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Point Beach Nuclear Power Plant License Extension Process Put on Hold

Two Rivers, WI – The relicensing of the Point Beach Nuclear Power Plant located near Two Rivers, Wisconsin has been paused due to a [lawsuit initiated](#) by several non-profit organizations. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) [ordered the memorandum on subsequent license renewals](#) for nuclear reactors in the United States. “Subsequent” license renewals refer to the second 20-year extension for a reactor operation following the original 40-year license of a nuclear power plant. These subsequent license extensions bring the life of nuclear power plants to 80 years.

This memorandum is due to the above-mentioned lawsuit and pressure from other organizations to force the implementation of internal NRC regulations and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The NRC determined that before a subsequent license extension could be granted an updated environmental statement needed to be completed under NEPA. Thus, the Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) previously used was not adequate for a subsequent license renewal.

“Because of the work and diligence of many organizations and citizen voices across the country, including those right here in Wisconsin, the NRC was held accountable to environmental regulations. This is a victory for all those voices,” said Hannah Mortensen, Executive Director of Physicians for Social Responsibility Wisconsin (PSR WI).

In March 2021, PSR WI [petitioned](#) the NRC asking for a hearing on the Point Beach subsequent license application. PSR WI [challenged](#) the aging structure of the plant, alternative energy scenarios and the safety risks of the reactors. These contentions were dismissed initially; however, due to the [recent order](#), PSR WI will be allowed to bring forth the alternative energy contention again when the license renewal process resumes.

Amy Schulz, RN, President of PSR WI, stated regarding the new GEIS, “We encourage the NRC to include updated data on the climate crisis as well as the benefits of renewable energy and energy conservation measures in the GEIS. The NRC has a “redo” opportunity, and they should seize it.”

Beyond Nuclear was one of the organizations leading the effort to hold the NRC accountable to their NEPA error. Paul Gunter from Beyond Nuclear remarked, “This decision requires the NRC and the industry to analyze the climate crisis future and the associated risks, costs and consequences of extending reactor operations. Most importantly, renewable energy, efficiency and conservation can be recognized as the most effective alternative as a carbon reduction technology at the least cost for faster deployment.”

Kevin Kamps, from Beyond Nuclear, said, “Even the NRC Commissioners have been forced to admit the agency’s handling of extreme license extension applications, as at Point Beach, does not pass legal

muster. As the National Environmental Policy Act requires, NRC must take a ‘hard look’ at the many negative environmental impacts, and the significantly increasing risks, of operating Point Beach’s already age-degraded atomic reactors for 30 more years. And it should full consider renewable energy preferred alternatives, such as installing much cheaper, cleaner, and safer solar and wind power and energy efficiency upgrades.”

While the new environmental statement is being written, the two Point Beach nuclear reactors will be allowed to continue to operate because NextEra, the owners of PBNP, filed their request for the license extension before the current licenses for the reactors expire in 2030/2033. The timeline is to yet to be determined for the new GEIS and when the license extension process will continue.

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Physicians for Social Responsibility Wisconsin (PSR WI) recognizes that the two most significant threats today to human survival are nuclear weapons and climate change. Our members are also deeply concerned about the health consequences from growing contamination of our environment by toxic chemicals and pollution. We rely on the medical and public health expertise of our members to work for the abolition of nuclear weapons, to reverse our climate change trajectory and to stop further degradation of our environment.