore purchase allowances from owners of other power plants
6 or reduce SO₂ emissions at other power plants they own. Allowances can be banked for
7 use in future years. Thus, provided a new coal-fired power plant is able to purchase
8 sufficient allowances to operate, it would not add to net regional SO₂ emissions, although it
9 might do so locally.

10
11 Nitrogen oxides emissions. A coal fired alternate at the VEGP site would most likely employ
12 various available NO_x-control technologies including low-NO_x burners, over-fire air, and
13 selective catalytic reduction. EPA notes that when these emissions controls are used in
14 concert, they can reduce NO_x emissions by up to 95 percent (EPA 1998a). Assuming the
15 use of such technologies at VEGP site, NO_x emissions are estimated to be in the range of
16 1,820 tons annually.

17
18 Section 407 of the Clean Air Act establishes technology-based emission limitations for NO_x
19 emissions. A new coal-fired power plant would be subject to the new source performance
20 standards for such plants as indicated in 40 CFR 60.44a(d)(1). This regulation, issued on
21 September 16, 1998 (63 FR 49453; EPA 1998b), limits the discharge of any gases that
22 contain nitrogen oxides (NO₂) to 200 nanograms (ng) per joule (J) of gross energy output
23 (equivalent to 1.6 pound [lb]/megawatt hours [MWh]), based on a 30-day rolling average.
24 NRC staff estimates that the total annual NO_x emissions for a new coal-fired power plant
25 would be approximately 12.5 percent of the new source performance standard mission rate.

26
27 EPA further restricts the total amount of NO_x that can be emitted on a State level basis. In
28 the 2008 ozone season (May 1–September 30) Georgia may emit 188,572 tons of NO_x. A
29 new coal-fired power plant would need to offset emissions through credit purchases or from
30 a set-aside pool.

31
32 Particulate emissions. This new coal-fired power plant would use fabric filters or
33 electrostatic precipitators to remove particulates from flue gases. SNC indicates that fabric
34 filters would remove 99.9 percent of particulate matter (SNC 2007a). EPA notes that filters
35 or precipitators are each capable of removing in excess of 99 percent of particulate matter,
36 and that SO₂ scrubbers further reduce particulate matter emissions (EPA 2002). As such,
37 NRC staff believes SNC's removal factor is appropriate. Based on this, the new supercritical
38 coal-fired plant would emit 320 tons of total suspended particulates and approximately 73
39 tons of particulate matter having an aerodynamic diameter less than or equal to 10 microns
40 (PM₁₀) annually. In addition, coal burning would also result in approximately 0.3 tons of

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1 particulate emissions with an aerodynamic diameter of 2.5 microns (PM_{2.5}) and coal-
2 handling equipment would introduce fugitive dust emissions when fuel is being transferred to
3 on-site storage and then reclaimed from storage for use in the plant.
4

5 During the construction of a coal-fired plant, on-site activities would also generate fugitive
6 dust. In addition, vehicles and motorized equipment would create exhaust emissions during
7 the construction process. These impacts would be intermittent and short-lived, however. In
8 addition, to minimize dust generation, construction crews would use applicable dust-control
9 measures.
10

11 Carbon monoxide emissions. Based on EPA emission factors (EPA 1998a), NRC staff
12 estimates that the total CO emissions would be approximately 1,820 tons per year.
13

14 Hazardous air pollutants including mercury. In December 2000, EPA issued regulatory
15 findings on emissions of hazardous air pollutants from electric utility steam-generating units
16 (EPA 2000a). EPA determined that coal- and oil-fired electric utility steam-generating units
17 are significant emitters of hazardous air pollutants. Coal-fired power plants were found by
18 EPA to emit arsenic, beryllium, cadmium, chromium, dioxins, hydrogen chloride, hydrogen
19 fluoride, lead, manganese, and mercury (EPA 2000b). EPA concluded that mercury is the
20 hazardous air pollutant of greatest concern. EPA found that (1) there is a link between coal
21 consumption and mercury emissions; (2) electric utility steam-generating units are the
22 largest domestic source of mercury emissions; and (3) certain segments of the U.S.
23 population (e.g., the developing fetus and subsistence fish-eating populations) are believed
24 to be at potential risk of adverse health effects due to mercury exposures resulting from
25 consumption of contaminated fish (EPA 2000b). Accordingly, on March 15, 2005, EPA
26 issued the Clean Air Mercury Rule to permanently cap and reduce mercury emissions from
27 coal-fired power plants (EPA 2007). A new coal-fired power plant would need to comply
28 with performance standards contained in 40 CFR 60.45(a), requiring that the plant emit no
29 more than 0.0025 ng/J output (20×10^{-6} lbs /MWh). In addition, to the extent the plant would
30 emit any mercury, the plant owners would need to purchase mercury allowances or reduce
31 emissions to ensure that Georgia emits no more than 1.166 tons of mercury containing
32 gases in 2010, and 0.460 tons of mercury containing gases in 2018 (EPA 2006).
33

34 Uranium and thorium. Coal contains uranium and thorium, among other naturally occurring
35 elements. Alex Gabbard, a researcher at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, indicates that
36 uranium concentrations are generally in the range of one to ten parts per million (ppm) and
37 thorium concentrations are generally about two and a half times this level (Gabbard 1993).
38 The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) indicates that Western and Illinois Basin coals contain
39 uranium and thorium at roughly equal concentrations, mostly between 1 and 4 ppm, but also
40 indicates that some coals may contain concentrations as high as 20 ppm of both elements
41 (USGS 1997). Gabbard indicates that a 1,000 MW(e) coal-fired plant would release roughly

1 5.2 tons of uranium and 12.8 tons of thorium annually (Gabbard 1993). Both USGS and
2 Gabbard indicate that almost all of the uranium, thorium, and most decay products remain in
3 solid coal wastes, especially in the fine glass spheres that constitute much of coal's fly ash.
4 Modern emissions controls, such as those included for this coal-fired alternative, allow for
5 recovery of greater than 99 percent of these solid wastes (EPA 2002), thus retaining most of
6 coal's radioactive elements in solid form rather than releasing it to the atmosphere. Even
7 after concentration in coal waste, the level of radioactive elements remains relatively low
8 (typically 10 to 100 ppm) and consistent with levels found in naturally occurring granites,
9 shales, and phosphate rocks (USGS 1997). The level of uranium and thorium contained in
10 coal wastes and disposed of in the environment exceed the levels of uranium and thorium
11 released to the environment by the existing nuclear power plant.
12

13 Carbon dioxide. A coal-fired plant would also have unregulated carbon dioxide (CO₂)
14 emissions during operations as well as during coal mining and processing, and coal and
15 lime transportation. Burning bituminous coal in the U.S. emits roughly 205.3 lbs CO₂ per
16 million BTU (Hong and Slatick 1994). The supercritical coal-fired plant would emit
17 approximately 20 million tons of CO₂ per year.
18

19 Summary of air quality. While the GEIS analysis mentions global warming from unregulated
20 carbon dioxide emissions and acid rain from SO_x and NO_x emissions as potential impacts, it
21 did not quantify emissions from coal fired power plants. However, the GEIS analysis did
22 imply that air impacts would be substantial (NRC 1996). The above analysis shows that
23 emissions of air pollutants, including SO_x, NO_x, carbon monoxide, and particulates, exceed
24 those produced by the existing nuclear power plant, as well as those of the other
25 alternatives considered in this section. Operational emissions of carbon dioxide are also
26 much greater under the coal-fired alternative.^(e)
27

28 Adverse human health effects such as cancer and emphysema have also been associated
29 with air emissions from coal combustion. NRC analysis for a coal-fired alternative at the
30 VEGP site and an alternative site indicates that impacts from the coal-fired alternative would
31 have clearly noticeable effects, but given existing regulatory regimes, permit requirements,
32 and emissions controls, the coal-fired alternative would not destabilize air quality. Thus, the
33 appropriate characterization of air impacts from coal-fired generation would be MODERATE.
34 Siting a coal-fired generation plant at a site other than VEGP would not significantly change
35 air-quality impacts, although it would result in installing more- or less-stringent pollution-
36 control equipment to meet applicable local requirements, or cause the plant's owner to
37 more- or less-actively participate in various emissions trading schemes. Impacts to air
38 quality at an alternate site would also be MODERATE.
39

(e) Table S-3 in 10 CFR 51.51 indicates that electrical energy consumed during the uranium fuel cycle to supply a 1,000 MW(e) is equivalent to the electricity produced by a 45 MW(e) coal-fired power plant.

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• Waste

Coal combustion generates several waste streams including ash (a dry solid) and sludge (a semi-solid by-product of emission control system operation). The NRC staff estimates that three 767 net MW(e) coal-fired units would generate approximately 640,000 tons of ash and 304,000 tons of sludge each year. This estimate is based on data provided by SNC in the Environmental Report with appropriate scaling applied to the SNC estimates to account for assumed differences in plant heat rates and net electrical output. Of this waste, approximately 90 percent of the ash could be recycled according to SNC with the remainder being disposed in an on-site land fill. On-site disposal is likely to encompass approximately 220 acres of the VEGP site over 40 years of operation. As mentioned in the air quality section, this waste would also contain levels of uranium and thorium in concentrations similar to those found in naturally occurring granites, shales, and phosphate rocks (USGS 1997). In addition to coal combustion wastes, a supercritical coal-fired alternative would also produce small amounts of domestic and hazardous wastes.

Waste impacts to groundwater and surface water would extend beyond the operating life of the plant if leaching and runoff from the waste storage area makes its way into groundwater or surface water. Disposal of the waste would noticeably affect land use and groundwater quality if not properly managed, but with appropriate management and monitoring, effects on groundwater water resources would be prevented. After closure of the landfill and re-vegetation, the disposal area would be available for other uses. Impacts of the waste generated by a coal fired alternative are considered by the NRC staff to be SMALL to MODERATE.

Considerable debris would be generated during construction of three coal units to replace VEGP. Most of such waste material would be disposed or recycled off-site though some could be land filled on-site as well. Overall, the mass of waste generated during construction would be small compared to the quantity generated during operation of the coal burning replacement and, as such, impacts of construction-stage waste would be SMALL. For all of the preceding reasons, the appropriate characterization of impacts from waste generated by the supercritical coal-fired alternative would be MODERATE; the impacts would be clearly noticeable, but would not destabilize any important resource. Siting the facility at a site other than VEGP would not alter waste generation, although alternate sites could pose unique waste disposal constraints. Overall, the NRC staff considers waste impacts at an alternate site to also be MODERATE.

• Human Health

Coal-fired power generation introduces worker risks from coal and limestone mining, from coal and lime transportation, and from disposal of coal combustion waste. In addition there

1 are public risks from inhalation of stack emissions. Emission impacts can be widespread
2 and health risks difficult to quantify. The coal-fired alternative also introduces the risk of
3 coal-pile fires and attendant inhalation risks.
4

5 Regulatory agencies, including EPA and State agencies, set air emission standards and
6 requirements based on human health impacts. These agencies also impose site-specific
7 emission limits as needed to protect human health. As discussed previously, EPA has
8 concluded that certain segments of the U.S. population (e.g., the developing fetus and
9 subsistence fish-eating populations) are believed to be at potential risk of adverse health
10 effects due to mercury exposures from sources such as coal-fired power plants and has
11 taken action to address mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants. In the absence of
12 more quantitative data, human health impacts from radiological doses and inhaling toxins
13 and particulates generated by burning coal would be characterized as SMALL.
14

15 • Socioeconomics

16
17 Construction of the supercritical coal-fired alternative would take approximately 5 to 6 years
18 (DOE/EIA 2007c). The NRC staff assumed that construction would take place while VEGP
19 continues operation and would be completed by the time the two units permanently cease
20 operations in 2027 and 2029. The construction work force would be expected to include up
21 to 2,000 workers at peak times (NRC 1996). These workers would be in addition to the
22 approximately 862 workers currently employed at VEGP. During construction, the
23 surrounding communities could experience an increased demand for rental housing and
24 public services, though this would be moderated by the relative proximity of the site to
25 Augusta/Aiken. After construction, communities that provided housing and other support
26 during construction would be somewhat affected by loss of the temporary construction-
27 related activity.
28

29 If the coal-fired replacement plant were constructed at the VEGP site, and VEGP were to be
30 decommissioned, the area would experience a loss of approximately 488 permanent,
31 relatively high-paying jobs (from 862 employees for VEGP to about 400 for the coal-fired
32 plant) with a commensurate reduction in purchasing activity and tax contributions to the
33 regional economy. The impact of the job loss is, however, expected to be SMALL given the
34 relatively large area from which plant personnel are currently drawn and the extensive
35 timeframe over which construction of a new plant and decommissioning of the existing
36 facility would occur. The coal-fired plant would provide a new tax base in Burke County to
37 offset the loss of taxes that would occur when VEGP is decommissioned. While it is difficult
38 to estimate the impact of this scenario on Burke County resources, it would not be
39 unreasonable to assume that, on balance, the County's tax base would not be significantly
40 altered and that resulting impacts could be best characterized as being SMALL to
41 MODERATE.

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1 The magnitude of socioeconomic impacts would vary at an alternate site depending on
2 location. During peak construction, there could be up to 2,000 workers at the site, and
3 surrounding communities would experience increased demands on rental housing and
4 public services that could result in SMALL to MODERATE impacts. Upon completion of the
5 new coal-fired power plant, host communities would be affected by the loss of construction
6 jobs but would be offset by approximately 400 new long-term operations jobs at the new
7 plant. Overall, operational impacts could range from SMALL to LARGE, socioeconomic
8 impacts would be greater (up to LARGE) if the new coal-fired power plant were constructed
9 at a rural location rather than if it were constructed in a more developed urban site.

10
11 There would also be a noticeable impact on Burke County due to the loss of jobs and tax
12 revenues should VEGP cease operations and no replacement power plant was built at
13 VEGP. Since Burke County currently relies on VEGP for approximately 75 percent of its tax
14 revenue, the loss of that revenue could represent a MODERATE to LARGE socioeconomic
15 impact if the coal-fired power plant were to be constructed at an alternate site.

16
17 • Socioeconomics (Transportation)

18
19 During the four to five-year construction period of replacement coal-fired units, up to 2,000
20 construction workers would be commuting to the VEGP site in addition to the current 862
21 workers already at VEGP. The addition of these workers would increase traffic loads on
22 existing highways and, particularly, on local roads leading to the plant site. Given the limited
23 number of access points to the site, transportation impacts associated with commuting
24 construction workers would likely be in the range of SMALL to MODERATE. Transportation-
25 related impacts associated with commuting construction workers at an alternate site are site
26 dependent and characterized as being in the range of SMALL to LARGE.

27
28 Transportation impacts of commuting plant operating personnel are expected to be SMALL.
29 The number of operations personnel working at a coal-fired power plant would be
30 approximately 400 compared to the current VEGP work force of 862. At an alternate site it
31 is expected approximately 400 operating personnel commuting to the power plant would not
32 likely overload nearby access roadways.

33
34 Approximately 1 to 2 unit trains per day (each with 100 cars carrying 100 tons of fuel) would
35 deliver coal to the new plant at the VEGP site. Since each train load generates an empty
36 return load, the number of movements per day along the rail spur to the VEGP site would
37 actually be 2 to 4 trains per day. The rail line leading to the site crosses a number of local
38 roadways and extensive delays could be experienced by waiting for trains to clear grade
39 crossings. Consequently, rail transportation impacts of coal and lime delivery to the VEGP
40 site are expected to be SMALL to MODERATE. At an alternate site, coal and lime would be
41 delivered by rail and transportation impacts could range from SMALL to LARGE depending
42 on site location and other characteristics.

1 • Aesthetics

2
3 If constructed and operated at the VEGP, the coal-fired units would have boiler houses
4 rising about 200 feet above ground level; these would not be particularly visible from
5 significant distances offsite due to the undulating terrain and the considerable tree plantation
6 farming in the plant vicinity. The three exhaust stacks of the coal-fired units would rise
7 about 500 feet above grade high and would be visible for a considerable distance offsite.
8 Given the current presence of cooling towers and their vapor plumes, as well as other on-
9 site plant structures, the addition of power plant stacks to the visual setting would not
10 drastically increase visual impacts there. The coal-fired units would also be visible at night
11 because of mandated safety lighting on the stacks and along the plant perimeter. Overall,
12 construction and operation of three coal-fired units at the VEGP site would likely result in a
13 SMALL to MODERATE aesthetic impacts.

14
15 Coal-fired generation would introduce mechanical sources of noise that would be audible
16 offsite, although given the low population near the plant's periphery, nuisance impacts are
17 not expected. Sources contributing to total noise produced by plant operation would be
18 classified as continuous or intermittent. Continuous sources include the mechanical
19 equipment associated with normal plant operations. Intermittent sources include the
20 equipment related to coal handling, solid-waste disposal, transportation related to coal and
21 lime delivery, use of outside loudspeakers, and the commuting of plant employees. The
22 nuisance impacts of plant noise emissions are expected to be SMALL due to the large area
23 encompassed by the VEGP site and the fact that few sensitive land uses occur in the
24 immediate plant vicinity.

25
26 Noise impacts associated with rail delivery of coal and lime to a coal fired facility at VEGP
27 would be most significant for residents living along the 20 mile rail corridor that leads to the
28 plant site. Depending on ambient noise levels and the number of coal deliveries occurring
29 at night, it is possible that rail related noise impacts (including sounding of safety horns at
30 grade crossings) would range from SMALL to MODERATE.

31
32 At an alternate site, plant buildings, exhaust stacks, cooling towers, and cooling tower
33 plumes would create aesthetic impacts. There would also be an aesthetic impact
34 associated with construction of a new transmission line. Noise and light from the plant could
35 be detectable offsite depending on site characteristics. Aesthetic impacts at the plant site
36 would be mitigated if the plant were located in an industrial area adjacent to other power
37 plants or industrial facilities. Noise impacts from offsite rail operations could encompass a
38 wide range of impacts also depending on site characteristics. Overall the aesthetic impacts
39 associated with locating at an alternate site would be categorized as SMALL to LARGE, with
40 impacts potentially being less at a previously developed industrial site.

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- 1 • Historic and Archaeological Resources

2
3 At the VEGP site or an alternate site, a cultural resource inventory would be needed for any
4 onsite property that has not been previously surveyed. Other lands, if any, that are acquired
5 to support the coal-fired alternate would also need an inventory of field cultural resources,
6 identification and recording of existing historic and archaeological resources, and possible
7 mitigation of adverse effects from subsequent ground-disturbing actions related to physical
8 expansion of the plant site.

9
10 Before beginning construction at an alternate site, surveys would likely be needed to
11 identify, evaluate, and address mitigation of the potential impacts of new plant construction
12 on cultural resources. The studies would likely be needed for all areas of potential
13 disturbance at the proposed plant site and along associated corridors where new
14 construction would occur (e.g., roads, transmission corridors, rail lines, or other ROWs).

15
16 Historic and archaeological resource impacts can generally be effectively managed and as
17 such would be considered SMALL for the existing site and likely SMALL to MODERATE at a
18 new site. For a previously developed site, most of which would have already been
19 intensively developed, the impact on cultural and historic resources would also be SMALL.
20 Previous development would likely have either removed or surveyed items of archaeological
21 interest.

- 22
23 • Environmental Justice

24
25 No environmental impacts were identified that would result in disproportionately high and
26 adverse environmental impacts on minority and low-income populations if a replacement
27 coal-fired plant were built at the VEGP site. Some impacts on rental and other temporary
28 housing availability and lease prices during construction might occur, and this could
29 disproportionately affect the minority and low-income populations.

30
31 Impacts on minority and low-income populations due to the shutdown of VEGP would
32 depend on the number of jobs and the amount of tax revenue lost by Burke County and the
33 communities surrounding the power plant. Closure of VEGP would eliminate jobs and
34 reduce tax revenue in the region that were directly and indirectly attributed to plant
35 operations. However, given the economic growth of Columbia County and the Augusta
36 area, it is likely that these losses could be replaced by the development of new businesses
37 and new sources of tax revenue in the region. Since SNC's tax payments represent a large
38 percentage of Burke County's total annual property tax revenue, it is likely that social
39 services in Burke County would be seriously affected. Therefore, minority and low-income
40 populations in Burke County could experience disproportionately high and adverse
41 socioeconomic impacts from the shutdown of VEGP.

1 The shutdown of VEGP would reduce operational impacts on the environment. Therefore,
2 minority and low-income populations in the vicinity of VEGP would not likely experience any
3 disproportionately high and adverse environmental impacts from the shutdown of VEGP.

4 The impact of constructing a new coal-fired power plant at an alternative site would depend
5 on its location in relation to minority and low-income populations. Environmental and
6 economic impacts could range from SMALL to LARGE. Impacts could be larger at
7 previously undeveloped sites, depending on its proximity to minority and low-income
8 populations.
9

10 **8.2.2 Coal Based Integrated Gasification Combined-Cycle (IGCC) Generation**

11
12 The second coal based option considered by NRC as an alternative to VEGP license renewal is
13 an IGCC plant. In both concept and practice, IGCC plants can be fueled with a variety of
14 feedstock, and large IGCC plants are often fueled by byproducts of petroleum refining. For the
15 purpose of this analysis, it assumed that an IGCC replacement for VEGP would be a stand-
16 alone facility and would not be co-located at a refinery; therefore, only IGCC plants using coal
17 as the primary fuel are considered.
18

19 Coal based IGCC plants operate very differently from conventional coal plants, and were not
20 considered by NRC staff in the GEIS. A coal IGCC plant first heats coal in a gasifier with
21 carefully controlled amounts of water and oxygen. The resulting gas stream (called synthesis
22 gas or syngas) contains primarily carbon monoxide and hydrogen. Most coal impurities remain
23 in gasifier waste material, called slag, while gasifiers convert sulfur-containing compounds to
24 either elemental sulfur or sulfuric acid, both of which can be marketed as commodities.
25 Gaseous pollutants, mercury among them, can be removed from the syngas stream prior to
26 combustion. Following gasification and pollutant removal, the gas stream travels to a
27 conventional combined-cycle power plant, similar in construction to a natural-gas-fired
28 combined-cycle power plant. First, the gas stream burns in a combustion turbine. Then, the
29 still-hot gas mixture gives up most of the remaining heat to water in a heat recovery steam
30 generator.
31

32 While IGCC plants can theoretically achieve thermal efficiencies approaching 50 percent
33 (DOE/EIA 2005), the technology is still relatively young from a utility-scale commercial
34 perspective, and actual efficiencies tend to be on the order of 40 percent (Ekboom 2007). No
35 IGCC plant with a capacity as large as VEGP has yet been constructed. The largest IGCC plant
36 is the ATI Sulcis plant in Portoscuso, Italy, which has a net output of 471 MW(e) (roughly 20
37 percent of VEGP's net capacity of 2,301 MW[e]). The largest IGCC plant in the U.S. is the
38 Wabash River plant in Terre Haute, IN, with a net capacity of 262 MW(e) (11 percent of VEGP's
39 net capacity). A 603 MW(e) net output plant, equivalent to 26 percent of VEGP's capacity, is
40 proposed for completion in the Mesaba Iron Range in Minnesota by 2011, and regulator
41 approval was recently granted for the construction of a 630 MW(e) net capacity plant in
42 Edwardsport, Indiana (WSJ 2007).

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1 Despite the lack of IGCC plants of similar capacity to VEGP, NRC staff notes considerable utility
2 interest in this technology for its ability to effectively reduce emissions of many air pollutants as
3 well as to potentially produce a separate carbon dioxide stream for eventual sequestration.
4 Given IGCC's limited commercial implementation in the U.S., EPA has not yet developed
5 detailed emissions factors for the technology. In general, NRC staff has adopted emissions
6 factors from DOE (DOE 1999) in order to characterize emissions from the IGCC alternative.
7 DOE/EIA adopted a heat rate of 8,309 BTU/kWh for coal-fueled IGCC alternatives for
8 forecasting purposes (DOE/EIA 2005), and NRC staff will adopt EIA's assumed heat rate for this
9 analysis, as it closely approximates data from existing IGCC plants (e.g., Tampa Electric
10 Company's Polk Plant and the Wabash River Coal Gasification Repowering Project; DOE 2004
11 and 2004). The analysis also assumes 10% onsite power consumption; this level of onsite
12 consumption is consistent with experience at the Wabash River site (DOE 2000). Therefore, a
13 coal IGCC replacement alternative for VEGP would require a total gross output rating of 2,560
14 MW(e). For the purpose of this analysis, it is assumed that VEGP would be replaced by 4
15 generating stations, each with a net capacity of 640 MW(e). This reflects a modest increase of
16 only 2 percent beyond the largest currently proposed IGCC installation, and is therefore
17 considered technically feasible. A capacity factor of 0.85, as used by SNC and adopted by NRC
18 for its analysis of the supercritical coal-fired alternative, is also used for the IGCC alternative. It
19 should also be noted that the prediction of 10% onsite power consumption is reflective of the
20 power needs for the basic technology. Advanced options, such as the addition of processes to
21 sequester carbon emissions, can increase onsite power requirements to as much as 30 percent
22 of the gross capacity. As there is no current regulatory framework regulating carbon emissions,
23 carbon sequestration is not considered in this analysis.
24

25 Although the operating license renewal period is only 20 years, NRC staff analyzed the impact
26 of operating the coal IGCC alternative for 40 years, as this may be a reasonable projection of
27 the operating life of an IGCC plant and is consistent with the analysis NRC staff conducted for
28 the supercritical coal-fired alternative.
29

30 Volumes of feedstock and waste product for the IGCC alternative were calculated by NRC staff
31 on the basis of the gross MW(e) rating of the replacement plant, using average heat, sulfur and
32 ash contents of coal delivered to Georgia for electric generation. These calculations assumed
33 an average heat value of 11,058 BTU/lb, and average sulfur and ash contents of 0.81 and 8.83
34 percent by weight, respectively (DOE/EIA 2007b). On this basis, NRC estimates that an IGCC
35 plant with a gross output of 2,560 MW(e) would consume approximately 6.51 million metric
36 tones (MT) (7.15 million tons) of bituminous coal per year, and produce approximately 575,000
37 MT (631,500 tons) of slag and 52,750 MT (57,900 tons) of elemental sulfur in a year.
38 SNC indicated in the Environmental Report that both slag and sulfur are considered marketable
39 commodities, although no estimation of the percentage of these waste streams that might be
40 saleable was provided. Slag has several reuse opportunities, including in concrete and asphalt
41 aggregate, as backfill material, and as landfill daily cover. Historically, the primary technical

1 obstacle to the beneficial reuse of slag has been excessive carbon content. However,
2 technologies to recover and recycle unconverted carbon are now feasible, resulting in a slag
3 waste stream that is consistently of saleable quality (Ratafia-Brown et al. 2002). Depending on
4 the specific process installed, sulfur is recovered from the IGCC power generation as either
5 elemental sulfur or sulfuric acid. The elemental sulfur is typically about 99.99 percent pure,
6 while the sulfuric acid is generally about 98 percent pure (Rosenberg et al. 2004). These
7 products are both valuable commodities that can be employed in numerous industries, including
8 fertilizer manufacture and wastewater treatment. The Environmental Report also notes IGCC's
9 ability to remove wastes prior to syngas combustion (SNC 2007a). As such, it is expected that
10 no additional scrubbing of the exhaust stream would be necessary.

11
12 At the VEGP site, coal would likely be delivered by rail, while slag and sulfur for reuse would
13 likely be removed by rail or by truck. The IGCC coal fired option would likely require
14 approximately 615 unit trains (100 car consists) per year, or roughly 14 round trips per week.
15 As noted in the Environmental Report (SNC 2007a), it is expected that the existing rail spur
16 would need to be improved to allow for these deliveries. For purposes of this section, the NRC
17 staff assumed that a coal IGCC plant located at either the VEGP site or an alternate site would
18 use a closed-cycle cooling system, as the current VEGP units do.

19
20 The NRC staff discusses the overall impacts of the coal IGCC generating system in the
21 following sections and summarizes the analysis in Table 8-4. The extent of impacts at an
22 alternate site would depend on the location of the particular site selected.

23
24 • Land Use

25
26 The existing facilities and infrastructure at the VEGP site would be used to the extent
27 practicable, limiting the amount of new construction. A new coal IGCC plant may be able to
28 use the existing cooling tower system, switchyard, offices, and transmission line. Much of
29 the land that would be used has been previously disturbed. As noted in Section 8.2.1
30 improvements to the existing rail line that leads to the VEGP site would be needed to
31 support coal based operations.

32
33 While the power block of an IGCC complex may be somewhat larger than that of a
34 comparable capacity pulverized coal complex, land needs for on-site waste disposal can be
35 considerably less since most IGCC by-products can be marketed. Overall, the staff views its
36 land area estimates for pulverized coal facilities to be generally applicable to the land
37 requirements for IGCC. It is, therefore, the staff's view that land requirements estimated for
38 pulverized coal burning at the VEGP site (800 acres) and at an alternate site (1,150 acres)
39 are also applicable to the IGCC alternate.

40
41 Additional land-use changes would occur in an undetermined coal-mining area from which
42 coal would be shipped to the plant. Assuming a mix of coal supply similar to Georgia's

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1 current coal supply, this land disturbance would likely occur mostly in Kentucky and
2 Wyoming, with disturbance occurring to a lesser degree in Virginia as well (DOE/EIA
3 2007b). Based on analyses presented in the GEIS, an IGCC alternative to replace VEGP
4 would require approximately 49,450 acres (20,470 ha) of land. Coal mining would likely
5 take place in existing coal-mining regions and in accordance with applicable mining
6 regulations. Based on analyses presented in the GEIS, it is estimated that approximately
7 2,560 acres (1,025 ha) would be affected for mining the uranium and processing it during
8 the operating life of a 2,301 MW(e) nuclear power plant.
9

10 The impacts of an IGCC complex, developed at the VEGP site, could to be MODERATE An
11 IGCC alternative at an alternate site could also generate MODERATE to LARGE land use
12 impacts.
13

- 14 • Ecology

15
16 Locating a coal IGCC plant at the VEGP site would affect terrestrial ecological resources
17 since much of the available land is currently used as tree plantation and some undeveloped
18 portions of the VEGP site support wetland and stream habitats. As a result, the staff
19 estimates terrestrial ecological impacts of developing and IGCC complex at the VEGP site to
20 be MODERATE. At an alternate site, clearing land for transmission lines and possibly a rail
21 spur would be needed in addition to land for plant facilities and infrastructure. The scale of
22 land use impacts associated with developing and IGCC complex at an alternate site are,
23 therefore, considered to be in the range of MODERATE to LARGE.
24

25 It is expected that an IGCC complex constructed at the VEGP site would operate with
26 cooling towers, as does the existing VEGP facility. Aquatic ecological impacts of an IGCC
27 complex at the VEGP site would be approximately the same as those generated by the
28 existing nuclear facility even though IGCC production is probably more thermally efficient
29 than a nuclear plant (i.e., for the same gross electrical output an IGCC alternative will reject
30 less heat to the environment than would a nuclear plant). The improved thermal efficiency
31 is, however, balanced somewhat by an increased demand for on-site power by the IGCC
32 facility. Since aquatic ecological impacts of the existing VEGP facility, which are a result of
33 water withdrawals for cooling tower makeup, have been determined to be SMALL, the IGCC
34 alternate will also have SMALL aquatic impacts. An IGCC facility at an alternate site would
35 also make use of cooling towers, and would incur aquatic impacts that would range from
36 SMALL to MODERATE, depending on characteristics of the water body used for cooling.

1
2
3

Table 8-4. Summary of Environmental Impacts of Coal IGCC Generation at VEGP Site and an Alternate Site Using Closed-Cycle Cooling

Impact Category	VEGP Site		Alternate Site	
	Impact	Comments	Impact	Comments
Land Use	MODERATE	Uses approximately 800 additional on-site acres; additional offsite land impacts for coal mining affects thousands of acres.	MODERATE to LARGE	Uses approximately 1150 acres for plant, offices, parking, and potential waste disposal; additional impacts from transmission line, and rail spur, as well as coal mining
Ecology	MODERATE	Uses undeveloped areas at current VEGP site, plus existing rail and transmission corridors; impacts also dependent on lands used for coal mining.	MODERATE to LARGE	Impact depends on location and ecological value of site, surface water body used for intake and discharge, and transmission line and rail routes; may cause habitat loss and fragmentation, as well as reduced productivity and biological diversity; impact also dependent on coal mining.
Water Use and Quality—Surface Water	SMALL	Uses existing cooling tower system, and potentially less water than the existing VEGP.	SMALL to MODERATE	Closed-cycle cooling, impact likely to be SMALL, though it would depend on the volume of water withdrawn and discharged, as well as the characteristics of the surface water body.
Water Use and Quality—Groundwater	SMALL	IGCC complex would likely continue to rely on groundwater for only miscellaneous plant services.	SMALL to MODERATE	Impacts would depend on the volume of water withdrawn and discharged and the characteristics of the aquifers, though groundwater would not likely be used for cooling tower makeup purposes.

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1
2

Table 8-4. (cont'd)

Impact Category	VEGP Site		Alternate Site	
	Impact	Comments	Impact	Comments
Air Quality	MODERATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sulfur oxides (1,344 tons/yr) • Nitrogen oxides (1,898 tons/yr) • PM₁₀ (158 tons/yr) • Carbon monoxide (2,370 tons/yr) • Mercury removed by syngas-stage controls 	MODERATE	Potentially the same impacts as at the VEGP site, although pollution-control requirements may vary.
Waste	SMALL	It is expected that most byproducts from an IGCC alternative would be saleable commodities, and minimal (if any) on-site disposal would be required.	SMALL	Same impacts as at the VEGP site; waste disposal constraints may vary.
Human Health	SMALL	Impacts are uncertain, but considered SMALL as the plant would comply with health-informed standards in the Clean Air Act and other relevant emissions regulations.	SMALL	Similar impacts as at the VEGP site.
Socioeconomics	SMALL to MODERATE	During construction, impacts would be MODERATE. Up to 2,000 workers during the peak period of the 5- to 6-year construction period, followed by an as-yet unspecified reduction from current VEGP work force of 862. Tax base would be preserved in Burke County. Impacts during operation would be SMALL.	SMALL to LARGE	Construction impacts depend on location, but would be LARGE if the plant is located in an area that is rural or is growing less quickly than areas near the VEGP site. Impacts at a site near to an urban area may be SMALL to MODERATE.

1
2

Table 8-4. (cont'd)

Impact Category	VEGP Site		Alternate Site	
	Impact	Comments	Impact	Comments
Socioeconomics (Transportation)	SMALL to MODERATE	Transportation impacts would be SMALL to MODERATE during the construction phase. For rail transportation of coal and waste products, the impacts would likely be MODERATE as a result of rail delivery impacts.	SMALL to LARGE	Transportation impacts would be SMALL to LARGE due to construction activities. For rail transportation of coal, the impact would be SMALL to LARGE and depend on routing of coal trains.
Aesthetics	SMALL to MODERATE	Aesthetic impact due to plant units and stacks would be SMALL. Rail transportation of coal would have a SMALL to MODERATE aesthetic impact. Noise impact would be SMALL given the size of the site.	SMALL to LARGE	Overall impacts could vary widely, with the greatest impacts from new transmission lines, rail lines to transport coal, and cooling towers.
Historic and Archeological Resources	SMALL	Most construction would affect previously developed parts of the VEGP site; a cultural resource inventory and mitigation measures would manage impacts on undeveloped areas.	SMALL to MODERATE	Alternate location would necessitate cultural resource studies; construction would likely avoid highly sensitive areas. Impacts would be managed.
Environmental Justice	SMALL	Impacts on minority and low-income communities would be similar to those experienced by the population as a whole. Some impacts on rental housing may occur during construction	SMALL to LARGE	Impacts would vary depending on population distribution and location of the alternate site. Significant impacts would occur in Burke County due to loss of tax base and jobs. Impacts to minority and low-income populations in Burke County would be due to lost tax revenue based services and jobs.

3

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- Water Use and Quality

Surface Water. The IGCC alternate at the VEGP site would likely use the existing cooling tower system if at all practicable. Given that the IGCC would likely need to dissipate a similar level of thermal energy as the existing VEGP facility, as noted above, it would also utilize approximately the same quantity of cooling water as VEGP. As such, impacts to surface water use and water quality would be SMALL, should an IGCC complex operate the VEGP site.

At an alternate site, an IGCC complex would also likely be designed with closed cycle cooling and therefore, the impacts to surface waters would depend on the volume of water needed for makeup water, the discharge volume, and the characteristics of the water body used for intake and discharge. Intake from and discharge to any surface body of water would be regulated by GDNR via various state-level discharge permit programs. The NRC staff considers the impacts to potentially range from SMALL to MODERATE.

Groundwater. VEGP uses an average of 1.05 mgd of groundwater drawn from on-site wells, and is permitted to draw up to 5.5 mgd on average. Groundwater is used at VEGP for nuclear service cooling water, utility service water, and makeup for the water treatment plant, fire protection system, and potable and sanitary water systems. As an IGCC alternative on the VEGP site would likely require approximately the same quantity of water for these auxiliary purposes, the impact to groundwater, of IGCC operations would be SMALL, as is the case for continued operation of the VEGP facility.

On-site management of coal piles and coal wastes (from IGCC operations) could, however, have an impact on groundwater resources should runoff from these materials storage and disposal facilities result in discharges of contaminants to groundwater. NRC staff expects, however, that runoff and other potential discharges from on-site coal operations would be regulated by GDNR in a manner similar to regulation of discharges to surface waters. Thus, NRC staff considers overall groundwater impacts of IGCC operations to be SMALL at the VEGP site.

At an alternate site, impacts to groundwater would depend on the extent to which the plant utilizes groundwater, though NRC finds it unlikely that an IGCC plant would depend on groundwater for cooling purposes. Given that a plant would likely use groundwater only for domestic and some service purposes, the impact could be SMALL to MODERATE, depending on the nature of the aquifers used.

1 • Air Quality

2
3 The air-quality impacts of coal IGCC generation can be substantial, though markedly less
4 than conventional coal technologies in several important areas. These include lower
5 emissions of mercury as well as particulate matter. Pre-scrubbed levels of SO_x and NO_x are
6 also typically much lower than conventional coal technologies. In addition, naturally
7 occurring radioactive materials would likely remain in slag much as they remain in solid ash
8 products in conventional coal plants.
9

10 Burke County, and the entire Augusta-Aiken Air Quality Control Region within which the
11 county is situated, meets the National Ambient Air Quality Standards established by EPA
12 under the CAA (42 USC 7401). A new coal IGCC generating plant developed at the VEGP
13 site would need to comply with the new source performance standards for coal-fired plants
14 set forth in 40 CFR 60 Subpart D(a). The standards establish limits for particulate matter
15 and opacity (40 CFR 60.42(a)), SO₂ (40 CFR 60.43(a)), and NO_x (40 CFR 60.44(a)). A coal
16 IGCC power plant constructed elsewhere in Georgia would need to comply with applicable
17 provisions of the Clean Air Act, as well, based on the attainment status of the selected
18 alternate site.
19

20 Section 169A of the CAA (42 USC 7491) establishes a national goal of preventing future
21 and remedying existing impairment of visibility in mandatory Class I Federal areas when
22 impairment results from man-made air pollution. EPA issued a new regional haze rule in
23 1999 (64 FR 35714; EPA 1999). The rule specifies that for each mandatory Class I Federal
24 area located within a state, the State must establish goals that provide for reasonable
25 progress towards achieving natural visibility conditions. The reasonable progress goals
26 must provide for an improvement in visibility for the most-impaired days over the period of
27 the implementation plan and ensure no degradation in visibility for the least-impaired days
28 over the same period (40 CFR 51.308(d)(1)). If a coal-fired plant were located close to a
29 mandatory Class I area, additional air pollution control requirements would be imposed.
30 Georgia has three designated Class I wilderness areas and South Carolina has one.
31

32 A coal IGCC alternate located at the VEGP site would not likely impact visibility in any Class
33 I areas since the nearest such area, as can be noted from Table 8.3, is approximately 119
34 miles from VEGP. For an alternate site, consideration may have to be given to installation
35 of additional air emission control systems if that site were in proximity to any one of the Class I
36 areas. In addition to the regional haze rule, EPA also regulates visibility, in general,
37 pursuant to rules at 40 CFR 51, Subpart P.

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1 The coal IGCC alternative would produce the following annual emissions of air pollutants:

2
3 Sulfur oxides emissions. DOE indicated that a coal IGCC plant would emit 0.0077 kilograms
4 (kg) (0.017 lb) of SO_x per million BTU of thermal input (DOE 1999). Based on this emission
5 rate, NRC staff projects total SO_x emissions are of 1,218 MT (1,344 tons) per year without
6 any additional emissions control technology.

7
8 A new coal-fired power plant would be subject to the requirements in Title IV of the CAA.
9 Title IV was enacted to reduce emissions of SO₂ and NO_x, the two principal precursors of
10 acid rain, by restricting emissions of these pollutants from power plants. Title IV caps
11 aggregate annual power plant SO₂ emissions and imposes controls on SO₂ emissions
12 through a system of marketable allowances. EPA issues one allowance for each ton of SO₂
13 that a unit is allowed to emit. New units do not receive allowances, but are required to have
14 allowances to cover their SO₂ emissions. Owners of new units must therefore purchase
15 allowances from owners of other power plants or reduce SO₂ emissions at other power
16 plants they own. Allowances can be banked for use in future years. Thus, a new coal IGCC
17 power plant would not add to net regional SO₂ emissions, although it might do so locally.

18
19 Nitrogen oxides emissions. DOE indicated that a coal IGCC plant would emit 0.0109 kg
20 (0.024 lb) of NO_x per million BTU of thermal input (DOE 1999). In the absence of additional
21 control technologies, the IGCC alternative would produce 1,724 MT (1,898 tons) of NO_x per
22 year, based on DOE emissions projections (DOE 1999).

23
24 Section 407 of the CAA establishes technology-based emission limitations for NO_x
25 emissions. The market-based allowance system used for SO₂ emissions is not used for
26 NO_x emissions. A new coal-fired power plant would be subject to the new source
27 performance standards for such plants as indicated in 40 CFR 60.44a(d)(1). This
28 regulation, issued on September 16, 1998 (63 FR 49453; EPA 1998b), limits the discharge
29 of any gases that contain NO₂ in excess of 200 ng/J of gross energy output (1.6 lb/MWh),
30 based on a 30-day rolling average. NRC staff estimates that the total annual NO_x emissions
31 for a new IGCC plant would be approximately 12.4 percent of the new source performance
32 standard emission rate. This level of NO_x emissions would be greater, however, than the
33 operating license renewal alternative.

34
35 EPA further restricts the total amount of NO_x that can be emitted on a State level basis. In
36 the 2007 ozone season (May 1–September 30) Georgia may emit 171,285 MT (188,572
37 tons) of NO_x. A new coal IGCC power plant would need to offset emissions through credit
38 purchases or from a set-aside pool.

1 Particulate emissions. Unlike SO_x and NO_x, where DOE has calculated approximate
2 emission rates, DOE has indicated only that a coal IGCC plant would emit less than 0.001
3 kg (0.002 lb) of particulate matter per million BTU of thermal input (DOE 1999). Assuming
4 the maximum particulate emissions rate, NRC staff estimates that the total annual stack
5 emissions would include approximately 144 MT (158 tons) of filterable total suspended
6 particulates, all of which have an aerodynamic diameter less than or equal to 10 microns
7 (PM₁₀) (40 CFR 50.6). In addition, coal-handling equipment would introduce fugitive
8 particulate emissions. Particulate emissions would be greater under the coal IGCC
9 alternative than the operating license renewal alternative.

10
11 During the construction of a coal IGCC plant, fugitive dust would be generated. In addition,
12 exhaust emissions would come from vehicles and motorized equipment used during the
13 construction process. These impacts are intermittent and short-lived. To minimize dust
14 generation, construction crews would use applicable dust-control measures.

15
16 Carbon monoxide emissions. In the absence of DOE or EPA emissions data, a CO
17 emissions rate of 0.03 lb/million BTU, previously used in the analysis of an IGCC alternative
18 for a separate relicensing application (Progress Energy 2006) and adopted by NRC staff, is
19 used. At that emissions rate, total carbon monoxide emissions would be approximately
20 2,153 MT (2,370 tons) per year. This level of emissions would be greater than the operating
21 license renewal alternative.

22
23 Hazardous air pollutants including mercury. In December 2000, EPA issued regulatory
24 findings on emissions of hazardous air pollutants from electric utility steam-generating units
25 (EPA 2000b). EPA determined that coal- and oil-fired electric utility steam-generating units
26 are significant emitters of hazardous air pollutants. Coal-fired power plants were found by
27 EPA to emit arsenic, beryllium, cadmium, chromium, dioxins, hydrogen chloride, hydrogen
28 fluoride, lead, manganese, and mercury (EPA 2000b). EPA concluded that mercury is the
29 hazardous air pollutant of greatest concern, and found that (1) there is a link between coal
30 consumption and mercury emissions; (2) electric utility steam-generating units are the
31 largest domestic source of mercury emissions; and (3) certain segments of the U.S.
32 population (e.g., the developing fetus and subsistence fish-eating populations) are believed
33 to be at potential risk of adverse health effects due to mercury exposures resulting from
34 consumption of contaminated fish (EPA 2000b). Accordingly, EPA added coal- and oil-fired
35 electric utility steam-generating units to the list of source categories under Section 112(c) of
36 the Clean Air Act for which emission standards for hazardous air pollutants will be issued
37 (EPA 2000b).

38
39 Also, on March 15, 2005, EPA issued the Clean Air Mercury Rule to permanently cap and
40 reduce mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants (EPA 2007). A new coal IGCC
41 power plant would need to comply with performance standards contained in 40 CFR

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1 60.45(a), requiring that the plant emit no more than 0.0025 ng/J output (20×10^{-6} lbs/MWh).
2 In addition, to the extent the plant would emit any mercury, the plant owners would need to
3 purchase mercury allowances or reduce emissions to ensure that Georgia emits no more
4 than 1.166 tons of mercury containing gases in 2010, and 0.460 tons of mercury containing
5 gases in 2018 (EPA 2007). It should be noted that IGCC units minimize mercury emissions
6 by allowing control technologies to extract mercury from syngas prior to combustion in the
7 combined-cycle power plant.
8

9 Uranium and thorium. Coal contains uranium and thorium, among other naturally occurring
10 elements. Alex Gabbard, a researcher at Oak Ridge National laboratory, indicates that
11 uranium concentrations are generally in the range of 1 to 10 ppm and thorium
12 concentrations are generally about 2.5 times this level (Gabbard 1993). The USGS
13 indicates that Western and Illinois Basin coals contain uranium and thorium at roughly equal
14 concentrations, mostly between 1 and 4 ppm, but also indicates that some coals may
15 contain concentrations as high as 20 ppm of both elements (USGS 1997). Gabbard
16 indicates that a 1,000 MW(e) coal-fired plant would release roughly 4.7 MT (5.2 tons) of
17 uranium and 11.6 MT (12.8 tons) of thorium annually (Gabbard 1993). Both USGS and
18 Gabbard indicate that almost all of the uranium, thorium, and most decay products remain in
19 solid coal wastes. In an IGCC plant, uranium and thorium would remain in slag material.
20 Even after concentration in coal slag, the level of radioactive elements remains relatively low
21 (typically 10 to 100 ppm) and consistent with levels found in naturally occurring granites,
22 shales, and phosphate rocks (USGS 1997). The level of uranium and thorium contained in
23 coal wastes and environmentally disposed exceeds the level of uranium and thorium
24 released to the environment by continued operation of the VEGP facility.
25

26 Carbon dioxide. A coal IGCC plant would also have unregulated CO₂ emissions during
27 operations of the plant itself as well as during coal mining and processing, as well as coal
28 transportation. Burning bituminous coal in the U.S. emits roughly 205.3 lbs CO₂ per million
29 BTU (Hong and Slatick 1994). The alternative IGCC plant would emit approximately 16.2
30 million tons of CO₂ per year.
31

32 Summary of air quality impacts. While the GEIS analysis mentions global warming from
33 unregulated carbon dioxide emissions and acid rain from SO_x and NO_x emissions as
34 potential impacts, it did not quantify emissions from coal fired power plants. However, the
35 GEIS analysis did imply that air impacts would be substantial (NRC 1996). Adverse human
36 health effects such as cancer and emphysema have been associated with the products of
37 coal combustion. NRC staff analysis for a coal IGCC alternative at the VEGP site and an
38 alternative site indicates that impacts from the IGCC alternative would have clearly
39 noticeable effects, but would not destabilize air quality. Thus, the appropriate
40 characterization of air impacts from IGCC operations would be MODERATE.

1 Siting an IGCC plant at a site other than VEGP would not significantly change air-quality
2 impacts, although it would result in installing more or less stringent pollution-control
3 equipment to meet applicable local requirements. Therefore, the impacts at an alternate site
4 would also be MODERATE.

5
6 • Waste

7
8 IGCC combustion of coal generates waste as slag, a vitreous, sand-like material that must
9 be handled in accordance with state and federal regulations. The IGCC alternative would
10 generate 575,000 MT (631,500 tons) of slag and 52,750 MT (57,900 tons) of elemental
11 sulfur in a year annually for 40 years. SNC considers these waste streams to be saleable
12 commodities in the Environmental Report, but did not provide an estimate as to how much
13 of this waste could be recycled in that manner. NRC staff expects that the elemental sulfur
14 and slag would be saleable due to the relative purity of the waste products, as noted above.
15 If on-site disposal of waste is required (potentially due to high carbon content, or market
16 conditions), waste impacts to groundwater and surface water would extend beyond the
17 operating life of the plant if leachate and runoff from the waste storage area occurs, though
18 proper management can prevent this pollution. After closure of the waste site and
19 revegetation, the land would be available for other uses

20
21 Debris would be generated during construction activities. This would likely be disposed
22 onsite, when possible. Overall, construction phase waste quantities would be small
23 compared to operational wastes, and some of the construction waste could potentially be
24 recycled. As such, construction-stage waste impacts would be SMALL.

25
26 For the preceding reasons, the appropriate characterization of impacts from waste
27 generated by an IGCC plant located at the VEGP site would be SMALL. Siting the facility at
28 a site other than VEGP would not alter waste generation, although other sites might have
29 more constraints on disposal locations. Overall impacts of managing wastes generated by a
30 coal IGCC facility are expected to be SMALL whether it is constructed and operated at the
31 VEGP site or an alternate site.

32
33 • Human Health

34
35 Coal IGCC power generation introduces worker risks from coal mining, from coal
36 transportation, and from disposal of slag as well as transportation of reusable byproducts.
37 In addition there are public risks from inhalation of stack emissions. Emission impacts can
38 be widespread and health risks difficult to quantify. In the GEIS, the NRC staff stated that
39 there would be human health impacts (cancer and emphysema) from inhalation of toxins
40 and particulates, but it did not identify the significance of these impacts (NRC 1996).

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1 Regulatory agencies, including EPA and State agencies, set air emission standards and
2 requirements based on human health impacts. These agencies also impose site-specific
3 emission limits as needed to protect human health. As discussed previously, EPA has
4 recently concluded that certain segments of the U.S. population (e.g., the developing fetus
5 and subsistence fish-eating populations) are believed to be at potential risk of adverse
6 health effects due to mercury exposures from sources such as coal-fired power plants,
7 though these emissions are likely to be smaller from IGCC plants than from conventional
8 coal-fired plants. In the absence of more quantitative data, human health impacts from
9 radiological doses and inhaling toxins and particulates generated by operation of a coal
10 based IGCC would be characterized as SMALL.

11 • Socioeconomics

12
13
14 The construction time-frame for an IGCC plant of a size necessary to replace VEGP is
15 unknown as a plant of this size (2,301 MW[e] net) has yet to be constructed. Construction
16 of a smaller IGCC coal based alternative has been estimated to require approximately 4
17 years (DOE/EIA 2007c); thus, for the present analysis it is assumed that construction would
18 cover a 5-6 year interval. The NRC staff assumed that construction would take place while
19 VEGP continues operation and would be completed by the time it permanently ceases
20 operations in 2027 and 2029. The work force would be expected to be approximately as
21 extensive as that required for the pulverized coal alternate, which brings approximately
22 2,000 construction workers to the site at the peak of construction activity. These workers
23 would be in addition to the 862 full time employees already stationed at VEGP. During
24 construction, the surrounding communities would experience an increased demand for
25 rental housing and public services, though this demand would be moderated by the
26 proximity of the site to the Augusta-Aiken metropolitan area where a considerable pool of
27 workers is likely to be found. After construction, there would be some impact as
28 construction jobs are lost though these jobs would be absorbed, in the normal course of
29 events, by other economic activity in the region.

30
31 If a coal based IGCC plant were constructed at the VEGP site and the nuclear facility shut
32 down, there could be a loss of permanent high-paying jobs. However, job losses at the
33 nuclear facility could be off-set by employment at the IGCC complex. While an estimate of
34 the staff needs for a large IGCC complex is not readily available at this time, it is likely to be
35 considerably greater than that for a pulverized coal facility given the relative complexity of
36 the IGCC facility, with its various syngas processing and waste scrubbing modules in
37 addition to an electric generation block and waste recycling systems. Thus, it is reasonable
38 to conclude that employment could range somewhere between the estimate for pulverized
39 coal burning (400 employees) and the current staff at VEGP (862 employees).

1 Construction and operation of a coal based IGCC plant at the VEGP site would provide a
2 new tax base that could offset the loss of taxes paid to Burke County when VEGP is shut
3 down. Construction and operation of a coal based IGCC complex at the VEGP site is
4 expected to have SMALL to MODERATE socioeconomic impacts when consideration is
5 given to both construction and operations employment and impacts on the local tax base.
6

7 The magnitude of socioeconomic impacts would vary at an alternate site depending on
8 location. During peak construction, there could be up to 2,000 workers at the site, and
9 surrounding communities would experience increased demands on rental housing and
10 public services that could result in SMALL to MODERATE impacts. Upon completion of the
11 new coal-fired power plant, host communities would be affected by the loss of construction
12 jobs but would be offset by approximately 400 new long-term operations jobs at the new
13 plant. Overall, operational impacts could range from SMALL to LARGE. Socioeconomic
14 impacts would be greater (up to LARGE) if the new coal-fired power plant were constructed
15 at a rural location rather than if it were constructed in a more developed urban site.
16

17 There would also be a noticeable impact on Burke County due to the loss of jobs and tax
18 revenues should VEGP cease operations and no replacement power plant was built at the
19 VEGP site. Since Burke County currently relies on VEGP for approximately 75 percent of its
20 tax revenue, the loss of that revenue could represent a MODERATE to LARGE
21 socioeconomic impact if the coal-fired power plant were to be constructed at an alternate
22 site.
23

24 • Socioeconomics (Transportation)
25

26 During the 5 to 6- year construction period of the IGCC complex, as many as 2,000
27 construction workers would be commuting to the site together with employees of the
28 operating nuclear complex. The addition of construction workers would increase traffic
29 loads on existing highways, particularly on local roadways in and around the plant. These
30 transportation impacts would be SMALL to MODERATE. Transportation-related impacts
31 associated with commuting construction workers at an alternate site are site dependent, but
32 could be SMALL to LARGE.
33

34 Transportation impacts of IGCC facility commuting power plant operations personnel are
35 expected to be SMALL. The maximum IGCC operating staff is expected to be no larger
36 than that of the current nuclear complex (862 employees). Transportation impacts at an
37 alternate site of commuting power plant operations personnel would be site dependent but
38 in all likelihood would also be SMALL.
39

40 NRC staff estimates that approximately 14 round-trips of unit trains (100 car consists) would
41 be required to deliver coal to the site each week. Additional train or truck movements would
42 occur as a result of hauling slag and sulfur to off site regional markets. The rail line leading

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1 to the VEGP site crosses a number of local roadways at-grade and, therefore, extensive
2 delays could be experienced by waiting for unit trains to clear grade crossings.
3 Consequently, rail transportation impacts of coal delivery to the VEGP site are expected to
4 be MODERATE. At an alternate site, coal would also likely be delivered by rail and
5 transportation impacts could range from SMALL to LARGE depending on site location and
6 other characteristics.

7 8 • Aesthetics

9
10 If an IGCC complex were developed at the VEGP site, the stacks of its gas-fired generators
11 would rise as much as 200 feet above local elevation. Given the tree cover, and the
12 somewhat undulating terrain in the area, the stacks are not likely to be visible offsite. The
13 exhaust stacks would be similar in height to those of a natural gas-fired combined cycle
14 plant, and shorter than those of a pulverized coal unit (400 to 600 ft). Furthermore, given
15 the presence of cooling towers and associated vapor plumes at the site, as well as other
16 structures associated with nuclear operations, the addition of several 200 foot stacks would
17 not drastically increase visual impacts. The facility would also be visible at night because of
18 the need for outside safety lighting; lighting impacts at night could be mitigated by reducing
19 light intensity and installing shields where needed. The NRC staff considers the visual
20 impacts of operating an IGCC complex at the VEGP site to be SMALL.

21
22 Coal based IGCC generation would introduce mechanical sources of noise at the site.
23 Given the low population in the vicinity significant impacts to sensitive off-site receptors are
24 not expected. Sources contributing to total noise produced by plant operation are classified
25 as continuous or intermittent. Continuous sources include the mechanical equipment
26 associated with normal plant operations. Intermittent sources include the equipment related
27 to coal handling, solid-waste disposal, transportation related to coal delivery, use of outside
28 loudspeakers, and the commuting of plant employees. The incremental noise impacts of an
29 IGCC complex compared to existing VEGP operations would be considered SMALL.

30
31 Noise impacts associated with rail delivery of coal to a plant at the VEGP site would be most
32 significant for residents living in the vicinity of the rail route. Passing trains raises noise
33 levels along the rail corridor intermittently. As such impacts to residents along the rail
34 corridor could range from SMALL to MODERATE.

35
36 At an alternate site, there would be aesthetic impacts from erecting new buildings, exhaust
37 stacks, cooling towers and, as well, the vapor plumes associated with cooling towers. There
38 would be a significant aesthetic impact associated with construction of a new transmission
39 line to connect plant output to the regional electric grid. Noise and light from the plant may
40 be detectable offsite, depending on site characteristics. Aesthetic impacts at the plant site
41 would be mitigated if the plant were located in an industrial area adjacent to other industrial

1 facilities. Noise impacts from a rail spur, if one is required, would be similar to the impacts at
2 the VEGP site. Overall the aesthetic impacts associated with locating at an alternate site
3 could range from SMALL to LARGE, depending on site characteristics. Some of these
4 issues would be rectified if the IGCC coal plant were sited at a previously developed site
5 where impacts would be expected to be in the range of SMALL to MODERATE.
6

7 • Historic and Archaeological Resources
8

9 At the VEGP site, a cultural resource inventory would be needed for any onsite property that
10 has not been previously surveyed. Other adjacent properties , if any, that are acquired to
11 support the IGCC complex would also need an inventory of field cultural resources,
12 identification and recording of existing historic and archaeological resources, and possible
13 mitigation of adverse effects from subsequent ground-disturbing actions related to physical
14 expansion of the plant site.
15

16 Before construction at an alternate, undeveloped site, studies would be needed to identify,
17 evaluate, and develop mitigation measures for the potential impacts of new plant
18 construction on cultural resources. The studies would be needed for all areas of potential
19 disturbance at the proposed site and along associated corridors where new construction
20 would occur (e.g., roads, transmission corridors, rail lines, or other ROWs).
21

22 Historic and archaeological resource impacts can generally be effectively managed and as
23 such impacts would be considered SMALL for the existing and SMALL to MODERATE at
24 alternate sites. For a previously developed alternate site, impacts on cultural resources
25 would be SMALL. Previous development would likely either have removed or surveyed
26 items of archaeological interest.
27

28 • Environmental Justice
29

30 No environmental impacts were identified that would result in disproportionately high and
31 adverse environmental impacts on minority and low-income populations if the IGCC facility
32 were built at the VEGP site. Some impacts on rental and other temporary housing
33 availability and lease prices during construction might occur, and this could
34 disproportionately affect the minority and low-income populations.
35

36 Impacts on minority and low-income populations due to the shutdown of VEGP would
37 depend on the number of jobs and the amount of tax revenue lost by Burke County and the
38 communities surrounding the power plant. Closure of VEGP would eliminate jobs and
39 reduce tax revenue in the region that were directly and indirectly attributed to plant
40 operations. However, given the economic growth of Columbia County and the Augusta
41 area, it is likely that these losses could be replaced by the development of new businesses
42 and new sources of tax revenue in the region. Since SNC's tax payments represent a large

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1 percentage of Burke County's total annual property tax revenue, it is likely that social
2 services in Burke County would be seriously affected. Therefore, minority and low-income
3 populations in Burke County could experience disproportionately high and adverse
4 socioeconomic impacts from the shutdown of VEGP.
5

6 The shutdown of VEGP would reduce operational impacts on the environment. Therefore,
7 minority and low-income populations in the vicinity of VEGP would not likely experience any
8 disproportionately high and adverse environmental impacts from the shutdown of VEGP.
9

10 The impact of constructing the IGCC facility at an alternative site would depend on its
11 location in relation to minority and low-income populations. Environmental and economic
12 impacts could range from SMALL to LARGE. Impacts could be larger at previously
13 undeveloped sites, depending on its proximity to minority and low-income populations.
14

15 **8.2.3 Natural Gas-Fired Combined-Cycle Generation**

16
17 In this section, NRC staff examines the environmental impacts of the natural gas-fired
18 alternative at both the VEGP site and at an alternate site. The NRC staff assumed that a
19 natural gas-fired plant would use a closed-cycle cooling system. At the VEGP site, the NRC
20 staff assumed that the new plant would make use of the existing cooling system, including
21 cooling tower, intake, and outlet.
22

23 Additionally, NRC staff assumed that a replacement natural gas-fired plant would use
24 combined-cycle technology. Compared to simple-cycle combustion turbines, combined cycle
25 plants are significantly more efficient, and thus provide electricity at lower levelized costs.
26 Typically, these plants support intermediate loads but they are capable of supporting a baseload
27 duty cycle and thus provide an alternative to renewing the VEGP operating license. In a
28 combined-cycle unit, hot combustion gases in a combustion turbine rotate the turbine to
29 generate electricity. Waste combustion heat from the combustion turbine is routed through a
30 heat-recovery steam generator, which then powers a steam turbine electrical generator.

31 If a new natural gas-fired plant were built at the VEGP site, approximately 20 miles of new 16-
32 inch gas pipeline would be necessary to connect the new facility to existing gas transmission
33 lines north of the site (SNC 2007b). The NRC staff estimates that running the new gas line
34 would entail disturbance along an approximately 25-foot wide corridor, for 20 miles, resulting in
35 temporary impacts to approximately 60 acres of land. Much of the gas line route would likely be
36 alongside shoulders of existing roadways thus reducing the significance of routing the new line.
37

38 For its natural gas-fired alternative the staff evaluates impacts of four combined cycle gas-fired
39 units each with a gross electrical rating of 602.5 MW(e); it is assumed that these units have the
40 same heat rate as used by SNC in their Environmental Report (5,940 Btu/kWh). NRC staff
41 discusses the overall impacts of the natural gas-fired generating system in the following

1 sections and summarizes them in Table 8-4. The extent of impacts at an alternate site would
2 depend on the location of the site selected.

3
4 • Land Use

5
6 Existing facilities and infrastructure would be used to the extent practicable, if a gas-fired
7 complex were to be developed at the VEGP site. Specifically, the NRC staff assumed that
8 this alternate would use the existing cooling tower system, switchyard, offices, and
9 transmission line ROWs. Much of the land that would be developed has been previously
10 disturbed. NRC staff, in the GEIS, asserted that a 1,000 MWe gas-fired plant would require
11 110 acres. As such, a plant of the size proposed to replace VEGP's capacity would require
12 approximately 250 acres. SNC estimated in their Environmental Report that 160 acres
13 would be needed to accommodate a gas-fired complex at VEGP; since substantial
14 infrastructure is already available to support a gas-fired complex, for purposes of the
15 analysis herein the NRC adopts the SNC estimate of needed land area.

16
17 For construction at an alternate site, the NRC staff assumed that 250 acres would be
18 needed for the plant and associated infrastructure. In addition, considerable land area could
19 be disturbed as a result of the need to install gas service to the generating station and the
20 need to clear land for new transmission lines. NRC staff expects that this area would be
21 reduced if a gas-fired alternate were constructed on a previously-developed industrial site
22 since it would be expected that such sites would be near utility transmission systems.

23
24 Regardless of where a gas-fired alternative is built, additional land would be required for
25 natural gas wells and collection stations. According to the GEIS, a 1,000 MW(e) gas-fired
26 plant requires approximately 3,600 acres (1,500 ha) for wells, collection stations, and
27 pipelines (NRC 1996). Much of the land area necessary for the gas-fired alternative would
28 be in existing gas-extraction areas. Partially offsetting these offsite land requirements would
29 be the elimination of the need for uranium mining to supply fuel for VEGP. In the GEIS
30 (NRC 1996), the NRC staff estimated that approximately 1,000 acres would be affected for
31 mining the uranium and processing it during the operating life of a 1,000 MW(e) nuclear
32 power plant. Overall, land-use impacts could be SMALL to MODERATE for the alternative
33 at the VEGP site. Impacts would generally be similar at an undeveloped site, as the primary
34 driver for these impacts would be the amount of land necessary for natural gas
35 infrastructure. At an alternate site, additional pipelines or transmission lines may also be
36 necessary. As such, impacts could be SMALL to LARGE.

Environmental Impacts of License Renewal

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2
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Table 8-5. Summary of Environmental Impacts of Natural Gas-Fired Generation at VEGP and an Alternate Site Using Closed-Cycle Cooling

Impact Category	VEGP Site		Alternate Site	
	Impact	Comments	Impact	Comments
Land Use	SMALL to MODERATE	Approximately 160 acres for power block and support facilities. Some existing infrastructure would be used to support gas-fired operations. Additional impact potentially affecting from tens to hundreds of acres for construction of gas pipeline.	SMALL to LARGE	Approximately 250 acres for power block, offices, roads, and parking areas. Power line and gas pipeline impacts may vary widely, from tens of acres to thousands of acres. Previously developed sites would experience lower impacts than undeveloped sites.
Ecology	SMALL	As the alternative would largely use undeveloped areas at VEGP, terrestrial impacts would be minimal. Land disturbance for a new gas pipeline would depend on its route though use of roadway corridors will minimize impacts. Aquatic ecology benefits from the gas-fired alternative, as the combined-cycle plant requires significantly less makeup water and discharges less blowdown than VEGP.	SMALL to LARGE	Impact depends on location and ecology of the site, surface water body used for intake and discharge, and transmission and pipeline routes. At an undisturbed location there could be habitat loss and fragmentation; reduced productivity and biological diversity. These issues would be less significant at a previously developed site.
Water Use and Quality—Surface Water	SMALL	Due to higher thermal efficiency, less cooling tower makeup water needed than for VEGP and also reduced blowdown flows to river.	SMALL to MODERATE	Impact depends on volume of water withdrawn and discharged, as well as characteristics of the surface water body.
Water Use and Quality—Groundwater	SMALL	Somewhat lower groundwater usage for plant services than VEGP.	SMALL to MODERATE	Impact depends on volume of water withdrawn and characteristics of local aquifers.

1
2

Table 8-5. (cont'd)

Impact Category	VEGP Site		Alternate Site	
	Impact	Comments	Impact	Comments
Air Quality	SMALL to MODERATE	Emissions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sulfur oxides (175 tons/yr) • Nitrogen oxides (561 tons/yr) • Carbon monoxide (116 tons/yr) • Filterable particulates (98 tons/yr) • Small amounts of hazardous air pollutants 	SMALL to MODERATE	Same emissions as at VEGP site.
Waste	SMALL	Solid waste primarily due to emission controls and plant operations.	SMALL	Same waste produced as at the VEGP site.
Human Health	SMALL	Impacts are uncertain, but considered SMALL as the plant would comply with health-informed standards in the Clean Air Act and other relevant emissions regulations.	SMALL	Similar impacts to those at the VEGP site.
Socioeconomics	SMALL to MODERATE	During construction, impacts in surrounding communities would be SMALL to MODERATE, depending on site. Up to 1100 additional workers during the peak of construction period. Impacts could occur as a result of the decrease in on-site operations employment from 862 to 300. Tax base would be preserved. Impacts during operation would be SMALL.	SMALL to LARGE	During construction, impacts in surrounding communities would be SMALL to MODERATE, depending on site. Up to 1100 additional workers during the peak of construction period. Burke County would lose jobs and portion of tax base.

Environmental Impacts of License Renewal

Table 8-5. (cont'd)

Impact Category	VEGP Site		Alternate Site	
	Impact	Comments	Impact	Comments
Socioeconomics (Transportation)	SMALL to MODERATE	Transportation impacts would occur primarily during the peak of construction activity.	SMALL to MODERATE	Expected to be similar to those at VEGP.
Aesthetics	SMALL	Aesthetic impact would be minor given the large plant structures already in-place at VEGP.	SMALL to MODERATE	Greatest impacts from clearing for new transmission line. Overall impact would be SMALL for previously developed sites and SMALL to MODERATE for undeveloped sites.
Historic and Archeological Resources	SMALL	Any potential impacts could be effectively managed given the plant and pipeline's small footprint.	SMALL to MODERATE	Development of a new site and clearing for pipeline and transmission line could disturb these resources.
Environmental Justice	SMALL	Environmental impacts on minority and low-income populations would be similar to those experienced by the general population in the region. Loss of jobs at VEGP may disproportionately affect minority and low-income populations in Burke County.	SMALL to LARGE	Impacts would vary depending on population distribution and location of the site. The loss of jobs at VEGP and tax revenue could disproportionately affect minority and low-income populations in Burke County.

• Ecology

At the VEGP site there could be terrestrial ecological impacts associated with siting a gas-fired facility, though these impacts are likely to be SMALL since much of the new plant would be situated in disturbed areas and impacts to wetland and other useful on-site habitats could be avoided. There would also be some ecological impacts associated with bringing a new underground gas pipeline to the VEGP site, though the scale of this impact is dependent on how much of the pipeline route can follow already disturbed roadway corridors.

1 Given the relatively high efficiency of a combined cycle facility in relationship to a
2 comparable capacity nuclear plant, the combined cycle's requirements for cooling water
3 would be noticeably reduced from that of VEGP and the resultant impacts to aquatic
4 resources would also be reduced. In addition, cooling tower discharges to the Savannah
5 River would diminish more or less in line with the reduction in make-up flows. Thus, aquatic
6 ecological impacts of the combine cycle alternative would be less than those of the existing
7 VEGP complex and are characterized as SMALL.

8
9 Ecological impacts at an alternate site would depend on the nature of the land converted to
10 plant uses and the distances over which new transmission facilities (gas and electric) would
11 need to be run. Ecological impacts to the plant site and to transmission rights-of-way would
12 include wildlife habitat loss and reduced productivity, habitat fragmentation, and a local
13 reduction in biological diversity. At an alternate site, the cooling tower makeup water and
14 discharges would have aquatic resource impacts that depend on the quality of the surface
15 water body from which withdrawals occur. Overall, ecological impacts of developing a
16 combined cycle facility at an alternative site would be considered SMALL if the site were at
17 an already disturbed industrial location and range to LARGE for alternate sites with relatively
18 undisturbed habitat conditions.

19
20 • Water Use and Quality

21
22 Surface Water. Combined-cycle gas-fired plants are highly efficient and require less cooling
23 water than other technologies such as nuclear and pulverized coal plants. Plant discharges
24 would consist mostly of cooling tower blowdown, with the discharge having a slightly higher
25 temperature and increased concentration of dissolved solids relative to the receiving water
26 body. All discharges from a new plant would be regulated through a National Pollutant
27 Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit which would be issued by GDNR. Finally,
28 some erosion and sedimentation would probably occur during construction (NRC 1996),
29 though the GEIS indicates this would be SMALL. Overall, the impacts to water use and
30 quality at the VEGP site from a gas-fired alternative would be considered SMALL, and would
31 be less than the proposed action.

32
33 A natural gas-fired plant at an alternate site is assumed to use closed-cycle cooling. The
34 NRC staff assumed that surface water would be used for cooling makeup water and
35 blowdown discharge. The impact on the surface water would depend on the volume of
36 water needed for makeup water, the discharge volume, and the characteristics of the
37 receiving body of water. Intake from and discharges to any surface body of water would be
38 regulated by GDNR. The impacts would be SMALL to MODERATE depending on receiving
39 water characteristics.

40
41 Groundwater. VEGP currently uses about 1.05 mgd of groundwater and it is likely that a
42 gas-fired combined cycle alternative would also use groundwater for various in-plant

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1 auxiliary services. Since the impacts of current groundwater usage practices by VEGP are
2 considered SMALL, the impacts of a combined cycle alternate are also estimated to be
3 SMALL. Groundwater usage impacts at an alternate site may vary depending on the nature
4 of aquifers at the alternate location. Given that it is unlikely that a plant at an alternate site
5 would use groundwater for cooling purposes, impacts at an alternate site could range from
6 SMALL to MODERATE.

7 8 • Air Quality

9
10 Burke County, and the entire Augusta-Aiken Air Quality Control Region within which the
11 county is situated, meets the National Ambient Air Quality Standards established by EPA
12 under the CAA (42 USC 7401). A new gas-fired generating plant developed at the VEGP
13 site would need to comply with the new source performance standards set forth in 40 CFR
14 60 Subpart D(a) and GG. The standards establish limits for particulate matter and opacity
15 (40 CFR 60.42(a)), SO₂ (40 CFR 60.43(a)), and NO_x (40 CFR 60.44(a)). A gas-fired power
16 plant constructed elsewhere in Georgia would need to comply with applicable provisions of
17 the CAA, as well, based on the attainment status of the selected alternate site.

18
19 Section 169A of the CAA (42 USC 7491) establishes a national goal of preventing future
20 and remedying existing impairment of visibility in mandatory Class I Federal areas when
21 impairment results from man-made air pollution. EPA issued a new regional haze rule in
22 1999 (64 FR 35714; EPA 1999). The rule specifies that for each mandatory Class I Federal
23 area located within a state, the State must establish goals that provide for reasonable
24 progress towards achieving natural visibility conditions. The reasonable progress goals
25 must provide for an improvement in visibility for the most-impaired days over the period of
26 the implementation plan and ensure no degradation in visibility for the least-impaired days
27 over the same period (40 CFR 51.308(d)(1)).

28
29 If a natural gas-fired plant were located close to a mandatory Class I area, additional air
30 pollution control requirements could be imposed. Georgia has three designated Class I
31 wilderness areas and South Carolina has one. These areas are listed in Table 8.3. A gas-
32 fired alternate located at the VEGP site would not likely impact visibility at any Class I area
33 since the nearest such area, as can be noted from Table 8.3, is approximately 119 miles
34 from VEGP. For an alternate site, consideration may have to be given to installation of
35 addition air emission control systems if that site were in proximity to any one of the Class I
36 areas. In addition to regulating under the regional haze rule, USEPA also regulates
37 visibility, in general, pursuant to rules at 40 CFR 51, Subpart P.

38
39 The State of Georgia regulates air emissions from power plants pursuant to terms of the
40 Georgia Air Quality Act (Part I of Chapter 9 of Title 12 of the Official Code of Georgia
41 Annotated [O.C.G.A. Section 12-9-1, et seq.]). Regulations issued by GDNR (Chapter 391-

1 3-1) adopt the EPA's CAA rules, with modifications, to limit power plant emissions of SO_x,
2 NO_x, particulate matter, and hazardous air pollutants, among other matters. Depending
3 where a new gas-fired facility is located within the State that facility will need to comply with
4 the applicable Federal and State air regulations
5

6 NRC staff projects the following emissions for a gas-fired alternative based on EPA
7 emissions factors (EPA 2000a):

- 8 ○ Sulfur oxides – 175 tons/yr
- 9 ○ Nitrogen oxides – 561 tons/yr
- 10 ○ Carbon monoxide – 116 tons/yr
- 11 ○ Filterable particulates – 98 tons/yr

12
13 The total amount of nitrogen oxides which can be emitted by Georgia in the 2008 ozone
14 season (May 1–September 30) is set out at 40 CFR 51.121(e). For Georgia the amount is
15 150,000 MT (165,306 tons). A new gas-fired power plant would need to buy credits if it was
16 likely to cause the State to exceed these limits.
17

18 A natural gas-fired plant would also have unregulated carbon dioxide emissions and, in case
19 of the alternate to VEGP, would emit approximately 5.6 million tons of CO₂ per year. In
20 December 2000, EPA issued regulatory findings on emissions of hazardous air pollutants
21 from electric utility steam-generating units (EPA 2000b). Natural gas-fired power plants
22 were found by EPA to emit arsenic, formaldehyde, and nickel (EPA 2000b). Unlike coal and
23 oil-fired plants, EPA did not determine that emissions of hazardous air pollutants from
24 natural gas-fired power plants should be regulated under Section 112 of the CAA.
25

26 Construction activities would also result in some air effects, including those from temporary
27 fugitive dust, though construction crews would employ dust-control practices to limit this
28 impact. Exhaust emissions would also come from vehicles and motorized equipment used
29 during the construction process, though these emissions are likely to be intermittent in
30 nature and will occur over a limited period of time. As such, construction stage impacts
31 would be SMALL.
32

33 The overall air-quality impacts of a new natural gas-fired combined cycle plant sited at
34 VEGP or at an alternate site would be SMALL to MODERATE.
35

36 • Waste
37

38 Burning natural gas results in minor quantities of waste compared to other alternates,
39 though a plant using selective catalytic reduction (SCR) to control NO_x will generate spent
40 SCR catalyst from NO_x emissions control and small amounts of solid-waste products (i.e.,

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1 ash). In the GEIS, the NRC staff concluded that waste generation from gas-fired technology
2 would be minimal (NRC 1996). Constructing a gas-fired alternative would generate small
3 amounts of waste, though many construction wastes can be recycled and some debris
4 would be land filled onsite.
5

6 Overall, the waste impacts would be SMALL for a natural gas-fired plant sited at VEGP or at
7 an alternate site.
8

9 • Human Health

10
11 In Table 8-2 of the GEIS, the NRC staff identifies cancer and emphysema as potential
12 health risks from gas-fired plant operations (NRC 1996). The risks may be attributable to
13 No_x emissions that contribute to ozone formation, which in turn can contribute to health
14 impacts. No_x emissions from any gas-fired plant would be regulated as mentioned in the Air
15 Quality section. Overall, the impacts on human health of a natural gas-fired alternate sited
16 at VEGP or at an alternate site would be considered SMALL.
17

18 • Socioeconomics

19
20 Construction of a natural gas-fired plant would take approximately 4 years (DOE/EIA
21 2007c). Peak employment would be approximately 1,100 workers (NRC 1996). NRC staff
22 assumed that construction would take place while VEGP continues operation and would be
23 completed by the time it permanently ceases operations. During construction, the
24 communities surrounding the site would experience an increased demand for rental housing
25 and public services that would have SMALL to MODERATE impacts. These impacts would
26 be somewhat reduced if construction workers were to commute to the site from other parts
27 of the region including the Augusta-Aiken metropolitan area.
28

29 During operation of the gas-fired complex about 300 full time employees would work at the
30 site, a considerable reduction from the 862 permanent employees currently staffing the
31 VEGP facility. In addition, the current nuclear plant accounts for approximately 75 percent
32 of the property taxes collected by Burke County. Any reduction in taxes paid to the County
33 could impact local services. Given the reduced number of operations workers required for a
34 gas-fired plant, the socioeconomic impacts of this alternate would be SMALL.
35

36 Should the new gas-fired plant be built at an alternate site, the loss of taxes and
37 employment in Burke County would have a LARGE impact. At the alternate site,
38 socioeconomic impacts would range from SMALL to MODERATE, depending on site
39 specific conditions.

1 • Socioeconomics (Transportation)

2
3 Transportation impacts associated with construction of a gas-fired complex at either the
4 VEGP site or an alternate site would range from SMALL to MODERATE due to the daily
5 arrival of up to 1100 construction workers and associated construction equipment. Once
6 operations of the complex begin, transportation system impacts would be SMALL.

7
8 • Aesthetics

9
10 At the VEGP site, the turbine buildings (100 ft tall) and four exhaust stacks (approximately
11 200 ft tall) would not be from offsite due to trees and the undulating terrain. The existing
12 cooling towers are a dominant feature of the VEGP site and would be retained for gas-fired
13 operations. Noise and light from the plant may be detectable offsite, but would be screened
14 by the site's trees. The visual impact, from a new gas-fired plant on the current VEGP site,
15 would be SMALL.

16
17 At an alternate site, new buildings, cooling towers, cooling tower plumes, and electric
18 transmission lines could be visible offsite. Visual impacts from new transmission lines would
19 depend on land uses along the transmission corridor. Aesthetic impacts would be mitigated
20 if the plant were located in an industrial area where land uses are compatible with electric
21 generation activities. Overall, the aesthetic impacts associated with an alternate site could
22 range from SMALL to MODERATE.

23
24 • Historic and Archaeological Resources

25
26 At VEGP, a cultural resource inventory would be needed for any onsite property that has not
27 been previously surveyed and would be disturbed by the proposed development.
28 Construction of a gas line to the VEGP site could disturb undeveloped areas along its route
29 and these areas would also need to be surveyed for the presence of archeological
30 resources. Impacts to cultural resources would be SMALL. Most impacts could be
31 mitigated under an approved resource management plan.

32
33 Before construction at an alternate site, studies would be needed to identify, evaluate, and
34 address mitigation of the potential impacts of new plant construction on cultural resources.
35 Studies would be needed for all areas of potential disturbance at the proposed plant site and
36 along associated corridors where new construction would occur (e.g., roads, transmission
37 and pipeline corridors, or other ROWs). Building on a previously developed site would
38 minimize the likelihood of affecting historical or archaeological resources. At an alternate
39 the impact would be SMALL to MODERATE.

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- Environmental Justice

No environmental impacts were identified that would result in disproportionately high and adverse environmental impacts on minority and low-income populations if the gas-fired plant were built at the VEGP site. Some impacts on rental and other temporary housing availability and lease prices during construction might occur, and this could disproportionately affect the minority and low-income populations.

Impacts on minority and low-income populations due to the shutdown of VEGP would depend on the number of jobs and the amount of tax revenue lost to Burke County and the communities surrounding the power plant. Closure of VEGP would eliminate jobs and reduce tax revenue in the region that were directly and indirectly attributed to plant operations. However, given the economic growth of Columbia County and the Augusta area, it is likely that these losses could be replaced by the development of new businesses and new sources of tax revenue in the region. Since SNC's tax payments represent a large percentage of Burke County's total annual property tax revenue, it is likely that social services in Burke County would be seriously affected. Therefore, minority and low-income populations in Burke County could experience disproportionately high and adverse socioeconomic impacts from the shutdown of VEGP.

The shutdown of VEGP would reduce operational impacts on the environment. Therefore, minority and low-income populations in the vicinity of VEGP would not likely experience any disproportionately high and adverse environmental impacts from the shutdown of VEGP.

The impact of constructing a gas-fired plant at an alternative site would depend on its location in relation to minority and low-income populations. Environmental and economic impacts could range from SMALL to LARGE. Impacts could be larger at previously undeveloped sites, depending on its proximity to minority and low-income populations.

8.2.4 New Nuclear Generation

Since 1997 the NRC has certified four new standard designs for nuclear power plants under 10 CFR 52, Subpart B. These designs are the 1,300 MW(e) U.S. Advanced Boiling Water Reactor (10 CFR 52, Appendix A), the 1,300 MW(e) System 80+ Design (10 CFR 52, Appendix B), the 600 MW(e) AP600 Design (10 CFR 52, Appendix C), and the 1,100 MW(e) AP1000 Design (10 CFR 52, Appendix C). One additional design is awaiting certification, and five others are undergoing pre-application reviews. All of the designs currently certified or awaiting certification are light-water reactors. Several designs in pre-application review are not light water reactors; these include the helium-cooled Pebble Bed Modular Reactor and the heavy water moderated and cooled Advanced Candu Reactor, ACR-700.

1 NRC has received several early site permit (ESP) applications, and has approved the first ESPs
2 at the Clinton site near Clinton, Illinois (ESP issued on March 15, 2007), and the Grand Gulf
3 site, in Claiborne County, Mississippi (ESP issued on March 27, 2007). In addition, NRC has
4 received an application for a construction operating license from Dominion Power for a third
5 nuclear unit at the North Anna Generating Station.
6

7 In August 2006, SNC submitted an ESP requesting approval of the VEGP site for construction
8 of two Westinghouse Electric AP1000 nuclear units. Applications for construction and operation
9 of the two units may be expected to follow should the site be approved. These applications by
10 SNC and other potential nuclear facility operators indicate continuing interest in the possibility of
11 licensing new nuclear power plants.
12

13 Given the growing concern over fossil fuel related green house gas emissions and the
14 expressed industry interest in new nuclear construction, NRC staff will evaluate new nuclear
15 generation as an alternate to renewal of the VEGP operating license. The evaluation will
16 consider locating the new nuclear facility at either the VEGP site (and terminating operations of
17 the two operating units) or at an alternate site. Impacts of continued nuclear plant operations on
18 the VEGP site, beyond the term of the current licenses, are fully evaluated in this draft SEIS
19 (see Chapter 4) and the impact levels presented herein are applicable to a new nuclear plant as
20 well. However, construction impacts associated with developing a new nuclear facility at the
21 VEGP site have not been addressed in Chapter 4 and will be considered here.
22

23 NRC staff notes that this analysis addresses the potential impacts of a reactor constructed at
24 the current VEGP site for the purposes of replacing the existing VEGP units. This analysis is
25 not meant to be indicative of the impacts one would expect from the two units SNC has
26 indicated they may possibly construct at the VEGP site, should they complete the combined
27 construction and license (COL) application process and receive approval from the NRC. During
28 that process NRC staff would initiate a separate, detailed environmental impact statement to
29 address the design-specific and site-specific impacts from those units.
30

31 NRC has summarized environmental data associated with the uranium fuel cycle in Table S-3 of
32 10 CFR 51.51. The impacts shown in Table S-3 are representative of the impacts that would be
33 associated with a replacement 1000 MW(e) nuclear power plant built to one of the certified
34 designs. As such, the impacts outlined in this table need to be adjusted to reflect impacts of two
35 AP1000 units (total output of 2,200 MW(e) for the VEGP new nuclear reactor alternative.^(f) The
36 environmental impacts associated with transporting fuel and waste to and from a light-water

(f) NRC staff notes that while Table S-3 does not estimate impacts from unregulated CO₂ emissions during the nuclear fuel cycle, Table S-3 does indicate that energy consumed during the cycle is roughly equal to that generated by a 45 conventional coal-fired plant, and thus provides a means of approximating unregulated CO₂ emissions.

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1 cooled nuclear power reactor are summarized in Table S-4 of 10 CFR 51.52. NRC staff
2 summarize findings on NEPA issues for license renewal of nuclear power plants in Table B-1 of
3 10 CFR 51 Subpart A, Appendix B.

4
5 NRC staff discusses the overall impacts of constructing and operating a new, two-unit, nuclear
6 complex at the VEGP site and at an alternate site in the following paragraphs. Table 8-6 then
7 compares the impacts associated with developing the two-unit complex at the two sites.

8 Operating phase impacts associated with two new units at the VEGP site are based on the
9 analysis presented in Chapter 4 which evaluates impacts of license renewal for the reactors
10 currently operating at VEGP. However, the NRC staff assumed that the new nuclear plant
11 would have a 40-year lifetime to allow for comparisons between a new nuclear plant and other
12 alternatives. This assumed period also coincides with the initial licensing period for a new
13 nuclear plant.

14
15 As indicated in the following paragraphs, the extent of impacts at an alternate site would heavily
16 depend on the location and characteristics of the particular site:

17
18 • Land Use

19
20 The existing facilities and infrastructure at the VEGP site would be used to the extent
21 practicable, limiting the amount of new construction that would be required. Specifically, the
22 NRC staff assumed that a replacement nuclear power plant would use the existing cooling
23 tower system, switchyard, offices, and transmission line rights-of-way. Much of the land that
24 would be used has been previously disturbed. SNC estimates that approximately 400 acres
25 of the VEGP site would be disturbed if two new nuclear plants were constructed to replace
26 the currently operating complex (SNC 2007a). While some of the area that would be
27 needed for the new facility would already be highly disturbed, it is likely that considerable
28 area currently used for tree farming or that otherwise has habitat value (including wetlands,
29 streams and open water) would be developed. Thus, the land use impacts associated with
30 constructing the new nuclear facility would be MODERATE while operation of the new plant
31 would have SMALL land use impacts.

32
33 Land-use impacts at an alternate site would be similar to siting at VEGP except for the land
34 needed for transmission lines necessary to connect to the grid, and a rail spur to allow
35 delivery of major components and fuel. Depending on the site, anywhere from tens to
36 thousands of acres may be necessary. The need to construct transmission and rail capacity
37 would likely be reduced at a previously developed industrial site, though it would likely result
38 in MODERATE to LARGE land-use impacts.

1 • Ecology

2
3 Due to the 400 acres of land disturbance associated with construction of a new nuclear
4 facility at the VEGP site the terrestrial ecological impacts are considered to be SMALL.
5 Terrestrial and aquatic ecological impacts related to plant operations would be SMALL as
6 presented in Chapter 4 of this DSEIS.

7
8 For an alternate site, there would be both on-site and off-site ecological impacts during
9 construction and operation of the new nuclear facility. Even assuming siting at a previously
10 disturbed location, the impacts could include wildlife habitat loss, reduced productivity,
11 habitat fragmentation, and a local reduction in biological diversity, depending on the degree
12 to which the site was previously disturbed and how much remediation has taken place. A
13 new nuclear plant at an alternate site would likely employ cooling towers and would
14 potentially incur aquatic impacts comparable to those of the existing VEGP units. At an
15 alternate site ecological impacts would likely be MODERATE to LARGE, due primarily to
16 impacts to terrestrial ecology. However, actual impact levels would depend on
17 characteristics of the alternate site.
18

19 **Table 8-6.** Summary of Environmental Impacts of New Nuclear Power Generation at the VEGP site and
20 at an Alternate Site Using Closed-Cycle Cooling
21

Impact Category	VEGP Site		Alternate Site	
	Impact	Comments	Impact	Comments
Land Use	MODERATE	Impacts occur as a result of disturbing up to 400 acres of existing VEGP site during construction.	MODERATE to LARGE	On-site requirements in the range of 500 to 1500 acres. Off-site transmission lines and railway potentially impact hundreds of acres.
Ecology	SMALL	Impacts are to terrestrial ecosystem as a result of land disturbance during construction.	MODERATE to LARGE	Impact depends on location and ecology of the site, surface water body used for intake and discharge, and transmission line route; potential habitat loss and fragmentation; reduced productivity and biological diversity.

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1
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Table 8-6. (cont'd)

Impact Category	VEGP Site		Alternate Site	
	Impact	Comments	Impact	Comments
Water Use and Quality—Surface water	SMALL	Impacts are expected to be comparable to existing plant.	SMALL to MODERATE	Impact would depend on the volume of water withdrawn and discharged and the characteristics of the surface water body.
Water Use and Quality—Groundwater	SMALL	The current plant uses groundwater for several services and impacts are SMALL. New plant would have comparable impacts.	SMALL to MODERATE	Impact would depend on the volume of water withdrawn, as well as characteristics of the aquifer. Groundwater would not be used for cooling system makeup water.
Air Quality	SMALL	Impacts are expected to be SMALL because construction emissions are short term and operational emissions are minor.	SMALL	Same impacts as at VEGP site.
Waste	SMALL	Waste impacts for an operating nuclear power plant are set out in 10 CFR 51, Appendix B, Table B-1. Debris would be generated and removed during construction.	SMALL	Same as at VEGP
Human Health	SMALL	Human health impacts for an operating nuclear power plant are set out in 10 CFR 51, Appendix B, Table B-1.	SMALL	Same as at VEGP site.

1
2

Table 8-6. (cont'd)

Impact Category	VEGP Site		Alternate Site	
	Impact	Comments	Impact	Comments
Socioeconomics	SMALL to MODERATE	During construction, impacts would be MODERATE, with up to 4,400 workers during the peak of the 6-year construction period. The operating work force assumed to be similar to VEGP; tax base preserved in Burke County, but may change in surrounding counties if workers don't transfer from one plant to another. Impacts during operation would be SMALL.	SMALL to LARGE	Construction impacts depend on location. Impacts at a rural location would be LARGE. Burke County would experience a loss of tax revenue while surrounding counties would lose employment, though growth in the region could offset these impacts.
Socioeconomics (Transportation)	SMALL to MODERATE	Transportation impacts from construction activities would be MODERATE. Transportation impacts of commuting plant personnel would be SMALL even if their commuting patterns differ from current plant employees.	SMALL to LARGE	Transportation impacts would be MODERATE to LARGE, primarily with construction activities. Transportation impacts of commuting plant personnel would be SMALL to MODERATE.
Aesthetics	SMALL	No new exhaust stacks or cooling towers would be needed. New containment and turbine buildings would be visible in the immediate vicinity of the plant. Visual impact at night would be mitigated by reduced use of lighting and appropriate shielding. Noise impacts would be relatively small and would be mitigated.	MODERATE to LARGE	Greatest impact is likely from new cooling towers. Also, transmission lines would have noticeable impacts. Containment and other building would also be noticeable

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Table 8-6. (cont'd)

Impact Category	VEGP Site		Alternate Site	
	Impact	Comments	Impact	Comments
Historic and Archeological Resources	SMALL	Any potential impacts could be effectively managed. Any offsite land acquired would need to be surveyed.	SMALL to MODERATE	Any undeveloped land would need to be surveyed prior to development. Impact likely smaller at previously developed site and could be effectively managed.
Environmental Justice	SMALL	Impacts on minority and low-income communities would be similar to those experienced by the general population. Some impacts on rental housing may occur during construction, though most personnel are expected to travel from nearby urban areas.	SMALL to LARGE	Impacts would vary depending on population distribution and location of the site. The loss of jobs at VEGP and tax revenue could disproportionately affect minority and low-income populations in Burke County. However, impacts to minority and low-income populations from the closure of VEGP would likely to be offset by economic growth in the region.

• Water Use and Quality

Surface Water. Should a new two-unit nuclear facility be constructed and operated at the VEGP site to replace the currently operating units, the impacts to surface waters would be expected to be SMALL. At an alternate site, plant cooling would be provided by means of a closed cycle system. The impact on nearby surface waters would depend on the volume of water needed for makeup, the discharge flow rates, and characteristics of the receiving water body. Intake from and discharge to any surface water would be regulated by the GDNR. The impacts would be SMALL to MODERATE.

Groundwater. Impacts to groundwater are expected to be SMALL if a new nuclear facility is constructed at the VEGP site and the existing facility licenses are not renewed. Groundwater use would be an option for a nuclear plant at an alternate site. However, it is

1 unlikely that a new nuclear facility would use groundwater for cooling purposes which is the
2 major water demand generated by large steam-electric stations. Groundwater withdrawals
3 at an alternate site would require permits from the State permitting authority (GDNR in the
4 case of a plant in Georgia). Overall, groundwater impacts at an alternate site would be
5 SMALL to MODERATE.

6
7 • Air Quality

8
9 Construction of a new nuclear plant at either the VEGP site or an alternate site would result
10 in fugitive dust emissions during the construction process. These impacts would be
11 intermittent and short-lived. To minimize dust generation, construction crews would use
12 applicable dust-control measures. Exhaust emissions would also come from vehicles and
13 motorized equipment used during the construction process, but these would also be of
14 limited duration. An operating nuclear plant would have minor air emissions associated with
15 diesel generators and other small-scale intermittent sources. Overall, air emissions and
16 associated impacts would be SMALL.

17
18 • Waste

19
20 The waste impacts associated with operation of a nuclear power plant are set out in Table
21 B-1 of 10 CFR 51, Subpart A, Appendix B. Construction-related debris would be generated
22 during construction activities and removed to an appropriate disposal site. Overall, waste
23 impacts would be SMALL for either the VEGP site or an alternate site.

24
25 • Human Health

26
27 Human health impacts for an operating nuclear power plant are set out in 10 CFR 51
28 Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1. Overall, human health impacts would be SMALL.

29
30 • Socioeconomics

31
32 Representative construction period and the peak work force associated with construction of
33 a new nuclear power plant at VEGP are presented in the *Draft Environmental Impact
34 Statement for an Early Site Permit (ESP) at the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Site
35 (NUREG-1872)* (NRC 2007). NRC staff assumed a construction period of 6 years and a
36 peak work force of 4,400. The NRC staff assumed that construction would take place while
37 the existing nuclear unit continues operation and would be completed by the time VEGP
38 permanently ceases operations. During construction, the communities surrounding the
39 VEGP site would experience an increase demand for rental housing and public services that
40 would have SMALL to MODERATE impacts. These impacts could be reduced by
41 construction workers commuting to the site from other parts of the Augusta area or from
42 other counties. After construction, the communities would be impacted by the loss of the

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1 construction jobs. An alternative site would experience SMALL to LARGE impacts,
2 depending on characteristics of the surrounding community and local economy.
3 The new nuclear units are assumed to have an operating work force of up to 660 workers.
4 The replacement nuclear alternative would provide new and/or additional tax revenue to
5 offset the loss of revenue associated with the decommissioning of VEGP. New employment
6 at an alternative site, as well as the region's economic growth, would also likely offset any
7 loss of VEGP jobs. Socioeconomic impacts for a replacement nuclear alternative
8 constructed at VEGP would be SMALL; the socioeconomic impacts would be noticeable, but
9 would be unlikely to destabilize the area. In comparison, socioeconomic impacts for a
10 replacement nuclear alternative at a rural site could be LARGE.

11

- 12 • Socioeconomic (Transportation)

13
14 During the 6-year construction period, up to 4,400 construction workers would commute to
15 the VEGP site in addition to the 890 workers at VEGP. The addition of the construction
16 workers, equipment, and material would increase traffic loads on existing roads around the
17 plant. Such impacts would be MODERATE. Transportation impacts related to commuting
18 of plant operating personnel would be similar to current impacts associated with operation of
19 VEGP and would be SMALL.

20
21 Construction of a replacement nuclear power plant at an alternate site would relocate some
22 socioeconomic impacts, but would not eliminate them. The communities around the VEGP
23 site would still experience the impact of operational job loss, though this could be offset by
24 economic growth in the region. The communities around the new site would have to absorb
25 the impacts of a large, temporary work force (up to 4,400 workers at the peak of
26 construction) and a permanent work force of approximately 660 workers. In the GEIS (NRC
27 1996), the NRC staff indicated that socioeconomic impacts at a rural site would be larger
28 than at an urban site because more of the peak construction work force would need to move
29 to the area to work. The VEGP site is within commuting distance of the Augusta urban area.
30 Transportation-related impacts associated with commuting construction workers at an
31 alternate site are site dependent, but would be MODERATE to LARGE. These may be
32 mitigated somewhat if the new nuclear power plant would be built on a previously developed
33 site nearer to large population centers. Transportation impacts related to commuting of
34 plant operating personnel at an alternate site would also be site dependent, but would be
35 characterized as SMALL to MODERATE.

36

- 37 • Aesthetics

38
39 The containment building for a replacement nuclear power plant sited at VEGP, existing
40 cooling tower, and as other associated buildings would be visible in daylight hours over
41 many miles, though extensive forestation on site may help screen these structures. The

1 replacement nuclear unit may be visible at night because of outside lighting. Visual impacts
2 could be mitigated by landscaping and selecting a color for buildings that is consistent with
3 the environment. Visual impact at night could be mitigated by reduced use of lighting and
4 appropriate use of shielding. No exhaust stacks would be needed. Visual impacts would
5 likely be SMALL.

6
7 Noise impacts from a new nuclear plant would be similar to those from the existing VEGP
8 units. Given the land area available around the plant, and potential noise mitigation
9 measures, such as reduced use of outside loudspeakers, the impact of noise would be
10 SMALL.

11
12 At an alternate site, there would be an aesthetic impact from the buildings, cooling towers,
13 and the plume associated with the cooling tower. There would also be a significant
14 aesthetic impact associated with construction of a new transmission line to connect to other
15 lines to enable delivery of electricity. Noise and light from the plant would be detectable
16 offsite. The impact of noise and light would be mitigated if the plant is located in an
17 industrial area adjacent to other power plants or industrial land uses. Overall the aesthetic
18 impacts associated with locating at an alternative site would be categorized as MODERATE
19 to LARGE, depending on site characteristics. The greatest contributor to this categorization
20 would be the aesthetic impact of the cooling towers and transmission lines.

21
22 • Historic and Archaeological Resources

23
24 At the VEGP site, a cultural resource inventory would likely be needed for any onsite and
25 offsite property that has not been previously surveyed. Any land acquired to support the
26 new plant would also need an inventory of field cultural resources, identification and
27 recording of existing historic and archaeological resources, and possible mitigation of
28 adverse effects from subsequent ground-disturbing actions related to physical expansion of
29 the plant site. Impacts are expected to be SMALL.

30
31 Before beginning construction at an alternate site, studies would be needed to identify,
32 evaluate, and address mitigation of the potential impacts of new plant construction on
33 cultural resources. Studies would be needed for all areas of potential disturbance at the
34 proposed plant site and along associated corridors where new construction would occur
35 (e.g., roads, transmission corridors, rail lines, or other rights-of-way). Historic and
36 archaeological resource impacts can generally be effectively managed. Effects at an
37 undeveloped site would be SMALL to MODERATE.

38
39 • Environmental Justice

40
41 No environmental impacts were identified that would result in disproportionately high and
42 adverse environmental impacts on minority and low-income populations if a replacement

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1 nuclear plant were built at the VEGP site. Some impacts on housing availability and lease
2 prices during construction might occur, and this could disproportionately affect the minority
3 and low-income populations.

4
5 Impacts on minority and low-income populations due to the shutdown of VEGP would
6 depend on the number of jobs and the amount of tax revenue lost to the communities
7 surrounding the power plant. Closure of VEGP would reduce the overall number of jobs and
8 tax revenue generated in the region that were directly and indirectly attributed to plant
9 operations. However, given the economic growth of Columbia County and the Augusta
10 area, it is likely that these losses would be replaced by the development of new businesses
11 and new sources of tax revenue in the region. Since SNC's tax payments represent a large
12 percentage of Burke County's total annual property tax revenue, it is likely that social
13 services in the county would be seriously affected by the shutdown of VEGP. Therefore, the
14 loss of jobs and tax revenue from the shutdown of VEGP could disproportionately affect
15 minority and low-income populations in Burke County.

16
17 The environmental effect of plant shutdown would also reduce the amount of operational
18 impacts on the environment. Therefore, minority and low-income populations in the vicinity
19 of VEGP would not likely experience any disproportionately high and adverse environmental
20 impacts from the shutdown of VEGP.

21
22 Impacts at an alternate site would depend upon the site chosen and population distribution,
23 and would likely be SMALL to LARGE.

24 25 **8.2.5 Conservation**

26
27 In this section, NRC staff evaluates conservation^(g) as an alternative to license renewal.
28 According to the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) State Energy
29 Efficiency Scorecard for 2006, Georgia ranks 38th in the country in terms of implementation of
30 energy efficiency programs (Eldridge et al. 2006) suggesting there is considerable opportunity
31 for enhancing the State's conservation efforts.

32
33 The Georgia Public Service Commission (GPSC) is currently taking a number of steps to
34 balance the State's energy markets through new energy efficiency practices. One such step is
35 requiring that State-regulated utilities, such as the Georgia Power Company (GPC), submit an
36 Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) for its approval every three years. The IRP demonstrates the
37 economic, environmental, and other benefits of the utility's plans to, among other things,

(g) NRC staff notes that conservation typically refers to all programs that reduce energy consumption, while energy efficiency refers to programs that reduce consumption without reducing services. For this section, NRC staff will use the terms interchangeably.

1 improve energy efficiency, operate alternative sources of energy, and expand Demand Side
2 Management (DSM). GPC submitted its latest IRP on January 31, 2007 and the GPSC
3 approved it by Order dated July 12, 2007 (GPSC 2007). Beyond approving the IRP, the Order
4 requires that GPC expand its DSM programs (including conservation programs) beyond those
5 proposed in the IRP to "capture more of the economic and achievable potential to improve end-
6 use energy efficiency."
7

8 The GPC IRP proposed five new DSM pilot programs: the Power Credit Multifamily Program,
9 the Programmable Thermostat with Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program, the
10 Compact Fluorescent Light Bulb Program, the Electric Water Heater Insulation Program, and
11 the Commercial Tax Incentive Program. The GPSC found that each of the five pilot programs
12 proposed by the GPC should be approved on a pilot basis and that the GPC shall begin
13 implementation of each of these five programs no later than January 1, 2008 (GPSC 2007). In
14 addition to the five pilot programs, the GPSC is also requiring that the GPC expand several
15 other DSM programs including a weatherization assistance funding program, programs that
16 encourage the use of energy efficient appliances, commercial lighting tax incentives programs,
17 and commercial and residential building tax incentive programs.
18

19 In a report prepared for the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority, ICF Consulting (ICF
20 2005a) discusses the potential to cost effectively increase energy efficiency in the State if the
21 appropriate programs and policies were to be implemented. The intent of the report is to
22 identify latent energy efficiency potential that can be readily captured through policy
23 interventions over a five to ten year period.
24

25 In their report, ICF uses a series of mathematical models to estimate the energy savings that
26 that could realistically be attained by efficiency-related policy and program interventions. The
27 firm modeled three intervention scenarios identified as Minimally Aggressive, Moderately
28 Aggressive, and Very Aggressive. For each scenario an estimate was generated of the
29 reduction in peak demand and electric sales that could be achieved by sector (residential,
30 commercial, and industrial). In terms of peak energy demand, ICF concluded that the two
31 primary contributors were air conditioning and lighting which accounted for 65 percent of the
32 peak.
33

34 ICF estimates of potential reductions in peak demand in the fifth year following implementation
35 of the policy and program interventions for the three scenarios are 447 MW(e), 1,149 MW(e),
36 and 1,608 MW(e). ICP proposes options for reaching these targets in a companion report that
37 describes investment programs and policies that would be needed to support a state-wide
38 conservation program (ICF 2005b).
39

40 ICF recommends a portfolio of targeted investment programs that could be implemented to
41 capture at least a substantial portion of the potential reduction in peak demand (ICP 2005b).
42 Target areas of the portfolio include:

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- 1 • Residential lighting and appliances
- 2 • Small commercial and industrial (hard-to-reach) users
- 3 • New commercial and industrial construction
- 4 • Custom incentives for commercial and industrial users
- 5 • Prescriptive rebates for commercial and industrial users

6
7 The ICF report also recommends State-sponsored direct intervention policies which produce
8 significant energy savings by eliminating the least efficient technologies and practices from the
9 market. Direct intervention policies target building codes, appliance/equipment efficiency
10 standards, and tax credits to set an efficiency floor. The ICF report also recommends the use of
11 State-sponsored enabling policies to stimulate consumer investment in energy saving
12 measures.

13
14 While it is not clear as to the extent to which GPSC, in their order to GPC mandating expansion
15 of the utility's demand side management programs, has embraced the analysis and results of
16 the ICF study, the principal requirements imposed on GPC by the GPSC Order directly address
17 the principal contributors to peak demand established by ICF: lighting and air conditioning.
18 Therefore, it appears reasonable to assume that the policies supported by GPSC in their Order
19 will, as they are implemented, capture to some extent the energy efficiency benefits estimated
20 by ICF.

21
22 In the absence of quantifiable peak demand reductions that will result from the GPSC Order, the
23 lack of documented commitment to the ICF report recommendations, and the absence of
24 quantifiable program achievements to date, NRC staff will not evaluate conservation or
25 efficiency programs as replacement for the full output of the VEPG. NRC staff will, however,
26 consider conservation as part of a combined alternative.

27
28 For the purpose of the analysis presented in Section 8.2.8 (Combination of Alternative), it is
29 assumed that Georgia meets the Moderately Aggressive conservation goal of 1,149 MW(e)
30 before the VEPG operating licenses expire. However, GPC anticipates taking approximately
31 600 MW(e) base load off line with the retirement of the McDonough Units 1 and 2 coal-fired
32 plants resulting in a net conservation of about 550 MW(e) (GPSC 2007). It is further assumed
33 that conservation efforts during the license renewal period can result in an additional 450 MW(e)
34 demand reduction (the approximate difference in the Moderately Aggressive and Very
35 Aggressive savings estimates). Therefore the combined alternative will include 1,000 MW(e)
36 from conservation.

37 38 **8.2.6 Purchased Electrical Power**

39
40 Georgia imported approximately 57.9 gigawatt-hours of electricity in 2004 (EIA 2007c) and
41 essentially none of this power, as would be expected, came from international sources.

1 According to SNC (Vogtle Environmental Report, 2007) some of the imported power may be the
2 result of existing purchase contracts which would prevent it from being used to replace VEGP.
3

4 Additionally, SNC has entered into long term purchase contracts with several entities to provide
5 firm capacity and energy. SNC views these contracts as part of their current and future capacity
6 and does not consider those purchases to be applicable to replacement of VEGP (Vogtle
7 Environmental Report, 2007). In their July 12, 2007 Order, the GPSC mandates that GPC issue
8 a request for proposal for base load resources that have been identified in the utility's
9 Integrated Resource Plan, as being needed to meet future demand. Thus, based on the
10 language of the Order, resources that would be so purchased would not be intended to replace
11 the output of VEGP.
12

13 While it is expected that GPC could purchase additional capacity and energy beyond that
14 already being planned, the NRC staff also considers it likely that the technologies that would be
15 used to generate the purchased power would be one of those that have already been evaluated
16 in this report. These include pulverized coal, gas-fired combined cycle systems, and IGCC
17 facilities, among others. Impacts of those technologies have been shown to exceed the impacts
18 of license renewal. Thus, the NRC staff does not view purchasing power to be an
19 environmentally preferable alternative.
20

21 **8.2.7 Other Alternatives**

22
23 Other generation technologies NRC staff considered but determined to be individually
24 inadequate to serve as alternatives to VEGP are discussed in the following paragraphs.
25

26 **8.2.7.1 Oil-Fired Generation**

27
28 EIA projects that oil-fired plants will account for very little of the new generation capacity in the
29 United States during the 2007 to 2030 time period, and overall oil consumption for electricity
30 generation will decrease because of higher fuel costs and lower efficiencies (DOE/EIA 2007a).
31 Oil-fired generation is more expensive to operate than nuclear or coal-fired plants, though it is
32 less expensive than either to construct. Future increases in oil prices are expected to make oil-
33 fired generation increasingly more expensive than coal-fired generation. The high cost of oil
34 has prompted a steady decline for use in electricity generation. For these reasons, oil-fired
35 generation will not be evaluated as an alternative to VEGP license renewal.
36

37 **8.2.7.2 Wind Power**

38
39 Power generation from wind on an industrial scale is a relatively recent development. The first
40 "modern" commercial wind farm was constructed in California in 1981 of individual units capable
41 of producing 50 kilowatts (kW). As of 2007, land-based wind turbines with generating capacities

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1 up to 2.5 MW, and marine-based (offshore) wind turbines up to 5.0 MW, were commercially
2 available (Georgia Institute of Technology, Southern Company 2007). The largest single
3 coastal wind-farm installation is the Arklow wind farm under construction off Ireland's eastern
4 coast; it will have 200 wind turbines with a total nominal capacity of 520 MWe. In the US, the
5 Cape Wind Energy Project, planned for coastal Massachusetts, will, if constructed, have a
6 maximum electrical output of 468 MWe and an average output of 182 MWe (Cape Wind Energy
7 Project, DEIS, DOI/MMS, January 2008).

8
9 Wind resources in Georgia are generally concentrated off the state's Atlantic coast. The vast
10 majority of the state is a class one (poor) wind power region, with limited areas of class two and
11 three (marginal and fair) wind power regions found in the state's northern areas and near the
12 Atlantic coast. Off the Atlantic coast, however, large swaths of class 4 and 5 (good to excellent)
13 wind power regions are available. A smaller area of wind power region class 6 (outstanding) is
14 also available, but at great distance (more than 45 miles) from the coastline (Georgia Wind
15 Working Group 2007).

16
17 Wind power, by itself, has not historically been considered suitable for large base-load capacity,
18 due to the high degree of variability associated with wind availability at any given installation.
19 Annual capacity factors of individual wind plants are relatively low (on the order of 30 to 40
20 percent), compared to other generation technologies, and the potential for no generation
21 capacity whatsoever at any given time is incompatible with base-load requirements. However,
22 as the installed base of wind power facilities increases, the question of base-load capacity from
23 wind is being reevaluated in terms of the probability of minimum continuous generating capacity
24 available from networks of multiple wind farms located in different wind regimes (Auswind
25 2007).

26
27 The ratio of base-load capacity to total generating capacity from sufficiently dispersed wind
28 farms has been described as being in the range of one-third to one-fifth (Diesendorf 2007), with
29 the precise ratio dependent upon the aggregate wind characteristics of the entire wind farm
30 network. This range is theoretical, however; many utilities assign no base-load capacity to wind
31 power, and utilities that do accept wind as base-load capacity typically do so at even lower
32 ratios (on the order of one-seventh) than the literature suggests may be possible.

33
34 Assuming that a one-third ratio of total capacity to base-load capacity ultimately proves feasible,
35 then replacing VEGP's safe summertime output of 2,301 MW with widely dispersed wind farm
36 installations would require a total capacity in the range of 6,900 MW. If achieved entirely with 5
37 MWe, offshore units, 1,380 wind turbines would be required to replace VEGP's capacity. Such
38 an installation would be on the order of seven times the size of any existing installation, and is
39 significantly beyond the scale of wind farm installations attempted to date. As such, it is not
40 considered feasible at this time.

1 Given limitations on potential wind power sites, as well as relatively low capacity factors, NRC
2 staff does not consider wind power to be a suitable stand-alone alternative to VEGP license
3 renewal. NRC staff does, however, does recognize that Georgia likely has utility-scale wind
4 resources available, and that supplementing wind power installations with more conventional
5 and readily dispatchable power sources (such as gas-fired turbines) alters the estimation of
6 what might be considered as base-load capacity from the combined system. Because short- to
7 medium-term wind forecasting can be conducted with a high degree of confidence, it is possible
8 to predict in advance when shortfalls of base-load capacity solely from wind may occur, and to
9 arrange for replacement capacity from more traditional peak-load technologies. As such, NRC
10 will include wind power (primarily situated along Georgia's coast line) in a combination
11 alternative addressed in Section 8.2.8.

12 13 **8.2.7.3 Solar Power**

14
15 Solar technologies, both thermal and photovoltaic, use the sun's energy to produce electricity
16 without producing fuel wastes, air pollution, or greenhouse gases.

17
18 In thermal solar power plants sunlight is first concentrated using mirrors. The concentrated light
19 is directed at a heat collector that contains a heat transfer fluid that powers an engine or steam
20 turbine. Because thermal solar power plants can use only the direct component of the sunlight
21 they appear to be unsuitable in areas with high humidity and frequent cloud cover, both of which
22 result in scattering. Moreover, an annual average solar radiation, at ground level, of 6.0 or more
23 kilowatt-hours per square meter per day is required for viable solar power generation (Leitner
24 2002). Most of the state of Georgia, including the VEGP site, receives an average of 4 to 4.5
25 kWh of direct solar radiation per square meter per day (DOE 2007). As a result of the
26 inadequate levels of incident radiation and Georgia weather conditions, the NRC staff will not
27 evaluate thermal solar power as an alternative to license renewal of VEGP.

28
29 Photovoltaic systems convert sunlight directly into electricity. Photovoltaic collectors, which are
30 simply flat panels that can be mounted on a roof or on the ground, are typically fixed in a tilted
31 position correlated to the latitude of the location. This allows the collector to best capture the
32 sun. These collectors can use both the direct solar rays and reflected light that comes through
33 a cloud or off the ground. Because they use all available sunlight, flat-plate collectors are the
34 best choice for many northern states with relatively low levels of solar radiation or for
35 southeastern states with high humidity and frequent cloud cover. Currently, the VEGP site
36 receives an average of 5 to 5.5 kWh of solar radiation (direct and diffusive) per square meter
37 per day, as does much of Georgia (DOE 2007). While weather conditions in Georgia suggest
38 that photovoltaic cells would be the more likely solar alternate to replace VEGP, land required
39 for such systems are about four acres per MW. Assuming that photovoltaic panels can cover 50
40 percent of the land area on which they are deployed, a 2,301 MW(e) photovoltaic power plant
41 would encompass an area of about 18,400 acres. Even assuming a percentage of panels could

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1 be mounted on existing structures (rooftops, etc.), the impact of developing such an extensive
2 site would be significant in terms of ecological and aesthetic considerations.

3
4 In the GEIS, the NRC staff also noted that solar power is intermittent; therefore, additional
5 collectors would be necessary to account for shading. In addition, a solar powered alternative
6 would require energy storage or a backup power supply to provide electric power at night. Solar
7 power is currently significantly more costly than most other alternatives for a given amount of
8 capacity, and as adding energy storage technologies only increases the cost of solar power,
9 NRC staff will not evaluate solar power further as an alternative to license renewal of VEGP.

10 11 **8.2.7.4 Hydropower**

12
13 The Idaho National Laboratory (INL) estimates that Georgia has 275.3 MW of technically
14 available, undeveloped hydroelectric resources (INL 1998). This amount occurs entirely in
15 installations of 100 MW or less. This potential is 88 percent less than VEGP's capacity, and
16 thus is insufficient to serve as an alternative to license renewal. As such, hydropower would not
17 be considered as a feasible alternative to VEGP license renewal at this time.

18
19 However, as part of the DOE Hydropower Program, DOE (in conjunction with several federal,
20 private, and public entities) is currently conducting further research and development to improve
21 the overall benefits of hydropower and to provide cost-competitive technologies that enable the
22 development of new hydropower capacity. This includes new resource assessments of the
23 undeveloped conventional hydropower potential in each state (DOE 2007).

24 25 **8.2.7.5 Geothermal**

26 Geothermal resources include a wide variety of heat sources from the earth. This resource
27 includes both hydrothermal energy sources and the earth's deeper, stored thermal energy (MIT,
28 2006). Unfortunately, conventional hydrothermal fluid resources are limited in terms of their
29 location, in that the most intense and, therefore, the most valuable of these resources are
30 located in the western continental United States, Alaska, and Hawaii (DOE EERE, 2006).

31
32 In an effort to evaluate the future of geothermal energy, an MIT-led 18-member interdisciplinary
33 panel was assembled in September 2005 (MIT, 2006). The panel evaluated the impact of
34 Enhanced Geothermal Systems (EGS)- engineered reservoirs created to extract economical
35 amounts of heat from low permeability geothermal resources-and provided expertise on
36 resource characterization and assessment, drilling, reservoir stimulation, and economic
37 analyses. The panel found that there is great potential for energy recovery using technologies
38 for sustainable heat-mining from large volumes of accessible hot rock, available anywhere in the
39 United States. The installed capacity of EGS could reach 100,000 MWe within 50 years (MIT,
40 2006), however, at the present time these enhanced systems require further funding, research
41 and development.

8.2.7.6 Wood Waste and Other Biomass Derived Fuels

DOE notes that Georgia has excellent biomass resource potential (DOE 2007). In particular, Georgia has the largest area of commercially-forested land in the United States at 24.2 million acres, and already has significant infrastructure for timber harvesting in place (GDED 2007).

An analysis conducted by the Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development at the University of Georgia found that there are approximately 18.3 million tons of biomass fuels available in Georgia on an annual basis, and that these fuels, if fully converted to electricity using the applicable best available technologies (without consideration of cost), could supply as much as 11.8 percent of Georgia's 2006 electric demand (Shumaker, George A., Audrey Luke-Morgan, Tommie Shepherd and John C. McKissick. 2007. "The Economic Feasibility of Using Georgia Biomass for Electrical Energy Production." University of Georgia Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development: Athens, Georgia (Shumaker 2007). While the study did not present conversion efficiencies for each of the 14 different types of biomass fuels analyzed, the average conversion efficiency for all 18.3 million tons of potentially available biomass fuel was approximately 885 kWh/ton. At that conversion efficiency, it is likely that only a limited quantity of electricity could be generated on an annual basis at a cost competitive with coal-fired generation (Shumaker 2007). However, if consideration is given to fuels with generating costs up to 25% higher than a coal-fired alternative (but still less than that of natural gas- or petroleum-fired alternatives), it is estimated that considerable biomass derived energy could be generated cost effectively.

However, such estimates of biomass capacity contain substantial uncertainty. Production of biomass-source electricity is still a nascent industry, and is not believed to be feasible on an industrial scale at this time (Shumaker 2007). Also, potential availability does not mean these resources would actually be available at the prices indicated or that resources would be free of contamination. Some of these waste streams already have reuse value, and their acquisition on a scale necessary to compensate for significant portions of the VEGP output is likely to significantly alter their market value (Walsh et al. 1999). The consequence would be higher prices for electric generation feedstock as well as a need to identify replacements for waste streams diverted to electric generation that are currently used for other purposes. Additionally, some feedstock may prove unsustainable to harvest on a regular basis.

While the GEIS notes that wood-waste plants are able to operate in a base load duty cycle, the larger wood-waste power plants have capacities in the range of 50 MW(e). Thus, 46 wood waste plants may be necessary to replace the capacity of VEGP, given the current state of the technology. Estimates in the GEIS suggest that the overall level of construction impact per MW of installed capacity would be approximately the same as that for a coal-fired plant, although facilities using wood waste for fuel would be built at smaller scales. Like coal-fired plants, wood-waste plants require large areas for fuel storage and processing and involve use of similar combustion equipment.

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1 It is the NRC Staff's view that Georgia has utility-scale wood waste resources, but given
2 uncertainties in supply estimates, as well as the relatively large number of small units necessary
3 to replace VEGP, the NRC staff does not believe wood waste is a viable energy alternative to
4 renewal of the VEGP operating license. However, NRC staff will include wood waste facilities in
5 a combination alternative addressed in Section 8.2.8.

6 7 **8.2.7.7 Municipal Solid Waste**

8
9 In the United States, in 2006, 251.3 million tons of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) was generated
10 of which 32.5 percent was recycled, 55 percent was discarded to landfills or handled by other
11 disposal methods and only 12.5 percent was combusted with energy recovery (EPA OSWER
12 2007).

13
14 The practice of incinerating municipal refuse and, in the process, extracting useable energy, has
15 increased over the last 50 years (essentially no such facilities existed in the US in 1960). This
16 has occurred for two principal reasons: incineration reduces the volume of material that needs
17 to land filled and the electricity that can be generated in the process avoids the cost of
18 increasingly expensive fossil fuels. Currently there are approximately 89 waste-to-energy plants
19 operating in the United States. These plants generate approximately 2,500 MW(e), or about 0.3
20 percent of total national power generation (EPA OSWER 2003).

21
22 Estimates in the GEIS suggest that the overall level of construction impact from a MSW
23 combustion facility would be approximately the same as that for a coal-fired plant. Additionally,
24 waste-fired plants have operational impacts on the aquatic environment, air, and waste
25 disposal. MSW power plants require a similar amount of water per unit of electricity generated
26 and combustion of MSW generates atmospheric emissions of NO₂, SO₂, particulates, and trace
27 amounts of toxic pollutants.

28
29 The principal by-product of MSW combustion is ash, which can contain toxic contaminants that
30 were present in the initial waste. Under current regulations, MSW ash must be sampled and
31 analyzed regularly to determine whether it is hazardous or not, and if hazardous must be
32 properly managed. Non-hazardous ash can be recycled for use in projects such as road
33 construction or disposed in a landfill.

34
35 Although combustion of MSW has many of the same environmental impacts as combustion of
36 fossil fuels, MSW is recognized as a renewable energy source since the material would
37 otherwise be sent to landfills. However, economic factors, regulatory issues, and increasing
38 community opposition to MSW combustion at the local level, have limited construction of new
39 facilities. There is some possibility that with increasing energy prices municipal waste
40 combustion may once again become attractive.

1 Given the relatively small scale of MSW plants from an electric output perspective, and the
2 complex regulatory environment that would be faced by any proposal to site such facilities, the
3 NRC staff does not consider MSW combustion to be a feasible alternative to VEGP license
4 renewal and will not consider it further in this draft SEIS.

6 **8.2.7.8 Fuel Cells**

7
8 Fuel cells work without combustion and therefore do not present the environmental side effects
9 of combustion processes. In a fuel cell, power is produced electrochemically by passing
10 hydrogen over an anode and air (or oxygen) over a cathode and separating the two by an
11 electrolyte. Hydrogen can be extracted from fuels that contain hydrocarbons such as natural
12 gas, methane, coal-based gas, methanol, ethanol, gasoline, biomass and landfill gas. It can
13 also be produced from water using renewable solar, wind, hydro or geothermal energy. If pure
14 hydrogen is used no discernible pollutants are produced. The principal by-products would be
15 water and heat. If hydrocarbon fuels are used, carbon dioxide is also a by-product. However,
16 because, in a fuel cell, fuel is converted directly into electricity without going through an
17 intermediate combustion step the emission of carbon dioxide is much less than that from
18 conventional fossil fueled plants. Direct conversion to electricity also results in fuel cells having
19 high efficiencies. According to the DOE, the electrical efficiency of fuel cells is up to 60 percent
20 and higher when by-product heat is utilized. This is approximately double the efficiency of
21 traditional combustion technologies that have efficiencies of 33 to 35 percent (DOE 2006).

22
23 Land requirements for fuel cells are relatively small in comparison to those of renewable
24 technologies. For example the dimensions of the DFC 3000 fuel cell manufactured by Fuel Cell
25 Energy with an output of 2,400 kW are 60 x 105 feet. Therefore, a 2,301 MW(e) fuel cell plant
26 requires about 139 acres of land area for installation of a fuel cell system. Even assuming 50
27 percent additional land for transmission systems, parking, administration, etc., the required area
28 is 278 acres or less than half that for a comparable nuclear alternate.

29
30 Fuel cell technology has many advantages. It produces pollution free energy. The fuel cells are
31 quiet, reliable, safe and easy to maintain. However, the materials and manufacturing costs
32 associated with catalysts, bipolar plates, membranes, and gas diffusion layers are extremely
33 expensive. Installed capital cost, in 2010, is predicted to be in the range of 5,466 dollars per
34 KW (DOE/EIA 2007a). This is too high to compete with conventional power plants. For the
35 stationary fuel cells systems, a price point of 400 to 750 dollars per KW is considered necessary
36 for widespread commercialization. Also, to be considered a viable technology for stationary
37 power plants the durability of fuel cell systems would have to be increased to the 40,000 hour
38 range.

39
40 Even though portable and stationary fuel cells are being used for backup power, at the present
41 time, fuel cells are not economically or technologically competitive with other alternatives for

1 base load generation. While it may be possible to use a distributed array of fuel cells to provide
2 an alternate to VEGP, it would be prohibitive to do so at current costs.

3 4 **8.2.7.9 Delayed Retirement**

5
6 Retirement plans are addressed in the GPC IRP and are reviewed by the GPSC in their Order
7 dated July 12, 2007. In their IRP, the utility designated two units for retirement, Units 1 and 2 at
8 Plant McDonough. A decision approving retirement of these two units has been postponed by
9 the Commission to a future proceeding. The two units are coal fired, have been operating since
10 1963 and 1964, and each have generator nameplate ratings of 299 MW(e). Apparently, it is
11 GPC's plan to replace these units with a larger natural gas-fired facility at the same site. Given
12 that no other retirement options are considered by the GPSC, the NRC staff concludes that
13 delay of planned retirements would not be a viable alternate to renewal of the VEGP license.
14

15 **8.2.8 Combination of Alternatives**

16
17 Even though individual alternatives to license renewal might not be sufficient on their own to
18 replace the 2,464 MW(e) total capacity of the two VEGP units due to the lack of cost-
19 effectiveness or availability, it is conceivable that a combination of alternatives might be
20 sufficient.
21

22 There are many possible combinations of alternatives that could be considered to replace the
23 VEGP. One possible combination of alternatives examined in this section consists of a 800
24 MW(e) of combined-cycle natural gas-fired plant, 500 MW(e) of purchased power, a net 1,000
25 MW(e) from current and future conservation programs, and about 200 MW(e) from a
26 combination of wood-fired plants and wind resources. These resources would provide an
27 alternative that roughly approximates the amount of power produced by VEGP Units 1 and 2.
28

29 Siting an 800 MW(e) gas-fired unit with closed-cycle cooling at the VEGP site would likely have
30 SMALL ecological impacts and socioeconomic impacts. The potential environmental impacts of
31 the construction and operation of the gas-fired plant are provided in Table 8-5.
32

33 Participating in 1,600 MW(e) of energy conservation programs (1,000 MW[e] net), as described
34 in Section 8.2.5, would have overall SMALL impacts. Purchasing 500 MW(e) from other
35 sources would also have a SMALL overall impact. As such, these two components of the
36 combined alternative are not included in the summary of environmental impacts in Table 8-7.
37

38 The GEIS indicates that wood-fired plants would serve base load capacity, but that they tend to
39 operate at low efficiencies and are economic only when feedstocks are very inexpensive. In
40 addition, the GEIS notes that gathering fuel for wood-fired plants can have significant
41 environmental impacts. However, NRC staff believes that the operation of 100 to 200 MW(e) of

1 wood-fired generation would have SMALL impacts especially if the plants were widely
2 distributed and feedstocks were primarily pre-existing waste streams. Construction impacts of
3 the wood-fired plants would be SMALL to MODERATE depending on plant cooling
4 configurations and plant locations. These impacts would be mitigated by locating plants on
5 previously disturbed land near other industrial applications, including paper/pulp mills or other
6 forest-products operations.

7
8 NRC staff notes that Georgia's coastal areas provide significant wind resources for the
9 development of substantial wind power generation and that large scale facilities are being
10 planned and constructed at other offshore locations. A 100 to 200 MW(e) peak capacity wind
11 installation using 5 MWe turbines (a capacity that is now becoming available) would entail
12 placing 20 to 40 wind turbines off coastal Georgia. A wind installation capable of delivering 100
13 to 200 MWe on average would require placing approximately 52 to 104 turbines (MMS 2008).
14 The principal environmental impacts of such an installation would be those to aquatic ecological
15 resources and possibly aesthetic impacts as has been the case at other proposed coastal
16 locations. Ecological impacts would occur during the construction phase and could be managed
17 by choice of construction methods (for example, avoiding particularly sensitive habitats).
18 Aesthetic impacts would occur during operation of the wind installation and would depend on its
19 distance from the shore and on its orientation in regard to shoreline communities. The NRC
20 staff estimates that the construction and operational impacts of the facility could be managed so
21 as to be no greater than MODERATE.

22
23 The combined potential environmental impacts of the construction and operation of the wood-
24 fires plants and the off-shore wind farm are summarized in Table 8-7.

25
26 Overall, the impacts of this combination of alternatives would be MODERATE as a result of the
27 air emissions associated with the gas-fired portion of the alternative, the loss of permanent jobs
28 and tax revenues in Burke County, and the potential aesthetic impacts of the coastal wind
29 installation.

Environmental Impacts of License Renewal

1
2

Table 8-7. Summary of Environmental Impacts of a Combination of Alternative

Impact Category	800MW(e) Gas-fired VEGP Site (Closed-cycle Cooling)		Other Alternatives at Off-site Locations	
	Impact	Comments	Impact	Comments
Land Use	SMALL to MODERATE	Impacts of construction of the natural gas plant on the VEGP site would not result in the significant use of undisturbed areas. Additional impact potentially affecting 60 acres for construction of gas pipeline.	SMALL	Impacts would depend on the site selection for the wood-fired plants.
Ecology	SMALL	See Table 8-5.	SMALL to MODERATE	Impacts would depend on the site selection for the wood-fired plants and the off-shore wind farm construction methods.
Water Use and Quality—Surface water	SMALL	See Table 8-5.	SMALL	Impacts would be minor because of the small total output and possible multiple locations of the wood-fired plants. Off-shore wind farm impacts would also be minor.
Water Use and Quality—Groundwater	SMALL	See Table 8-5.	SMALL	Impacts would be minor because of the small total output and possible multiple locations of the wood-fired plants. An off-shore wind farm would not impact groundwater resources.
Air Quality	MODERATE	Table 8-5 emissions reduced by a factor of 3 based on plant size reduction.	SMALL	Air emissions of the small wood-fired plants would be minor considering their size and possible multiple locations. An off-shore wind farm would not impact on air quality.

1
2

Table 8-7. (cont'd)

Impact Category	800MW(e) Gas-fired VEGP Site		Other Alternatives at Off-site Locations	
	Impact	Comments	Impact	Comments
Waste	SMALL	See Table 8-5.	SMALL	The overall power output from the other alternatives would not result in significant waste volumes.
Human Health	SMALL	See Table 8-5.	SMALL	The overall power output from the other alternatives would not result in significant waste volumes.
Socioeconomics	SMALL	Impacts could occur as a result of the decrease in on-site employment from 862 to 300. Tax base would be preserved. Impacts during operation would be SMALL.	SMALL	Small plant sizes, possible multiple locations, and off-shore construction.
Socioeconomics (Transportation)	SMALL to MODERATE	See Table 8-5.	SMALL	Transportation impacts would be SMALL because of small plant sizes, possible multiple locations, and off-shore construction. Minor impacts of commuting plant personnel.
Aesthetics	SMALL	See Table 8-5.	MODERATE	MODERATE visual and noise impacts from new off-shore wind turbines, depending on the location. Limited impact from wood-fired plants.
Historic and Archeological Resources	SMALL	See Table 8-5	SMALL	Small plant sizes, possible multiple locations, and off-shore construction.

Table 8-7. (cont'd)

Impact Category	800MW(e) Gas-fired VEGP Site		Other Alternatives at Off-site Locations	
	Impact	Comments	Impact	Comments
Environmental Justice	SMALL	Impacts on minority and low-income populations would be similar to those experienced by the general population in the region. Loss of jobs at VEGP may disproportionately affect minority and low-income populations in Burke County.	SMALL	Small plant sizes, possible multiple locations, and off-shore construction.

8.3 Summary of Alternatives Considered

In this DSEIS the NRC staff has considered alternative actions to license renewal of the VEGP plants including the no-action alternative (discussed in Section 8.1), new generation or energy conservation alternatives (coal-fired supercritical and IGCC generation, natural gas, nuclear, and conservation alternatives discussed in Sections 8.2.1 through 8.2.5, respectively), purchased electrical power (discussed in Section 8.2.6), alternative technologies (discussed in Section 8.2.7), and a combination of alternatives (discussed in Section 8.2.8).

As established in the GEIS, the need for power from VEGP is assumed by NRC in the license renewal process. Should NRC not renew VEGP's licenses, this amount of generating capacity or load reduction would have to come from an alternative to license renewal.

Furthermore, even if NRC renews the operating license, SNC could elect to meet its capacity and energy needs with an alternative other than continued VEGP operation. Decisions about which alternative to implement, regardless of whether or not NRC renews the VEGP operating license, are left to utility and state-level decision makers (or non-NRC Federal level decision makers where applicable).

The environmental impacts from those alternatives to license renewal that NRC staff considered would be greater than the impacts of continued VEGP operation under a renewed license. License renewal would have all SMALL impacts except for collective offsite radiological impacts from the fuel cycle and from high-level waste and spent fuel disposal. While the impacts of conservation measures are also likely to be SMALL, the Staff has determined, based on findings of the GPSC in relationship to the GPC IRP, that conservation cannot reasonably be

1 forecast to replace the output of VEGP. Conservation, together with other technologies, could
2 replace VEGP's capabilities but the impacts of those other technologies (e.g., coal, gas, wind,
3 etc.) are likely to be greater than impacts of renewing the VEGP operating license.
4

5 The NRC staff concludes, then, that the environmentally preferred alternative for meeting future
6 electrical needs of the State of Georgia is renewal of the VEGP operating license thereby
7 providing decision makers the option of operating VEGP for another 20 years beyond expiration
8 of its operating license.
9

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9.0 Summary and Conclusions

1
2
3
4 By letter dated June 27, 2007, Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (SNC) submitted an
5 application to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to renew the operating licenses
6 for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Units 1 and 2 (VEGP) for an additional 20-year period (SNC
7 2007a). If the operating licenses are renewed, State and Federal (other than NRC) regulatory
8 agencies and SNC would ultimately decide whether the plant will continue to operate based on
9 factors such as the need for power, power availability from other sources, regulatory mandates,
10 or other matters within the agencies' jurisdictions or the purview of the owners. If the operating
11 licenses are not renewed, then the plant must be shut down at or before the expiration of the
12 current operating licenses, which expires on January 16, 2027 for Unit 1 and February 9, 2029
13 for Unit 2.
14

15 Section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA; 42 USC
16 4321) directs that an environmental impact statement (EIS) is required for major Federal actions
17 that significantly affect the quality of the human environment. The NRC has implemented
18 Section 102 of NEPA in Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 51. 10 CFR
19 Part 51 identifies licensing and regulatory actions that require an EIS. In 10 CFR 51.20(b)(2),
20 NRC requires preparation of an EIS or a supplement to an EIS for renewal of a reactor
21 operating licenses; 10 CFR 51.95(c) states that the EIS prepared at the operating licenses
22 renewal stage will be a supplement to the *Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License
23 Renewal of Nuclear Plants* (GEIS), NUREG-1437, Volumes 1 and 2 (NRC 1996 and 1999).^(a)
24

25 Upon acceptance of the VEGP application, the NRC began the environmental review process
26 described in 10 CFR Part 51 by publishing a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS and conduct
27 scoping (*Federal Register*, Volume 72, page 43296 [NRC 2007]) on August 3, 2007. The Staff
28 held two public scoping meetings on September 27, 2007 and visited the VEGP site and
29 conducted a site audit in October 2007. The Staff reviewed the VEGP Environmental Report
30 (Environmental Report) (SNC 2007b) and compared it to the GEIS, consulted with other
31 agencies, and conducted an independent review of the issues following the guidance set forth in
32 NUREG-1555, Supplement 1, the *Standard Review Plans for Environmental Reviews for
33 Nuclear Power Plants, Supplement 1: Operating License Renewal* (NRC 2000). The Staff also
34 considered the public comments received during the scoping process for preparation of this
35 draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for VEGP. The public comments
36 received during the scoping process that were considered to be within the scope of the
37 environmental review are provided in Appendix A, Part 1, of this draft SEIS.
38

^(a) The GEIS was originally issued in 1996. Addendum 1 to the GEIS was issued in 1999. Hereafter, all references to the "GEIS" include the GEIS and its Addendum 1.

Summary and Conclusions

1 The Staff plans to hold public meetings in Waynesboro, Georgia, in June 2008 to describe the
2 preliminary results of the NRC environmental review and to answer questions to provide
3 members of the public with information to assist them in formulating their comments on this draft
4 SEIS. When the comment period ends, the Staff will consider and address all of the comments
5 received. These comments will be addressed in Appendix A, Part 2, of the final SEIS.

6
7 This draft SEIS includes the NRC staff's preliminary analysis that considers and weighs the
8 environmental effects of the proposed action (including cumulative impacts), the environmental
9 impacts of alternatives to the proposed action, and mitigation measures available for reducing or
10 avoiding adverse effects. This draft SEIS also includes the Staff's preliminary recommendation
11 regarding the proposed action.

12
13 The NRC has adopted the following statement of purpose and need for license renewal from the
14 GEIS:

15
16 The purpose and need for the proposed action (renewal of an operating license) is to
17 provide an option that allows for power generation capability beyond the term of a
18 current nuclear power plant operating license to meet future system generating needs,
19 as such needs may be determined by State, utility, and, where authorized, Federal
20 (other than NRC) decisionmakers.

21
22 The evaluation criterion for the Staff's environmental review, as defined in 10 CFR 51.95(c)(4)
23 and the GEIS, is to determine:

24
25 . . . whether or not the adverse environmental impacts of license renewal are so great
26 that preserving the option of license renewal for energy planning decisionmakers would
27 be unreasonable.

28
29 Both the statement of purpose and need and the evaluation criterion implicitly acknowledge that
30 there are factors, in addition to license renewal, that would contribute to NRC's ultimate
31 determination of whether an existing nuclear power plant continues to operate beyond the
32 period of the current operating licenses.

33
34 NRC regulations (10 CFR 51.95(c)(2)) contain the following statement regarding the content of
35 SEISs prepared at the license renewal stage:

36
37 The supplemental environmental impact statement for license renewal is not required to
38 include discussion of need for power or the economic costs and economic benefits of the
39 proposed action or of alternatives to the proposed action except insofar as such benefits
40 and costs are either essential for a determination regarding the inclusion of an
41 alternative in the range of alternatives considered or relevant to mitigation. In addition,

1 the supplemental environmental impact statement prepared at the license renewal stage
2 need not discuss other issues not related to the environmental effects of the proposed
3 action and the alternatives, or any aspect of the storage of spent fuel for the facility
4 within the scope of the generic determination in § 51.23(a) and in accordance with §
5 51.23(b).^[b]
6

7 The GEIS contains the results of a systematic evaluation of the consequences of renewing an
8 operating licenses and operating a nuclear power plant for an additional 20 years. It evaluates
9 92 environmental issues using the NRC's three-level standard of significance—SMALL,
10 MODERATE, or LARGE—developed using the Council on Environmental Quality guidelines.
11 The following definitions of the three significance levels are set forth in the footnotes to Table B-
12 1 of 10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B:

13
14 SMALL - Environmental effects are not detectable or are so minor that they will neither
15 destabilize nor noticeably alter any important attribute of the resource.
16

17 MODERATE - Environmental effects are sufficient to alter noticeably, but not to
18 destabilize, important attributes of the resource.
19

20 LARGE - Environmental effects are clearly noticeable and are sufficient to destabilize
21 important attributes of the resource.
22

23 For 69 of the 92 issues considered in the GEIS, the Staff analysis in the GEIS shows the
24 following:
25

26 (1) The environmental impacts associated with the issue have been determined to apply
27 either to all plants or, for some issues, to plants having a specific type of cooling system
28 or other specified plant or site characteristics.
29

30 (2) A single significance level (i.e., SMALL, MODERATE, or LARGE) has been assigned to
31 the impacts (except for collective off-site radiological impacts from the fuel cycle and
32 from high-level waste and spent fuel disposal).
33

34 (3) Mitigation of adverse impacts associated with the issue has been considered in the
35 analysis, and it has been determined that additional plant-specific mitigation measures
36 are likely not to be sufficiently beneficial to warrant implementation.
37

38 These 69 issues were identified in the GEIS as Category 1 issues. In the absence of new and
39 significant information, the Staff relied on conclusions as amplified by supporting information in

^(b) The title of 10 CFR 51.23 is "Temporary storage of spent fuel after cessation of reactor operations—
generic determination of no significant environmental impact."

Summary and Conclusions

1 the GEIS for issues designated Category 1 in Table B-1 of 10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A,
2 Appendix B.

3 Of the 23 issues that do not meet the criteria set forth above, 21 are classified as Category 2
4 issues requiring analysis in a plant-specific supplement to the GEIS. The remaining two issues,
5 environmental justice and chronic effects of electromagnetic fields, were not categorized.
6 Environmental justice was not evaluated on a generic basis and must also be addressed in a
7 plant-specific supplement to the GEIS. Information on the chronic effects of electromagnetic
8 fields was not conclusive at the time the GEIS was prepared.
9

10 This draft SEIS documents the Staff's consideration of all 92 environmental issues identified in
11 the GEIS. The Staff considered the environmental impacts associated with alternatives to
12 license renewal and compared the environmental impacts of license renewal and the
13 alternatives. The alternatives to license renewal that were considered include the no-action
14 alternative (not renewing the operating licenses for VEGP), alternative methods of power
15 generation, and conservation. These alternatives were evaluated assuming that the
16 replacement power generation plant is located at either the VEGP site or some other
17 unspecified location.
18

19 **9.1 Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action - License** 20 **Renewal**

21
22 SNC and the Staff have established independent processes for identifying and evaluating the
23 significance of any new information on the environmental impacts of license renewal. Neither
24 SNC nor the Staff has identified information that is both new and significant related to Category
25 1 issues that would call into question the conclusions in the GEIS. Similarly, neither the scoping
26 process, SNC, nor the Staff has identified any new issue applicable to VEGP that has a
27 significant environmental impact. Therefore, the Staff relies upon the conclusions of the GEIS
28 for all Category 1 issues that are applicable to VEGP.
29

30 SNC's license renewal application presents an analysis of the Category 2 issues that are
31 applicable to VEGP, plus environmental justice and chronic effects from electromagnetic fields.
32 The Staff has reviewed the SNC analysis for each issue and has conducted an independent
33 review of each issue plus environmental justice and chronic effects from electromagnetic fields.
34 Two Category 2 issues are not applicable because they are related to plant design features or
35 site characteristics not found at VEGP. Four Category 2 issues are not discussed in this draft
36 SEIS because they are specifically related to refurbishment. SNC has stated that its evaluation
37 of structures and components, as required by 10 CFR 54.21, did not identify any major plant
38 refurbishment activities or modifications as necessary to support the continued operation of
39 VEGP for the license renewal period (SNC 2007a). In addition, any replacement of components
40 or additional inspection activities are within the bounds of normal plant component replacement

1 and, therefore, are not expected to affect the environment outside of the bounds of the plant
2 operations evaluated in the *Final Environmental Statement Related to the Operation of Vogtle*
3 *Electric Generating Plant Units 1 and 2* (NRC 1985).
4

5 Twelve Category 2 issues (including eleven Category 2 issues plus the severe accident
6 mitigation alternatives [SAMAs] issue from Chapter 5) related to operational impacts and
7 postulated accidents during the renewal term, as well as environmental justice and chronic
8 effects of electromagnetic fields, are discussed in detail in this draft SEIS. For the 12 Category
9 2 issues and environmental justice, the Staff concludes that the potential environmental effects
10 are of SMALL significance in the context of the standards set forth in the GEIS. Research is
11 continuing in the area of chronic effects on electromagnetic fields, and a scientific consensus
12 has not been reached. Therefore, no further evaluation of this issue is required. For SAMAs,
13 the Staff concludes that a reasonable, comprehensive effort was made to identify and evaluate
14 SAMAs. Based on its review of the SAMAs for VEGP, and the plant improvements already
15 made, the Staff concludes that SNC identified two potentially cost-beneficial SAMAs. However,
16 these SAMAs do not relate to adequately managing the effects of aging during the period of
17 extended operation. Therefore, they need not be implemented as part of license renewal
18 pursuant to 10 CFR Part 54.
19

20 Cumulative impacts of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions were
21 considered, regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such
22 other actions. The Staff concludes that cumulative impacts of VEGP license renewal would be
23 SMALL for all potentially affected resources.
24

25 Mitigation measures were considered for each Category 2 issue. For all issues, current
26 measures to mitigate the environmental impacts of plant operation were found to be adequate.
27

28 The following sections discuss unavoidable adverse impacts, irreversible or irretrievable
29 commitments of resources, and the relationship between local short-term use of the
30 environment and long-term productivity.
31

32 **9.1.1 Unavoidable Adverse Impacts**

33

34 An environmental review conducted at the license renewal stage differs from the review
35 conducted in support of a construction permit because the plant is in existence at the license
36 renewal stage and has operated for a number of years. As a result, adverse impacts associated
37 with the initial construction have been avoided, have been mitigated, or have already occurred.
38 The environmental impacts to be evaluated for license renewal are those associated with
39 refurbishment and continued operation during the renewal term.
40

Summary and Conclusions

1 All unavoidable adverse impacts of continued operation identified are considered to be of
2 SMALL significance. The unavoidable adverse impacts of likely alternatives if VEGP ceases
3 operation at or before the expiration of the current operating licenses will not be smaller than
4 those associated with continued operation of this unit, and they may be greater for some impact
5 categories in some locations.
6

7 **9.1.2 Irreversible or Irretrievable Resource Commitments**

8

9 The commitment of resources related to construction and operation of VEGP during the current
10 license period was made when the plant was built. The resource commitments to be
11 considered in this draft SEIS are associated with continued operation of the plant for an
12 additional 20 years. These resources include materials and equipment required for plant
13 maintenance and operation, the nuclear fuel used by the reactors, and ultimately, permanent
14 off-site storage space for the spent fuel assemblies.
15

16 The most significant resource commitments related to operation during the renewal term are the
17 fuel and the permanent storage space. VEGP replaces a portion of its fuel assemblies during
18 every refueling outage, which occurs on an 18-month cycle (SNC 2007b).
19

20 The likely power generation alternatives if VEGP ceases operation on or before the expiration of
21 the current operating licenses would require a commitment of resources for construction of the
22 replacement facilities as well as for fuel to run the plants.
23

24 **9.1.3 Short-Term Use Versus Long-Term Productivity**

25

26 An initial balance between short-term use and long-term productivity of the environment at
27 VEGP was set when the plant was approved and construction began. That balance is now well
28 established. Renewal of the operating licenses for VEGP and continued operation of the plant
29 would not alter the existing balance, but may postpone the availability of the site for other uses.
30 Denial of the application to renew the operating licenses would lead to shutdown of the plant
31 and will alter the balance in a manner that depends on subsequent uses of the site.
32

33 **9.2 Relative Significance of the Environmental Impacts of** 34 **License Renewal and Alternatives**

35

36 The proposed action is renewal of the operating licenses for VEGP. Chapter 2 describes the
37 site, power plant, and interactions of the plant with the environment. As noted in Chapter 3, no
38 refurbishment and no refurbishment impacts are expected at VEGP. Chapters 4 through 7
39 discuss environmental issues associated with renewal of the operating licenses. Environmental

1 issues associated with the no-action alternative and alternatives involving power generation and
 2 use reduction are discussed in Chapter 8.

3 The significance of the environmental impacts from the proposed action (approval of the
 4 application for renewal of the operating licenses), the no-action alternative (denial of the
 5 application), alternatives involving coal, gas, or nuclear-fired generating capacity at an
 6 unspecified greenfield site, gas-fired generation of power at VEGP, and a combination of
 7 alternatives are compared in Table 9-1. Continued use of open-cycle cooling is assumed for
 8 VEGP. All fossil fueled alternatives presented in Table 9-1 are assumed to use closed-cycle
 9 cooling systems.

10
 11 Substitution of once-through cooling for the recirculating cooling system in the evaluation of the
 12 nuclear and gas and coal-fired generation alternatives would result in greater environmental
 13 impact to categories related to water use and aquatic ecology. Alternatively, land use and
 14 aesthetic impacts are somewhat reduced with open-cycle cooling.

15
 16 Table 9-1 shows that the significance of the plant specific environmental effects of the proposed
 17 action would be SMALL for all impact categories (except for collective offsite radiological
 18 impacts from the fuel cycle and from high-level radioactive waste spent fuel disposal, for which
 19 a single significance level was not assigned [see Chapter 6]). The alternative actions, including
 20 the no-action alternative, may have environmental impacts in at least some impact categories
 21 that reach MODERATE or LARGE significance.

22 23 **9.3 Staff Conclusions and Recommendations**

24
 25 Based on (1) the analysis and findings in the GEIS (NRC 1996 and 1999), (2) the Environmental
 26 Report submitted by SNC, (3) consultation with Federal, State, and local agencies, (4) the
 27 Staff's own independent review, and (5) the Staff's consideration of public comments received,
 28 the preliminary recommendation of the Staff is that the Commission determine that the adverse
 29 environmental impacts of license renewal for VEGP are not so great that preserving the option
 30 of license renewal for energy planning decisionmakers would be unreasonable.

Table 9-1. Summary of Environmental Significance of License Renewal, the No Action Alternative, and Alternative Methods of Generation Using Once-Through Cooling^(a)

Impact Category	Proposed Action		No Action Alternative		Supercritical Coal-Fired Generation		Coal (IGCC) Generation	
	License Renewal	Denial of Renewal	VEGP Site	Alternate Site	VEGP Site	Alternate Site	VEGP Site	Alternate Site
Land Use	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE to LARGE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE to LARGE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE to LARGE</u>
Ecology	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE to LARGE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE to LARGE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE to LARGE</u>
Water Use and Quality – Surface Water	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL to MODERATE</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL to MODERATE</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL to MODERATE</u>
Water Use and Quality - Groundwater	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>
Air Quality	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>
Waste	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>
Human Health	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>
Socio-economics	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>MODERATE to LARGE</u>	<u>SMALL to MODERATE</u>	<u>SMALL to MODERATE</u>	<u>SMALL to MODERATE</u>	<u>SMALL to MODERATE</u>	<u>SMALL to MODERATE</u>	<u>SMALL to MODERATE</u>
Transportation	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>
Aesthetics	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>	<u>MODERATE</u>
Historical and Archeological Resources	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL to MODERATE</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL to MODERATE</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL to MODERATE</u>
Environmental Justice	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>MODERATE to LARGE</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL to LARGE</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL to LARGE</u>	<u>SMALL</u>	<u>SMALL to LARGE</u>

Table 9-1. (cont'd)

Impact Category	Natural-Gas-Fired Generation ^(b)		New Nuclear Generation ^(b)		Combination of Alternatives	
	VEGP Site	Alternate Site	VEGP Site	Alternate Site ^(b)	VEGP Site	Alternate Site
Land Use	SMALL to MODERATE	SMALL to LARGE	MODERATE	MODERATE to LARGE	SMALL to MODERATE	SMALL
Ecology	SMALL	SMALL to LARGE	SMALL	MODERATE to LARGE	SMALL	SMALL to MODERATE
Water Use and Quality – Surface Water	SMALL	SMALL to MODERATE	SMALL	SMALL to MODERATE	SMALL	SMALL
Water Use and Quality - Groundwater	SMALL	SMALL to MODERATE	SMALL	SMALL to MODERATE	SMALL	SMALL
Air Quality	SMALL to MODERATE	SMALL to MODERATE	SMALL	SMALL	MODERATE	SMALL
Waste	SMALL	SMALL	SMALL	SMALL	SMALL	SMALL
Human Health	SMALL	SMALL	SMALL	SMALL	SMALL	SMALL
Socio-economics	SMALL to MODERATE	SMALL to LARGE	SMALL to MODERATE	LARGE	SMALL	SMALL
Transportation	SMALL to MODERATE	SMALL to MODERATE	SMALL to MODERATE	SMALL to LARGE	SMALL to MODERATE	SMALL
Aesthetics	SMALL	SMALL to MODERATE	SMALL	MODERATE to LARGE	SMALL	MODERATE
Historical and Archeological Resources	SMALL	SMALL to MODERATE	SMALL	SMALL to MODERATE	SMALL	SMALL
Environmental Justice	SMALL	SMALL to LARGE	SMALL	SMALL to LARGE	SMALL	SMALL

(a) The majority of impacts shown are negative; however, several impacts are positive. See Chapters 4 and 8 for details.

(b) Analysis based on use of a closed-cycle cooling system.

(c) Except for the collective offsite radiological impacts from the fuel cycle and from high level waste and spent-fuel disposal, for which a significance level was not assigned. See Chapter 6 for details

9.4 References

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Appendix A

Comments Received on the Environmental Review

Appendix A

Comments Received on the Environmental Review

Part I - Comments Received During Scoping

As outlined by National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) initiated the scoping process with the issuance of the *Federal Register* Notice. On September 14, 2007, the NRC published a Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register* (FR; 72 FR 52586), to notify the public of the Staff's intent to prepare a plant-specific supplement to the *Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants* (GEIS), NUREG-1437, Volumes 1 and 2 regarding the renewal application for the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Units 1 and 2 (VEGP) operating license. The plant-specific supplement to the GEIS will be prepared in accordance with NEPA, Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) guidelines, and 10 CFR Part 51. The NRC invited the applicant, Federal, State, local, and tribal government agencies, local organizations, and individuals to participate in the scoping process by providing oral comments at the scheduled public meetings and/or submitting written suggestions and comments no later than October 24, 2007. The scoping process included two public scoping meetings, which were held at the Augusta Technical College, Waynesboro/ Burke Campus, 216 Highway 24 South, Waynesboro, Georgia on September 27, 2007. The NRC issued press releases and distributed flyers locally. Approximately 50 people attended the meetings. Both sessions began with NRC staff members providing a brief overview of the license renewal process and the NEPA process. Following the NRC's prepared statements, the meetings were open for public comments. Thirteen (13) attendees provided oral comments that were recorded and transcribed by a certified court reporter. The transcripts of the meetings can be found as an attachment to the meeting summary, which was issued on October 12, 2007. The meeting summary is available for public inspection in the NRC Public Document Room (PDR), located at One White Flint North, 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland, 20852, or from the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS). The meeting summary and can be found in ADAMS at Accession No. ML072840963. The transcripts can be found in ADAMS at Accession Nos. ML072840529 and ML072840530, for the afternoon and evening sessions, respectively. The ADAMS Public Electronic Reading Room is accessible at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html>. Persons who do not have access to ADAMS, or who encounter problems in accessing the documents located in ADAMS, should contact the NRC's Public Document Room Reference staff by telephone at 1-800-397-4209, or 301-415-4737.

The scoping process provides an opportunity for public participation to identify issues to be addressed in the plant-specific supplement to the GEIS and highlight public concerns and issues. The Notice of Intent identified the following objectives of the scoping process:

Appendix A

- 1 • Define the proposed action,
- 2
- 3 • Determine the scope of the supplement to the GEIS and identify significant issues to
- 4 be analyzed in depth,
- 5
- 6 • Identify and eliminate peripheral issues,
- 7
- 8 • Identify any environmental assessments and other environmental impact statements
- 9 being prepared that are related to the supplement to the GEIS,
- 10
- 11 • Identify other environmental review and consultation requirements,
- 12
- 13 • Indicate the schedule for preparation of the supplement to the GEIS,
- 14
- 15 • Identify any cooperating agencies, and
- 16
- 17 • Describe how the supplement to the GEIS will be prepared
- 18

19 At the conclusion of the scoping period, the NRC staff and its contractor reviewed the transcripts
20 and all written material received, and identified individual comments. All comments and
21 suggestions received orally during the scoping meetings or in writing were considered. Each
22 set of comments from a given commenter was given a unique alpha identifier (Commenter ID
23 letter), allowing each set of comments from a commenter to be traced back to the transcript,
24 letter, or email in which the comments were submitted. Several individuals submitted comments
25 through multiple sources (e.g., letter and afternoon or evening scoping meetings).

26
27 Comments were consolidated and categorized according to the topic within the proposed
28 supplement to the GEIS or according to the general topic if outside the scope of the GEIS.
29 Comments with similar specific objectives were combined to capture the common essential
30 issues that had been raised in the source comments. Once comments were grouped according
31 to subject area, the Staff and contractor determined the appropriate action for each comment.

32
33 Table 1 identifies the individuals providing comments and the Commenter ID letter associated
34 with each person's set(s) of comments. The Commenter ID letter is preceded by VEGP (short
35 for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant). For oral comments, the individuals are listed in the order
36 in which they spoke at the public meeting.

Table A-1. Individuals Providing Comments During Scoping Comment Period

Commenter ID	Commenter	Affiliation (If Stated)	Comment Source
VEGP-A	Sara Barczak	Safe Energy Director, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy	Afternoon Scoping Meeting
VEGP-B	Walter Dukes	VP, Georgia Power Company	Afternoon Scoping Meeting
VEGP-C	James Hendrix	Director, SRS Community Reuse Organization	Afternoon Scoping Meeting
VEGP-D	Billy Hopper	Former City and County Administrator	Afternoon Scoping Meeting
VEGP-E	Dick Byne	Waynesboro City Council	Afternoon Scoping Meeting
VEGP-F	Ellis Godbee	Former County Commissioner	Afternoon Scoping Meeting
VEGP-G	Bobbie Paul	Director, Women's Action for New Direction	Afternoon Scoping Meeting
VEGP-H	Teresa Carter	American Cancer Society	Afternoon Scoping Meeting
VEGP-I	Reverend Charles Utley	Resident	Afternoon Scoping Meeting
VEGP-J	A.K. Hasan	CSRA Citizens for Nuclear Energy	Afternoon Scoping Meeting
VEGP-K	Walter Dukes	VP, Georgia Power Company	Evening Scoping Meeting
VEGP-L	J.B. Powell	State Senator	Evening Scoping Meeting
VEGP-M	Gloria Frazier	State Representative	Evening Scoping Meeting
VEGP-N	Jesse Stone	Mayor, Waynesboro, Georgia	Evening Scoping Meeting
VEGP-O	Sara Barczak	Safe Energy Director, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy	Written Comments

The comments and suggestions received as part of the scoping process are documented in this section, and the disposition of each comment is discussed. Comments are grouped by category. The categories are as follows:

Appendix A

- 1 1. Comments Concerning License Renewal and its Processes
- 2 2. Comments Concerning Water Use and Quality
- 3 3. Comments Concerning Socioeconomic Impacts and Environmental Justice
- 4 4. Comments Concerning Human Health Issues
- 5 5. Comments Concerning Cumulative Impacts
- 6 6. Comments Concerning Postulated Accidents
- 7 7. Comments Concerning Alternative Energy Sources
- 8 8. Comments Concerning Uranium Fuel Cycle and Waste Management

9

10 Each comment is summarized in the following pages. For reference, the unique identifier for
11 each comment (Commenter ID letter listed in Table 1) is provided. In those cases where no
12 new environmental information was provided by the commenter, no further evaluation will be
13 performed.

14

15 The preparation of the plant-specific supplement to the GEIS, known as a Supplemental
16 Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), will take into account all the relevant issues raised
17 during the scoping process. The SEIS will address both Category 1 and 2 issues, along with
18 any new information identified as a result of scoping. The SEIS will rely on conclusions
19 supported by information in the GEIS for Category 1 issues, and will include the analysis of
20 Category 2 issues and any new and significant information. The draft plant-specific supplement
21 to the GEIS will be made available for public comment. The comment period will offer the next
22 opportunity for the applicant, interested Federal, State, and local government agencies, local
23 organizations, and members of the public to provide input to the NRC's environmental review
24 process. The comments received on the draft SEIS will be considered in the preparation of the
25 final SEIS. The final SEIS, along with the Staff's Safety Evaluation Report (SER), NRC Region
26 II inspections, and independent review by the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards, will
27 provide basis for the NRC's decision on the Southern Nuclear Operating Company license
28 renewal application.

29

30 **A.1 Comments and Responses**

31

32 **A.1.1 Comments Concerning License Renewal and Its Processes**

33

34 **Comment:** The SRS Community Reuse Organization is a two-state five-county economic
35 development board established by Congress to assist communities surrounding Department of
36 Energy facilities ... We applaud the NRC for holding events such as this meeting and trust that
37 you will diligently consider all input received. Our board has recently expanded our focus to
38 include an interest in commercial nuclear topics, because of the impacts on the community that
39 we serve. (VEGP-C)

40

41 **Comment:** Thank you for letting me speak. Thank you for the opportunity. I'm Dick Byne; I'm
42 on the Waynesboro County Council. I've been to every one of the meetings, I intend to be on

1 as many meetings as you have, if you have 500 between now and then, I'll be at every single
2 one of them. I appreciate the opportunity of living in a free country, to be able to bring concerns.
3 You are open, and you're letting us decide if this is good for our community, and I really do
4 appreciate that. I don't know how many other countries do that, but I know America does, and I
5 appreciate that. I also appreciate the Southern Nuclear going as slow as they are; they're being
6 meticulous about what they're doing. I appreciate that, and I appreciate them being open with
7 everything that they're trying to do, and I appreciate their challenges that they're getting; they're
8 addressing each challenge, and we appreciate that too. And that really means a lot to me.
9 (VEGP-E)

10
11 **Comment:** I have to say that I get a volume of material. I didn't realize how much I'd be
12 receiving, through this process from the NRC, documenting each step of the way of the studies;
13 they are exhaustive. I am convinced they have not overlooked anything in determining whether
14 this will have a bad or a positive impact on our environment. (VEGP-N)

15
16 **Comment:** I want to thank the NRC on behalf of the citizen of Waynesboro who I represent as
17 their Mayor, for having this open, public forum for everyone to express their views, so that they
18 can be taken into account in the decision on whether to renew the license for Plant Vogtle, and
19 to extend the period. (VEGP-N)

20
21 **Response:** *The comments concern the general license renewal process. However, the*
22 *comments provide no new information related to the Staff's environmental review and,*
23 *therefore, will not be evaluated further.*

24
25 **Comment:** Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Sara Barczak, and I'm the Safe Energy
26 Director with Southern Alliance for Clean Energy. We are a nonprofit energy policy organization
27 with members throughout Georgia and the region. We promote responsible energy choices that
28 create global-warming solutions and ensure clean, safe and healthy communities in the
29 Southeast. And I'm also a resident of the downstream community of Savannah. The issue of
30 extending the operating life of Plant Vogtle will not affect just this local community but Georgia
31 as a whole, and our regional overall. And we hope the NRC staff understands that we need to
32 do what will benefit all -- not just a select few. (VEGP-A)

33
34 **Comment:** And I know we like to compartmentalize: We're not DOE; we're NRC, we're blah,
35 blah, blah. But the people on the ground are the ones who are getting the benefits or the
36 deficiencies of such major mission. (VEGP-A)

37
38 **Comment:** And given that the license renewal for Vogtle is for 20 additional years of
39 operation—taking us to 2047 and 2049 if approved, we believe the NRC needs to evaluate not
40 only the Georgia of today, but the Georgia we may be living in 40 years from now. (VEGP-A,
41 VEGP-O)

Appendix A

1 **Response:** *The comments concern the general license renewal process. The Commission*
2 *has established a process, by rule, for the environmental and safety reviews to be conducted to*
3 *review a license renewal application. NRC will evaluate a broad spectrum of potential*
4 *environmental impacts resulting from the continued operation of Vogtle Units 1 and 2. These*
5 *findings will be presented in the SEIS.*

6
7 **Comment:** I think it's -- and this is a question directly to what I said earlier in our statements. Is
8 there a process that the NRC has established, given the reality that there are so many more
9 applications and things going on, and new hires, or fairly new, to -- like a license renewal
10 happening within an ESP and then a COL, Early Site Permit and Combined Operating License?
11 Do you have a mechanism within the Agency to get public comment from one entity that may
12 not be reviewed but would be relevant for the COL or the ESP? I mean, the COL hasn't been
13 applied for, but -- (VEGP-A)

14
15 **Comment:** My fear is that there doesn't appear to be any assurance that things won't slip
16 through the cracks, so to speak. We have grave concerns that too many permits are occurring
17 at the same time with Plant Vogtle. A license renewal, an early site permit and an upcoming
18 application for a combined construction and operating license. Can the NRC keep up with all of
19 this in a manner that is truly protective of public health? We are doubtful. As we all know,
20 bureaucracies themselves have their deficiencies. The idea that everything will be coordinated
21 seamlessly between all of these different staffs and projects -- and you know, putting full faith
22 that we have great staff at the NRC. But there's a lot going on, and we're just concerned that
23 these different projects are not going to be integrated, and expecting that to be integrated is
24 somewhat almost unrealistic. But we'd hope that it could happen. (VEGP-A)

25
26 **Comment:** There doesn't appear to be any assurance that things won't slip through the cracks
27 so-to-speak. We have grave concerns that too many permits are occurring at the same time
28 with Plant Vogtle: a license renewal, an early site permit, and an upcoming application for a
29 combined construction and operating license. Can the NRC keep up with all of this in a manner
30 that is truly protective of public health? We are doubtful; as we all know, bureaucracies
31 themselves have their deficiencies. The idea that everything will be coordinated seamlessly
32 between all these different staff and all these different projects seems unrealistic. (VEGP-O)

33
34 **Response:** *The comments are in regard to license renewal and its processes, specifically the*
35 *concern that issues may "slip through the cracks" with multiple applications concerning VEGP*
36 *being reviewed by NRC staff at the same time. The Commission has established a process, by*
37 *rule, for the environmental and safety reviews to be conducted pertaining to a license renewal*
38 *application. License renewals are being conducted separately, and within another Division*
39 *within NRC, from the other applications that are currently in progress, such as an Early Site*
40 *Permit application. To address this specific issue, as well as other related issues, NRC has*
41 *developed protocol to help ensure the consistent application of technical and regulatory*

1 *guidance by the Offices of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR) and New Reactors (NRO). In*
2 *Chapter 4 of the draft SEIS, NRC staff will consider potential cumulative impacts on the*
3 *environment resulting from the incremental impact of license renewal when added to other past,*
4 *present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, including the construction and operation of*
5 *two additional reactors at the VEGP site.*

6
7 **Comment:** Please see attached public comments from October 4, 2007 public meeting. Due
8 to time limitations at that meeting, only a small portion was read into the record. We feel that
9 these comments are pertinent to the Vogtle relicensing process and request that they be
10 reviewed.

11
12 **Response:** *The references comments have been incorporated into the public record and are*
13 *accessible through ADAMS Accession Number ML073060040. The specific comments are*
14 *addressed in this document in the appropriate technical sections.*

15 16 **A.1.2 Comments Concerning Water Use and Quality**

17
18 **Comment:** Power plants have a tremendous impact on our water resources. Our energy
19 choices do make a big difference in the future of the river basins and the communities and
20 businesses relying on those water resources. (VEGP-A)

21
22 **Comment:** Most people are not aware that the nuclear plants in Georgia have larger water
23 permits than most municipalities, including nearby Augusta. Plant Vogtle is currently the largest
24 water user in the entire Savannah River Basin, and has an average withdrawal of 64 million
25 gallons per day from the Savannah River, with an average consumption of 43 million gallons per
26 day. That means that Vogtle is returning only about a third of what it withdraws from the River.
27 An additional 20 years of operation as populations increase and the demand for water increases
28 will not be a positive development for our water resources.

29
30 That was released earlier this month, actually after this application was submitted. While I have
31 not yet had time to read the draft EIS word for word that we're going to talk about next
32 Thursday, but I can tell you that it appears that the cumulative impact on water quality and
33 quantity have not been satisfactorily evaluated in the draft EIS for the early site permit.
34 And that's a problem, because this early license renewal is saying that that's going to be a draft
35 in the early site permit, and I don't see it there, so it's a concern. (VEGP-A)

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1 **Comment:** And I'm interested in the amount of extract of water from the river, for the use of the
2 plant not exceed that. It's going to be used for those farmers along the river, as well as those
3 who would like to use it as a recreation facility. And so I -- my primary interest in that part of it at
4 this time, because if it's not addressed, that young man or that young lady who would like to just
5 go strolling down the river, are we going to pull out more than a power boat would be able to even
6 go down, and enjoy it. There's only one river; there's only one provider. And let us use it for the
7 best that we can use it for and not put those farmers who are using it for irrigation -- put them
8 out of business. So let us look at what we can return to the river, as safe, usable water,
9 because once it's gone, it's gone, and we can't replenish it. So that's my thinking, that's
10 my goal, is to make sure that the little man like I am, is taken care of, in any type of
11 restructuring, redevelopment. And thank you very much. (VEGP-I)

12
13 **Comment:** The State of Georgia and surrounding states are currently facing a drought of epic
14 proportions, and there does not appear to be any analysis of the current situation in the
15 application nor analysis beyond a level 3 drought. Plant Vogtle is the largest water user in the
16 entire Savannah River basin and has an average withdrawal of 64 million gallons per day from
17 the Savannah River and an average water consumption of 43 million gallons per day. That
18 means that Vogtle is returning only about one-third of what it withdraws from the Savannah
19 River. An additional 20 years of operation, as populations increase, will not be a positive
20 development for our water resources. (VEGP-O)

21
22 **Comment:** Power plants have a tremendous impact on our water resources. Our energy
23 choices make a big difference on the future of the river basins and the communities and
24 businesses reliant on those water sources. (VEGP-O)

25
26 **Response:** *The comments are related to water use conflicts specific to VEGP. Water use*
27 *conflict is a Category 2 issue and will be addressed in Chapters 2 and 4 of the SEIS.*

28
29 **Comment:** Lastly, as a downstream resident I'm very concerned about tritium, a radioactive
30 form of hydrogen that can impact our health. Faced with saltwater intrusion of the Floridan
31 Aquifer, both Beaufort and Jasper Counties in South Carolina and the Savannah area will
32 become more dependent on the Savannah River for drinking water. I did not see that discussed
33 in the application. Plant Vogtle already contributes to the tritium in the River, although they are
34 not the major culprit; and allowing the reactors to operate for longer will do nothing to reduce
35 this reality, let alone when and if more reactors come online. The NRC needs to study tritium in
36 the river, future projections, especially given the Savannah River Site's already large
37 contribution to the tritium pollution, and to analyze this with droughts and future population
38 growth in mind. The future safety of not only this community, but many, many, others are at
39 stake. (VEGP-A)

1 **Comment:** There are concerns about tritium contamination, a radioactive form of hydrogen that
2 can impact our health. Faced with saltwater intrusion of the Floridan Aquifer, both Beaufort and
3 Jasper counties in South Carolina and the Savannah area will become more dependent on the
4 Savannah River for drinking water. Plant Vogtle already contributes to the tritium in the river
5 and allowing the reactors to operate for longer will do nothing to reduce this reality, let alone
6 when and if more reactors come online. The NRC needs to study tritium in the river, future
7 projections especially given the Savannah River Site's already large contribution to the tritium
8 pollution, and to analyze this with droughts and future population growth in mind. (VEGP-O)
9

10 **Response:** *The comments are noted and relate to both human health and water use conflicts*
11 *associated with continued operation of Plant Vogtle. Human health issues were evaluated in*
12 *the GEIS and were determined to be Category 1 issues. The GEIS evaluated radiation*
13 *exposures to the public for all plants including VEGP, and concluded that the impact was small.*
14 *During the plant-specific environmental review of VEGP, the NRC will determine whether there*
15 *is any new and significant information bearing on the previous analysis in the GEIS. The*
16 *information provided by the comments will be reviewed as part of that determination. In*
17 *addition, evaluation of new studies and analyses of the health effects of radiation exposure is an*
18 *ongoing effort at the NRC. Water use conflict is a Category 2 issue and will be addressed in*
19 *Chapters 2 and 4 of the SEIS.*
20

21 **Comment:** Additionally, since we are discussing the prospects of these reactors operating for
22 many decades from now, the NRC needs to evaluate predictive effects of global warming on
23 this region, and how nuclear power plants may be negatively impacted or unable to generate
24 electricity. This was demonstrated, as many of us in the room know, by the heat wave this past
25 summer in Europe, when nuclear power plants from Sweden to France had to shut down
26 because of the lake -- I'm sorry -- the summer of 2006, when nuclear power plants from Sweden
27 to France had to shut down because the lake or river water temperatures were too high.
28 (VEGP-A, VEGP-O)
29

30 **Response:** *The comments pertain to an extended heat wave in Europe in July of 2006.*
31 *Drought conditions, associated with the heat wave, contributed to reduced water levels in the*
32 *lakes and rivers that some nuclear plants use to cool their reactors. As a result, some plants in*
33 *France, Spain, and Germany were taken offline and operations were reduced at others. Across*
34 *Western Europe, nuclear plants also had to obtain exemptions from regulations in order to*
35 *discharge overheated water into the environment. This is an example of a potential water use*
36 *conflict that could be associated with plants with cooling pond or cooling towers using make-up*
37 *water from a small river with low flow. Water use conflict is a Category 2 issue and will be*
38 *addressed in Chapters 2 and 4 of the SEIS.*

1 **A.1.3 Comments Concerning Socioeconomic Impacts and Environmental Justice**
2

3 **Comment:** Plant Vogtle is a project that will be an economic engine for Burke County and the
4 entire CSRA. The Burke County Plant Vogtle plant is one of the best-run plants in the United
5 States of America. It has an impeccable safety record, and it is run very, very efficiently, and it
6 is run very, very well. I would like to tell each and every one of you here tonight that an
7 economic boost in Burke County is something that we need. An economic boost in the CSRA is
8 something that we also need. We've lost many jobs in Burke County, Jenkins County, and in
9 Richmond County. And we need to do everything that we can to try to create the job buildup
10 which Plant Vogtle will do for us all. (VEGP-L)

11
12 **Response:** *The comment is noted. Socioeconomic issues specific to the plant are Category 2*
13 *issues and will be discussed in Chapter 4 of the SEIS.*

14
15 **Comment:** Good evening. Just wanted to say that I'm primarily interested in environmental
16 justice in this area. I've been working with communities throughout the country and most of
17 those are EJ communities. (VEGP-I)

18
19 **Response:** *To perform a review of environmental justice in the vicinity of the nuclear power*
20 *plant, the NRC staff examines the geographic distribution of minority and low-income*
21 *populations within 50 miles (80 km) of the site being evaluated. The Staff uses the most recent*
22 *census data available. Once the locations of minority and low-income populations are*
23 *identified, the Staff determines the extent to which these populations may be disproportionately*
24 *affected. The comments are noted. Environmental justice is an issue specific to the plant and*
25 *will be addressed in Chapter 4 of the SEIS.*

26
27 **A.1.4 Comments Concerning Human Health Issues**
28

29 **Comment:** As you know, there's been a controversial health study that's put out, but one of the
30 things that the National Cancer Study did note that in Aiken, Barnwell, Burke County, the cancer
31 rates before the startup of Vogtle were less than 26 percent of the rest of the country.
32 And the most recent, from '99 to 2003, shows Burke County with an 11 percent increase over
33 the rest of the country. I'm not saying, again, just like the tobacco industry, why this is
34 happening. But I would put it in your laps that we really should have and support with our
35 federal dollars an independent study that we can all agree upon, really takes a look at the
36 burden of impact of this. (VEGP-G)

37
38 **Response:** *The GEIS evaluated human health issues and determined them to be a Category 1*
39 *issue. However, the cited reference will be reviewed to determine whether there is any new and*
40 *significant information relative to VEGP.*

1 A.1.5 Comments Concerning Cumulative Impacts

2
3 **Comment:** Further, the proposed new reactors at Plant Vogtle are estimated to use over 50
4 million gallons of water per day, with 50 to 75 percent of that lost as steam, and that's from
5 Southern Nuclear's August 2006 application. This means that more water will be lost from the
6 two existing and two proposed reactors at Plant Vogtle than is currently used by all residents of
7 Atlanta, Augusta, and Savannah combined. Yet the application doesn't discuss the cumulative
8 impacts of the existing and proposed reactors. Instead, it says in Section 2.12.3 that the NRC
9 will do such an analysis in the draft EIS for the early site permit. (VEGP-A)

10
11 **Comment:** Further, the proposed new nuclear reactors at Plant Vogtle are estimated to use 53
12 million gallons of water per day with 50-75% of that lost as steam. (Southern Nuclear Operating
13 Company, Early Site Permit Application, Environmental Report, August 2006). This means that
14 more water will be lost from the two existing and two proposed reactors at Plant Vogtle than is
15 currently used by all residents of Atlanta, Augusta, and Savannah combined. Yet, the
16 application doesn't discuss the cumulative impacts of the existing and proposed reactors.
17 Instead, it says in section 2.12.3 that the NRC will do such an analysis in the draft EIS for the
18 Vogtle ESP that was released earlier in September, actually after this license renewal
19 application was submitted. From our review of the draft EIS for the ESP at Vogtle, the
20 cumulative impacts on water quality and quantity have not been satisfactorily evaluated.
21 Therefore, we believe that this issue is also deficient in terms of the license renewal evaluation.
22 (VEGP-O)

23
24 **Comment:** For instance, section 2.12.3 of Southern's license renewal application states that
25 the NRC will do a cumulative water analysis in this draft EIS for the early site permit. Well, I can
26 tell you that it appears that the cumulative impacts on water quality and quantity have not been
27 satisfactorily evaluated in the draft EIS for the early site permit. That is a problem. (VEGP-O)

28
29 **Comment:** The NRC should not make its decisions or evaluations in a vacuum. If the two new
30 reactors are approved and actually built, the existing two reactors will be operating at the same
31 time, and this application and all other applications associated with Plant Vogtle have to address
32 the cumulative impacts -- not pass the buck, assuming that some other committee within the
33 NRC working on some other project is going to cover it. (VEGP-A, VEGP-O)

34
35 **Comment:** Hello. I guess I'm addressing mainly you here. My name is Bobbie Paul ... One of
36 the things that I think is -- should be considered seriously is a calculation of the overall impact to
37 the region, of the many nuclear activities that are going on in this region. Very often we -- I
38 myself have stayed away from the nuclear power arena until the new reactors were proposed,
39 thinking we had enough to deal with at Savannah River Site. But because of the waste,
40 because of the terrorist activities and potential, because of the health issues and the
41 consequences, latent cancers -- I am a doctor's daughter; I've become more and more
42 concerned about all of this. And as you probably know, although I do find that sometimes as

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1 Sara said, there's a lot of disjointed where people are kind of working in a vacuum. But it
2 reminds me of the arcade game where the little guy keeps popping his head up and you keep
3 trying to bat it down. I feel like there are nuclear things popping all over this region, and as we
4 know, this is the most radioactive region, this 15-mile area, in the whole country; not for volume,
5 but for radioactivity.

6
7 So right now I guess as people in the audience are probably full aware the Savannah River Site
8 is now the recipient, continually will be the recipient, of more plutonium from Hanford, from
9 Lawrence Livermore in California, and Los Alamos in New Mexico. This has an impact on the
10 region, not only from transportation but other things. We also have active tritium extraction
11 going on at Savannah River Site, and added to that now we're having the likelihood of -- well, I
12 hope not the likelihood of two new reactors, which may disappoint people in the room, and I do
13 understand what an economic treasure Plant Vogtle has been to this area, because I have
14 many friends who live in this area. But I sincerely think that that cumulative burden that's really
15 being put on the people in this 40- to 50-mile radius of this should be considered, whether it's an
16 independent study or what. (VEGP-G)

17
18 **Comment:** So as we look at anything that's going to impact our river, and the use of it now
19 from Augusta down, we know we have Olin Chemicals as well as Federal Paper, and others
20 who are pulling from the river constantly. (VEGP-I)

21
22 **Response:** *As part of the environmental review process, the NRC evaluates the potential for*
23 *cumulative impacts of operations (as defined in 40 CFR 1508.7) during the renewal term. In*
24 *Chapter 4 of the SEIS, the impacts of the proposed action will analyzed in conjunction with other*
25 *past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions at VEGP, including the cumulative*
26 *impacts associated with the proposed addition of Units 3 and 4, and the activities of other*
27 *industrial facilities and/or Federal agencies, such as the Department of Energy at Savannah*
28 *River Site.*

29
30 **Comment:** We have strong concerns about the NRC's analysis on the impacts Vogtle's
31 proposed expansion would have on our water resources. Our energy choices make a big
32 difference on the future of the river basins and the communities and businesses reliant on those
33 water sources. Vogtle is the largest water user in the Savannah River basin and its expansion
34 essentially doubles that water use and water loss. We would suggest to the NRC that water use
35 should be reported in different ways to help people actually understand the numbers. For
36 instance, in Section 7.3, water consumption is reported in cubic feet per second. Though I did
37 the math, I don't think most people have the time to convert all of those figures to gallons per
38 day, which is what most of our surface water withdrawal permits in Georgia are licensed under.
39 When you do the math, it shows that the current reactors are losing ~43 million gallons of water
40 per day and that the new reactors will lose ~40 mgd. This means that more water will be lost
41 from the two existing and two proposed reactors at Plant Vogtle than is currently used by all

1 residents of Atlanta, Augusta, and Savannah combined. And on p. 2-34, the draft EIS says that
2 Burke County is projected to have a 50% increase in water demand by 2035 and that
3 neighboring South Carolina's water demand will also increase by 50% from 2000-2045 and
4 acknowledges that people will be shifting off of the Floridan Aquifer to the Savannah River and
5 simply states that all of this would also increase demands for Savannah River water
6 downstream of Vogtle. But in the end, because the NRC calculated that the two new reactors
7 would not decrease the Savannah River flow of today by more than 5%, it acts as though all is
8 good. Well, nowhere in this document does it appear that the NRC has evaluated how the
9 Savannah River is going to be able to handle the Georgia and South Carolina that we will live in
10 decades from now, that by the NRC's own statements appears to be a future in which the
11 Savannah River is going to see extreme increases in demand. Further, the draft EIS has no
12 analysis of climate change predictions on our water systems, such as the prospects for severe,
13 long-lasting mega-droughts, of which Georgia may encounter as global warming impacts are
14 realized. Again we ask, who stands to gain and who stands to lose? (VEGP-O)

15
16 **Comment:** Sure, you are going to hear all the local economic boosters come out in numbers to
17 say the existing reactors generate revenue and jobs. You will hear folks who live here say how
18 Southern is the biggest employer in Burke County and you will see Table 2-16 show that
19 Southern pays over 80% of the property taxes in the county and that Burke County has one of
20 the highest revenues in the state. And you'll hear the company make it look like a full
21 assessment of the cumulative impacts related to socioeconomics has been done where it states
22 on page 7-17 that, "In terms of beneficial effects including tax revenues benefits, the impacts on
23 Burke County would be large."

24
25 But where's the analysis and the NRC review of the cumulative impacts for ratepayers in
26 Georgia who face serious harm from potential adverse impacts down the road? Isn't that part of
27 the socio-economic impact on all of us? Who's doing any analysis on the implications of the
28 Southern Company proposal included in its application to have the new radioactive waste it will
29 generate go to a fictitious federal waste repository? A repository that doesn't even exist and
30 that ratepayers have been paying for over many years and that states have been forced to sue
31 the federal government on that translates into ratepayer dollars. NRC largely ignores this reality
32 in its review of Vogtle's proposal. But you can know that ratepayers and state agencies and the
33 public would think that surely the NRC as the federal agency charged to oversee a review would
34 have fully addressed this issue in reviewing a new reactor proposal. (VEGP-O)

35
36 **Response:** *The comments are noted. The comments are specific to the Draft EIS that was*
37 *prepared for the Early Site Permit (ESP) associated with the proposed new reactors at Plant*
38 *Vogtle (Units 3 and 4) and published for public review and comment. The cumulative impacts*
39 *associated with the operation of two additional reactors at Plant Vogtle will be addressed in*
40 *Chapter 4 of the SEIS produced as part of the Staff's license renewal environmental review.*

1 **A.1.6 Comments Concerning Postulated Accidents**
2

3 **Comment:** And that leads me to the last thing and back to my friends here in Burke County.
4 How are we communicating with the folks on the ground here? Let's do a worst-case scenario.
5 Even from a business standpoint, I realize Southern Company is a business and has to make a
6 profit. Let's look at a worst-case scenario. Don't we owe it to the people here in Burke County
7 to show what would happen in the worst possible case, if there was a meltdown, if there was a
8 valve like there was at Farley in Alabama that didn't quite work right. (VEGP-G)
9

10 **Comment:** But I think it's time for us to stop downplaying all of the risks of nuclear. We all
11 know that radiation kills. That's a known fact. I'm not being hysterical about that. But let's look
12 at the worst case and then move from there, forward together. Thank you. (VEGP-G)
13

14 **Response:** *The environmental review considers postulated plant accidents that might occur*
15 *during the license renewal term. It also includes a review of the alternatives to mitigate severe*
16 *accidents if this has not previously been evaluated for the applicant's plant. The purpose of this*
17 *consideration is to ensure that plant changes (i.e., hardware, procedures, and training) with the*
18 *potential for improving severe accident safety performance are identified, evaluated, and, if*
19 *appropriate, implemented. The impacts of postulated accidents are considered within the scope*
20 *of the environmental review for license renewal and will be addressed in Chapter 5 of the SEIS.*
21

22 **A.1.7 Comments Concerning Alternative Energy Sources**
23

24 **Comment:** The application is deficient in its analysis of energy sources efficiency. Energy
25 efficiency and conservation represent the quickest, safest, cheapest way to provide more power
26 and to best protect our air and water resources. As an added benefit, increased energy
27 efficiency reduces water consumption by power plants that compete with local industries and
28 cities for much-needed water. The NRC should be aware that in 2001, the Energy Information
29 Administration ranked Georgia eighth in the nation for per capita energy consumption for
30 electricity, and 40th in per capita spending on energy efficiency programs. (VEGP-A, VEGP-O)
31

32 **Comment:** The NRC needs to fully research other energy choices, including energy efficiency
33 and conservation, as the application from Southern Nuclear is woefully inadequate. Renewable
34 energy supplies are available here in Georgia, such as biopower, solar and wind. In fact,
35 according to a 2006 report from the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority, Georgia has the
36 potential to meet 1500 to 1600-plus megawatts of the state's forecasted electricity demand
37 through new, renewable resources, from biomass, wind, hydropower, landfill gas, and solar
38 photovoltaics. These energy supplies should be supported due in part because they keep
39 dollars here at home, and they don't pose the risk to the community that nuclear power does.
40 (VEGP-A) (VEGP-O)

1 **Comment:** The NRC should be aware that new, certified wind maps of Georgia were released
2 by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in October 2006 that show there is substantial
3 wind power available, especially offshore, with a potential of 10,000MW. Go to the Georgia
4 Wind Working Group website at www.gawwg.org. Yet information in the application is
5 completely outdated; in terms of wind it referenced 1986 data in spite of Southern Company
6 being involved in a an offshore wind study with Georgia Tech that was released in part earlier
7 this summer. Additionally, the potential to use Georgia's plentiful agriculture and forestry
8 resources should be evaluated. A conservative estimate from a University of Georgia study
9 showed that as much as 12% of Georgia's total electricity demand could be generated from
10 biomass. The benefits to Georgia include increased self-sufficiency, improved water resource
11 quality, and long-term environmental and rural development benefits. (VEGP-A) (VEGP-O)
12

13 **Comment:** The NRC should be aware that new, certified wind maps of Georgia were released
14 by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in October 2006 that show there is substantial
15 wind power available, especially offshore, with a potential of well over 10,000 MW. Go to the
16 Georgia Wind Working Group website at www.gawwg.org for background. Yet Section 9.2.3.2
17 on wind power doesn't mention this potential, instead relying on Southern's slanted wording of a
18 study they did with Georgia Tech that "technology limitations and regulatory restrictions would
19 make development of offshore wind projects difficult in the southeast." Instead of taking
20 Southern's word for it, the NRC should actually review the offshore wind study with Georgia
21 Tech that was released in part earlier this summer and is now finalized ready for release.
22 (VEGP-O)
23

24 **Comment:** The analysis of energy efficiency is deficient. This issue is still under review by the
25 Georgia PSC as a result of analytical questions that arose in reviewing Georgia Power's
26 Integrated Resource Plan this year. The PSC has ordered a working group to examine these
27 issues further. Energy efficiency and conservation represent the quickest, safest, cheapest way
28 to provide more power and to best protect our air and water resources. As an added benefit,
29 increased energy efficiency reduces water consumption by power plants that compete with local
30 industries and cities for much needed water. The NRC should be aware that in 2001, the
31 Energy Information Administration ranked Georgia 8th in the nation for per capita energy
32 consumption for electricity and 40th in per capita spending on energy efficiency programs.
33 Additionally, we are an energy exporting state. We use our natural resources, impact our
34 citizens' health, and pile up nuclear waste within our border to power other states' air
35 conditioning units. (VEGP-O)
36

37 **Comment:** Additionally, the potential to use Georgia's plentiful agriculture and forestry
38 resources should be more closely evaluated as the benefits include increased self-sufficiency,
39 improved water resource quality, and long-term environmental and rural development benefits.
40 A University of Georgia 2003 study that showed that as much as 12% of Georgia's total
41 electricity demand could be generated from biomass was referenced by the NRC in Section

Appendix A

1 9.2.3.8, but the NRC dismissed biomass as not being economically competitive with existing
2 technologies. Georgia Power's plan filed with the Georgia PSC this year shows there are
3 competitive biomass projects. Further, nowhere in this draft EIS does it state officially how
4 much these new reactors are going to cost Georgia ratepayers or taxpayers, instead providing
5 estimates on p. 5-38 ranging from \$1.2-2.6 billion for each reactor. (VEGP-O)
6

7 **Response:** *The comments are related to the alternatives to license renewal at VEGP. The*
8 *GEIS included a discussion of alternative energy sources. Environmental impacts associated*
9 *with various reasonable alternatives to renewal of the VEGP operating license, including*
10 *renewable energy sources and conservation (Demand-Side Management), will be evaluated in*
11 *Chapter 8 of the SEIS.*
12

13 **Comment:** The draft EIS failed to fully research other energy choices, including energy
14 efficiency and conservation. Renewable energy supplies are available here in Georgia, such as
15 biopower, solar, and wind. In fact, according a 2006 report by the Georgia Environmental
16 Facilities Authority, Georgia has the potential to meet 1518-1618 MW of the state's forecasted
17 electricity demand through new renewable resources from biomass, wind, hydropower, landfill
18 gas, and solar photovoltaics. (Meeting Future Electricity Demand, GA Environmental Facilities
19 Authority, 2006). These energy supplies should be tapped because they keep dollars here at
20 home, provide safe jobs, and don't pose the risks to the community that nuclear power does.
21 (VEGP-O)
22

23 **Response:** *The comments are noted. The comments are specific to the Draft EIS that was*
24 *prepared for the Early Site Permit (ESP) associated with the proposed new reactors at Plant*
25 *Vogtle (Units 3 and 4) and published for public review and comment. However, these*
26 *comments will be considered during the preparation of the SEIS for license renewal.*
27 *Environmental impacts associated with various reasonable alternatives to renewal of the VEGP*
28 *operating license, including renewable energy sources and conservation (Demand-Side*
29 *Management), will be evaluated in Chapter 8 of the SEIS.*
30

31 **A.1.8 Comments Concerning Uranium Fuel Cycle and Waste Management**

32

33 **Comment:** My next-to-last point would be waste. We have no solution for the waste. Yucca
34 Mountain is likely not to be built. If it was, the transportation risks and everything else are
35 terrific. There was just a little earthquake tremor out in Yucca Mountain in Nevada the other
36 day. (VEGP-G)
37

38 **Response:** *Onsite storage of spent nuclear fuel is a Category 1 issue. The safety and*
39 *environmental effects of long-term storage of spent fuel onsite has been evaluated by the NRC,*
40 *as set forth in the Waste Confidence Rule. The NRC's Waste Confidence Rule, found in 10*
41 *CFR 51.23, states: The Commission has made a generic determination that, if necessary, spent*

1 fuel generated in any reactor can be stored safely and without significant environmental impacts
2 for at least 30 years beyond the licensed life for operation (which may include the term of a
3 revised or renewed license) of that reactor at its spent fuel storage basin or at either onsite or
4 offsite independent spent fuel storage installations. Further, the Commission believes there is
5 reasonable assurance that at least one mined geologic repository will be available within the
6 first quarter of the twenty-first century, and sufficient repository capacity will be available within
7 30 years beyond the licensed life for operation of any reactor to dispose of the commercial high-
8 level waste and spent fuel originating in such reactor and generated up to that time. In its
9 Statement of Considerations for the 1990 update of the Waste Confidence Rule (55 FR 38472),
10 the Commission addressed the impacts of the disposal of spent fuel discharged from the current
11 fleet of reactors operating under existing and renewed licenses and from a new generation of
12 operating reactors. The rule was last reviewed by the Commission in 1999 when it reaffirmed
13 the findings in the rule (64 FR 68005, dated December 6, 1999). The comments provide no
14 new and significant information relevant to the Staff's environmental review and, therefore, will
15 not be evaluated further.

16

17 **Comment:** I know they're talking about GNEP, and I was interesting -- interested to hear the
18 man from Savannah River Site say, we're looking at energy. I know the global nuclear energy
19 partnership coming down the pike for the last two years has all of these indications that there's
20 going to be a hope for getting rid of some of this waste through a return to reprocessing. This
21 is one of the most filthy, dangerous plutonium cycles that we could ever engage in, and will
22 create more waste. This spent fuel and these rods that come out that have to sit in cooling
23 ponds are highly radioactive and have to sit in these ponds for five years before we can even
24 deal with them. (VEGP-G)

25

26 **Response:** The comments are related to the uranium fuel cycle and waste management
27 issues. Uranium fuel cycle and waste management issues were evaluated in the GEIS and
28 were determined to be Category 1 issues. The Global Nuclear Energy Partnership is not the
29 subject of this environmental review, and the comment does not provide any new and significant
30 information that would alter the original GEIS determinations regarding the uranium fuel cycle.
31 However, as part of the environmental review process, the NRC evaluates the potential for
32 cumulative impacts of operations (as defined in 40 CFR 1508.7) during the renewal term. In
33 Chapter 2 of the SEIS, the NRC will review the possibility that activities of other Federal
34 agencies, such as the Department of Energy at Savannah River Site, contribute to cumulative
35 impacts in conjunction with license renewal. In Chapter 4 of the SEIS, the impacts of the
36 proposed action will be combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future
37 actions at VEGP.

Appendix B

Contributors to the Supplement

Appendix B

Contributors to the Supplement

The overall responsibility for the preparation of this supplement was assigned to the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). The statement was prepared by members of the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation with assistance from other NRC organizations, Earth Tech, Inc. and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory.

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Appendix C

Chronology of NRC Staff Environmental Review Correspondence Related to Southern Nuclear Operating Company Application for License Renewal of Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Units 1 and 2

Appendix C

Chronology of NRC Staff Environmental Review Correspondence Related to Southern Nuclear Operating Company Application for License Renewal of Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Units 1 and 2

This appendix contains a chronological listing of correspondence between the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and Southern Nuclear Operating Company (SNC), and other correspondence related to the NRC staff's environmental review, under 10 CFR Part 51, of SNC's application for renewal of the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, (VEGP) operating license. The License Renewal Application and the Draft Supplement Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) have been placed in the Burke County Library, at 130 Highway 24 South, Waynesboro, GA 30830. All documents, with the exception of those containing proprietary information, are available electronically from the Public Electronic Reading Room found on the Internet at the following Web address: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm.html>. From this site, the public can gain access to the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS), which provides text and image files of NRC's public documents in the publicly available records component of ADAMS. The ADAMS accession number for each document is included below.

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| January 9, 2007 | Letter from Robert E. Martin, NRC, to Mr. D.E. Grissette, Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc., Regarding Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Unit 2 Exemption from the Requirements of 10 CFR Part 54, Section 54.17(c), for the License Renewal Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML062770492). |
| June 27, 2007 | Letter from L.M. Stinson, Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc., to NRC submitting the application for the renewal of the operating licenses for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant.
(ADAMS Accession Nos. ML071840351 [Cover Letter], ML071840360 [Application], and ML071840357 [Environmental Report]). |
| July 10, 2007 | Letter from J.P. Leous, NRC, to Ms. Elaine M. Sikes, Burke County Library, Regarding Maintenance of Reference Materials Related to the Review of the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Units 1 and 2 License Renewal Application at the Burke County Library. (ADAMS Accession No. ML071860391). |
| August 3, 2007 | Federal Register Notice of Receipt and Availability of Application for Renewal of Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2 Facility Operating License Nos. NPF-68 and NPF-81 for an Additional 20-Year Period (72FR43296). (ADAMS Accession No. ML071840090). |

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- 1 August 21, 2007 Federal Register Notice of Acceptance for Docketing of the Application
2 and Notice of Opportunity for Hearing Regarding Renewal of Facility
3 Operating License Nos. NPF-68 and NPF-81 for an Additional 10-Year
4 Period, Docket Nos. 50-424 and 50-425 (72FRN46680).
5 (ADAMS Accession No. ML072130084).
6
- 7 August 21, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mr. Tom E. Tynan, Vice President
8 Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Regarding Notice of Intent to Prepare an
9 Environmental Impact Statement and Conduct Scoping Process for
10 License Renewal for the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2.
11 (ADAMS Accession No. ML072140293).
12
- 13 August 5, 2007 Letter from J.P. Leous, NRC, to Mr. Tom E. Tynan, Vice President Vogtle
14 Electric Generating Plant, Regarding Vogtle Electric Generating Plant,
15 Units 1 and 2, License Renewal Application.
16 (ADAMS Accession No. ML072400136).
17
- 18 August 22, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mr. David Bernhart, National Marine
19 Fisheries Service, Regarding Request for a List of Protected Species and
20 Essential Fish Habitat Within the Area under Evaluation for the Vogtle
21 Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License Renewal Application
22 Review. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072060605).
23
- 24 August 22, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mr. Strant Colwell, U.S. Fish and
25 Wildlife Service, Regarding Request for a List of Protected Species Within
26 the Area under Evaluation for the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units
27 1 and 2, License Renewal Application Review.
28 (ADAMS Accession No. ML072040219).
29
- 30 August 22, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mr. Don L. Kilma, Advisory Council
31 on Historic Preservation, Regarding Vogtle Electric Generating Plant,
32 Units 1 and 2, License Renewal Application.
33 (ADAMS Accession No. ML072060568).
34
- 35 August 22, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Dr. Ray Luce, Historical Preservation
36 Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Regarding Vogtle
37 Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License Renewal Application.
38 (ADAMS Accession No. ML072060519).
39
- 40 August 28, 2007 Federal Register Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact
41 Statement and Conduct Scoping Process for Vogtle Electric Generating
42 Units 1 and 2, Docket Nos. 50-424 and 50-425 (72FRN49322).
43 (ADAMS Accession No. ML072140337).

1 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mr. James Caulder, Chief The Pee
2 Dee Tribe of South Carolina, Regarding Request for Comments
3 Concerning Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License
4 Renewal Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210551).
5

6 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mr. James Webb, Chief The
7 Waccamaw Indian People, Regarding Request for Comments Concerning
8 the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License Renewal
9 Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210590).
10

11 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mr. Pare Bowlegs, Seminole Nation
12 of Oklahoma, Regarding Request for Comments Concerning the Vogtle
13 Electric Generating Plant, Unit 1 and 2, License Renewal Application.
14 (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210746).
15

16 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mr. A.D. Ellis, Principal Chief
17 Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Regarding Request for Comments Concerning
18 the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License Renewal
19 Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210286).
20

21 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mr. Louis McGertt, Thlopthlocco
22 Tribal Town, Regarding Request for Comments Concerning the Vogtle
23 Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License Renewal Application.
24 (ADAMS Accession No. ML072211012).
25

26 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Ms. Gale Thrower, NAGPRA Contact
27 Poarch Band of Creek Indians, Regarding Request for Comments
28 Concerning the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License
29 Renewal Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072211016).
30

31 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to The Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe
32 Regarding Request for Comments Concerning the Vogtle Electric
33 Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License Renewal Application.
34 (ADAMS Accession No. ML072211004).
35

36 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Ms. Emma Sue Holland, NAGPRA
37 Contact United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians, Regarding
38 Request for Comments Concerning the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant,
39 Units 1 and 2, License Renewal Application.
40 (ADAMS Accession No. ML072211008).
41

42 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mr. Richard L. Allen, NAGPRA
43 Contact Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, Regarding Request for
44 Comments Concerning the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and
45 2, License Renewal Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210861).

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1 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to The Eastern Cherokee, Southern
2 Iroquois and United Tribes of South Carolina Regarding Request for
3 Comments Concerning the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and
4 2, License Renewal Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210646).
5
6 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mr. Roosevelt Scott, Chief The
7 Santee Indian Organization, Regarding Request for Comments
8 Concerning the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License
9 Renewal Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210347).
10
11 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to The Cherokee of Georgia Regarding
12 Request for Comments Concerning the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant,
13 Units 1 and 2, License Renewal Application.
14 (ADAMS Accession No. ML072070113).
15
16 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mr. Gilbert Blue, Chief Catawba
17 Indian Nation, Regarding Request for Comments Concerning the Vogtle
18 Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License Renewal Application.
19 (ADAMS Accession No. ML072070691).
20
21 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Chief Louie Chavis, Regarding
22 Request for Comments Concerning the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant,
23 Units 1 and 2, License Renewal Application.
24 (ADAMS Accession No. ML072211003).
25
26 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mr. Eddie Tullis, Chairperson Poarch
27 Band of Creek Indians, Regarding Request for Comments Concerning the
28 Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License Renewal
29 Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072211013).
30
31 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to The Wasaamasaw Tribe of
32 Varnertown Indians Regarding Request for Comments Concerning the
33 Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License Renewal
34 Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210744).
35
36 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Chief Gene Norris, The Piedmont
37 American Indian Association, Regarding Request for Comments
38 Concerning the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License
39 Renewal Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210315).
40
41 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Ms. Carolyn Chavis Bolton, Chief
42 The Pee Dee Indian Nation of Upper South Carolina, Regarding Request
43 for Comments Concerning the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1
44 and 2, License Renewal Application.
45 (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210375).

1 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Ms. Debbie Thomas, Tribal Historic
2 Preservation Officer, Regarding Request for Comments Concerning the
3 Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License Renewal
4 Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210817).
5

6 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to The American Indian Chamber of
7 Commerce of South Carolina Regarding Request for Comments
8 Concerning the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License
9 Renewal Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210901).
10

11 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mr. John Zachary, Attorney at Law
12 c/o Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, Regarding Request for Comments
13 Concerning the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License
14 Renewal Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210880).
15

16 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to The Honorable Ms. Evelyn Bucktrot,
17 Town King Kialegee Tribal Town, Regarding Request for Comments
18 Concerning the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License
19 Renewal Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210575).
20

21 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mr. Kenneth H. Carleton,
22 THPO/Tribal Archaeologist, Regarding Request for Comments
23 Concerning the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License
24 Renewal Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210373).
25

26 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mr. Bill Anoatubby, Governor
27 Chickasaw Nation, Regarding Request for Comments Concerning the
28 Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License Renewal
29 Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210312).
30

31 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mr. Steven Terry, Land Resources
32 Manager Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, Regarding Request for
33 Comments Concerning the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and
34 2, License Renewal Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210294).
35

36 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mr. Dallas Proctor, Chief United
37 Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians, Regarding Request for Comments
38 Concerning the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License
39 Renewal Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210950).
40

41 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Vernon Tanner, Chief The
42 Chaloklowa Chickasaw Indian People, Regarding Request for Comments
43 Concerning the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License
44 Renewal Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210338).

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- 1 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mr. Willard Steele, Deputy THPO
2 Seminole Tribe of Florida, Regarding Request for Comments Concerning
3 the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License Renewal
4 Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210633).
5
- 6 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Ms. Karen Kaniatobe, Director of the
7 Cultural/Historical Preservation Department Absentee-Shawnee Tribe of
8 Oklahoma, Regarding Request for Comments Concerning the Vogtle
9 Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License Renewal Application.
10 (ADAMS Accession No. ML072211009).
11
- 12 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mrs. Joyce A. Bear, NAGPRA
13 Contact Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma, Regarding Request for
14 Comments Concerning the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and
15 2, License Renewal Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210668).
16
- 17 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Ms. Kathy McCoy, NAGPRA Contact
18 Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Regarding Request for Comments
19 Concerning the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License
20 Renewal Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210498).
21
- 22 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Georgia Tribe of Eastern Cherokee
23 Regarding Request for Comments Concerning the Vogtle Electric
24 Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License Renewal Application.
25 (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210937).
26
- 27 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Mr. Charles Thurmond, NAGPRA
28 Contact, Regarding Request for Comments Concerning the Vogtle
29 Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License Renewal Application.
30 (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210364).
31
- 32 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to Ms. Virginia Nail, NAGPRA Contact,
33 Regarding Request for Comments Concerning the Vogtle Electric
34 Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License Renewal Application.
35 (ADAMS Accession No. ML072210995).
36
- 37 August 31, 2007 Letter from Rani Franovich, NRC, to The American Cherokee
38 Confederacy, Inc. Regarding Request for Comments Concerning the
39 Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License Renewal
40 Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072140791).
41
- 42 September 5, 2007 Letter from J.P. Leous, NRC, to Mr. Tom Tynan, Vogtle Electric
43 Generating Plant, Regarding Environmental Site Audit Regarding Vogtle
44 Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License Renewal Application
45 (ADAMS Accession No. ML072400136).

1 September 11, 2007 Letter from David Bernhart, NOAA, to Rani Franovich, NRC, Response to
2 NRC letter dated August 22, 2007 Regarding Renewal of Operating
3 Licenses for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2 (VEGP) in
4 Burke County. (ADAMS Accession No. ML072670546).
5

6 October 3, 2007 Email from Steve Terry, Miccosukee Tribe, to NRC Vogtle License
7 Renewal website, Regarding Request for Comments Concerning the
8 Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License Renewal
9 Application. (ADAMS Accession No. ML0728405172).
10

11 October 12, 2007 Letter from J.P. Leous, NRC, to Southern Nuclear Operating Company,
12 Inc. Regarding Summary of Public Environmental Scoping Meetings
13 Related to the Review of the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and
14 2, License Renewal Applications. (ADAMS Accession No.
15 ML072840963).
16

17 October 23, 2007 Email from J.P. Leous, NRC, to Dale Fulton and Tom Moorer, Southern
18 Company, Regarding Vogtle Environmental Site Audit Follow Up.
19 (ADAMS Accession No. ML073040040).
20

21 October 24, 2007 Letter from J.P. Leous, NRC, to Mr. Tom Tynan, Vogtle Electric
22 Generating Plant, Regarding Request for Additional Information
23 Regarding Severe Accident Mitigation Alternatives for Vogtle Electric
24 Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, License Renewal Application. (ADAMS
25 Accession No. ML072841107).
26

27 November 6, 2007 Letter from Tom Tynan, Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc., to
28 NRC, Regarding Vogtle Early Site Permit Application, Response to
29 Request for Additional Information Involving Quality Assurance Controls
30 for Limited Work Authorization-2. (ADAMS Accession No.
31 ML073120135).
32

33 November 12, 2007 Letter from Tom Tynan, Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc., to
34 NRC, Regarding Vogtle License Renewal Application, Environmental Site
35 Audit Information Request – Follow up Response. (ADAMS Accession
36 No. ML073300604).
37

38 November 16, 2007 Letter from J.P. Leous, NRC, Regarding Summary of Conference Call
39 with Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. to Discuss the Severe
40 Accident Mitigation Alternatives Requests for Additional Information for
41 Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2 (ADAMS Accession No.
42 ML073120119).
43

44 November 19, 2007 Letter from J.P. Leous, NRC, to Southern Nuclear Operating Company,
45 Inc., Regarding Summary of Site Audit Related to the Review of the
46 License Renewal Application for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1
47 and 2. (ADAMS Accession No. ML073111213).

Appendix C

- 1 December 5, 2007 Email from Karen Kaniatobe, THPO Absentee Shawnee Tribe, to the
2 NRC Regarding GA/No Properties Identified/Vogtle Electric Generating
3 Plant, Units 1 & 2. (ADAMS Accession No. ML073520077).
4
- 5 December 13, 2007 Letter from Rhianna Rogers, THPO Seminole Tribe of Florida, to J. P.
6 Leous, NRC, Regarding Archaeological Report: Vogtle Electric
7 Generating Plant. (ADAMS Accession No. ML080040114).
8
- 9 February 1, 2008 Letter from Tom Tynan, Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc., to
10 the NRC Regarding Vogtle License Renewal Application, Follow Up to
11 Severe Accident Mitigation Alternatives, Request for Additional
12 Information, Review Questions. (ADAMS Accession No. ML080360158).
13
- 14 February 11, 2008 Letter from J.P. Leous, NRC, to Southern Nuclear Operating Company,
15 Inc. Regarding Summary of Conference Call with Southern Nuclear
16 Operating Company, Inc. to Discuss the Severe Accident Mitigation
17 Alternatives Request for Additional Information Applicant Responses for
18 Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2. (ADAMS Accession No.
19 ML080240172).

Appendix D

Organizations Contacted

Appendix D

Organizations Contacted

During the course of the Staff's independent review of environmental impacts from operations during the renewal term, the following Federal, State, regional, local, and Native American tribal agencies were contacted:

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

National Marine Fisheries Service

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region IV

Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division

Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historical Preservation Division

The Pee Dee Tribe of South Carolina

The Waccamaw Indian People

Seminole Nation of Oklahoma

Muscogee (Creek) Nation

Thlopthlocco Tribal Town

Poarch Band of Creek Indians

The Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe

United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians

Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma

Eastern Cherokee, Southern Iroquois and United Tribes of South Carolina

The Santee Indian Organization

Appendix D

- 1 The Cherokee of Georgia
- 2
- 3 Catawba Indian Nation
- 4
- 5 The Beaver Creek Indians
- 6
- 7 The Wasaamasaw Tribe of Varnertown Indians
- 8
- 9 The Piedmont American Indian Association
- 10
- 11 The Pee Dee Indian Nation of Upper South Carolina
- 12
- 13 Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas
- 14
- 15 The American Indian Chamber of Commerce of South Carolina
- 16
- 17 Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana
- 18
- 19 Kialegee Tribal Town
- 20
- 21 Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians
- 22
- 23 Chickasaw Nation
- 24
- 25 Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida
- 26
- 27 United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians
- 28
- 29 The Chaloklowa Chickasaw Indian People
- 30
- 31 Seminole Tribe of Florida
- 32
- 33 Absentee-Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma
- 34
- 35 Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
- 36
- 37 Georgia Tribe of Eastern Cherokee
- 38
- 39 The American Cherokee Confederacy

Appendix E

Compliance Status and Consultation Correspondence

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Appendix E

Southern Nuclear Operating Company's (SNC) Compliance Status and Consultation Correspondence

Correspondence received during the process of evaluation of the application for renewal of the license for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2 (VEGP) is identified in Table E-1. Copies of the correspondence are included at the end of this appendix.

The licenses, permits, consultations, and other approvals obtained from Federal, State, regional, and local authorities for VEGP, are listed in Table E-2.

Table E-1. Consultation Correspondence

Source	Recipient	Date of Letter
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (R. Franovich)	State Historical Preservation Office (R. Luce)	August 22, 2007
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (R. Franovich)	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (D. Klima)	August 22, 2007
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (R. Franovich)	National Marine Fisheries Service (D. Bernhart)	August 22, 2007
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (R. Franovich)	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (S. Colwell)	August 22, 2007
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (R. Franovich)	Pee Dee Tribe of South Carolina (J. Caulder)	August 31, 2007 ^(a)
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (D. Bernhart)	U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (R. Franovich)	September 11, 2007
Miccosukee Tribe (S. Terry)	U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (R. Franovich)	October 3, 2007

^(a) Similar letters were sent to 34 other Native American Tribes listed in Appendix C.

Table E-2. Federal, State, Local, and Regional Licenses, Permits, Consultations, and Other Approvals for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant

Agency	Authority	Description	Number	Issue Date	Expiration Date	Remarks
NRC	10 CFR Part 50	Operating license, SSES	NPF-068	1/16/1987	01/16/2027	Authorizes operation of <u>Unit 1</u>
NRC	10 CFR Part 50	Operating license, SSES	NPF-081	2/9/1989	02/09/2029	Authorizes operation of <u>Unit 2</u>
FWS	Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (16 USC 1536)	Consultation	N/A	N/A	N/A	Requires a Federal agency to consult with FWS regarding whether a proposed action will affect endangered or threatened species
NMFS	Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (16 USC 1536)	Consultation	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division	Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 USC 470f)	Consultation	N/A	N/A	N/A	The National Historic Preservation Act requires Federal agencies to take into account the effect of any undertaking on any district, site, building, structure, or object that is included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.
U.S. Dept. of Transportation	49 USC 5108	Registration	051007550004P	6/15/2006	6/30/2008	Hazardous materials shipments
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Section 10 of River and Harbor Act of 1899 (33 USC 403)	Permit	200500606	8/24/2005	8/31/2010	Maintenance dredging in front of the river intake structure
Georgia Department of Natural Resources	Clean Water Act (33 USC 1251 et seq.), Georgia Water Quality Control Act, NPDES	Permit	GA0026786	6/30/1999	5/31/2004 administratively extended	Industrial wastewater discharges to Savannah River

Table E-2. (cont'd)

Agency	Authority	Description	Number	Issue Date	Expiration Date	Remarks
Georgia Department of Natural Resources	Clean Water Act (33 USC 1251 et seq.), Georgia Water Quality Control Act, NPDES	Permit	GAR000000	8/1/2006	7/31/2011	Industrial storm water discharges
Georgia Department of Natural Resources	Clean Water Act (33 USC 1251 et seq.), Georgia Water Quality Control Act, NPDES	Permit	GAR100001	8/13/2003	7/31/2008	Storm water discharges associated with construction activities for standalone construction projects
Georgia Department of Natural Resources	Clean Air Act (42 USC 7401 et seq), Georgia Air Quality Act (OCGA Section 12-9-1) and Georgia Rules for Air Quality Control (Chapter 391-3-1)	Operating Permit	4911-0333-0030-V-02-0	3/21/2006	3/21/2011	Installation of temporary boiler package in chemical cleaning of steam generators
Georgia Department of Natural Resources	Georgia Safe Drinking Water Act of 1977 (OCGA 12-5-170 et seq.) and Rules, Chapter 391-3-5	Permit	PG0330017	3/17/2006	4/14/2016	Operate nontransient noncommunity makeup wells – Plant Vogtle Makeup Wells #1 and #2A
Georgia Department of Natural Resources	Georgia Safe Drinking Water Act of 1977 (OCGA 12-5-170 et seq.) and Rules, Chapter 391-3-5	Permit	NG03300367	4/1/1998	3/31/2008	Operate public transient noncommunity water system – Plant Vogtle Employee Recreation Area
Georgia Department of Natural Resources	Georgia Safe Drinking Water Act of 1977 (OCGA 12-5-170 et seq.) and Rules, Chapter 391-3-5	Permit	PG0330035	4/1/1998	3/31/2008	Operate public non-transient noncommunity water system – Plant Vogtle Simulator Building

Table E-2. (cont'd)

Agency	Authority	Description	Number	Issue Date	Expiration Date	Remarks
Georgia Department of Natural Resources	Georgia Water Quality Control Act, Rules and Regulations for Water Quality Control, Chapter 391-3-6	Permit	017-0191-05	4/17/2000	9/1/2010	Withdraw surface water from the Savannah River for the purpose of cooling and in-plant use
Georgia Department of Natural Resources	Provisions of the Groundwater Use Act (GA Laws 1972, p 976 et seq. as amended by GA Laws 1973, p 1273 et seq.) and Rules and Regulations	Permit	017-0003	3/24/2000	8/6/2010	Withdraw 6 million gpd groundwater from 8 wells in the Cretaceous Sand Aquifer for sanitary facilities, central water supply, cooling water, process water and irrigation
Georgia Department of Natural Resources	Georgia Solid Waste Management Act, Act 1486, Georgia Laws of 1972, as amended and Rules and Regulations	Permit	017-006D(L)(I) No. 2	7/10/1981	None	Dispose of 1500 cubic yards of asbestos transite board and cement asbestos pipe materials
Georgia Department of Natural Resources	Georgia Solid Waste Management Act, Act 1486, p. 1002 et seq. as amended	Permit	017-007D(L)(I) No. 3	6/15/1987	None	Dispose of nonhazardous, nonputrescible waste
Georgia Department of Natural Resources	Rules for Solid Waste Management, Section 391-3-4-.06(3)(a)	Permit by Rule Operations	PBR-017-07COL	11/13/2000	None	Collect and transport nonhazardous, nonindustrial, putrescible waste for disposal in permitted MSWLF
State of Georgia Public Service Commission	Transportation of Hazardous Materials Act, Act 394 at OCGA 46:11	Notification of shipment of hazardous materials – permit by rule	DOT Hazardous Materials Certification 051007 550 004P	5/11/2007	6/30/2008	Transportation of radioactive materials in the state of Georgia

Table E-2. (cont'd)

Agency	Authority	Description	Number	Issue Date	Expiration Date	Remarks
South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control – Division of Waste Management	South Carolina Radioactive Waste Transportation and Disposal Act (Act No. 429)	South Carolina Radioactive Waste Transport Permit	0311-10-08-X	12/14/2006	12/31/2008	Transportation of radioactive waste into the state of South Carolina
State of Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation Division of Radiological Health	Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation Rule 1200-2-10.32	Tennessee Radioactive Waste License-for-Delivery	T-GA003-L08	01/01/2007	12/31/2008	Transportation of radioactive waste into the state of Tennessee

Appendix E

August 22, 2007

Dr. Ray Luce
Historical Preservation Division
Georgia Department of Natural Resources
34 Peachtree St., Suite 1600
Atlanta, GA 30303-2316

SUBJECT: VOGTLE ELECTRIC GENERATING PLANT, UNITS 1 AND 2, LICENSE
RENEWAL APPLICATION REVIEW

Dear Dr. Luce:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff is reviewing a license renewal application (LRA) submitted by Southern Nuclear Operating Company (SNC or the applicant) dated June 27, 2007 for the renewal of the operating licenses for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2 (VEGP), pursuant to Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 54 (10 CFR Part 54). VEGP is located approximately 15 miles east-northeast of Waynesboro, Georgia and 26 miles southeast of Augusta, Georgia.

The NRC has established that, as part of the staff review of any nuclear power plant license renewal action, a site-specific Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to its "Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants," NUREG-1437, will be prepared under the provisions of 10 CFR Part 51, the NRC's regulation that implements the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). In accordance with 36 CFR 800.8(c), the SEIS will include analyses of potential impacts to historic and cultural resources.

In the context of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the NRC staff has determined that the area of potential effect (APE) for a license renewal action is the area at the power plant site and its immediate environs that may be impacted by post-license renewal land-disturbing operations or projected refurbishment activities associated with the proposed action. The APE may extend beyond the immediate environs in those instances where post-license renewal land-disturbing operations or projected refurbishment activities specifically related to license renewal, may potentially have an effect on known or proposed historic sites. This determination is made irrespective of ownership or control of the lands of interest.

On September 27, 2007, the NRC will conduct two public NEPA scoping meetings at the Augusta Technical College Waynesboro Campus, 216 Highway 24 South, Waynesboro, GA. The first meeting will convene at 1:30 p.m. and will continue until 4:30 p.m., as necessary. The second meeting will convene at 7:00 p.m., with a repeat of the overview portions of the first meeting, and will continue until 10:00 p.m., as necessary. You and your staff are invited to attend. The staff expects to publish the draft SEIS in May 2008. Your office will receive a copy of the draft SEIS along with a request for comments.

R. Luce

-2-

If you have any questions, regarding the NRC staff review of this LRA, please contact Mr. J.P. Leous, the Environmental Project Manager, at 301-415-2864 or via e-mail at jpl1@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Rani Franovich, Branch Chief
Environmental Branch B
Division of License Renewal
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-424 and 50-425

cc: See next page

Appendix E

R. Luce

-2-

If you have any questions, regarding the NRC staff review of this LRA, please contact Mr. J.P. Leous, the Environmental Project Manager, at 301-415-2864 or by e-mail at jpl1@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Rani Franovich, Branch Chief
Environmental Branch B
Division of License Renewal
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-424 and 50-425

cc: See next page

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ADAMS Accession No.: **ML072060519**

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OFFICIAL RECORD COPY

Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Units 1 and 2

cc:

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Appendix E

August 22, 2007

Mr. Don L. Klima, Director
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Office of Federal Agency Programs
1100 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Suite 803
Washington, DC 20004

SUBJECT: VOGTLE ELECTRIC GENERATING PLANT, UNITS 1 AND 2, LICENSE
RENEWAL APPLICATION REVIEW

Dear Mr. Klima:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff is reviewing an application to renew the operating licenses for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2 (VEGP), which is located approximately 15 miles east-northeast of Waynesboro, Georgia and 26 miles southeast of Augusta, Georgia. VEGP is operated by Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (SNC). The application for renewal was submitted by SNC on June 29, 2007, pursuant to Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 54 (10 CFR Part 54).

The NRC has established that, as part of the staff's review of any nuclear power plant license renewal action, a site-specific Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to its "Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants," NUREG-1437, will be prepared under the provisions of 10 CFR Part 51, the NRC's regulation that implements the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). In accordance with 36 CFR 800.8(c), the SEIS will include analyses of potential impacts to historic and cultural resources.

The NRC staff plans to hold two public NEPA scoping meetings on September 27, 2007, at the Augusta Technical College Waynesboro Campus, 216 Highway 24 South, Waynesboro, GA. The first meeting will convene at 1:30 p.m. and will continue until 4:30 p.m., as necessary. The second meeting will convene at 7:00 p.m., with a repeat of the overview portions of the first meeting, and will continue until 10:00 p.m., as necessary. In addition, during the week of October 15, 2007, the NRC staff plans to conduct a site audit at VEGP. You and your staff are invited to attend both the public meetings and the site audit. Your office will receive a copy of the draft SEIS along with a request for comments. The anticipated publication date for the draft SEIS is May 2008.

D. Klima

-2-

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact the Environmental Project Manager, Mr. J.P. Leous, at 301-415-2864 or via e-mail at jpl1@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Rani Franovich, Branch Chief
Environmental Branch B
Division of License Renewal
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-424 and 50-425

cc: See next page

Appendix E

D. Klima

-2-

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact the Environmental Project Manager, Mr. J.P. Leous, at 301-415-2864 or via e-mail at jpl1@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Rani Franovich, Branch Chief
Environmental Branch B
Division of License Renewal
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-424 and 50-425

cc: See next page

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Adams Accession No. **ML072060568**

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DATE	7/31/07	8/1/07	8/13/07	8/22/07

OFFICIAL RECORD COPY

Vogtle Electric Generating Units 1 & 2

cc:

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August 22, 2007

Mr. David Bernhart
Assistant Regional Administrator
National Marine Fisheries Service
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR A LIST OF PROTECTED SPECIES AND ESSENTIAL FISH
HABITAT WITHIN THE AREA UNDER EVALUATION FOR THE VOGTLE
ELECTRIC GENERATING PLANT, UNITS 1 AND 2, LICENSE RENEWAL
APPLICATION REVIEW

Dear Mr. Bernhart:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is reviewing an application submitted by Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc., for the renewal of the operating licenses for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2 (VEGP). VEGP is located on the southwest side of the Savannah River in eastern Burke County Georgia. It is approximately 15 miles east-northeast of Waynesboro, Georgia, and 26 miles southeast of Augusta, Georgia. As part of the review of the license renewal application, the NRC is preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended. The SEIS includes an analysis of pertinent environmental issues, including endangered or threatened species and impacts to marine resources and habitat. This letter is being submitted under the provisions of the Endangered Species Act of 1973; as amended, the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1934; as amended; and the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996.

The proposed action is to renew the facility operating licenses for VEGP for an additional 20 years beyond the expiration of the current operating license. The proposed action would include the use and continued maintenance of existing plant facilities and transmission lines. The VEGP industrial facility covers approximately 3,169-acres. Enclosures 1 and 2 provide a general overview of the site location and site layout.

VEGP is equipped with two cooling towers that withdraw makeup water from and discharge it to the Savannah River. The river water intake system includes the intake canal, a four-bay intake structure, four intake pumps, condensers, two natural draft cooling towers, and an underground single port discharge pipe into the Savannah River.

Approximately 360 miles of corridor that occupy approximately 7,200 acres are within the scope of review for this action. The Environmental Report lists six transmission lines that Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc., built to connect VEGP to the transmission system (Enclosure 3):

- Scherer – This 500-kV line runs generally westward to Plant Scherer, north of Macon, Georgia. Built in 1986, it is 154 miles long and in a corridor that is mostly 150 feet wide, but up to 400 feet wide in some locations.

D. Bernhart

-2-

- West McIntosh (Thalmann) – Running 69 miles to the south, this 500-kV line, in a 150-foot wide corridor, connects VEGP to the West McIntosh substation near Plant McIntosh, just north of Savannah, Georgia. It then continues for 90 miles to its termination at the Thalmann substation near Brunswick.
- Goshen (Black) and Goshen (White) – The two 230-kV Goshen lines connect to the Goshen substation approximately 19 corridor miles from VEGP. The corridor is 275 feet wide and the lines were built in 1986. These two lines, plus 17 miles of the Augusta Newsprint line, share the corridor.
- Augusta Newsprint – The Augusta Newsprint substation is approximately 20 corridor miles from VEGP. The corridor is 275 feet wide until the 230-kV Augusta Newsprint line diverges from the Goshen lines at 17 miles and is 100 to 125 feet wide for the remaining distance.
- SCE&G – Built in 1986, this 230-kV line runs north and east for 4.5 miles to cross the Savannah River and then an additional 17 miles to a substation operated by SCE&G. The corridor in South Carolina is 100 feet wide and the Georgia segment is 125 feet wide.
- Wilson – This 1.4-mile long transmission line is wholly contained on Georgia Power Company property. It connects VEGP to Plant Wilson at 230-kV. The corridor is 150 feet wide. Enclosure 3 shows the transmission system of interest.

To support the SEIS preparation process and to ensure compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the NRC requests a list of species and information on protected, proposed, and candidate species and critical habitat that may be in the vicinity of VEGP and its associated transmission line right-of-way. In addition, please provide any information you consider appropriate under the provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act. Also, in support of the SEIS preparation and to ensure compliance with Section 305 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the NRC requests a list of essential fish habitat that has been designated in the vicinity of the VEGP site and its associated transmission line corridors.

The NRC staff plans to hold two public NEPA scoping meetings on September 27, 2007, at the August Technical College Waynesboro Campus, 216 Highway 24 South, Waynesboro, GA. The first meeting will convene at 1:30 p.m. and will continue until 4:30 p.m., as necessary. The second meeting will convene at 7:00 p.m., with a repeat of the overview portions of the first meeting, and will continue until 10:00 p.m., as necessary. In addition, during the week of October 15, 2007, the NRC staff plans to conduct a site audit at VEGP. You and your staff are invited to attend both the public meetings and the site audit. Your office will receive a copy of the draft SEIS along with a request for comments. The anticipated publication date for the draft SEIS is May 2008.

Appendix E

D. Bernhart

-3-

If you have any questions regarding the NRC staff review of this license renewal application, please contact the NRC Environmental Project Manager, Mr. J.P. Leous, at 301-415-2864 or via e-mail at jpl1@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Rani Franovich, Branch Chief
Environmental Branch B
Division of License Renewal
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-424 and 50-425

Enclosures:

1. 50 mile radius
2. Site layout
3. Transmission line map

cc w/encls: See next page

D. Bernhart

-3-

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Sincerely,

/RA/

Rani Franovich, Branch Chief
Environmental Branch B
Division of License Renewal
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-424 and 50-425

Enclosures:

1. 50 mile radius
2. Site layout
3. Transmission line map

cc w/encls: See next page

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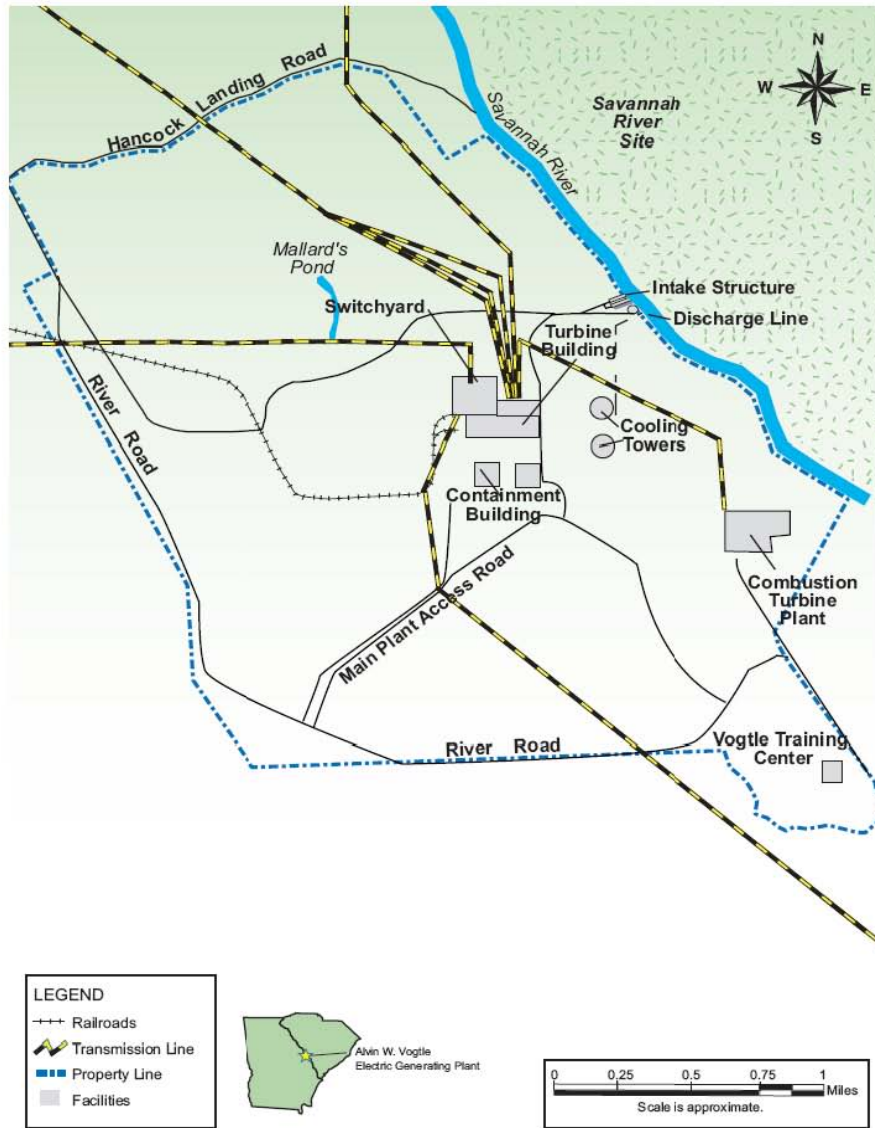
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Appendix E

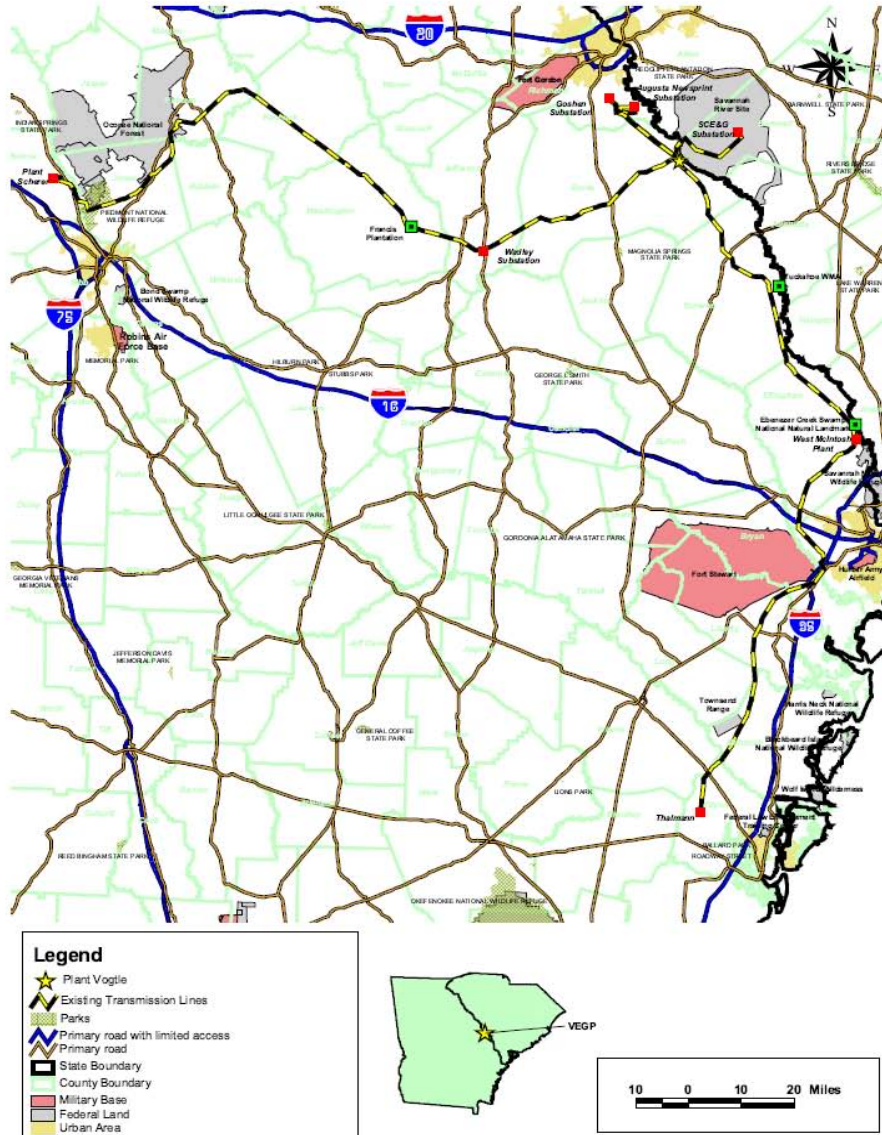


Enclosure 1



Enclosure 2

Appendix E



Enclosure 3

Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Units 1 and 2

cc:

Mr. Tom E. Tynan
Vice President - Vogtle
Vogtle Electric Generating Plant
7821 River Road
Waynesboro, GA 30830

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Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc.
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Executive Vice President
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P.O. Box 1295
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Mr. Steven M. Jackson
Senior Engineer - Power Supply
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Office of the County Commissioner
Burke County Commission
Waynesboro, GA 30830

Ms. Julie Keys
Nuclear Energy Institute
1776 I Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20006-3708

August 22, 2007

Mr. Strant Colwell, Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
4270 Norwich St.
Brunswick, GA 31520

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR A LIST OF PROTECTED SPECIES WITHIN THE AREA
UNDER EVALUATION FOR THE VOGTLE ELECTRIC GENERATING PLANT,
UNITS 1 AND 2, LICENSE RENEWAL APPLICATION REVIEW

Dear Mr. Colwell:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff is reviewing an application submitted by Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc., for the renewal of the operating licenses for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2 (VEGP). VEGP is located on the southwest side of the Savannah River in eastern Burke County Georgia. It is approximately 15 miles east-northeast of Waynesboro, Georgia, and 26 miles southeast of Augusta, Georgia. As part of the review of the license renewal application, the NRC is preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended. The SEIS includes an analysis of pertinent environmental issues, including endangered or threatened species and impacts to fish and wildlife. This letter is being submitted under the provisions of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1934, as amended.

The proposed action is to renew the operating licenses for VEGP for an additional 20 years beyond the expiration of the current operating licenses. The proposed action would include the use and continued maintenance of existing plant facilities and transmission lines. The VEGP industrial facility covers approximately 3,169-acres. Enclosures 1 and 2 provide a general overview of the site location and site layout.

VEGP is equipped with two cooling towers that withdraw makeup water from and discharge it to the Savannah River. The river water intake system includes the intake canal, a four-bay intake structure, four intake pumps, condensers, two natural draft cooling towers, and an underground single port discharge pipe into the Savannah River.

Approximately 360 miles of corridor that occupy approximately 7,200 acres are within the scope of review for this action. The Environmental Report lists six transmission lines that Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc., built to connect VEGP to the transmission system (Enclosure 3):

- Scherer – This 500-kV line runs generally westward to Plant Scherer, north of Macon, Georgia. Built in 1986, it is 154 miles long and in a corridor that is mostly 150 feet wide, but up to 400 feet wide in some locations.

S. Colwell

-2-

- West McIntosh (Thalman) – Running 69 miles to the south, this 500-kV line, in a 150-foot wide corridor, connects VEGP to the West McIntosh substation near Plant McIntosh, just north of Savannah, Georgia. It then continues for 90 miles to its termination at the Thalman substation near Brunswick.
- Goshen (Black) and Goshen (White) – The two 230-kV Goshen lines connect to the Goshen substation approximately 19 corridor miles from VEGP. The corridor is 275 feet wide and the lines were built in 1986. These two lines, plus 17 miles of the Augusta Newsprint line, share the corridor.
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- Wilson – This 1.4-mile long transmission line is wholly contained on Georgia Power Company property. It connects VEGP to Plant Wilson at 230-kV. The corridor is 150 feet wide. Enclosure 3 shows the transmission system of interest.

To support the SEIS preparation process and to ensure compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the NRC requests a list of species and information on protected, proposed, and candidate species and critical habitat that may be in the vicinity of VEGP and its associated transmission line right-of-way. In addition, please provide any information you consider appropriate under the provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act.

The NRC staff plans to hold two public NEPA scoping meetings on September 27, 2007, at the Augusta Technical College Waynesboro Campus, 216 Highway 24 South, Waynesboro, GA. The first meeting will convene at 1:30 p.m. and will continue until 4:30 p.m., as necessary. The second meeting will convene at 7:00 p.m., with a repeat of the overview portions of the first meeting, and will continue until 10:00 p.m., as necessary. In addition, during the week of October 15, 2007, the NRC staff plans to conduct a site audit at VEGP. You and your staff are invited to attend both the public meetings and the site audit. Your office will receive a copy of the draft SEIS along with a request for comments. The anticipated publication date for the draft SEIS is May 2008.

Appendix E

S. Colwell

-3-

If you have any questions regarding the NRC staff review of this license renewal application, please contact the NRC Environmental Project Manager, Mr. J.P. Leous, at 301-415-2864 or via e-mail at jpl1@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Rani Franovich, Branch Chief
Environmental Branch B
Division of License Renewal
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-424, 50-425

Enclosures:

1. 50 mile radius
2. Site layout
3. Transmission Map

cc w/encls: See next page

S. Colwell

-3-

If you have any questions regarding the NRC staff review of this license renewal application, please contact the NRC Environmental Project Manager, Mr. J.P. Leous, at 301-415-2864 or via e-mail at jpl1@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Rani Franovich, Branch Chief
 Environmental Branch B
 Division of License Renewal
 Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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Appendix E

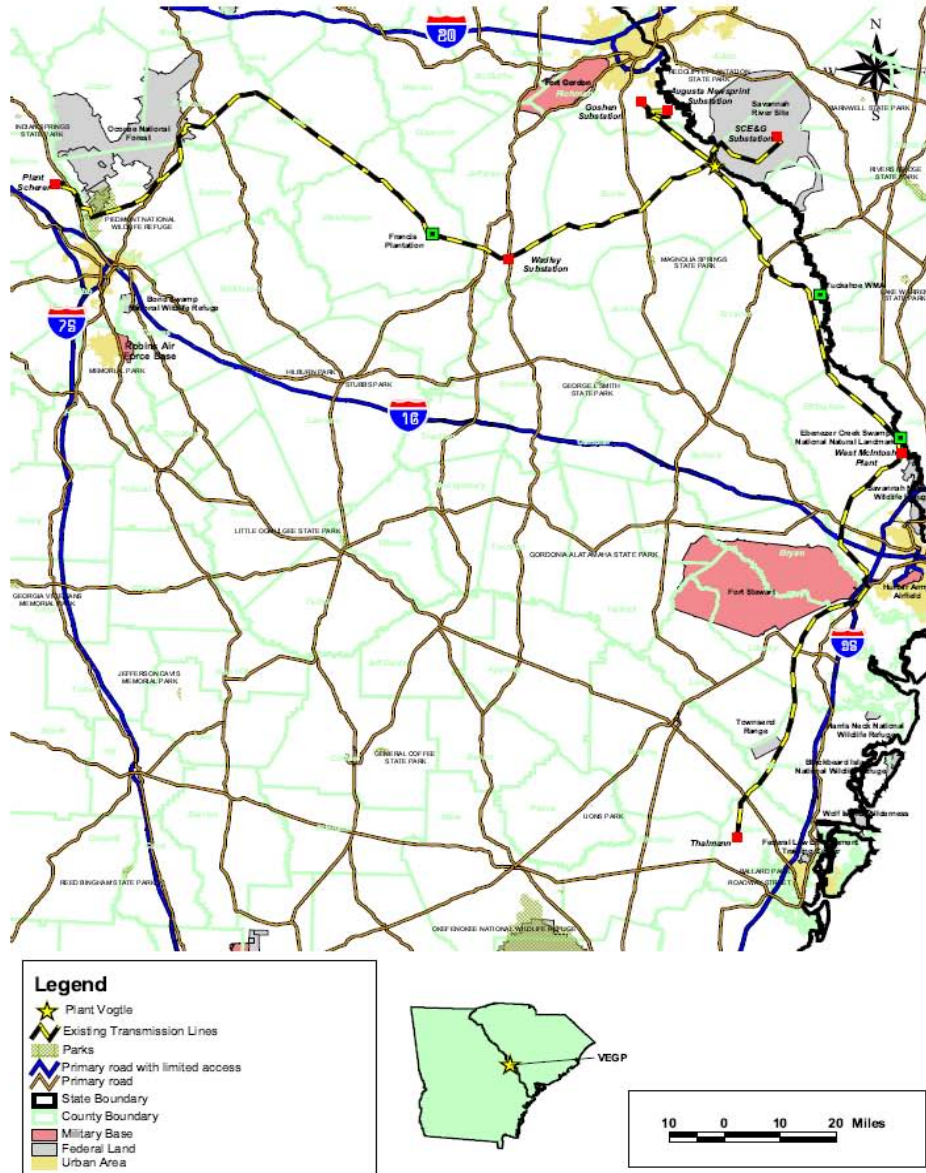


Enclosure 1



Enclosure 2

Appendix E



Enclosure 3

Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2

cc:

Mr. Tom E. Tynan
Vice President - Vogtle
Vogtle Electric Generating Plant
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Office of the County Commissioner
Burke County Commission
Waynesboro, GA 30830

Ms. Julie Keys
Nuclear Energy Institute
1776 I Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20006-3708

August 31, 2007

Ms. Carolyn Chavis Bolton, Chief
The Pee Dee Indian Nation of Upper
South Carolina
3814 Highway 57 N.
Little Rock, SC 29576

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR COMMENTS CONCERNING THE VOGTLE ELECTRIC
GENERATING PLANT, UNITS 1 AND 2, LICENSE RENEWAL APPLICATION
REVIEW

Dear Chief Bolton:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is seeking input for its environmental review of an application from Southern Nuclear Operating Company (SNC or the applicant) for the renewal of the operating licenses for the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2 (VEGP), located in Waynesboro, Burke County, Georgia. VEGP is in close proximity to lands that may be of interest to the Pee Dee Indian Nation of Upper South Carolina. As described below, the NRC's process includes an opportunity for public and inter-governmental participation in the environmental review. We want to ensure that you are aware of our efforts and, pursuant to Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR) Part 51, Section 51.28(b), the NRC invites the Pee Dee Indian Nation of Upper South Carolina to provide input to the scoping process relating to the NRC's environmental review of the application. In addition, as outlined in 36 CFR 800.8(c), the NRC plans to coordinate compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 through the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

Under NRC regulations, the original operating license for a nuclear power plant is issued for up to 40 years. The license may be renewed for up to an additional 20 years if NRC requirements are met. The current operating licenses for VEGP will expire in 2027 and 2029. SNC submitted its application for renewal of the VEGP operating licenses in a letter dated June 27, 2007.

The NRC is gathering information for a VEGP site-specific supplement to its "Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants" (GEIS), NUREG-1437. The supplement will contain the results of the review of the environmental impacts on the area surrounding the VEGP site related to terrestrial ecology, aquatic ecology, hydrology, cultural resources, and socioeconomic issues (among others) and will contain a recommendation regarding the environmental acceptability of the license renewal action. Provided for your information is the VEGP Site Layout (Enclosure 1) and Transmission Line Map (Enclosure 2).

C. Bolton

-2-

To accommodate interested members of the public, the NRC will hold two public scoping meetings for the VEGP license renewal supplement to the GEIS on September 27, 2007, at the Augusta Technical College Waynesboro Campus, located at 216 Highway 24 South, Waynesboro, GA. There will be two sessions to accommodate interested parties. The first session will convene at 1:30 p.m. and will continue until 4:30 p.m., as necessary. The second session will convene at 7:00 p.m., with a repeat of the overview portions of the first meeting, and will continue until 10:00 p.m., as necessary. Additionally, the NRC staff will host informal discussions one hour before the start of each session.

The license renewal application (LRA) and the GEIS are publicly available at the NRC Public Document Room (PDR), located at One White Flint North, 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland 20852, or from the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS). The ADAMS Public Electronic Reading Room is accessible at <http://adamswebsearch.nrc.gov/dologin.htm>. The Accession Number for the LRA is ML071840360, and ML071840357 for the environmental report. Persons who do not have access to ADAMS, or who encounter problems in accessing the documents located in ADAMS, should contact the NRC's PDR Reference staff by telephone at 1-800-397-4209 or 301-415-4737, or by e-mail at pdr@nrc.gov.

The VEGP LRA is also available on the Internet at www.nrc.gov/reactors/operating/licensing/renewal/applications/vogtle.html. In addition, the Burke County Library, located at 130 Highway 24 South, Waynesboro, GA, has agreed to make the LRA available for public inspection.

The GEIS, which documents the NRC's assessment of the scope and impact of environmental effects that would be associated with license renewal at any nuclear power plant site, can also be found at the Burke County Library, on the NRC's website, and at the NRC's PDR.

Please submit any comments that the Pee Dee Indian Nation of Upper South Carolina may have to offer on the scope of the environmental review by October 24, 2007. Written comments should be submitted by mail to the Chief, Rules and Directives Branch, Division of Administrative Services, Mail Stop T-6D59, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001. Electronic comments may be submitted to the NRC by e-mail at Vogtle_LR_EIS@nrc.gov. At the conclusion of the scoping process, the NRC staff will prepare a summary of the significant issues identified and the conclusions reached, and mail a copy to you.

Appendix E

C. Bolton

-3-

The staff expects to publish the draft supplement to the GEIS in May 2008. The NRC will hold another set of public meetings in the site vicinity to solicit comments on the draft supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS). A copy of the draft SEIS will be sent to you for your review and comment. After consideration of public comments received on the draft, the NRC will prepare a final SEIS. The issuance of a final SEIS for VEGP is planned for January 2009. If you need additional information regarding the environmental review process, please contact JP Leous, Environmental Project Manager, at 301-415-2864 or at jpl1@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA Jennifer Davis for/

Rani L. Franovich, Branch Chief
Environmental Branch B
Division of License Renewal
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-424 and 50-425

Enclosures:

1. Site Layout
2. Transmission Line Map

cc w/encls: See next page

C. Bolton

-3-

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Sincerely,

/RA Jennifer Davis for/

Rani L. Franovich, Branch Chief
 Environmental Branch B
 Division of License Renewal
 Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-424 and 50-425

Enclosures:

1. Site Layout
2. Transmission Line Map

cc w/encls: See next page

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Appendix E

Letter to C. Bolton from R. Franovich, dated August 31, 2007

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR COMMENTS CONCERNING THE VOGTLE ELECTRIC
GENERATING PLANT UNITS 1 AND 2 LICENSE RENEWAL APPLICATION
REVIEW

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Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2

cc:

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Manager, Licensing
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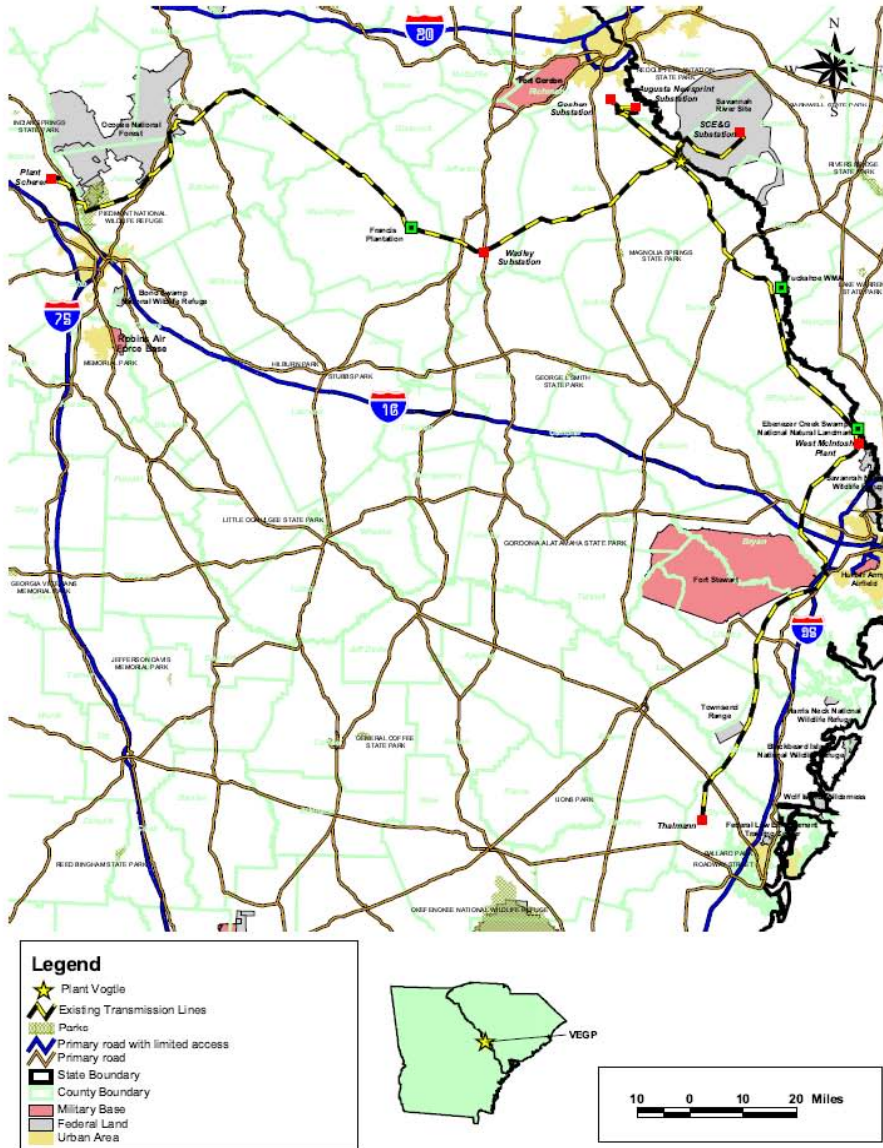
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Burke County Commission
Waynesboro, GA 30830

Ms. Julie Keys
Nuclear Energy Institute
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Washington, DC 20006-3708

Appendix E



Enclosure 1



Enclosure 2



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

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St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 824-5312, FAX (727) 824-5309
<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>

SEP 11 2007

F/SER3:TM

Rani Franovich, Branch Chief
Environmental Branch B
Division of License Renewal
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555-0001

Dear Mr. Franovich:

This correspondence responds to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) letter dated August 22, 2007, regarding the renewal of operating licenses for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2 (VEGP) in Burke County, Georgia.

As requested, enclosed is a list of federally-protected species under the jurisdiction of the National Marine Fisheries Service for the state of Georgia.

We look forward to continued cooperation with the NRC in conserving our endangered and threatened resources. If you have any questions regarding the ESA consultation process, please contact Mr. Robert Hoffman, fishery biologist, at (727) 824-5312, or by e-mail at Robert.Hoffman@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,

David M. Bernhart
Assistant Regional Administrator
Protected Resources Division

Enclosure

File: 1514-22.M NRC





Endangered and Threatened Species and Critical Habitats
under the Jurisdiction of the NOAA Fisheries Service



Georgia

Listed Species	Scientific Name	Status	Date Listed
Marine Mammals			
blue whale	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>	Endangered	12/02/70
finback whale	<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>	Endangered	12/02/70
humpback whale	<i>Megaptera novaengliae</i>	Endangered	12/02/70
right whale	<i>Eubalaena glacialis</i>	Endangered	12/02/70
sei whale	<i>Balaenoptera borealis</i>	Endangered	12/02/70
sperm whale	<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>	Endangered	12/02/70
Turtles			
green sea turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>	Threatened ¹	07/28/78
hawksbill sea turtle	<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>	Endangered	06/02/70
Kemp's ridley sea turtle	<i>Lepidochelys kempii</i>	Endangered	12/02/70
leatherback sea turtle	<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>	Endangered	06/02/70
loggerhead sea turtle	<i>Caretta caretta</i>	Threatened	07/28/78
Fish			
shortnose sturgeon	<i>Acipenser brevirostrum</i>	Endangered	03/11/67
smalltooth sawfish	<i>Pristis pectinata</i>	Endangered	04/01/03

Designated Critical Habitat

Right whale: Between 31°15'N (approximately the mouth of the Altamaha River, Georgia) and 30°15'N (approximately Jacksonville, Florida) from the coast out to 15 nautical miles offshore; the coastal waters between 30°15'N and 28°00'N (approximately Sebastian Inlet, Florida) from the coast out to 5 nautical miles.

Species Proposed for Listing

None

Proposed Critical Habitat

None

¹ Green turtles are listed as threatened, except for breeding populations of green turtles in Florida and on the Pacific Coast of Mexico, which are listed as endangered



Georgia

Candidate Species ²	Scientific Name
None	

Species of Concern ³	Scientific Name
Fish	
Atlantic sturgeon	<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus</i>
dusky shark	<i>Carcharhinus obscurus</i>
night shark	<i>Carcharinus signatus</i>
sand tiger shark	<i>Carcharias taurus</i>
speckled hind	<i>Epinephelus drummondhayi</i>
Warsaw grouper	<i>Epinephelus nigritus</i>
white marlin	<i>Tetrapturus albidus</i>

² The Candidate Species List has been renamed the Species of Concern List. The term "candidate species" is limited to species that are the subject of a petition to list and for which NOAA Fisheries Service has determined that listing may be warranted (69 FR 19975).

³ Species of Concern are not protected under the Endangered Species Act, but concerns about their status indicate that they may warrant listing in the future. Federal agencies and the public are encouraged to consider these species during project planning so that future listings may be avoided.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
REGIONAL OFFICE
263 13th AVENUE SOUTH
ST. PETERSBURG, FL 33701

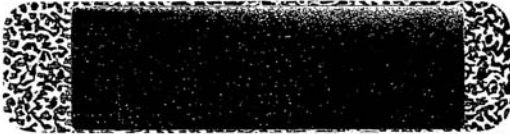
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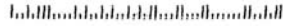


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Appendix E

From: "Steve Terry" <SteveT@miccosukeetribe.com>
To: <VOgtle_LR_EIS@nrc.gov>
Date: Wed, Oct 3, 2007 12:17 PM
Subject: The Miccosukee Tribal Elders have decided that the Tribe will limit itself to those matters within t

The Miccosukee Tribal Elders have decided that the Tribe will limit itself to those matters within the State of Florida. Therefore, the Tribe will defer to the wishes of the other Tribes which have a more direct cultural affiliation with this site.

Thank you for consulting with the Miccosukee Tribe. Please call me at 305.223.8380, Ext. 2243, if you require additional information.

Steve Terry
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Miccosukee Tribe
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Stevet@miccosukeetribe.com

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Return-path: <SteveT@miccosukeetrib.com>
Received: from mail2.nrc.gov [148.184.176.43] by NRNWMS02.NRC.GOV
Wed, 03 Oct 2007 12:16:49 -0400
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Message-Id: <s7038829.033@mit_ms2.miccosukeetrib.com>
X-Mailer: Novell_GroupWise Internet Agent 6.5.4
Received: Wed, 03 Oct 2007 12:16:06 -0400
From: "Steve Terry" <SteveT@miccosukeetrib.com>
To: <VOgtle_LR_EIS@nrc.gov>
Subject: The Miccosukee Tribal Elders have decided that the Tribe will limit
itself to those matters within t
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Biological Assessment

Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Units 1 and 2 License Renewal

April 2008

Docket Numbers 50-424 and 50-425

**U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Rockville, Maryland**

1 **Biological Assessment of the Potential Effects on Federally Listed**
2 **Endangered or Threatened Species from the Proposed License**
3 **Renewal for the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant**
4
5

6 **1.0 Introduction and Purpose**
7

8 The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) issues operating licenses for domestic nuclear
9 power plants in accordance with the provisions of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended,
10 and NRC implementing regulations. The NRC is reviewing an application submitted by
11 Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (SNC) for the renewal of operating licenses NPF-68
12 and NPF-81 for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Units 1 and 2 (VEGP) for 20 years beyond the
13 current operating license expiration dates of January 16, 2027 for Unit 1 and February 9, 2029
14 for Unit 2 (NRC's Agency-wide Documents Access and Management System [ADAMS]
15 accession no. ML071840360). The purpose and need for this proposed action is to provide an
16 option that permits electric power generation to continue beyond the term of the current nuclear
17 power plant operating license, allowing future electric generating needs to be met, if the
18 operator and State regulatory agencies pursue that option.
19

20 The SNC, which operates VEGP, prepared an Environmental Report (SNC 2007a; ADAMS
21 accession no. ML071840357) as part of its application for the renewal of the VEGP operating
22 licenses. In the Environmental Report, SNC analyzed the environmental impacts associated
23 with the proposed license renewal action, considered alternatives to the proposed action, and
24 evaluated mitigation measures for reducing adverse environmental effects. The NRC is using
25 the Environmental Report and additional information as the basis for this Biological Assessment
26 (BA) and a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), a plant-specific supplement
27 to the *Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants*,
28 NUREG-1437 (NRC 1996), referred to hereafter as the GEIS.
29

30 Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, NRC staff
31 requested in a letter dated August 22, 2007 (NRC 2007a) that the National Marine Fisheries
32 Service (NMFS) provide information on Federally listed endangered or threatened species, as
33 well as proposed or candidate species, and any designated critical habitats that may occur in
34 the vicinity of VEGP. In its response, the NMFS provided a list of Federally protected species
35 under its jurisdiction for the State of Georgia (NMFS 2007).
36

37 Although the NRC staff does not believe that license renewal would adversely affect the
38 Federally listed species under NMFS jurisdiction, the Staff has prepared this BA to document its
39 review. This BA examines the potential effects of the continued operation of VEGP on the
40 Federally endangered and threatened species under NMFS jurisdiction that potentially could
41 occur in the vicinity of the VEGP site and its associated transmission line right-of-ways (ROWs).

2.0 Site Description

The proposed Federal action is renewal of the operating license for VEGP. The VEGP facility is located in Burke County, Georgia, approximately 15 miles (mi) east-northeast of Waynesboro, Georgia and 26 mi southeast of Augusta, Georgia. The location of the facility and the areas within 6 mi of the facility are shown in Figure 2-1 (SNC 2007a). The Savannah River borders the VEGP site on the north and east. The VEGP site, covering 3169 acres (ac), is located between river mile (RM) 150 and 152 (river kilometer [rkm] 241 and 244). Terrestrial resources found within the VEGP site and associated transmission line ROWs include upland, riparian, and bottomland forest communities, as well as ponds, streams, and wetlands. Fauna consists mainly of wildlife species commonly found in eastern Georgia, including mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians.

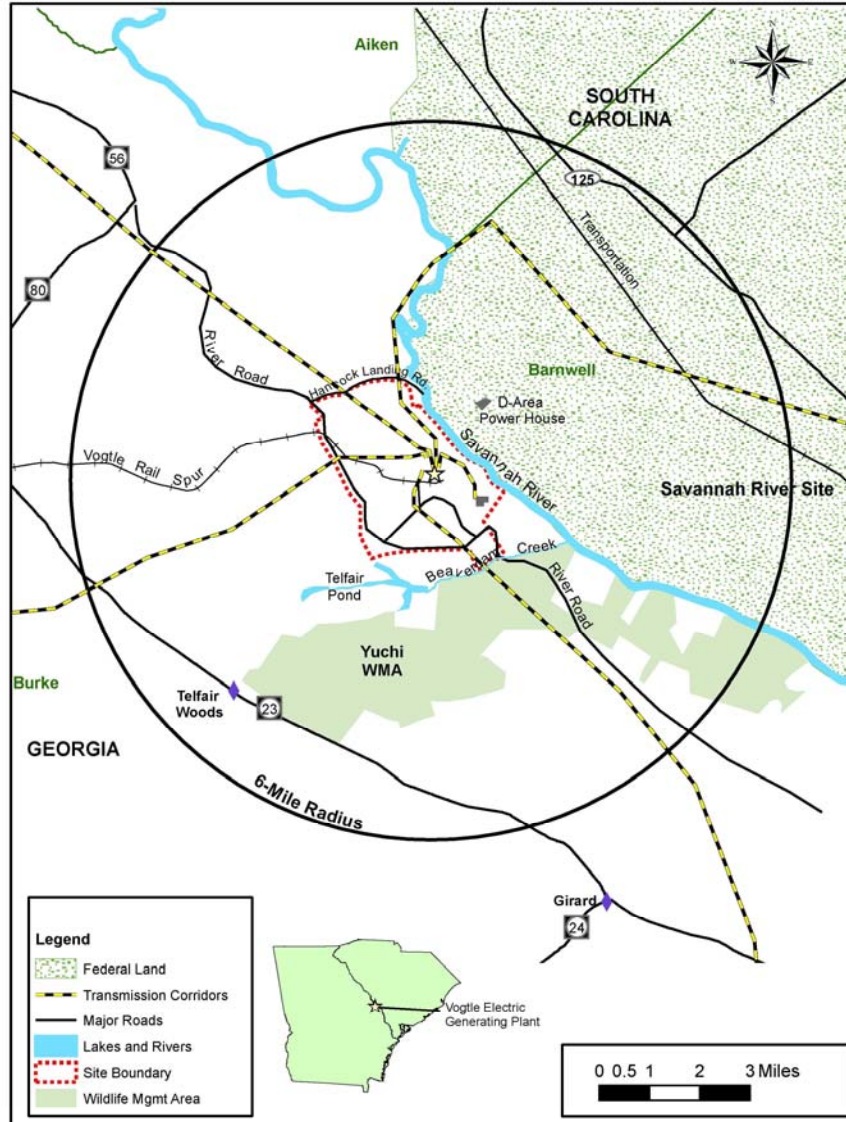
Located directly across the river from VEGP is the Savannah River Site (SRS), a Federally owned Department of Energy (DOE) facility that covers a total area of 310 square mi. Although SRS is not specifically associated with the proposed relicensing of VEGP and is not owned or maintained by SNC, its close proximity, the types of operations historically conducted at SRS, and the numerous ecological studies that have been conducted in conjunction with SRS have made it particularly relevant to the evaluation of VEGP impacts on the Savannah River. Five nuclear reactors and two processing facilities for the production of nuclear weapons materials were built on SRS, with construction completed in 1955. The SRS reactors utilized once-through cooling systems that withdrew water from the Savannah River, and the heated water was discharged to tributaries of the river (Reed et al. 2002). All SRS nuclear reactors were shut down by 1989, though other nuclear-related operations, research and development, environmental remediation, and ecological studies are ongoing at the facility (Reed et al. 2002).

The VEGP site is within the reach referred to as the middle Savannah River, a segment extending from the Fall Line (a line along which waterfalls occur at the transition from the Piedmont to the Coastal Plain) just above Kiokee Creek in Columbia County, Georgia at RM 221 south to the mouth of Brier Creek at RM 97 in Screven County, Georgia (Figure 3-2). The Savannah River watershed is approximately 10,579 square mi (USACE 1996). From the Hartwell Dam, the Savannah River flows 289 mi to the Atlantic Ocean at Savannah, Georgia. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) operates three dams that are located upstream from the VEGP site: the Hartwell Dam (RM 288.9); the Richard B. Russell Dam (RM 259.1); and the J. Strom Thurmond Dam (RM 221.6). Between the J. Strom Thurmond Dam and the VEGP site lie the Stevens Creek Dam (RM 208.1), the city of Augusta (approximately RM 200), the New Savannah Bluffs Lock and Dam (RM 187.7), and the mouths of several small creeks (SNC 2006a).

The Savannah River adjacent to the VEGP site is relatively straight with very few bends. The substrate in the deep areas is mostly gravel with some sand (SNC 2006a). Between 1973 and 1996, the average water temperature was 17.4°C (63.40°F), with a maximum of 27.2°C (81.0°F)

Appendix E

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Source: SNC 2007a

Figure 2-1. Location of VEGP, 6-mile Radius

1 and a minimum of 5.0°C (41.0°F) (SNC 2006a). The middle Savannah River is habitat for many
2 types of aquatic organisms, and, typical of southeastern river basins, the growing human
3 population increasingly affects the area. Habitats used by fish in the Savannah include the
4 main river channel, “cutoff bends” or “dead rivers” (former channels still connected to the main
5 channel), and streams or smaller tributaries that empty into the river. Additional habitat is
6 provided by swamps and floodplains during high water (Marcy et al. 2005).

8 **2.1 Description of Plant and Cooling and Auxiliary Water Systems**

9
10 VEGP consists of two Westinghouse pressurized water reactors (PWRs) with a reactor core
11 power of 3,565 megawatts-thermal (MW[t]) and an approximate net electrical output of 1,232
12 megawatts-electrical (MW[e]) for each unit (SNC 2007a). The circulating water system at VEGP
13 uses two natural draft cooling towers as part of a closed-cycle heat dissipation system, which
14 withdraws water from the Savannah River and discharges blowdown back to the River (SNC
15 2007a). The intake system consists of a 365-ft-long intake canal located on the western bank of
16 the Savannah River (SNC 2007a). The earthen bottom of the river at the intake is 67 ft above
17 mean sea level (msl). A skimmer weir is located at the canal entrance, with a bottom elevation
18 of 78 ft above msl, and a canal weir is located within the canal 100 ft from the entrance. The
19 skimmer weir prevents floating materials from entering the intake canal (SNC 2007a). The
20 intake structure at the head of the canal contains four bays (two for each unit), each with a stop
21 log, trash rack, traveling screens, and a single pump (SNC 2007a). The trash racks consist of a
22 series of vertical flat bars, and the traveling screens are annealed type 304 stainless steel 3/8-
23 inch mesh (SNC 2007a). As the system operates, wash water is used to rinse the traveling
24 screens and drive debris into a debris basket, which is emptied periodically (SNC 2007a). Daily
25 inspections are performed, and according to facility personnel, fish or other aquatic organisms
26 are rarely observed (SNC 2007a).

27
28 The circulating water is removed from the intake by vertical turbine pumps, each with a capacity
29 of 22,000 gallons per minute (gpm) (SNC 2007a). The circulating water is directed into the
30 natural draft cooling towers, which use natural convection to remove heat from water that has
31 been used to cool the condensers (SNC 2007a). Because the cooling towers operate as a
32 closed system, the only water loss is through evaporation, drift, and blowdown. Makeup water
33 is withdrawn from the river to replace these losses. The cooling water is treated with several
34 chemicals to control biofouling, corrosion, and scaling (SNC 2007a). The cooling tower
35 blowdown and other liquid wastestreams (such as the liquid radioactive waste treatment
36 effluents) are discharged back to the Savannah River through a discharge structure located 500
37 ft downstream of the intake structure.

3.0 Status Review of Shortnose Sturgeon

The only Federally listed aquatic species that is under the jurisdiction of NMFS and is recorded as occurring in the vicinity of the VEGP site is the shortnose sturgeon (*Acipenser brevirostrum*), which is endangered. The shortnose sturgeon occurs in the Savannah River both upstream and downstream of VEGP but has no designated critical habitat in the vicinity of the VEGP site (NMFS 1998, NRC 2007b). The shortnose sturgeon also occurs in the Altamaha and Ogeechee Rivers, which are crossed by the West McIntosh (Thalmann) transmission line in the Coastal Plain. Because no changes in operations, expansion of existing facilities, or disturbance of additional land associated with the transmission lines are expected during the license renewal period, the shortnose sturgeon populations in the Altamaha and Ogeechee Rivers would not be adversely affected by the transmission line crossings of these rivers. Accordingly, those populations are not discussed further.

3.1 Life History

The shortnose sturgeon is a member of the family Acipenseridae, a group of anadromous and freshwater fishes with long life spans and an ancient lineage. The shortnose sturgeon spawns in large Atlantic coastal rivers in eastern North America from northern Florida to New Brunswick, Canada. The shortnose sturgeon grows slowly, reaches sexual maturity relatively late in life, and typically lives 15-20 years (a reported record longevity was 67 years). It reaches maturity at a body length (nose to tail fork) of 18 to 20 inches (45 to 50 centimeters [cm]) and has a maximum total length of approximately 4 feet (ft) (1.2 meter [m]) and weight of up to 50 pounds (lbs) (23 kilograms [kg]). It is the smallest of the three sturgeon species that occur in eastern North America. The shortnose sturgeon was a commercially important species around the beginning of the 20th century, and it was also frequently taken with the catch of Atlantic sturgeon, a closely related and more commercially valuable sturgeon species, and as bycatch in the shad fishery. The substantial decline in shortnose sturgeon populations has been attributed mainly to overfishing, the impoundment of rivers, and water pollution. Natural recruitment rates appear to be too low to fully replenish depleted populations (NMFS 1998, NOAA 2007, Marcy et al. 2005).

The shortnose sturgeon originally was listed as an endangered species by the FWS under the Endangered Species Preservation Act (32 FR 4001) in 1967. That act preceded the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (16 USC 1531), under which the sturgeon is protected currently. In 1974, the shortnose sturgeon was placed under the jurisdiction of NMFS, the agency responsible for most anadromous and marine species under the ESA. Although the shortnose sturgeon was originally listed as endangered throughout its range, the NMFS currently recognizes 19 distinct population segments occurring in 19 river systems from northern Florida to New Brunswick, Canada. Life history studies indicate that populations from these river systems largely are reproductively isolated and should be considered separate. NMFS

1 considers that the loss of a single shortnose sturgeon population segment may risk the
2 permanent loss of unique genetic information potentially critical to the survival and recovery of
3 the species. Therefore, the species is managed based on protection of the distinct population
4 segments in each of these river systems, including the Savannah River (NMFS 1998).
5

6 Shortnose sturgeon spend most of their lives in their natal river systems and enter the ocean
7 only rarely. In the southern part of its range, this species is estuarine anadromous. Thus, adult
8 shortnose sturgeon in the Savannah River forage in the river estuary throughout the year except
9 when migrating upstream during spawning runs. Spawning runs typically occur in the Savannah
10 River from late January to March, and most of the spawning adults return to the lower portion of
11 the river by early May. Probable spawning sites in the Savannah River were identified by
12 studying the movements of adult shortnose sturgeon. The studies identified reaches that
13 repeatedly were the destinations of migrating adult fish and were occupied for several days
14 during the spawning season (Meyer et al. 2003). The probable spawning sites identified consist
15 of sharp curves of the river channel with substrates of rocks, logs, gravel, and sand in two
16 principal reaches: from RM 111 to 118 (rkm 179 to 190) and from RM 170 to 172 (rkm 275 to
17 278) (NMFS 1998, Meyer et al. 2003). The VEGP site is located on the Savannah River
18 between RM 150 and 152 (rkm 241 to 244), a reach that is between the two identified spawning
19 reaches and has not been identified as a known or suspected spawning site.
20

21 Shortnose sturgeon reach sexual maturity at about 8 to 15 years of age in the north and at
22 younger ages in the south (Marcy et al. 2005). Sexually mature adults usually spawn during
23 peak flood tide in February or March in or near deep areas of the river where there is a
24 significant current. Spawning usually occurs when water temperatures are between 50°F
25 (9.8°C) and 62°F (16.5°C). Data indicate that adults spawn at intervals of 2 to 5 years. The
26 fertilized eggs of the shortnose sturgeon are heavier than water (demersal), so they tend to sink
27 quickly, and they are extremely adhesive, so they adhere to solid substrates such as rocks and
28 logs. The eggs hatch in 1 to 2 weeks. The larvae and the early juveniles into which they
29 develop are weak swimmers that stay near the bottom. After about 2 weeks of drifting with the
30 current near the bottom, they slowly migrate downstream (Marcy et al. 2005). When the
31 juveniles reach the estuary at the lower end of the Savannah River, they tend to remain in the
32 reach between RM 29 and 19 (rkm 48 and 31) near the saltwater-freshwater interface. They
33 move into the upstream area of this estuary in summer and the downstream area in winter
34 (Meyer et al. 2003). The diet of juvenile shortnose sturgeon is mainly aquatic insects and small
35 crustaceans. Adults feed mainly on molluscs and also consume crustaceans and insects
36 (Marcy et al. 2005).
37

38 **3.2 Status of Shortnose Sturgeon in the Savannah River**

39

40 As part of a state and Federal recovery program, over 97,000 hatchery-spawned shortnose
41 sturgeon (18 percent of which were tagged) were stocked in the Savannah River between 1984
42 and 1992 (Marcy et al. 2005). Over 35 percent of the juvenile shortnose sturgeon that were

Appendix E

1 captured in the Savannah River from 1990 to 1993 were identified as having been stocked
2 (Wike 1998). Based on records of marked fish and results from tagging studies, it was
3 estimated that approximately 38 percent of the adult population in the Savannah River during
4 the period 1997 to 2000 consisted of stocked fish (Marcy et al. 2005). These results indicate
5 that recruitment into the local population was occurring (Wike 1998). The most recent estimate
6 of the shortnose sturgeon population of the Savannah River, from 1999, was 3000 fish (NMFS
7 2006).

9 **3.3 Potential Site-Related Impacts on the Shortnose Sturgeon**

10
11 The VEGP facility withdraws water from the Savannah River for use as makeup water for the
12 cooling tower system. The Savannah River population of the shortnose sturgeon potentially
13 could be affected by VEGP operations due to several factors associated with these cooling
14 water withdrawals as well as related discharges to the river. These factors include the
15 following: (1) reduction in the flow within the Savannah River due to makeup water withdrawals,
16 (2) increase in shortnose sturgeon mortality due to entrainment and/or impingement at the
17 VEGP intake, (3) thermal effects from the VEGP discharge, and (4) toxic effects from VEGP-
18 related chemical constituents in surface water of the river. Each of these factors is addressed
19 below.

21 **3.3.1 Water Withdrawal Effects**

22
23 The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GDNR) permits VEGP to withdraw water from
24 the Savannah River at a monthly average rate of up to 131 cubic feet per second (cfs) (85 mgd)
25 (GDNR 2007). According to the Environmental Report, the actual capacity of the intake system
26 is 89 cfs (SNC 2007a), of which an estimated 66.8 cfs is lost through evaporation, blowdown,
27 and drift (NRC 1985), resulting in a net consumptive use of water from the river (SNC 2007a).
28 The actual surface water withdrawal reports provide a different estimate. The highest monthly
29 average for water withdrawal in 2006, the most recent complete year for which data were
30 available, was 103.8 cfs in May (SNC 2007b). Based on this highest monthly average
31 withdrawal rate in 2006 and a 75 percent water consumption ratio provided in the Environmental
32 Report (SNC 2007a), the highest average consumptive use of river water by the facility in 2006
33 was calculated to be 77.9 cfs.

34
35 In its Drought Contingency Plan for the Savannah River basin, the USACE established
36 operational rules for the reservoirs using lake levels as triggers to reduce discharges to
37 specified levels. At J. Strom Thurmond Dam, Drought Level 1 reduces flow released at the dam
38 to a maximum weekly average of 4200 cfs, Level 2 reduces flow to a maximum weekly average
39 of 4000 cfs, Level 3 reduces flow to a maximum daily average of 3800 cfs, and Level 4 requires
40 that daily average outflow equal daily average inflow to the reservoir (USACE 2008). Drought
41 Level 3 maintains sufficient flow for water users downstream. Only if the water level in the
42 reservoir drops below the bottom of the conservation pool (312 feet above msl) under Level 4

1 does the plan require that water be released at the same rate as it flows into the reservoir
2 (USACE 2007). In 2006, GEPD established instream flow guidelines for the regulation of
3 surface water withdrawals based on the 7Q10 flow, which is the lowest average flow over seven
4 consecutive days expected to occur with an average frequency of once in ten years (UGA Carl
5 Vinson Institute of Government 2006). The instream flow guidelines are the basis of the
6 minimum flow of 3800 cfs for the Savannah River under Drought Level 3 (SNC 2007c).
7 Although there have been days on which the Savannah River flow was less than 3800 cfs, such
8 low flows have been rare, and the water level in the reservoir has not been as low as 312 feet
9 above msl since 1956 (USGS 2007a).

10
11 Thus, the lowest expected flow in the Savannah River is the instream flow guideline of 3800 cfs
12 (USACE 2007) under Drought Level 3. Although the state of Georgia currently is considered to
13 be in a period of severe drought and Level 3 has been triggered (USGS 2007b), the flow at the
14 Waynesboro measuring station at VEGP has not dropped below 3900 cfs since measurements
15 began at that location in early 2005 (USGS 2007c). Based on the values discussed above for
16 the highest consumptive use of Savannah River water by the operation of VEGP Units 1 and 2
17 in 2006 (77.9 cfs) and the lowest expected river flow (3800 cfs), the highest expected
18 consumptive use would be approximately 2 percent of the flow.

19
20 During an extreme drought in which river flow is below the Drought Level 4 action level, an
21 estimated minimum flow that may occur in the Savannah River based on historical data is 957
22 cfs (SNC 2006b). This minimum flow was estimated through a statistical analysis of flow
23 conditions in the river from 1926 through 1950, before the reservoirs were constructed
24 upstream. Under this minimum flow of only 957 cfs, consumptive use by Units 1 and 2 would be
25 approximately 8 percent of the flow. In a worst-case scenario, the VEGP facility potentially
26 could continue to operate at river flows as low as 500 cfs. Although the facility is not legally
27 required to stop withdrawals at such low flows, the low water level of the river would physically
28 prevent withdrawals by VEGP (SNC 2006b). At this very low river flow, water use by VEGP
29 would consume approximately 15 percent of the Savannah River flow.

30
31 Therefore, at expected river flows under severe drought conditions (3800 cfs), the reduction in
32 flow due to the normal withdrawal and consumptive use of river water by VEGP Units 1 and 2
33 would be less than 2 percent. Under much more extreme conditions of drought and low flow,
34 withdrawals could result in higher percentage reductions in river flow but no more than 15
35 percent. However, such conditions have not occurred since the construction of the upstream
36 reservoirs and would have an extremely low likelihood of occurring in the future.

37
38 The consumptive use of less than 2 percent of flows even under severe drought conditions at
39 normal withdrawal rates indicates that there is minimal potential for adverse effects on the
40 shortnose sturgeon from the effects of water withdrawals by VEGP Units 1 and 2. The greatest
41 reasonably foreseeable reduction in river flow due to the operation of VEGP Units 1 and 2
42 during the renewal term even under severe drought conditions would be sufficiently minor that it

1 would not adversely affect the shortnose sturgeon, its prey, or other components of the aquatic
2 community. Accordingly, the Staff finds that water withdrawals by the VEGP CWIS are not likely
3 to adversely affect the shortnose sturgeon population of the Savannah River.
4

5 **3.3.2 Entrainment/Impingement Effects**

6

7 The intake of cooling water from the Savannah River and the associated potential for eggs or
8 larvae to be entrained in the cooling water system or for larger individuals to be impinged on the
9 intake screens are the principal concerns regarding potential impacts on the shortnose sturgeon
10 from VEGP operations. Entrainment occurs when organisms are drawn through the intake
11 screens into the cooling water system. Organisms that typically become entrained are relatively
12 small planktonic or nektonic organisms in the water column, such as the early life stages of fish
13 (66 FR 65256). As entrained organisms pass through a facility's cooling system, they are
14 subjected to mechanical, thermal, and toxic stresses that often are fatal. Impingement occurs
15 when larger organisms are trapped against the intake screens by the force of the water passing
16 through the screens (66 FR 65256). Impingement can result in starvation and exhaustion,
17 asphyxiation from the force of the water preventing proper gill movement or from the organisms
18 being removed from the water for prolonged periods of time, and the loss of scales (66 FR
19 65256). The relatively small volumes of water needed for a closed-cycle, recirculating, wet
20 cooling tower system such as that use by VEGP Units 1 and 2 result in lower entrainment and
21 impingement effects compared to once-through cooling systems (NRC 1996). In addition to the
22 type of cooling system used by the facility, factors that can influence the degree to which
23 entrainment and impingement affect the shortnose sturgeon and other aquatic biota include the
24 design of the intake structure, the amount of water withdrawn (NRC 2007b), and the biology of
25 the organisms.
26

27 In promulgating regulations to reduce entrainment impacts from existing cooling water intake
28 structures at power plants under section 316(b) of the Clean Water Act (EPA 2004), EPA did not
29 require entrainment reductions for facilities that withdraw 5 percent or less of the annual mean
30 flow from freshwater rivers. EPA determined that such facilities generally have a low likelihood
31 of causing significant entrainment impacts because their intake withdrawals are a low proportion
32 of flow (EPA 2004). Based on an annual mean Savannah River flow at Augusta, Georgia, of
33 9157 cfs (SNC 2007a) and the highest monthly average withdrawal rate of 103.8 cfs (in May
34 2006), the withdrawal by VEGP Units 1 and 2 would be 1.1 percent of the annual mean flow.
35 Based on a flow of 3800 cfs under severe drought conditions and the same conservative
36 withdrawal rate, the withdrawal by VEGP Units 1 and 2 would be 2.7 percent of flow. Thus,
37 even under severe drought conditions, the VEGP withdrawal would be only half of the level EPA
38 selected to minimize entrainment impacts.
39

40 The potential for entrainment of the shortnose sturgeon also is affected by its life history and
41 behavior. As described in Section 3.1, adult shortnose sturgeon in the Savannah River forage
42 in the river estuary throughout the year except during spawning runs, when they migrate

1 upstream from late January to March. Spawning usually takes place in or adjacent to deep
2 areas of the river with significant currents in February or March, and most adults return to the
3 lower river by early May. In the Savannah River, probable spawning sites were identified in two
4 principal reaches where there are sharp curves of the channel and substrates of logs, rocks,
5 gravel, and sand: from RM 111 to 118 (rkm 179 to 190) and from RM 170 to 172 (rkm 275 to
6 278) (NMFS 1998, Meyer et al. 2003). The VEGP site is between RM 150 and 152 (rkm 241 to
7 244); thus, it is between the two identified spawning reaches. The upstream spawning reach is
8 approximately 18 RM (29 rkm) above the site, and the downstream reach is approximately 32
9 RM (52 rkm) below the site.

10
11 The only shortnose sturgeon eggs or larvae that potentially could be subject to entrainment at
12 the VEGP intake are those from the upstream spawning location. Entrainment of eggs or larvae
13 from the upstream spawning location into the cooling water system is not expected to occur due
14 to the characteristics of these organisms, the characteristics of the river, and the structure of the
15 intake. Fertilized eggs of the shortnose sturgeon are heavier than water and extremely
16 adhesive, so they sink quickly and adhere to hard substrates such as rocks and logs in the
17 spawning area (Marcy et al. 2005). As a result, fertilized eggs would not occur in the water
18 column in the area of the VEGP intake and would not be entrained. After the eggs hatch, the
19 yolk-sac larvae are weak swimmers and seek cover at the bottom for up to 12 days. During
20 this time, they develop into larvae of about 15 millimeters (mm) total length, with well-developed
21 eyes, teeth, and fins that make them capable of swimming effectively. By the time they reach
22 20 mm in length, the larvae begin to feed and swim in the water column. It is at this stage that
23 they are likely to begin downstream migration to the estuary (NMFS 1998). When shortnose
24 sturgeon larvae have been collected in rivers, the larvae are generally found in the deepest
25 water near the bottom and usually within the channel (Dadswell et al. 1984, NMFS 1998). The
26 location of the VEGP intake structure near the shoreline in conjunction with this behavioral
27 tendency of the larvae to remain in the deepest part of the channel should minimize the
28 potential for larvae to be entrained as they pass the intake on their downstream migration.

29
30 Entrainment studies have not been conducted for VEGP Units 1 and 2 during their operation.
31 Prior to their operation, the NRC estimated the potential for entrainment at these units in the
32 Final Environmental Statement for Operation (NRC 1985). That evaluation assumed a uniform
33 distribution of drift organisms in the Savannah River. Water withdrawals for the Circulating
34 Water Intake Structure (CWIS) were designed to range from approximately 1 to 4 percent of the
35 Savannah River's discharge, depending on CWIS operations and the variation in river
36 discharge. Assuming a uniform distribution of drift organisms and 100 percent mortality of those
37 entrained, NRC concluded that removal of 1 to 3.5 percent of drift organisms from the river
38 would not have a significant adverse effect on the drift organisms or the aquatic community,
39 including fish, in the vicinity of VEGP Units 1 and 2 (NRC 1985).

40
41 This estimate of the rate of entrainment is expected to be conservative and considerably higher
42 than the rate likely to actually occur, particularly for the shortnose sturgeon. As discussed

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1 above, eggs of the shortnose sturgeon sink and adhere to the substrate at the upstream
2 spawning area, and larval stages migrating downstream past the site tend to remain near the
3 bottom of the river channel (Dadswell et al. 1984, Marcy et al. 2005, NMFS 1998). The
4 upstream spawning reach begins approximately 18 RM upstream of VEGP, and there are no
5 historic records of shortnose sturgeon eggs being collected near the SRS (Wike 1998);
6 therefore, it is very unlikely that shortnose sturgeon eggs would be entrained.

7
8 Entrainment studies have been performed for reactor facilities at SRS. Between 1982 and
9 1985, ichthyoplankton studies were performed between RM 29.3 and 187.1 in the Savannah
10 River as well as in the intake canals for SRS reactors and at the mouths of three creeks along
11 the SRS that received cooling water discharges (Paller et al. 1986 in NRC 2007a). The studies
12 estimated that between 8.3 percent and 12.3 percent of the ichthyoplankton that drifted past the
13 SRS intake canals were entrained. However, the differences between the SRS intakes and the
14 VEGP intakes are substantial. First, the volume of water withdrawn by SRS for the K-Reactor
15 and L-Reactor at full power was 395 cfs (11.2 cubic meters per second [m^3/sec]) for each
16 reactor (Paller 1992 in NRC 2007a), which is more than seven times the highest monthly
17 average withdrawal rate for VEGP Units 1 and 2 (103.8 cfs). Second, the SRS intake canals
18 were much longer than that at VEGP. Third, the intake velocity at the SRS intakes was
19 calculated to be 1.25 feet per second (ft/sec) (38 centimeters per second [cm/sec]) (McFarlane
20 et al. 1978 in NRC 2007a), which is approximately 1.8 times the through-screen velocity of 0.7
21 ft/sec at the VEGP Units 1 and 2 intake (SNC 2007a).

22
23 To evaluate the potential impacts on the shortnose sturgeon from the re-start and operation of
24 the L-Reactor at SRS, which would utilize withdrawals much larger than those of VEGP Units 1
25 and 2, a BA was performed in 1983 (Muska and Matthews 1983). The BA concluded that
26 entrainment of shortnose sturgeon eggs was unlikely due to their demersal and adhesive
27 characteristics. The BA noted that larval entrainment was possible because four larvae had
28 been collected in or near the intake canals during sampling in the river. However, it concluded
29 that larval entrainment would be minimal because of the low density of larvae found in the intake
30 canals during an extensive ichthyoplankton sampling effort in the vicinity and the preference of
31 the larvae for benthic habitats within the river (Muska and Matthews 1983). The Protected
32 Species Management Branch of the U.S. Department of Commerce concurred with this
33 conclusion (Wike 1998). Based on these lines of evidence, shortnose sturgeon larvae are
34 considered to have very limited susceptibility to being entrained by the VEGP intake.

35
36 Impingement studies also have not been performed at the VEGP Unit 1 and 2 intake structure
37 during operations. However, Section 4.1 (entitled Unusual or Important Environmental Events)
38 of the VEGP Units 1 and 2 Environmental Protection Plan, Appendix B to VEGP Units 1 and 2
39 operating licenses NPF 68 and NPF 81, requires NRC notification of any unusual environmental
40 events, specifically fish kills or impingement events. To date, no such events have occurred
41 that have required such a report to be submitted for VEGP Units 1 and 2 (NRC 2007a). In
42 addition, during the years when the SRS reactors were operational, no juvenile or adult

1 shortnose sturgeon were collected in the SRS cooling water intake canals, and none were
2 found in SRS impingement studies (Muska and Matthews 1983), despite the fact that, as
3 discussed above, the SRS intakes had much higher withdrawal rates than the VEGP intake.
4 Furthermore, it is unlikely that healthy adult shortnose sturgeon would be impinged given the
5 low through-screen velocity at the VEGP intake (0.7 fps at average river flow [SNC 2007a]) and
6 the adaptation of the sturgeon to swimming in a riverine habitat with swift currents.

7
8 Entrainment and impingement data collected at another nuclear power facility in Georgia also
9 are relevant to the evaluation of the effects of these processes on the shortnose sturgeon at
10 VEGP. The Edwin I. Hatch Nuclear Plant (HNP) is similar to VEGP in that it also has two
11 reactors (Units 1 and 2), uses a closed-cycle cooling system with cooling towers, and withdraws
12 makeup water for the cooling system from a single intake structure on a river. It is located on
13 the Altamaha River, which also supports a shortnose sturgeon population that spawns upstream
14 of the facility. The water velocity through the HNP intake screens is 1.9 ft/sec (58 cm/sec)
15 under normal conditions of pumping and river flow (NRC 2000). This is substantially higher than
16 the corresponding velocity through the VEGP intake screens of 0.7 ft/sec (SNC 2007a). No
17 sturgeon larvae were found in entrainment samples from the first two years of HNP Unit 1
18 operation (1975 and 1976) or the first year of combined HNP Unit 1 and Unit 2 operation (1980).
19 Furthermore, no sturgeon were collected in impingement samples during the first five years of
20 operation (1975 through 1980), and no impinged adults have been collected during operation of
21 the facility subsequently (NRC 2000). Given the similarity of HNP to VEGP and the greater
22 intake velocity at HNP, the lack of shortnose sturgeon entrainment and impingement at HNP
23 provides evidence that these potential causes of mortality also are negligible at VEGP.

24
25 The lines of evidence discussed above indicate that the potential for shortnose sturgeon eggs,
26 larvae, juveniles, or adults to be present at the VEGP intake and subject to entrainment or
27 impingement is very low. Based on the small proportion of river water that is withdrawn by
28 VEGP Units 1 and 2 due to their closed-cycle cooling system design, the low through-screen
29 intake velocity, the existence of spawning sites downstream of the site as well as upstream
30 within the middle Savannah River, the affinity of shortnose sturgeon eggs and larvae for the
31 river bottom and main channel, and the lack of entrainment or impingement of shortnose
32 sturgeon recorded at other facilities on the Savannah and Altamaha Rivers, the Staff finds that
33 entrainment or impingement at the VEGP CWIS are not likely to adversely affect the shortnose
34 sturgeon population of the Savannah River.

35 36 **3.3.3 Thermal Effects**

37
38 The effluent from the cooling water system for VEGP Units 1 and 2 is discharged into the
39 Savannah River downriver of the CWIS. The NRC staff performed a thermal impact
40 assessment as part of its evaluation of the potential impacts associated with the proposed
41 VEGP Units 3 and 4. Because Units 3 and 4 would produce a thermal discharge very similar to
42 that of Units 1 and 2, the results of the evaluation are applicable to Units 1 and 2 (NRC 2007b).

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1 The assessment used the CORMIX model to estimate the size and temperature of the thermal
2 plume from the existing VEGP Units 1 and 2 as well as the proposed VEGP Units 3 and 4.
3 Assuming conservative conditions (including minimum river temperatures, maximum discharge
4 temperatures, and combining the total effluent from all four VEGP reactor units at a single
5 discharge), the greatest distance the isotherm representing 5°F (2.8°C) above ambient was
6 estimated to extend downstream from the outfall was 97 ft (29.6 m). The isotherm curved
7 downstream with the flow (NRC 2007b).

8
9 The maximum width of the 5°F isotherm was 15 ft (4.6 m), and under average flow conditions,
10 the plume was substantially smaller (NRC 2007b). At the proposed location of the Units 3 and 4
11 outfall, the Savannah River was approximately 312 ft (95.1 m) wide at the Drought Level 3 flow
12 rate. Compared to the width of the river, these results indicate that the size of the thermal
13 plume from the combined effluent discharge would be small. Thus, the thermal plume from the
14 existing discharge from Units 1 and 2 would be smaller and should not impede passage of
15 shortnose sturgeon up and down the river. There are no physical features of the river channel
16 in this area that would prevent sturgeon and other organisms from avoiding the elevated
17 temperatures of the thermal plume as they pass through this part of the river (NRC 2007b). The
18 1983 BA that evaluated the effects of the SRS L-Reactor on the shortnose sturgeon similarly
19 concluded that passage upstream and downstream was not blocked by thermal effluents from
20 the L-Reactor discharge (Muska and Matthews 1983).

21
22 A thermal plume may cause heat shock to fish when the water temperature exceeds the thermal
23 tolerance of the fish. The occurrence of heat shock also is affected by the duration of exposure
24 to high water temperatures. Fish thermoregulate by avoiding extreme temperatures and
25 seeking optimal temperatures (Beyers and Rice 2002). Thus, adult fish can avoid adverse
26 effects from the limited area of the plume. Although it is possible that larvae drifting
27 downstream near the discharge could enter the thermal plume, the small width of the plume
28 within the river channel minimizes the likelihood that larvae may experience high temperatures
29 for sufficient duration to cause substantial mortality.

30
31 Cold shock is another factor related to thermal discharges that may affect aquatic biota. Cold
32 shock occurs when aquatic animals that have been acclimated to warm water, such as fish in a
33 power plant's discharge canal, are suddenly exposed to a temperature decrease. Such a
34 situation could occur when a single-unit power plant shuts down suddenly in winter. According
35 to the GEIS (NRC 1996), cold shock mortalities at nuclear power plants in the United States are
36 "relatively rare" and typically involve small numbers of fish. Cold shock is less likely to occur at
37 a plant such as VEGP that has multiple reactor units because the temperature decrease from
38 shutting down one unit is moderated by the heated discharge from the unit that continues to
39 operate. Cold shock also is less likely when the discharge is to a river and the volume of the
40 discharge in comparison to the flow of the river is very small, as is the case at VEGP (NRC
41 2007b).

1 Based on this analysis, the Staff concludes that thermal discharges from VEGP Units 1 and 2
2 would not be likely to adversely affect the shortnose sturgeon population in the Savannah River.
3

4 **3.3.4 Chemical Toxicity Effects**

5
6 Shortnose sturgeon in the Savannah River at or downstream of the site potentially could be
7 affected by VEGP operations as a result of the discharge of chemical constituents to surface
8 water of the river. These chemicals include those that are used in the cooling towers, heat
9 exchangers, cooling systems, and sewage treatment system. The facility's cooling water is
10 treated with several chemicals to control biofouling, corrosion, and scaling. The concentrations
11 in the discharge are much lower than the median lethal concentration (LC₅₀) for each chemical.
12 The chemical concentrations are then reduced much further by dilution in the river (NRC
13 2007b).
14

15 The use of chemicals in VEGP Units 1 and 2 is regulated by the facility's NPDES permit, which
16 is administered by the GDNR. The chemical concentrations at the outfall meet the NPDES
17 limits, and no impacts to the aquatic ecology of the Savannah River from these chemicals have
18 been observed. Other than the systems noted above, none of the reactor systems have effluent
19 streams that contain chemicals or biocides, and no change in operations is anticipated. Thus,
20 toxic effects from discharged chemicals would not be likely to adversely affect the shortnose
21 sturgeon population of the Savannah River during the renewal period (NRC 2007b).
22

23 **3.4 Summary of Shortnose Sturgeon Impacts**

24
25 The potential for the operation of VEGP Units 1 and 2 to have adverse effects on the shortnose
26 sturgeon was evaluated by the Staff based on multiple lines of evidence regarding water
27 withdrawal from the Savannah River, entrainment and impingement at the cooling water intake,
28 thermal effects in the river from the effluent discharge, and chemical toxicity from the discharge.
29 The evaluation determined that the potential for each of these factors to substantially impact the
30 shortnose sturgeon population of the Savannah River was minimal. Given that compliance with
31 existing water use agreements is expected and that no change in operations is anticipated, the
32 shortnose sturgeon is unlikely to be adversely affected by continued operation of VEGP Units 1
33 and 2 during the renewal period.
34

35 **4.0 Conclusions**

36
37 The NRC Staff reviewed information from the site audit, VEGP's Environmental Report, other
38 reports, and information from the NMFS. The Staff identified the endangered shortnose
39 sturgeon as the only Federally listed species under NMFS jurisdiction that may be present in the
40 vicinity and potentially affected by the VEGP site. The staff has evaluated this species, its
41 known distribution and available habitat, the potential effects of the operation of VEGP on the

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1 species, and programs and procedures that VEGP employs to protect the species. Based on
2 this analysis, the Staff has determined that an additional 20 years of operation and maintenance
3 of VEGP and associated transmission lines and ROWs is not likely to adversely affect the
4 shortnose sturgeon population of the Savannah River.
5

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Appendix F

GEIS Environmental Issues Not Applicable to Vogtle Electric Generating Plant

1 **Appendix F**

2
3 **GEIS Environmental Issues Not Applicable**
4 **to Vogtle Electric Generating Plant**
5

6
7 Table F-1 lists those environmental issues listed in the *Generic Environmental Impact*
8 *Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants* (GEIS; NRC 1996, 1999)^(a) and 10 CFR
9 Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1, that are not applicable to Vogtle Electric Generating
10 Plant, Units 1 and 2 (VEGP) because of plant or site characteristics.

11 **Table F-1.** GEIS Environmental Issues Not Applicable to VEGP
12
13

ISSUE—10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1	Category	GEIS Sections	Comment
SURFACE WATER QUALITY, HYDROLOGY, AND USE (FOR ALL PLANTS)			
Impacts of refurbishment on surface water use and quality	1	3.4.1	VEGP does not plan on refurbishment.
Altered salinity gradients	1	4.2.1.2.2, 4.4.2	VEGP does not discharge to saltwater.
Altered thermal stratification of lakes	1	4.2.1.2.3, 4.4.2.2	VEGP does not discharge into a lake.
Water use conflicts (plants with once-through cooling systems)	1	4.2.1.3	VEGP does not have a once-through cooling system.
AQUATIC ECOLOGY (FOR ALL PLANTS)			
Refurbishment impacts to aquatic resources	1	3.5	VEGP does not plan on refurbishment.

^(a) The GEIS was originally issued in 1996. Addendum 1 to the GEIS was issued in 1999. Hereafter, all references to the “GEIS” include the GEIS and its Addendum 1.

Appendix F

1
2

Table F-1. (cont'd)

ISSUE—10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1	Category	GEIS Sections	Comment
AQUATIC ECOLOGY (FOR PLANTS WITH ONCE-THROUGH AND COOLING POND HEAT DISSIPATION SYSTEMS)			
Entrainment of fish and shellfish in early life stages	2	4.2.2.1.2, 4.4.3	This issue is related to heat-dissipation systems that are not installed at VEGP.
Impingement of fish and shellfish	2	4.2.2.1.3, 4.4.3	This issue is related to heat-dissipation systems that are not installed at VEGP.
Heat shock	2	4.2.2.1.4, 4.4.4	This issue is related to heat-dissipation systems that are not installed at VEGP.
GROUNDWATER USE AND QUALITY			
Impacts of refurbishment on groundwater use and quality	1	3.4.2	VEGP does not plan on refurbishment.
Groundwater use conflicts (potable and service water, and dewatering; plants that use < 100 gpm)	1	4.8.1.1, 4.8.1.2	VEGP does not use <100 gpm of groundwater for any purpose.
Groundwater-use conflicts (Ranney wells)	2	4.8.1.4	VEGP does not have or use Ranney wells.
Groundwater quality degradation (Ranney wells)	1	4.8.2.2	VEGP does not have or use Ranney wells.
Groundwater quality degradation (saltwater intrusion)	1	4.8.2.1	VEGP is not located in a coastal region.
Groundwater quality degradation (cooling ponds in salt marshes)	1	4.8.3	VEGP does not use cooling ponds.
Groundwater quality degradation (cooling ponds at inland sites)	2	4.8.3	VEGP does not use cooling ponds.

Table F-1. (cont'd)

ISSUE—10 CFR Part 51, Subpart A, Appendix B, Table B-1	Category	GEIS Sections	Comment
HUMAN HEALTH			
Radiation exposures to the public during refurbishment	1	3.8.1	VEGP does not plan on refurbishment.
Occupational radiation exposure during refurbishment	1	3.8.2	VEGP does not plan on refurbishment.
Electromagnetic fields, chronic effects	NA	4.5.4.2	NRC categorization and impact-findings definitions do not apply.
TERRESTRIAL RESOURCES			
Refurbishment impacts to terrestrial resources	2	3.6	VEGP does not plan on refurbishment.
Cooling pond impacts on terrestrial resources	1	4.4.4	This issue is related to a heat-dissipation system that is not installed at VEGP.
AIR QUALITY			
Air quality during refurbishment (non-attainment and maintenance areas)	2	3.3	VEGP does not plan on refurbishment.
SOCIOECONOMICS			
Public services: education (refurbishment)	2	3.7.4.1	VEGP does not plan on refurbishment.
Off-site land use (refurbishment)	2	3.7.5	VEGP does not plan on refurbishment.
Aesthetic impacts (refurbishment)	1	3.7.8	VEGP does not plan on refurbishment.

1 **F.1 References**

2
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Appendix G

Severe Accident Mitigation Alternatives (SAMAs) for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant

Appendix G

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Staff Evaluation of Severe Accident Mitigation Alternatives (SAMAs) for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Units 1 and 2 in Support of License Renewal Application Review

G.1 Introduction

Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (SNC) submitted an assessment of severe accident mitigation alternatives (SAMAs) for the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant (VEGP) Units 1 and 2 as part of the environmental report (ER) (SNC 2007a). This assessment was based on the most recent VEGP probabilistic risk assessment (PRA) available at that time, a plant-specific offsite consequence analysis performed using the MELCOR Accident Consequence Code System 2 (MACCS2) computer code, and insights from the VEGP individual plant examination (IPE) (SNC 1992) and individual plant examination of external events (IPEEE) (SNC 1995). In identifying and evaluating potential SAMAs, SNC considered SAMA candidates that addressed the major contributors to core damage frequency (CDF) and population dose at VEGP, as well as SAMA candidates for other operating plants which have submitted license renewal applications. SNC identified 16 potential SAMA candidates. This list was reduced to 12 unique SAMAs by eliminating SAMAs that were determined to provide no measurable benefit or have estimated costs that would exceed the dollar value associated with completely eliminating all severe accident risk at VEGP. SNC assessed the costs and benefits associated with each of the potential SAMAs, and concluded that several of the candidate SAMAs evaluated are potentially cost-beneficial.

Based on a review of the SAMA assessment, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) issued a request for additional information (RAI) to SNC by letter dated October 24, 2007 (NRC 2007). Key questions concerned: major plant and modeling changes incorporated within each evolution of the PRA model; justification for the multiplier used for external events; reactor core inventory and population data used in the Level 2 analysis; and further information on several specific candidate SAMAs and low cost alternatives. SNC submitted additional information by letters dated December 20, 2007 (SNC 2007b) and February 1, 2008 (SNC 2008). In the responses, SNC provided: additional information regarding the PRA model development and resultant changes to dominant risk contributors to CDF; additional justification for the treatment of external events; clarification regarding the reactor core inventory and population data; and additional information regarding several specific SAMAs. Additionally, SNC provided results of a revised SAMA analysis (including updated population dose and SAMA benefit estimates) based on several corrections/changes to the SAMA analysis contained in the ER. SNC's responses and revised SAMA analysis addressed the NRC staff's concerns.

An assessment of SAMAs for VEGP is presented below.

1 **G.2 Estimate of Risk for VEGP**

2
3 SNC's estimates of offsite risk at VEGP are summarized in Section G.2.1. The summary is
4 followed by the NRC staff's review of SNC's risk estimates in Section G.2.2.

5
6 **G.2.1 SNC's Risk Estimates**

7
8 Two distinct analyses are combined to form the basis for the risk estimates used in the SAMA
9 analysis: (1) the VEGP Level 1 and 2 PRA model, which is an updated version of the IPE
10 (SNC 1992), and (2) a supplemental analysis of offsite consequences and economic impacts
11 (essentially a Level 3 PRA model) developed specifically for the SAMA analysis. The SAMA
12 analysis is based on the most recent VEGP Level 1 and Level 2 PRA model available at the
13 time of the ER, referred to as the VEGL2UP PRA. Subsequent to the ER, the SAMA analysis
14 was revised in response to NRC staff RAIs (SNC 2007b). The scope of the VEGP PRA does
15 not include external events.

16
17 The baseline CDF for the purpose of the SAMA evaluation is approximately 1.55×10^{-5} per year.
18 The CDF is based on the risk assessment for internally-initiated events, which includes internal
19 flooding. SNC did not include the contribution from external events within the VEGP risk
20 estimates; however, it did account for the potential risk reduction benefits associated with
21 external events by effectively doubling the estimated benefits for internal events. This is
22 discussed further in Sections G.2.2 and G.6.2.

23
24 The breakdown of CDF by initiating event is provided in Table G-1. This information was
25 provided in response to a staff RAI (SNC 2007b), which also contains a more detailed
26 breakdown. As shown in this table, events initiated by station blackout, loss of offsite power,
27 and loss of nuclear service water are the dominant contributors to CDF. Anticipated transient
28 without scram (ATWS) sequences are insignificant contributors to CDF.

29
30 The Level 2 VEGP PRA model that forms the basis for the SAMA evaluation represents an
31 updated version of the original IPE Level 2 model. The current Level 2 model utilizes simplified
32 containment event trees (CETs), containing both phenomenological and systemic events, that
33 are directly linked with the Level 1 accident sequences and linked fault trees from VEGP PRA
34 model Revision 3. The CETs are based on NUREG/CR-6595 (NRC 2004b) and
35 WCAP-16341-P (Westinghouse 2005). WCAP-16341-P was developed by the Westinghouse
36 Owner's Group (WOG) with the intent that Level 2 models developed using its methodology
37 would meet requirements of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) PRA
38 standard (ASME 2002).

Table G-1. VEGP Core Damage Frequency

Initiating Event	CDF (Per Year)	% Contribution to CDF
Station Blackout	8.2×10^{-6}	54
Loss of Offsite Power	2.4×10^{-6}	16
Loss of Nuclear Service Water	1.7×10^{-6}	11
LOCA	5.0×10^{-7}	3
Loss of DC Bus	4.3×10^{-7}	3
Loss of 4.16KV Bus	4.0×10^{-7}	3
Loss of Condenser	2.8×10^{-7}	2
Steam Generator Tube Rupture	2.8×10^{-7}	2
Other Transients	2.0×10^{-7}	1
Loss of Feedwater	1.8×10^{-7}	1
Turbine Trip	1.4×10^{-7}	<1
Reactor Trip	1.2×10^{-7}	<1
Spontaneous Reactor Vessel Failure	1.0×10^{-7}	<1
Loss of Seal Injection	9.3×10^{-8}	<1
Secondary Side Steamline Break	8.9×10^{-8}	<1
ATWS	6.2×10^{-8}	<1
Inadvertent SI Injection	6.0×10^{-8}	<1
Interfacing Systems LOCA	3.0×10^{-8}	<1
Loss of ACCW	1.4×10^{-8}	<1
Loss of 120V AC Panels	9.8×10^{-9}	<1
Loss of Instrument Air	3.7×10^{-9}	<1
Total CDF (internal events)	1.55×10^{-5}	100

The result of the Level 2 model is a set of eleven release categories with their respective frequency and release characteristics. The categories were defined based on the timing and magnitude of the release and whether the containment remains intact or is bypassed. Each Level 2 end state was assigned to one of the 11 release categories. The results of this analysis

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1 for VEGP are provided in Section F.2.2 of the ER (SNC 2007a). The frequency of each release
 2 category was obtained by summing the frequency of the individual Level 2 sequences assigned
 3 to each release category. The release characteristics for the LERF and non-LERF release
 4 categories are based on Modular Accident Analysis Program (MAAP) analyses. The release
 5 categories and their frequencies and release characteristics are presented in Table F.3-2 of the
 6 ER.

7
 8 The offsite consequences and economic impact analyses use the MACCS2 code to determine
 9 the offsite risk impacts on the surrounding environment and public. Inputs for these analyses
 10 include plant-specific and site-specific input values for core radionuclide inventory, source term
 11 and release characteristics, site meteorological data, projected population distribution (within an
 12 80-kilometer (50-mile) radius) for the year 2040, emergency response evacuation modeling, and
 13 economic data. The magnitude of the onsite impacts (in terms of clean-up and decontamination
 14 costs and occupational dose) is based on information provided in NUREG/BR -0184 (NRC
 15 1997a).

16
 17 SNC estimated the dose to the population within 80 kilometers (50 miles) of the VEGP site to be
 18 approximately 0.0156 person-sievert (Sv) (1.56 person-rem) per year (SNC 2007b). The
 19 breakdown of the total population dose by containment release mode is summarized in
 20 Table G-2. Containment over-pressure failures and containment bypass sequences, such as a
 21 steam generator tube rupture (SGTR) accidents, are the dominant contributors to population
 22 dose risk at VEGP.

23
 24 **Table G-2.** Breakdown of Population Dose by Containment Release Mode
 25

Containment Release Mode	Population Dose (Person-Rem¹ Per Year)	% Contribution
Intact containment	Negligible	<1
Containment isolation failure	0.019	1
Containment bypass - ISLOCA (early)	0.166	11
Containment bypass - SGTR (early)	0.337	22
Containment bypass - SGTR (late)	0.198	13
Containment over-pressure failure (late)	0.587	37
Basemat melt-through (late)	0.248	16
Total CDF	1.56	100

26 ¹One person-Rem = 0.01 person-Sv
 27
 28

29 **G.2.2 Review of SNC's Risk Estimates**
 30

31 SNC's determination of offsite risk at VEGP is based on the following major elements of
 32 analysis:

- 1 • The Level 1 and 2 risk models that form the bases for the 1992 IPE submittal
- 2
- 3 • (SNC 1992), and the external event analyses of the 1995 IPEEE submittal (SNC 1995),
- 4
- 5 • The major modifications to the IPE model that have been incorporated in the VEGPL2UP
- 6 PRA update, and
- 7
- 8 • The MACCS2 analyses performed to translate fission product source terms and release
- 9 frequencies from the Level 2 PRA model into offsite consequence measures.
- 10

11 Each of these analyses was reviewed to determine the acceptability of SNC's risk estimates for
12 the SAMA analysis, as summarized below.

13
14 The NRC staff's review of the VEGP IPE is described in an NRC report dated April 15, 1996
15 (NRC 1996). Based on a review of the IPE submittal and responses to RAIs, the NRC staff
16 concluded that the IPE submittal met the intent of GL 88-20 (NRC 1988); that is, the licensee's
17 IPE process is capable of identifying severe accident risk contributors or vulnerabilities. The
18 IPE did not identify any severe accident vulnerabilities associated with either core damage or
19 poor containment performance.

20
21 Although no vulnerabilities were identified in the IPE, several improvements to plant procedures
22 were identified. These improvements have been implemented (SNC 2007a).

23
24 There have been five revisions to the IPE model since the 1992 IPE submittal, including a 1998
25 change (Revision 0) in modeling techniques and software, an extensive revision of the model in
26 2006 (Revision 3) in partial response to the WOG peer review, and a revision in 2006
27 (VEGPL2UP) that includes the first major update of the full Level 2 model since the IPE. The
28 VEGPL2UP model reflects the VEGP configuration and design as of August 2004, but SNC
29 indicated that no major physical plant or procedure changes have occurred since that time and
30 the model reflects the current as-built, as-operated condition of the plant. A comparison of
31 internal events CDF between the 1992 IPE and the current PRA model indicates a decrease of
32 approximately 70 percent (from 4.9×10^{-5} per year to 1.55×10^{-5} per year). SNC attributes the
33 decrease to a reduction in transient event frequency and crediting the switchyard of plant Wilson
34 for alternate AC power source. A comparison of the contributors to the total CDF indicates that
35 some have increased while others have decreased. A summary listing of those changes that
36 resulted in the greatest impact on the internal events CDF was provided in response to a staff
37 request for additional information and is summarized in Table G-3 (SNC 2007b).

38
39 The CDF value from the 1992 IPE submittal (4.9×10^{-5} per year, including a contribution from
40 internal flooding events of less than 2×10^{-11} per year) is near the average of the CDF values
41 reported in the IPEs for PWR plants with dry containments. Figure 11.2 of NUREG-1560 shows
42 that the IPE-based total internal events for these plants ranges from 9×10^{-8} to 8×10^{-5} per year,
43 with an average CDF for the group of 2×10^{-5} per year (NRC 1997b). It is recognized that other
44 plants have updated the values for CDF subsequent to the IPE submittals to reflect modeling
45 and hardware changes. The current internal event CDF result for VEGP

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1 (1.55 x 10⁻⁵ per year, including internal flooding) is comparable to that for other plants of similar
 2 vintage and characteristics.
 3

4 **Table G-3. VEGP PRA Historical Summary**
 5

PRA Version	Summary of Changes from Prior Model	CDF (per year)
1992 IPE	IPE Submittal	4.90 x 10 ⁻⁵
1998 Revision 0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Added credit for Plant Wilson (SBO recovery) - Added of maintenance basic events to facilitate maintenance rule (MR) analysis - Modularized some sub-fault trees, removed unused logic, and corrected minor errors 	3.62 x 10 ⁻⁵
1999 Revision 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhanced treatment of operator action dependency, removed circular logic, and corrected minor errors 	Not Reported
2000 Revision 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updated plant-specific failure data for initiating event frequencies, component failure, and maintenance unavailabilities using data collected up to 1998 - Added new WOG-identified RCP seal LOCA failure modes - Improved recovery tree for recovery analysis 	1.48 x 10 ⁻⁵
2001 Revision 2c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updated initiating event frequencies using recent generic data source (NRC 1999) - Removed some SGTR scenarios as LERF scenarios - Removed circular logic in normal charging pump fault trees - Enhanced DC support fault tree for emergency diesel generators - Resolved some Level B Facts and Observations (F&Os) from WOG PRA peer review - Removed small size containment penetrations (2 to 4" in diameter) from LERF logic 	1.60 x 10 ⁻⁵
2006 Revision 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resolved remaining Level B F&Os from WOG peer review - Incorporated plant changes (design and procedural) through the end of 2004 - Redefined initiating events definitions (internal events) to better reflect VEGP-specific situations - Revised event trees based on latest VEGP procedures and MAAP analyses - Modeled SBO using 5 different event trees depending on RCP seal leak rates and stuck open pressurizer (PZR) valves - Developed fully integrated event tree/fault tree models for 	1.28 x 10 ⁻⁵

PRA Version	Summary of Changes from Prior Model	CDF (per year)
	<p data-bbox="396 386 740 411">Interfacing System LOCAs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="396 453 1203 514">- Updated the frequency of VEGP initiating events using VEGP event data collected for the period 1995-2004 and NRC data <li data-bbox="396 520 1235 617">- Updated maintenance unavailability of major components using data collected from the beginning of the implementation of maintenance rule through the end of 2004 <li data-bbox="396 623 1235 684">- Updated common cause failure probabilities using alpha factors from VEGP-specific common cause failure analysis <li data-bbox="396 690 1219 779">- Updated human error probabilities using EPRI HRA Calculator and enhanced the treatment of dependency among operator actions 	
2006 VEGPL2UP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="396 814 1187 875">- Developed full level 2 fault tree modeling using direct Level1 and Level 2 logic coupling (WCAP-16341-P) <li data-bbox="396 882 1203 942">- Added containment penetrations (2 to 4" in diameter) back to containment isolation failure tree for LERF <li data-bbox="396 949 927 974">- Corrected RCP seal failure probabilities 	1.55 x 10 ⁻⁵

1
2
3 The CDF used in the SAMA analysis is based on the risk assessment for internally-initiated
4 events for Unit 1. In response to an RAI, SNC stated that the CDF for Unit 2 is the same as the
5 Unit 1 CDF since there is essentially no difference in the design and operation of Units 1 and 2
6 (SNC 2007b).

7
8 The NRC staff considered the peer reviews performed for the VEGP PRA, and the potential
9 impact of the review findings on the SAMA evaluation. In the ER (SNC 2007a) and in response
10 to an NRC staff RAI (SNC 2007b), SNC described the peer review by the WOG of VEGP PRA
11 Revision 2c. SNC noted that there were no type "A" findings and observations (F&O) and that
12 all type "B" F&Os from the WOG Peer Review have been addressed and incorporated into
13 Revision 3 to the PRA, upon which the VEGPL2UP model is based. SNC also noted that the
14 VEGPL2UP model has been reviewed by an external contractor and reviewed independently by
15 the SNC PRA team.

16
17 Given that the VEGP internal events PRA model has been peer-reviewed and the peer review
18 findings were all addressed, and that SNC has satisfactorily addressed NRC staff questions
19 regarding the PRA, the NRC staff concludes that the internal events Level 1 PRA model is of
20 sufficient quality to support the SAMA evaluation.

21
22 As indicated above, the current VEGP PRA does not include external events. In the absence of
23 such an analysis, SNC used the VEGP IPEEE to identify the highest risk accident sequences
24 and the potential means of reducing the risk posed by those sequences, as discussed below.
25

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1 The VEGP IPEEE was submitted in November 1995 (SNC 1995), in response to Supplement 4
2 of Generic Letter 88-20. This submittal included a seismic margin analysis, a fire PRA, and a
3 screening analysis for other external events. No fundamental weaknesses or vulnerabilities to
4 severe accident risk in regard to external events were identified. No seismic, fire, high winds,
5 external floods or other external hazard improvements were identified. In a letter dated
6 December 18, 2000, the NRC staff concluded that the submittal met the intent of Supplement 4
7 to Generic Letter 88-20, and that the licensee's IPEEE process is capable of identifying the
8 most likely severe accidents and severe accident vulnerabilities (NRC 2000).
9

10 The VEGP IPEEE used a focused scope Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) seismic
11 margins analysis. This method is qualitative and does not provide numerical estimates of the
12 CDF contributions from seismic initiators (EPRI 1991). For this assessment, a detailed
13 walkdown was performed in which components were screened using an overall high confidence
14 of low probability of failure (HCLPF) capacity of 0.3g, the review level earthquake (RLE) value
15 for the plant, and the screening level that would be used for a focused-scope plant. The
16 analysis identified 24 equipment open items for each unit, mostly seismic interaction issues.
17 Corrective actions for 46 of the 48 items have been completed while the remaining 2 items were
18 further evaluated and determined to require no further action (SNC 1998).
19

20 The VEGP IPEEE used a scenario-based PRA approach that assessed the risk of core damage
21 induced by fire and smoke hazards in all important plant locations. This approach met the intent
22 of NUREG-1407 (NRC 1991). The analysis was performed in a two phase approach consisting
23 of a spatial interactions analysis and a detailed analysis. In the spatial interactions phase, plant
24 locations (fire zones) were identified and qualitative screening was performed on the basis of
25 functional considerations combined with the absence of fire propagation pathways from the fire
26 zone. Fire and smoke hazard location and propagation scenarios were then developed for each
27 initially unscreened fire zone and quantitative screening was performed based on estimates of
28 core damage frequency, in which all plant components and cabling located in each zone were
29 assumed to be damaged. In the second phase of the analysis, a detailed analysis was
30 performed for the location scenarios retained from the first phase of the analysis. The detailed
31 analysis phase included the development of sub-scenarios, assessment of frequency reduction
32 factors, and relaxation of overly conservative assumptions.
33

34 The total fire CDF from the IPEEE was estimated to be 1.01×10^{-5} per year (SNC 2007a). The
35 plant-specific data and model reflect the plant configuration as of October 1993 and is based on
36 Revision 1 of the Vogtle IPE internal events PRA. In response to an RAI, SNC provided
37 information on three additional fire scenarios evaluated in the IPEEE, each having a fire CDF of
38 less than 1.3×10^{-7} per year (SNC 2007b). The dominant fire scenarios and their contributions
39 to the fire CDF are listed in Table G-4.
40

41 In the ER, SNC states that the use of the fire analysis results as a reflection of CDF may be
42 inappropriate and that while the fire PRA is generally self-consistent within its calculational
43 framework, the fire analysis does not compare well with internal events PRAs because of the
44 number of conservative assumptions that have been included in the fire analysis process. The
45 ER provides a list of fire analysis topics (involving technical inputs, data and modeling) that
46 prevent the effective comparison of the CDF between the internal events PRA and the fire

1 analysis. In response to an RAI requesting the applicability of the general topics to the VEGP
 2 fire analysis (NRC 2007), SNC provided several VEGP-specific examples of conservatisms in
 3 the fire analysis, including: potential reduction in fire ignition frequencies, use of generic fire
 4 protection system failure rate data, conservative target fire damage assumptions, conservative
 5 application of generic COMPBRN results, conservative failure probabilities for human recovery
 6 actions, and guaranteed failure of certain systems (SNC 2007b). Although arguments regarding
 7 the conservatisms in the fire analysis are presented in the ER and RAI responses, SNC used
 8 the baseline fire CDF of 1.01×10^{-5} per year in the SAMA analysis rather than some reduced
 9 value.

10
 11 **Table G-4.** Fire Scenarios and Their Contribution to Fire CDF
 12

Fire Scenario	Fire Area Description	CDF (per year)
CONT-46	Main Control Room	1.3×10^{-6}
1-CB-LA-G-91-L-F3	Train A 4.16-kV Switchgear Room (small)	7.6×10^{-7}
1-CB-LA-H-92-L-01	Train B 4.16-kV Switchgear Room (large)	6.2×10^{-7}
1-CB-LA-N-85-L-R2	Level A Corridor and Cable Chase (large)	4.2×10^{-7}
1-CB-LA-I-88-L-R2	Train B Electrical Penetration Area (transient)	3.4×10^{-7}
1-CB-LA-R-97-L-G1	Train B Electrical Raceway Room (small)	2.3×10^{-7}
1-CB-LB-A-73-L-R2	Train A Electrical Mezzanine (transient)	2.0×10^{-7}
1-CB-LA-G-91-L-R4	Train A 4.16-kV Switchgear Room (large)	2.0×10^{-7}
1-CB-LA-K-95-L-G2	Train A Lower Cable Spreading Room (cable set 1)	1.7×10^{-7}
1-CB-LA-K-95-L-G3	Train A Lower Cable Spreading Room (cable set 2)	1.7×10^{-7}
1-CB-LB-A-73-L-G1	Train A Electrical Mezzanine (cables)	1.3×10^{-7}
1-CB-LA-I-88-L-G1	Train B Electrical Penetration Area (cables)	1.2×10^{-7}
1-CB-L2-B-120-L-G2	Train B Cable Spreading Room (cables)	1.1×10^{-7}
	All other Scenarios	5.4×10^{-6}
Total Fire CDF		1.01×10^{-5}

13
 14
 15 The IPEEE analysis of high winds, floods, and other external events followed the screening and
 16 evaluation approaches described in Supplement 4 of GL 88-20 (NRC 1991) and did not identify

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1 any significant sequences or vulnerabilities (SNC 1995). Based on this result, SNC concluded
2 that these other external hazards would not be expected to impact the conclusions of the SAMA
3 analysis and did not consider specific SAMAs for these events. It is noted that the risks from
4 deliberate aircraft impacts were explicitly excluded since this was being considered in other
5 forums along with other sources of sabotage.

6
7 Based on the aforementioned results, SNC estimated that the external events CDF is
8 comparable to, or no higher than, the internal events CDF. This is based on a fire CDF of 1.01
9 $\times 10^{-5}$ per year, which represents just 66 percent of the internal events CDF of 1.55×10^{-5} per
10 year, and the argument that fire risk is typically the largest external risk contributor. Accordingly,
11 the total CDF from internal and external events would be approximately 2 times the internal
12 events CDF. In the SAMA analysis submitted in the ER, SNC doubled the benefit that was
13 derived from the internal events model to account for the combined contribution from internal
14 and external events. In response to an RAI requesting additional justification for increasing the
15 internal events CDF by only a factor of 2, SNC provided arguments related to the conservative
16 bias and modeling limitations of the fire analysis, and that the IPEEE identified no potential
17 vulnerabilities to external events (SNC 2007b). The NRC staff agrees with the licensee's overall
18 conclusion concerning the impact of external events and concludes that the licensee's use of a
19 multiplier of 2 to account for external events is reasonable for the purposes of the SAMA
20 evaluation.

21
22 The NRC staff reviewed the general process used by SNC to translate the results of the Level 1
23 PRA into containment releases, as well as the results of the Level 2 analysis, as described in
24 the ER and in response to NRC staff requests for additional information (SNC 2007b). The
25 Level 2 model utilizes event trees based on NUREG/CR-6595 (NRC 2004b) and
26 WCAP-16341-P (Westinghouse 2005), containing both phenomenological and systemic events,
27 which are linked directly to the Level 1 event trees. WCAP-16341-P was developed by the
28 WOG with the intent that Level 2 models developed using its methodology would meet
29 Capability Category II requirements of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME)
30 PRA standard (ASME 2002), which includes the use of plant-specific data and models for the
31 dominant contributors to CDF and the ability to identify the relative importance of the dominant
32 contributors at the component level. Each Level 1 core damage sequence was evaluated using
33 five attributes: (1) is AC power available, (2) is the containment bypassed, (3) is the containment
34 isolated, (4) is reactor coolant system (RCS) pressure high or low, and (5) are all steam
35 generators wet. After assignment of attributes, the Level 1 sequences were assigned to Level 2
36 event sequences using a defined set of logic rules.

37
38 SNC characterized the releases for the spectrum of possible radionuclide release scenarios
39 using a set of 11 release categories, defined based on the timing and magnitude of the release
40 and whether the containment remains intact or is bypassed. Each Level 2 end state was
41 assigned to one of the 11 release categories. The frequency of each release category was
42 obtained by summing the frequency of the individual Level 2 sequences assigned to each
43 release category. The release characteristics for the LERF and non-LERF release categories
44 are based on Modular Accident Analysis Program (MAAP) analyses. The release categories
45 and their frequencies and release characteristics are presented in Table F.3-2 of the ER.

1 The NRC staff's review of the Level 2 IPE concluded that it addressed the most important
2 severe accident phenomena normally associated with large, dry containments, and identified no
3 significant problems or errors (NRC 1996). Based on the NRC staff's review of the Level 2
4 methodology, the fact that the updated Level 2 model was reviewed by an external contractor
5 and independently reviewed by the SNC PRA team, and the responses to the RAIs concerning
6 the changes to the Level 2 model since the WOG peer review, the NRC staff concludes that the
7 Level 2 PRA provides an acceptable basis for evaluating the benefits associated with various
8 SAMAs.

9
10 The reactor core radionuclide inventory used in the consequence analysis contained in the ER
11 corresponds to the end-of-cycle values for VEGP at 3565 MWt. This was evaluated in 1990
12 using the ORIGEN code. All releases were modeled as occurring at ground level, and buoyant
13 plume rise was not modeled. SNC assessed the impact of alternatively assuming an elevated
14 release and a heated (buoyant) plume. The results of this sensitivity study showed that a
15 maximum elevated release produces about a 10 percent increase in population dose-risk, and a
16 bounding high plume heat produces about a 14 percent increase in population dose-risk.

17
18
19 In response to an RAI (SNC 2007b), SNC provided results of a revised SAMA analysis which
20 accounted for the planned 1.7 percent power uprate (to 3698 MWt) for VEGP, as well as several
21 additional changes to the ER SAMA analysis, as described in Section G.6.1. The results of the
22 revised analysis are reflected in the population dose values reported in Table G-2 and in the
23 benefit estimates reported later in Table G-5.

24
25 The NRC staff reviewed the process used by SNC to extend the containment performance
26 (Level 2) portion of the PRA to an assessment of offsite consequences (essentially a Level 3
27 PRA). This included consideration of the source terms used to characterize fission product
28 releases for the applicable containment release categories and the major input assumptions
29 used in the offsite consequence analyses. The MACCS2 code was utilized to estimate offsite
30 consequences. Plant-specific input to the code includes the source terms for each release
31 category and the reactor core radionuclide inventory (both discussed above), site-specific
32 meteorological data, projected population distribution within an 80-kilometer (50-mile) radius for
33 the year 2040, emergency evacuation modeling, and economic data. This information is
34 provided in Attachment F of the ER.

35
36 SNC used site-specific meteorological data for the 1999 calendar year as input to the MACCS2
37 code. The data were collected from the onsite meteorological tower. Data from 1998 through
38 2002 were also considered, but the 1999 data were chosen because they were the most
39 complete and because results of a MACCS2 sensitivity analysis indicated that the 1999 data
40 produced slightly more conservative results than the data sets for the other years. Missing data
41 were obtained by either using corresponding data from another level, interpolating if the data
42 gap was less than 4 hours, or using data for a similar day/hour from a previous year. The NRC
43 staff notes that previous SAMA analyses results have shown little sensitivity to year-to-year
44 differences in meteorological data and concludes that the use of the 1999 meteorological data in
45 the SAMA analysis is reasonable.

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1 The population distribution the licensee used as input to the MACCS2 analysis was estimated
2 for the year 2040, based on the U.S. Census Bureau population data for 2000, as provided by
3 the SECPOP 2000 program (NRC 2003), and the expected annual population growth rate. The
4 baseline population was determined for each of sixteen directions and each of ten concentric
5 rings (total of 160 sectors) out to a radius of 50 miles surrounding the site. The transient
6 population within 10 miles of the site was included. The county-level census data were used to
7 estimate the annual population growth rate for each of the 160 sectors (USCB 2000a and
8 2000b). The county population was proportioned within each sector by the fractional area of
9 each county within each sector. Population projections were based on the county growth rates,
10 with the fraction of each county in each sector determining the sector growth rate. The NRC
11 staff considers the methods and assumptions for estimating population reasonable and
12 acceptable for purposes of the SAMA evaluation.

13
14 The emergency evacuation model was modeled as a single evacuation zone extending out 16
15 kilometers (10 miles) from the plant. Based on information in the ER and in response to an RAI
16 (SNC 2007b), it was assumed that 95 percent of the population would evacuate. This
17 assumption is conservative relative to the NUREG-1150 study (NRC 1990), which assumed
18 evacuation of 99.5 percent of the population within the emergency planning zone (EPZ). The
19 evacuation time used in the SAMA analysis was based on a projection for the year 2040. The
20 evacuation speed for year 2010 was estimated to be approximated 3.2 meters per second with
21 a delayed start time of 42 minutes. This speed is derived from the time to evacuate the entire
22 EPZ under adverse weather conditions for the year 2010, which is the year for which the
23 evacuation time estimate was performed (IEM 2006). The evacuation speed was projected to
24 year 2040 by assuming that year 2010 traffic was at maximum throughput and no new roads
25 would be constructed. The 2040 evacuation speed was estimated to be 2.2 meters per second,
26 based on the 2010 speed multiplied by the ratio of the 2010 to 2040 populations within the EPZ.
27 A sensitivity analysis was performed in which the evacuation speed was not adjusted to year
28 2040 (i.e., the speed was increased from 2.2 to 3.2 meters/second). The result was a 1 percent
29 decrease in the total population dose, which is insignificant (SNC 2007a). The NRC staff
30 concludes that the evacuation assumptions and analysis are reasonable and acceptable for the
31 purposes of the SAMA evaluation.

32
33 Much of the site-specific economic data was provided from SECPOP2000 (NRC 2003) by
34 specifying the data for each of the counties surrounding the plant to a distance of 50 miles.
35 SECPOP2000 utilizes economic data from the 1997 Census of Agriculture (USDA 1998). In
36 addition, generic economic data that applied to the region as a whole were revised from the
37 MACCS2 sample problem input when better information was available. Some of this data was
38 adjusted using cost escalation factor of 1.84. This was applied to parameters describing the
39 cost of evacuating and relocating people, land decontamination, and property condemnation.
40 The scaling factor is taken from the U.S. department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)
41 Inflation Calculator from year 1984 to 2006. Other escalation factors (e.g., farm and non-farm
42 wealth for the area surrounding VEGP) were similarly extrapolated based on the reference year
43 of the data. In response to an RAI (SNC 2007b), the farm wealth escalation factor was
44 identified as being in error in the original SAMA analysis and was corrected in the revised SAMA
45 analysis.

1 In response to another RAI (SNC 2007b), SNC addressed the impact on the SAMA analysis of
2 three recently reported problems with SECPOP2000. These errors are: (1) inconsistency in the
3 format in which several economic parameters were output from the SECPOP2000 code and
4 input to the MACCS2 code, (2) an error that resulted in use of agricultural/economic data for the
5 wrong counties in the SECPOP2000 calculations, and (3) an error that resulted in the economic
6 data for some counties being handled incorrectly. (The first of these errors was identified prior
7 to the ER but not fully reflected in the baseline risk estimates provided in the ER. The two
8 remaining errors were identified subsequent to the ER.) The results of a revised SAMA analysis
9 reflecting these corrections was provided in response to the RAI.

10
11 The NRC staff concludes that the methodology used by SNC to estimate the offsite
12 consequences for VEGP provides an acceptable basis from which to proceed with an
13 assessment of risk reduction potential for candidate SAMAs. Accordingly, the NRC staff based
14 its assessment of offsite risk on the CDF and revised offsite doses reported by SNC.

15 16 **G.3 Potential Plant Improvements**

17
18 The process for identifying potential plant improvements, an evaluation of that process, and the
19 improvements evaluated in detail by SNC are discussed in this section.

20 21 **G.3.1 Process for Identifying Potential Plant Improvements**

22
23 SNC's process for identifying potential plant improvements (SAMAs) consisted of the following
24 elements:

- 25
26 • Review of the most significant basic events from the current, plant-specific PRA,
- 27
28 • Review of potential plant improvements identified in the VEGP IPE and IPEEE,
- 29
30 • Review of dominant fire areas from the fire analysis and SAMAs that could potentially
31 reduce the associated fire risk,
- 32
33 • Review of Phase II SAMAs from license renewal applications for six other U.S. nuclear sites,
34 and
- 35
36 • Review of other industry documentation discussing potential plant improvements.

37
38 Based on this process, an initial set of 16 candidate SAMAs, referred to as Phase I SAMAs, was
39 identified. In Phase I of the evaluation, SNC performed a qualitative screening of the initial list
40 of SAMAs and eliminated SAMAs from further consideration using the following criteria:

- 41
42 • The SAMA was determined to provide no measurable benefit, or
- 43
44 • The SAMA has estimated costs that would exceed the dollar value associated with
45 completely eliminating all severe accident risk at VEGP.

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1
2 Based on this screening, 4 SAMAs were eliminated leaving 12 for further evaluation. The
3 remaining SAMAs, referred to as Phase II SAMAs, are listed in Table F.6-1 of the ER (SNC
4 2007a). In Phase II, a detailed evaluation was performed for each of the 12 remaining SAMA
5 candidates, as discussed in Sections G.4 and G.6 below. To account for the potential impact of
6 external events, the estimated benefits based on internal events were multiplied by a factor of 2.
7

8 **G.3.2 Review of SNC's Process**

9
10 SNC's efforts to identify potential SAMAs focused primarily on areas associated with internal
11 initiating events, but also included explicit consideration of potential SAMAs for fire events. The
12 initial list of SAMAs generally addressed the accident sequences considered to be important to
13 CDF from functional, initiating event, and risk reduction worth (RRW) perspectives at VEGP,
14 and included selected SAMAs from prior SAMA analyses for other plants.
15

16 SNC provided a tabular listing of the PRA basic events sorted according to their RRW
17 (SNC 2007a). SAMAs impacting these basic events would have the greatest potential for
18 reducing risk. SNC used a RRW cutoff of 1.02, which corresponds to about a two percent
19 change in CDF given 100-percent reliability of the SAMA. This equates to a benefit of
20 approximately \$20,000 (after the benefits have been multiplied to account for external events).
21 SNC also provided and reviewed the large early release frequency (LERF)-based RRW events
22 down to a RRW of 1.02. SNC correlated the basic events with highest risk importance in the
23 Level 1 and 2 PRA with the SAMAs evaluated in Phase I or Phase II, and showed that, with a
24 few exceptions, all of the significant basic events are addressed by one or more SAMAs
25 (SNC 2007a). Of the basic events of high risk importance that are not addressed by SAMAs,
26 each is closely tied to other basic events that had been addressed by one or more SAMAs.
27

28 For a number of the Phase II SAMAs listed in the ER, the information provided did not
29 sufficiently describe the proposed modification. Therefore, the NRC staff asked the applicant to
30 provide more detailed descriptions of the modifications for several of the Phase II SAMA
31 candidates (NRC 2007). In response to the RAI (SNC 2007b), SNC provided the requested
32 information (SNC 2007b).
33

34 SNC did not identify or evaluate any Phase I SAMAs in the ER that reduce the magnitude of
35 releases from SGTR events, which are a dominant contributor to population dose risk and
36 economic cost risk at VEGP. In response to an RAI (SNC 2007b), SNC evaluated several
37 SAMAs from ER Table A-1 that would reduce the source term released during SGTR events.
38 SNC indicated that all of the alternatives identified in the RAI are either: not applicable,
39 effectively already implemented or already addressed by existing plant procedures, or not
40 effective at VEGP (SNC 2007b).
41

42 SNC identified and evaluated a number of Phase I and II SAMAs in the ER that address RCP
43 seal LOCAs, one of the largest contributors to the internal events CDF at VEGP. In response to
44 an RAI (SNC 2007b), SNC evaluated several lower cost, procedure-only SAMAs from ER Table
45 A-1 that also addressed RCP seal LOCAs. SNC indicated that all of the alternatives identified in

1 the RAI are either not applicable, effectively already implemented or already addressed by
2 existing plant procedures, or not effective at VEGP (SNC 2007b).

3 The NRC staff questioned SNC about other lower cost alternatives to some of the SAMAs
4 evaluated (NRC 2007), including:

- 5
- 6 • Enhancing procedures to direct PCS cooldown on loss of RCP seal cooling, which was
7 determined to be potentially cost-beneficial at another PWR plant.
8
- 9 • Proceduralizing local manual operation of auxiliary feedwater when control power is lost,
10 which was determined to be potentially cost-beneficial at another PWR plant.
11
- 12 • Using a portable generator to provide backup power to selected instrumentation and to the
13 turbine-driven auxiliary feedwater pump controls, thereby extending the ability of the plant to
14 cope with loss of AC power events.
15
- 16 • Providing alternate DC feeds (using a portable generator) to panels supplied only by DC
17 bus, as an alternative to SAMAs 5 and 8
18
- 19 • Modifying emergency procedures to isolate a faulted SG due to a stuck open safety valve.
20
- 21 • Providing hardware connections to allow service water to cool normal charging pump (NCP)
22 seals, as an alternative to SAMA 1.
23

24 In response to an RAI (SNC 2007b), SNC addressed the suggested lower cost alternatives
25 (SNC 2007b). This is discussed further in Section G.6.2.
26

27 Although no vulnerabilities were identified in the IPE, several procedural improvements were
28 identified and subsequently implemented by the plant (SNC 2007a). These enhancements
29 included: (1) revising procedures for operators to open doors to important electrical equipment
30 rooms following loss of cooling to obtain natural circulation to cool the rooms; (2) changing the
31 loss of all AC power procedure so operators attempt local manual operation of the turbine driven
32 auxiliary feedwater pump (TDAFW) upon loss of DC power; and (3) revising the procedure for
33 loss of the nuclear service cooling water systems (NSCW) to have operators reduce heat loads
34 to support cooling of reactor coolant pump seals while single NSCW pump operation is
35 established (NRC 1996).
36

37 Based on this information, the NRC staff concludes that the set of SAMAs evaluated in the ER,
38 together with those identified in supplemental information to the ER and in response to NRC
39 staff RAIs, addresses the major contributors to internal event CDF.
40

41 SNC did not identify VEGP-specific candidate SAMAs for seismic events. In the VEGP IPEEE
42 seismic analysis, both VEGP Units 1 and 2 have a HCLPF capacity of at least 0.3g. Also, as
43 noted in Section 2.2, 24 minor equipment open items, mostly seismic interaction issues, were
44 originally identified. They included a gap between the battery rack end rails and batteries, and
45 potential interactions between the diesel generators and crane controller. As noted in the ER,

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1 all of these issues have been addressed, as documented in a letter to the NRC dated March 31,
2 1998 (SNC 1998). The NRC staff concludes that the opportunity for seismic-related SAMAs has
3 been adequately explored and that it is unlikely that there are any cost-beneficial, seismic-
4 related SAMA candidates.

5
6 The IPEEE did not identify opportunities for improvements related to fire events (SNC 1995).
7 Nevertheless, SNC considered potential SAMAs for fire events, and determined that four of the
8 Phase I SAMAs identified based on internal events risk also mitigate the fire risk (e.g., SAMAs
9 5, 6, 8, and 11). Although these four SAMAs contribute to the reduction in fire risk, no SAMAs
10 unique to the fire analysis were identified. In response to an RAI on the potential for SAMAs
11 that could reduce the fire initiators, improve fire detection or suppression, or relocate
12 components or cabling, SNC stated that the IPEEE concluded that no plant improvement to
13 reduce fire risk is necessary because of the relatively low fire risk impact to the operations at
14 VEGP (SNC 2007b). The NRC staff concludes that the opportunity for fire-related SAMAs has
15 been adequately explored and that it is unlikely that there are any cost-beneficial, fire-related
16 SAMA candidates.

17
18 The NRC staff notes that the set of SAMAs submitted is not all inclusive, since additional,
19 possibly even less expensive, design alternatives can always be postulated. However, the NRC
20 staff concludes that the benefits of any additional modifications are unlikely to exceed the
21 benefits of the modifications evaluated and that the alternative improvements would not likely
22 cost less than the least expensive alternatives evaluated, when the subsidiary costs associated
23 with maintenance, procedures, and training are considered.

24
25 The NRC staff concludes that SNC used a systematic and comprehensive process for
26 identifying potential plant improvements for VEGP, and that the set of potential plant
27 improvements identified by SNC is reasonably comprehensive and therefore acceptable. This
28 search included reviewing insights from the plant-specific risk studies, and reviewing plant
29 improvements considered in previous SAMA analyses. While explicit treatment of external
30 events in the SAMA identification process was limited, it is recognized that the absence of
31 external event vulnerabilities reasonably justifies examining primarily the internal events risk
32 results for this purpose.

33 34 **G.4 Risk Reduction Potential of Plant Improvements**

35
36 SNC evaluated the risk-reduction potential of the 12 remaining SAMAs that were applicable to
37 VEGP. The majority of the SAMA evaluations were performed in a bounding fashion in that the
38 SAMA was assumed to completely eliminate the risk associated with the proposed
39 enhancement. Such bounding calculations overestimate the benefit and are conservative.

40
41 SNC used model re-quantification to determine the potential benefits. The CDF and population
42 dose reductions were estimated using the VEGP PRA (version VEGPL2UP) model. The
43 changes made to the model to quantify the impact of SAMAs are detailed in Section F.6 of
44 Attachment F to the ER (SNC 2007a). Table G-5 lists the assumptions considered to estimate
45 the risk reduction for each of the evaluated SAMAs, the estimated risk reduction in terms of
46 percent reduction in CDF and population dose, and the estimated total benefit (present value) of

1 the averted risk. The estimated benefits reported in Table G-5 reflect the combined benefit in
2 both internal and external events, as well as a number of changes to the analysis methodology
3 subsequent to the ER. The determination of the benefits for the various SAMAs is further
4 discussed in Section G.6.

5
6 The NRC staff questioned the assumptions used in evaluating the benefits or risk reduction
7 estimates of certain SAMAs provided in the ER (NRC 2007). For example, the NRC staff
8 requested the bases for the assumption for SAMA 11 that 90 percent of all loss of nuclear
9 service cooling water (NSCW) scenarios are avoided (i.e., 10 percent of loss of NSCW
10 scenarios still proceed to core damage). The licensee clarified that very quick operator action
11 would be required to prevent a reactor coolant pump (RCP) seal LOCA and, additionally, a loss
12 of NSCW has other deleterious effects on VEGP systems that could still result in core damage
13 even without the seal LOCA. The licensee also provided a qualitative argument that the cost-
14 risk assessment is not particularly sensitive to changes in probability of avoiding loss of NSCW
15 above 90 percent, as this value will provide 90 percent of the SAMA benefit. The NRC staff
16 considers the assumptions, as clarified, to be reasonable and acceptable for purposes of the
17 SAMA evaluation.

18
19 The NRC staff has reviewed SNC's bases for calculating the risk reduction for the various plant
20 improvements and concludes that the rationale and assumptions for estimating risk reduction
21 are reasonable and generally conservative (i.e., the estimated risk reduction is higher than what
22 would actually be realized). Accordingly, the NRC staff based its estimates of averted risk for
23 the various SAMAs on SNC's risk reduction estimates.

Table G-5. SAMA Cost/Benefit Screening Analysis for VEGP^(a)

SAMA	Assumptions	% Risk Reduction		Total Benefit Using 7% Discount Rate ^(b)		Total Benefit Using 3% Discount Rate ^(b)		Cost (\$)
		CDF	Population Dose	Discount Rate (\$)	Discount Rate (\$)	Discount Rate (\$)	Discount Rate (\$)	
1 - Permanent, self-powered pump to backup NCP	Modify event tree to include pump having a hardware and operator error failure probability of 1.0E-1.	48	17	348,000	423,000	2,700,000		
2 - Maintain full-time black start capability of the Wilson Switchyard combustion turbines	Include credit for the availability of the black start Plant Wilson CTs (and black start DGs) all the time. The black start CTs and DGs were assumed to have a failure probability of 5.0E-02.	43	37	336,000	414,000	25,000		
4 - AC cross-tie capability	Reduce human error probabilities for cross-tying to the opposite unit EDG within 7 hours after an SBO by a factor of 2 and after 7 hours by a factor of 1.6.	22	19	171,000	211,000	25,000		
6 - Add bypass line around NSCW CT return valves	Modify event tree to include a bypass line and valve, around each CT tower return line isolation valve, having a failure probability of 6.26E-3, a common cause failure probability of 2.66E-4, and an actuation signal failure probability of 3.69E-3.	32	16	241,000	294,000	816,000 ^(c)		
7 - Implement enhanced RCP seal design	Completely eliminate RCP seal leakage events greater than 21 gpm.	53	19	384,000	468,000	1,050,000		

Table G-5. (cont'd)

SAMA	Assumptions	% Risk Reduction		Total Benefit		Cost (\$)
		CDF	Population Dose	Using 7% Discount Rate ^(b) (\$)	Using 3% Discount Rate ^(b) (\$)	
9 - Implement automatic initiation of HPI on low RCS level after AC recovery during an SBO	Modify event tree to include HPI auto initiation system having a probability of failure of 6.42E-4.	3	1	21,000	25,000	250,000
10 - Additional training and/or procedural enhancement to implement timely RCS depressurization	Completely eliminate delayed RCS depressurization in both Level 2 SBO and non-SBO event trees.	0	2	5,000	7,000	25,000
11 - Use hydrostatic test pump as an alternate means of providing seal injection	Eliminate 90% of all Loss of NSCW events.	10	4	74,000	91,000	520,000 ^(c)
12 - Ensure all ISLOCA releases are scrubbed	Completely eliminate all ISLOCA events.	~0	9	14,000	20,000	>100,000
13 - Completely automate swap over to recirculation on RWST depletion	Reduce human error probabilities for all basic events that refer to high pressure injection to a negligible value (1.00E-05).	2	3	14,000	18,000	>100,000
14 - Install additional instrumentation for ISLOCA detection	Completely eliminate all ISLOCA events.	~0	9	14,000	20,000	425,000
15 - Install permanent dedicated generator for NCP	Modify event tree to include pump having a hardware and operator error failure probability of 1.0E-1.	48	17	348,000	423,000	900,000

Table G-5. (cont'd)

SAMA	Assumptions	% Risk Reduction		Total Benefit Using 7% Discount Rate ^(b) (\$)	Total Benefit Using 3% Discount Rate ^(b) (\$)	Cost (\$)
		CDF	Population Dose			
16 - Enhance procedures for ISLOCA response	Completely eliminate all ISLOCA events.	~0	9	14,000	20,000	25,000
(a)	SAMAs in bold are potentially cost-beneficial					
(b)	Estimated benefits reflect revised values provided after correction of three SECPPOP2000 economic data file errors, corrected escalation factor for farm wealth, and corrected source term inventory and replacement power cost to reflect proposed 1.7 percent power uprate (SNC 2007b, SNC 2008)					
(c)	Estimated costs reflect revised values provided in response to RAIs (SNC 2007b)					

1 **G.5 Cost Impacts of Candidate Plant Improvements**

2
3 SNC estimated the costs of implementing the 12 candidate SAMAs through the application of
4 engineering judgment, and use of other licensees' estimates for similar improvements. The cost
5 estimates conservatively did not include the cost of replacement power during extended
6 outages required to implement the modifications, nor did they generally include contingency
7 costs associated with unforeseen implementation obstacles (SNC 2007a, SNC 2008). The cost
8 estimates provided in the ER did not account for inflation, which is considered another
9 conservatism. For those cost estimates that were developed for a dual-unit SAMA analysis,
10 SNC reduced the estimated costs by half so that all cost estimates were on a "per unit" basis.
11

12 The NRC staff reviewed the bases for the applicant's cost estimates (presented in Section F.6
13 of Attachment F to the ER). For certain improvements, the NRC staff also compared the cost
14 estimates to estimates developed elsewhere for similar improvements, including estimates
15 developed as part of other licensees' analyses of SAMAs for operating reactors and advanced
16 light-water reactors. In response to an RAI requesting a more detailed description of the
17 changes associated with SAMAs 1, 6, 7, 9, 12, and 13, SNC provided additional information
18 detailing the analysis and plant modifications included in the cost estimate of each improvement
19 (SNC 2007b). In the response to the RAI, SNC provided a revised cost estimate for SAMA 6,
20 add bypass line around NSCW cooling tower (CT) return valves, of \$816,000. The staff
21 reviewed the costs and found them to be reasonable, and generally consistent with estimates
22 provided in support of other plants' analyses.
23

24 The NRC staff requested additional clarification on the estimated cost of \$580,000 for
25 implementation of SAMA 11, use hydrostatic test pump as an alternate means of providing seal
26 injection, when the cost estimate for this same SAMA for the V.C. Summer plant was only
27 \$150,000 (NRC 2007). In response to the RAI (SNC 2007b), SNC further described this
28 modification as involving the installation of additional piping, valves, pumps, and controls. SNC
29 also provided the bases for a revised cost estimate of \$520,000. Based on this additional
30 information, the NRC staff considers the estimated cost of \$520,000 to be reasonable and
31 acceptable for purposes of the SAMA evaluation.
32

33 The NRC staff concludes that the cost estimates provided by SNC are sufficient and appropriate
34 for use in the SAMA evaluation.
35

36 **G.6 Cost-Benefit Comparison**

37
38 SNC's cost-benefit analysis and the NRC staff's review are described in the following sections.
39

40 **G.6.1 SNC's Evaluation**

41
42 The methodology used by SNC was based primarily on NRC's guidance for performing
43 cost-benefit analysis, i.e., NUREG/BR-0184, *Regulatory Analysis Technical Evaluation*
44 *Handbook* (NRC 1997a). The guidance involves determining the net value for each SAMA
45 according to the following formula:
46

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1 Net Value = (APE + AOC + AOE + AOSC) - COE where,
 2 APE = present value of averted public exposure (\$)
 3 AOC = present value of averted offsite property damage costs (\$)
 4 AOE = present value of averted occupational exposure costs (\$)
 5 AOSC = present value of averted onsite costs (\$)
 6 COE = cost of enhancement (\$).

7
 8 If the net value of a SAMA is negative, the cost of implementing the SAMA is larger than the
 9 benefit associated with the SAMA and it is not considered cost-beneficial. SNC's derivation of
 10 each of the associated costs is summarized below.

11
 12 NUREG/BR-0058 has recently been revised to reflect the agency's policy on discount rates.
 13 Revision 4 of NUREG/BR-0058 states that two sets of estimates should be developed, one at 3
 14 percent and one at 7 percent (NRC 2004a). SNC provided both sets of estimates
 15 (SNC 2007a, SNC 2007b, SNC 2008).

16 Averted Public Exposure (APE) Costs

17
 18 The APE costs were calculated using the following formula:

19
 20
 21 APE = Annual reduction in public exposure (Δ person-rem per year)
 22 x monetary equivalent of unit dose (\$2000 per person-rem)
 23 x present value conversion factor (15.04 based on a 20-year period with a
 24 3-percent discount rate).

25
 26 As stated in NUREG/BR-0184 (NRC 1997a), it is important to note that the monetary value of
 27 the public health risk after discounting does not represent the expected reduction in public
 28 health risk due to a single accident. Rather, it is the present value of a stream of potential
 29 losses extending over the remaining lifetime (in this case, the renewal period) of the facility.
 30 Thus, it reflects the expected annual loss due to a single accident, the possibility that such an
 31 accident could occur at any time over the renewal period, and the effect of discounting these
 32 potential future losses to present value. For the purposes of initial screening, which assumes
 33 elimination of all severe accidents due to internal events, SNC calculated an APE of
 34 approximately \$46,900 for the 20-year license renewal period.

35 Averted Offsite Property Damage Costs (AOC)

36
 37 The AOCs were calculated using the following formula:

38
 39
 40 AOC = Annual CDF reduction
 41 x offsite economic costs associated with a severe accident (on a per-event basis)
 42 x present value conversion factor.

43
 44 For the purposes of initial screening, which assumes all severe accidents due to internal events
 45 are eliminated, SNC calculated an annual offsite economic risk of about \$2,000 based on the

1 Level 3 risk analysis. This results in a discounted value of approximately \$30,100 for the
2 20-year license renewal period.

3 Averted Occupational Exposure (AOE) Costs

4 The AOE costs were calculated using the following formula:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{AOE} = \text{Annual CDF reduction} \\ & \quad \times \text{occupational exposure per core damage event} \\ & \quad \times \text{monetary equivalent of unit dose} \\ & \quad \times \text{present value conversion factor.} \end{aligned}$$

5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13 SNC derived the values for averted occupational exposure from information provided in Section
14 5.7.3 of the regulatory analysis handbook (NRC 1997a). Best estimate values provided for
15 immediate occupational dose (3300 person-rem) and long-term occupational dose (20,000
16 person-rem over a 10-year cleanup period) were used. The present value of these doses was
17 calculated using the equations provided in the handbook in conjunction with a monetary
18 equivalent of unit dose of \$2000 per person-rem, a real discount rate of 3 percent, and a time
19 period of 20 years to represent the license renewal period. For the purposes of initial screening,
20 which assumes all severe accidents due to internal events are eliminated, SNC calculated an
21 AOE of approximately \$9,600 for the 20-year license renewal period.

22 Averted Onsite Costs

23
24
25 Averted onsite costs (AOSC) include averted cleanup and decontamination costs and averted
26 power replacement costs. Repair and refurbishment costs are considered for recoverable
27 accidents only and not for severe accidents. SNC derived the values for AOSC based on
28 information provided in Section 5.7.6 of NUREG/BR-0184, the regulatory analysis handbook
29 (NRC 1997a).

30
31 SNC divided this cost element into two parts – the onsite cleanup and decontamination cost,
32 also commonly referred to as averted cleanup and decontamination costs, and the replacement
33 power cost.

34
35 Averted cleanup and decontamination costs (ACC) were calculated using the following formula:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{ACC} = \text{Annual CDF reduction} \\ & \quad \times \text{present value of cleanup costs per core damage event} \\ & \quad \times \text{present value conversion factor.} \end{aligned}$$

36
37
38
39
40
41 The total cost of cleanup and decontamination subsequent to a severe accident is estimated in
42 the regulatory analysis handbook to be $\$1.5 \times 10^9$ (undiscounted). This value was converted to
43 present costs over a 10-year cleanup period and integrated over the term of the proposed
44 license extension. For the purposes of initial screening, which assumes all severe accidents
45 due to internal events are eliminated, SNC calculated an ACC of approximately \$302,000 for the
46 20-year license renewal period.

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1 Long-term replacement power costs (RPC) were calculated using the following formula:

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \text{RPC} = \text{Annual CDF reduction} \\
 & \quad \times \text{present value of replacement power for a single event} \\
 & \quad \times \text{factor to account for remaining service years for which replacement power is} \\
 & \quad \text{required} \\
 & \quad \times \text{reactor power scaling factor}
 \end{aligned}$$

9 SNC based its calculations on the value of 1253 megawatt electric (MWe), which includes the
 10 proposed 1.7 percent power uprate for VEGP. Therefore, SNC applied a power scaling factor of
 11 1253/910 to determine the replacement power costs. For the purposes of initial screening,
 12 which assumes all severe accidents due to internal events are eliminated, SNC calculated an
 13 RPC of approximately \$118,000 for the 20-year license renewal period. For the purposes of
 14 initial screening, which assumes all severe accidents are eliminated, SNC calculated the AOSC
 15 to be approximately \$420,000 for the 20-year license renewal period.

17 Using the above equations, SNC estimated the total present dollar value equivalent associated
 18 with completely eliminating severe accidents from internal events at VEGP to be about
 19 \$507,000 for a single unit. Use of a multiplier of 2 to account for external events increases the
 20 value to \$1,014,000 and represents the dollar value associated with completely eliminating all
 21 internal and external event severe accident risk for a single unit at VEGP, also referred to as the
 22 Modified Maximum Averted Cost Risk (MMACR).

24 SNC's Results

26 If the implementation costs for a candidate SAMA exceeded the calculated benefit, the SAMA
 27 was considered not to be cost-beneficial. In the baseline analysis contained in the ER (using a
 28 3 percent discount rate), SNC identified two potentially cost-beneficial SAMAs. The potentially
 29 cost-beneficial SAMAs are:

- 31 • SAMA 2 - Maintain full-time black start capability of the Plant Wilson combustion turbines.
- 33 • SAMA 4 - Prepare procedures and operator training for cross-tying an opposite unit DG.

35 SNC performed additional analyses to evaluate the impact of parameter choices and
 36 uncertainties on the results of the SAMA assessment (SNC 2007a). If the benefits are
 37 increased by a factor of 2 to account for uncertainties, two additional SAMA candidates were
 38 determined to be potentially cost-beneficial:

- 40 • SAMA 6 - Implementation of a bypass line for the cooling tower return isolation valves.
- 42 • SAMA 16 - Enhance procedures for ISLOCA response.

1 Subsequent to the ER, and in response to NRC staff RAIs, SNC provided revised population
2 dose and SAMA benefit estimates based on several corrections/changes to the SAMA analysis
3 contained in the ER, as summarized below (SNC 2007b):
4

- 5 • Correction to one SECPOP2000 input/output error that was not fully reflected in the ER
6 SAMA analysis, and corrections to two input/output errors related to the SECPOP2000 code
7 that were identified subsequent to the ER,
8
- 9 • An increase in reactor core radionuclide inventory and replacement power costs to reflect a
10 proposed 1.7 percent power uprate for VEGP that was not accounted for in the ER SAMA
11 analysis,
12
- 13 • Use of a revised offsite population dose risk of 1.56 person-rem per year instead of a value
14 of 2.04 person-rem per year referenced in the ER,
15
- 16 • Use of a revised offsite economic cost risk of \$2,003 instead of a value of \$1,412 referenced
17 in the ER, and
18
- 19 • Use of a revised farm wealth escalation factor of 1.256 instead of 1.095 utilized in the ER
20 SAMA analysis.
21

22 SNC provided revised population dose and benefit estimates reflecting the results of these
23 corrections/changes (SNC 2007b). The population dose and SAMA benefit estimates reported
24 in the present document (e.g., in Tables G-2 and G-5) reflect these revisions. The revised
25 analysis produced an insignificant change to the MMACR (i.e., a 0.4 percent decrease, from
26 \$1.018M to \$1.014M), and a change in the estimated benefits for the various SAMAs ranging
27 from a 1.0 percent reduction to a 3.4 percent increase. These changes resulted in no impact on
28 the Phase I screening results, or on the list of SAMAs determined to be potentially cost-
29 beneficial in the baseline and uncertainty analyses. Thus, the overall results of the SAMA
30 assessment were not affected (SNC 2007b).
31

32 The potentially cost-beneficial SAMAs, and SNC's plans for further evaluation of these SAMAs
33 are discussed in more detail in Section G.6.2.
34

35 **G.6.2 Review of SNC's Cost-Benefit Evaluation**

36

37 The cost-benefit analysis performed by SNC was based primarily on NUREG/BR-0184
38 (NRC 1997a) and was executed consistent with this guidance.
39

40 To account for external events, SNC multiplied the internal event benefits by a factor of 2 for
41 each SAMA. Given that the CDF from internal fires and other external events as reported by
42 SNC is less than the CDF for internal events, the NRC staff agrees that the factor of 2 multiplier
43 for external events is reasonable.
44

45 SNC considered the impact that possible increases in benefits from analysis uncertainties would
46 have on the results of the SAMA assessment. In the absence of a detailed uncertainty

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1 distribution from the VEGP PRA model, SNC applied an additional multiplier of 2 to the internal
2 and external event benefit estimates, which is representative of the ratio of the 95th percentile
3 CDF to the mean CDF in typical PRA uncertainty calculations. SNC reexamined the initial set of
4 SAMAs to determine if any additional Phase I SAMAs would be retained for further analysis if
5 the benefits (and Modified Maximum Averted Cost-Risk) were increased by a factor of 2. One
6 such Phase I SAMA was identified, i.e., SAMA 5 - permanent, dedicated generator for one
7 motor driven AFW pump and a battery charger.

8
9 SNC also considered the impact on the Phase II screening if the estimated benefits were
10 increased by a factor of 2 (in addition to the multiplier of 2 for external events). The additional
11 Phase I SAMA, SAMA 5 as described above, was included in this sensitivity analysis. Two
12 additional SAMAs became cost-beneficial in SNC's analysis (SAMAs 6 and 16 as described
13 above). However, SNC concluded that neither of these SAMAs was likely to be cost-beneficial
14 because not all required equipment and material had been included in the cost estimate for
15 SAMA 6, and because the full calculated benefit of SAMA 16 was unlikely to be achievable
16 since procedures to deal with ISLOCA events already exist at VEGP.

17
18 The NRC staff questioned why these two SAMAs shouldn't continue to be considered for
19 implementation at VEGP since the factor of 2 is not demonstratively conservative (this factor is
20 reported to be as high as 2.5 for other Westinghouse plants and as high as 5 for other plants)
21 (NRC 2007). In response to the RAI, SNC provided a revised implementation cost estimate for
22 SAMA 6 of \$816,000 that included additional costs for an inverter, heavy gauge cabling, and
23 additional pipe supports. Based on the revised cost estimate, SAMA 6 would no longer be cost-
24 beneficial (SNC 2007b).

25
26 SNC's response on SAMA 16 was that the relatively low potential cost-benefit of \$14,500 and
27 the fact that procedures to deal with ISLOCA events already exist at VEGP made this SAMA an
28 unlikely candidate for implementation (SNC 2007b). The staff agrees that the benefits of this
29 SAMA are only slightly greater than its estimated implementation costs, and that the risk
30 reduction provided by this SAMA would be relatively small. Furthermore, since VEGP already
31 has a plant procedure to deal with ISLOCA events and recognizing that the assumption that all
32 ISLOCA events are eliminated is conservative, the staff agrees that further evaluation of this
33 SAMA by SNC is not warranted.

34
35 The NRC staff questioned the estimated cost of \$900,000 for implementation of SAMA 15,
36 install permanent dedicated generator for the normal charging pump (NCP), when a recent cost
37 estimate for this same SAMA for another plant was only \$800,000 (NRC 2007). In response to
38 the RAI, SNC reevaluated this SAMA using an implementation cost of \$800,000 and determined
39 that this SAMA would be potentially cost-beneficial if analysis uncertainties were taken into
40 account (SNC 2007b). However, SNC noted that if either of low cost SAMAs 2 and 4, which
41 were determined to be potentially cost-beneficial, were implemented at VEGP, the benefit of
42 SAMA 15 would be greatly reduced. The staff agrees that SAMAs 2 and 4 provide much of the
43 same benefit that SAMA 15 does at much lower cost and that further evaluation of this SAMA by
44 SNC is not warranted.

1 The NRC staff asked the licensee to evaluate several lower cost alternative SAMAs that had
2 been found to be potentially cost-beneficial at other PWR plants. These alternatives were: (1)
3 directing PCS cooldown on loss of RCP seal cooling, (2) proceduralizing local manual operation
4 of auxiliary feedwater when control power is lost, (3) using a portable generator to extend the
5 coping time in loss of AC power events (to power selected instrumentation and DC power to the
6 turbine-driven auxiliary feedwater pump), (4) providing alternate DC feeds (using a portable
7 generator) to panels supplied only by a DC bus, (5) modifying emergency procedures to isolate
8 a faulted SG due to a stuck open safety valve, and (6) providing hardware connections to allow
9 service water to cool NCP seals (NRC 2007). SNC provided a further evaluation of these
10 alternatives, as summarized below (SNC 2007b).

- 11
- 12 • Enhancing procedures to direct PCS cooldown on loss of RCP seal cooling - This SAMA is
13 effectively already implemented at VEGP for SBOs by Emergency Operating Procedure
14 19100-C and for LOCAs by Emergency Operating Procedure 19010-C.
- 15
- 16 • Proceduralizing local manual operation of auxiliary feedwater when control power is lost -
17 This SAMA is effectively already implemented at VEGP by Emergency Operating Procedure
18 19100-C.
- 19
- 20 • Using a portable generator during a loss of AC power to power selected instrumentation
21 and DC power - This SAMA is effectively already implemented at VEGP because the
22 turbine-driven AFW pump can be manually operated without DC power per existing
23 Emergency Operating Procedure 19100-C.
- 24
- 25 • Providing alternate DC feeds to panels supplied only by the DC bus - This SAMA is
26 effectively already implemented at VEGP because the turbine-driven AFW pump can be
27 manually operated without DC power per existing Emergency Operating Procedure 19100-
28 C.
- 29
- 30 • Modifying emergency procedures to isolate a faulted SG due to a stuck open safety valve -
31 This SAMA is effectively already implemented at VEGP by Emergency Operating Procedure
32 19020-C E-2.
- 33
- 34 • Providing hardware connections to allow service water to cool NCP seals - The purpose of
35 this SAMA is effectively already implemented at VEGP because VEGP uses two centrifugal
36 charging pumps to provide service water for RCP seal injection if the normal charging pump
37 fails. VEGP Procedure 13006 directs operators to establish this system to provide RCP seal
38 injection if NCP is not available.
- 39
- 40 • SNC indicated that the remaining low cost alternatives identified in the RAI are either not
41 applicable, effectively already implemented or already addressed by existing plant
42 procedures, or not effective at VEGP.
- 43

44 The NRC staff notes that the two potentially cost-beneficial SAMAs identified in SNC's baseline
45 analysis will be considered further through the appropriate VEGP action process (SNC 2007a).

46

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1 The NRC staff concludes that, with the exception of the potentially cost-beneficial SAMAs
2 discussed above, the costs of the other SAMAs evaluated would be higher than the associated
3 benefits.

4 5 **G.7 Conclusions**

6
7 SNC compiled a list of 16 SAMAs based on a review of: the most significant basic events from
8 the plant-specific PRA, insights from the plant-specific IPE and IPEEE, Phase II SAMAs from
9 license renewal applications for other plants, and review of other NRC and industry
10 documentation. An initial screening removed SAMA candidates that (1) were determined to
11 provide no measurable benefit, or (2) had estimated costs that would exceed the dollar value
12 associated with completely eliminating all severe accident risk at VEGP. Based on this
13 screening, 4 SAMAs were eliminated leaving 12 candidate SAMAs for evaluation.

14
15 For the remaining SAMA candidates, a more detailed design and cost estimate were developed
16 as shown in Table G-4. The cost-benefit analyses showed that two of the SAMA candidates
17 were potentially cost-beneficial in the baseline analysis (SAMAs 2 and 4). SNC performed
18 additional analyses to evaluate the impact of parameter choices and uncertainties on the results
19 of the SAMA assessment. As a result, two additional SAMAs (SAMAs 6 and 16) were identified
20 as potentially cost-beneficial,. However, these two SAMAs were subsequently dismissed based
21 on a higher estimated implementation cost for SAMA 6 and low potential benefit for SAMA 16.
22 SNC has indicated that the two potentially cost-beneficial SAMAs (SAMAs 2 and 4) will be
23 considered further through the appropriate VEGP action process.

24
25 The NRC staff reviewed the SNC analysis and concludes that the methods used and the
26 implementation of those methods were sound. The treatment of SAMA benefits and costs
27 support the general conclusion that the SAMA evaluations performed by SNC are reasonable
28 and sufficient for the license renewal submittal. Although the treatment of SAMAs for external
29 events was somewhat limited, the likelihood of there being cost-beneficial enhancements in this
30 area was minimized by improvements that have been realized as a result of the IPEEE process,
31 and inclusion of a multiplier to account for external events.

32
33 The NRC staff concurs with SNC's identification of areas in which risk can be further reduced in
34 a cost-beneficial manner through the implementation of the identified, potentially cost-beneficial
35 SAMAs. Given the potential for cost-beneficial risk reduction, the NRC staff agrees that further
36 evaluation of these SAMAs by SNC is warranted. However, these SAMAs do not relate to
37 adequately managing the effects of aging during the period of extended operation. Therefore,
38 they need not be implemented as part of license renewal pursuant to Title 10 of the *Code of*
39 *Federal Regulations*, Part 54.

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(See instructions on the reverse)

NUREG-1437, Supplement 34

2. TITLE AND SUBTITLE

Generic Environmental Impact Statement for License Renewal of Nuclear Plants (GEIS)
Supplement 34
Regarding Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2
Draft Report

3. DATE REPORT PUBLISHED

MONTH

YEAR

April

2008

4. FIN OR GRANT NUMBER

5. AUTHOR(S)

See Appendix B of report

6. TYPE OF REPORT

Technical

7. PERIOD COVERED (Inclusive Dates)

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION - NAME AND ADDRESS (If NRC, provide Division, Office or Region, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and mailing address; if contractor, provide name and mailing address.)

Division of License Renewal
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555-0001

9. SPONSORING ORGANIZATION - NAME AND ADDRESS (If NRC, type "Same as above"; if contractor, provide NRC Division, Office or Region, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and mailing address.)

Same as 8 above

10. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

Docket Number 50-424, 50-425

11. ABSTRACT (200 words or less)

This supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) has been prepared in response to an application submitted by Southern Nuclear Operating Company (SNC) to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to renew the Operating Licenses for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2 for an additional 20 years under 10 CFR Part 54. The SEIS includes the NRC staff's analysis that considers and weighs the environmental impacts of the proposed action, the environmental impacts of alternatives to the proposed action, and mitigation measures available for reducing or avoiding adverse impacts. It also includes the staff's recommendation regarding the proposed action.

The NRC staff's preliminary recommendation is that the Commission determine that the adverse environmental impacts of license renewal for VEGP are not so great that preserving the option of license renewal for energy-planning decision makers would be unreasonable. The recommendation is based on (1) the analysis and findings in the GEIS; (2) the Environmental Report submitted by SNC; (3) consultation with Federal, State, and local agencies; (4) the staff's own independent review; and (5) the staff's consideration of public comments.

12. KEY WORDS/DESCRIPTORS (List words or phrases that will assist researchers in locating the report.)

Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2
VEGP
Southern Nuclear Operating Company
Supplement to the Generic Environmental Impact Statement
DSEIS
National Environmental Policy Act
NEPA
License Renewal
GEIS
NUREG 1437, Supplement 34

13. AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

unlimited

14. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

(This Page)

unclassified

(This Report)

unclassified

15. NUMBER OF PAGES

16. PRICE