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PUBLIC COMMENTS ON POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ARE KEY PART OF OYSTER CREEK LICENSE RENEWAL REVIEW

TOMS RIVER, N.J. (NOV. 1) – The Nuclear Regulatory Commission says public comments received today at meetings regarding the Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station are essential to help the agency determine whether to relicense the plant for another 20 years.

“A key element of our relicensing process is listening to what area residents have to say,” said Michael Masnik, the NRC project manager who is leading the environmental review associated with the application. “With our mission of openness, hearing what the public has to say is very important.”

Masnik said that because the agency places such a heavy emphasis on public comment, two sessions have been scheduled: one from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. and a second from 7 to 10 p.m. to ensure those who cannot attend during the day have the opportunity to be heard in the evening. The sessions are taking place at the Quality Inn at 815 Route 37 in Toms River.

The comments received from the public will be reviewed not just by the NRC but also by well-respected national laboratories to enable the agency to reach a decision about adding two decades to the license for the plant, which is located in Lacey Township (Ocean County), N.J., and operated by AmerGen. The facility’s current 40-year license is set to expire in April 2009.

The specific focus of today’s meetings will be any potential environmental impacts resulting from an extension of the plant’s license. The conclusion of this environmental “scoping” process will be on Nov. 15. The findings of the environmental review will be published in a draft report due out next June. The public will then have an opportunity to comment on that report before issuance of the final version in January 2007.

The environmental review will be carried out in line with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, which requires that federal agencies follow a systematic approach in evaluating potential environmental impacts associated with certain actions, including nuclear power plant license renewal. That includes a review of the impacts of the proposed action and any mitigation for those impacts the agency considers to be significant. In addition, it requires the consideration of alternatives to the proposed action, including the no-action alternative.

AmerGen submitted a license renewal application for Oyster Creek on July 22. As part of its application, the company submitted an environmental report. The application can be reviewed via the NRC's web site at: www.nrc.gov/reactors/operating/licensing/renewal/applications/oystercreek.html . It is also available for review at the NRC's Public Document Room in Rockville, Md., which can be reached by phone at 1-800-397-4209, and at the Lacey Branch of the Ocean County Library, located at 10 E. Lacey Road.

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