



The Nuclear Burden on Mississippi

The New Orleans-based energy company Entergy has applied for a permit to site a new nuclear plant—for the first time in the U.S. since the partial meltdown at Three Mile Island more than twenty-five years ago—at its Grand Gulf site in western Mississippi. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has already given a preliminary recommendation that Entergy receive the Early Site Permit (ESP) it has requested, but many key issues remain unsettled, and local opposition is mounting.

REASONS TO OPPOSE NEW NUCLEAR REACTORS IN MISSISSIPPI:

- 1. A new reactor could unfairly burden minorities and low-income populations.** According to the draft environmental review of Entergy's application, "It is not clear whether Claiborne County would receive property taxes, sales, and use taxes, or other taxes and public monies commensurate with the costs of its additional emergency management and public services obligations. The net financial burden may fall on local residents and taxpayers, most of whom are minority and low-income persons."¹
- 2. Local police, fire, and hospital staff don't have the resources to handle an emergency.** The County Sheriff, Frank Davis, wrote in an affidavit that "additional man power is needed to fully fill the required needs of our emergency evacuation plan and provide additional services at Grand Gulf Nuclear Power Plant since the 911 disaster," while the deputy sheriff attested that "the addition of another plant or two plants will further burden the limited resources and infrastructure of the Claiborne County's Sheriff's Department." The Claiborne County Hospital Administrator, Wanda Flemming, wrote in an affidavit that "any additional nuclear power station unit or units to the current Grand Gulf nuclear generating station would further complicate effective medical response to a radiological emergency and would, most likely, multiply our inabilities to do so many times over."
- 3. A new reactor increases the chances of an accident or terrorist attack.** No reactor design is foolproof, and security threats remain real. In February 2005 testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, FBI director Robert Mueller noted that "Al-Qa'ida planner Khalid Sheikh Mohammed had nuclear power plants as part of his target set and we have no reason to believe that al-Qa'ida has reconsidered."² Grand Gulf is guarded by the private security firm Wackenhut. In addition to past performance problems at Entergy plants,³ Wackenhut is the same company that tests security at all the country's nuclear plants, which poses a tremendous conflict of interest.
- 4. Emergency plans are inadequate,** relying heavily on under-trained and under-equipped teachers, bus drivers, doctors and other civilians to facilitate an evacuation, without taking into account the possibility of "role abandonment." Studies of the 1979 Three Mile Island accident in Pennsylvania found that doctors and other key workers abandoned their posts up to 25 miles from the site to tend to their families or save themselves. In the case of a more severe accident, heroic actions would be required to successfully carry out an evacuation. Emergency evacuation plans don't even exist for people living more than ten miles away.
- 5. It's expensive and relies on massive government subsidies to be cost-competitive.** Entergy will receive federal subsidies of \$5 million out of the total \$10 million cost for its Early Site Permit application; the company is also part of a business consortium that will receive \$260 million from the federal government to pursue a construction and operating license. From 1948-1998, nuclear power alone received 56% of all federal energy research and development funds, totaling over \$74 billion in 2003 dollars.⁴ That was almost three times as much as all renewable and energy efficiency technologies combined received over the same period.



6. **It will produce high-level nuclear waste that will stay in Mississippi indefinitely.** Even if the proposed nuclear waste dump at Yucca Mountain were to open, it lacks capacity for any waste produced after 2011, meaning that the problem of waste from new reactors and even the existing reactor will have no safe, permanent solution. Entergy publicly admits that by the year 2007 it will no longer have the capacity to store on-site the radioactive waste generated by the current Grand Gulf reactor.⁵

7. **The permitting process is designed to minimize public input and influence, and is deceptive.** Though Entergy wants to build its reactor in Port Gibson, most of the public meetings have taken place at NRC headquarters in Rockville, MD. The time period for filing legal arguments only lasted several months and has long since passed, and the associated hearings could be held under recently-revised rules that eliminate traditional due process activities such as discovery and the right to cross examine witnesses. Further, though the ESP is presented as a way to address all the environmental issues before further resources are invested, many difficult questions are expressly forbidden from being included or are pushed off until later, after the ESP is granted. What used to be two licenses—construction and operation—has been reduced to one, so that before the first shovel hits the dirt, Exelon has permission to begin operating their reactor; any construction problems that arise are difficult to challenge.

8. **The health effects of routine operation of a nuclear plant require more thorough investigation.** Recent research by several scientists raises questions about health impacts that need further investigation. The NRC should commission an independent epidemiological study on the health impacts of all citizens living downwind from operating nuclear plants. In February 2005, U.S. Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, issued a similar call for NRC to further investigate possible links between nuclear power and increased infant mortality.

9. **Nuclear power promotes a centralized, secretive energy system** rather than a distributed, locally controlled, and transparent one. Nuclear plants require tremendous security because of the unimaginable health and economic consequence of a successful attack. Their strategic importance has prompted unprecedented secrecy to attempt to keep them safe, including a proposed rule to classify even emergency evacuation plans. In contrast, the distributed nature of renewable energy systems like wind provides resiliency and efficiency benefits of generating power closer to where it is used. Wind turbines do not need evacuation plans.

10. **It's not just Mississippi.** Entergy, like the two other utilities engaged in the ESP process, is doing so partly as a test of new licensing procedures. If all goes well, this will likely set a precedent to bring in a whole new generation of nuclear reactors around the country. The industry's stated goal is to have 50 new reactors under way by 2020.⁶ In essence, the outcome in Port Gibson, Mississippi, will have a major effect on the direction of the country's energy future for decades to come.

TAKE ACTION!

You can help stop the construction of new reactors in Mississippi and ensure we move toward a future of clean, safe, and abundant renewable energy.

- ⚙ Call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 to connect with your Senators and Representative. Tell them you **OPPOSE** the energy bill and massive subsidies for polluting nuclear and fossil fuels.
- ⚙ Attend a public meeting in Port Gibson, Mississippi on June 28 to speak out against new reactors.
- ⚙ Submit comments in writing to the NRC against new reactors in Mississippi and NRC's narrow environmental analysis.
- ⚙ **Speak Out!** Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, organize a community meeting (we can help you find expert speakers), and contact your local public officials.

¹ NUREG-1817, *Draft Environmental Impact Statement for an Early Site Permit (ESP) at the Grand Gulf ESP Site*, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, April 2005; p. 5-41; <<http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/nuregs/staff/sr1817/index.html>>.

² "Testimony of Robert S. Mueller, III, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation Before the Select Committee on Intelligence of the United States Senate," February 16, 2005; p. 3; <<http://intelligence.senate.gov/0502hrg/050216/mueller.pdf>>.

³ *Report of Investigation: Entergy Nuclear Northeast, Indian Point #2*, January 25, 2002; <<http://tinyurl.com/eyule>>.

⁴ *Energy Efficiency: Budget, Oil Conservation, and Electricity Conservation Issues*, Congressional Research Service Issue Brief for Congress, Fred Sissine, Order Code IB10020, Updated September 22, 2004.

⁵ From System Energy Resources FY2004 10-K filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission; <<http://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/7323/000006598405000147/a10-k.htm>>.

⁶ *Vision 2020 – Nuclear Energy and the Nation's Future Prosperity*, Nuclear Energy Institute, p. 3; <http://www.nei.org/documents/Vision2020_Booklet.pdf>.

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Public Citizen, a non-profit public interest organization, has been fighting nuclear power for over 30 years.