

# Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

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November 19, 2012

Jon Carson, Director  
Office of Public Engagement  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Carson:

On behalf of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League and its chapter the Concerned Citizens of Shell Bluff, I ask for your assistance in protecting our community. Our concerns center on the Plant Vogtle nuclear power station located in rural Burke County, Georgia on the banks of the Savannah River. Georgia Power has operated two reactors there since the 1980s and has two more under construction. If completed, it would be the largest nuclear power plant in the nation.

First, for some time we have been seeking to improve the safety and security of our families and neighbors who live near the Plant Vogtle nuclear power station. However, our efforts have met with little effective response from those who are charged with emergency evacuation and shelter. Our concerns here are two: 1) that Georgia Power is not providing enough information to people living within the 10-mile emergency planning zone around Plant Vogtle, and 2) that many residents lack personal transportation and would be unable to get to shelter in time to prevent radiation exposure in the event of an accident.

In May we met with Chairman Gregory Jaczko of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and told him about these concerns. We were pleased that he responded quickly by filing an allegation within his agency. However, the result of this effort has amounted to no improvement in the Shell Bluff community. The NRC turned the matter over to the Federal Emergency Management Agency which responded by merely recounting what ought to be done according to the regulations and ended the discussion. FEMA apparently contacted state and power company officials but to my knowledge called no one living in the Shell Bluff community. I enclose copies of the correspondence with NRC and FEMA.<sup>i</sup>

Second, in 2009 a nuclear power siting study was published which suggests that there is a reactor-related environmental injustice at Plant Vogtle.<sup>ii</sup> However, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission concluded that there were no disproportionate negatives impacts and that the high percentage of minority and low-income people was because of the sparseness of the rural population. Their data collection for this report consisted of interviews with just three residents. We brought this to the attention of the NRC in 2010; nevertheless, the agency approved the license for two additional units in 2012. Our public hearing testimony is enclosed.<sup>iii</sup>

The two new reactors heap insult upon injury. Some of the land acquired by Georgia Power for the first two units at Plant Vogtle was obtained without the consent of its African-American landowners. The details are related in an essay written by Claude Howard, a descendent of the man whose land was taken, enclosed.<sup>iv</sup>

Third, the US Department of Energy is considering loan guarantees of \$8.33 billion for Plant Vogtle. We believe this loan guarantee should be rejected. The DOE Loan Programs Office is supposed to protect US taxpayers by ensuring the loan guarantees have a reasonable prospect of repayment. But if this were so, Georgia Power's parent Southern Company would have gotten private investors instead of taxpayers to back Plant Vogtle. Early, optimistic construction cost estimates vastly understated the actual costs of nuclear reactors. Presently, with work only on the foundation, the Vogtle project is nearly a billion dollars over budget. There are additional concerns about the loan program which are presented in our letter to Secretary Chu, attached.<sup>v</sup>

In conclusion, it is clear to us that the Plant Vogtle should not be expanded and that clean, safe energy does not include nuclear power.

Mr. Carson, we certainly appreciate the opportunity to speak with you. Thank you for all you do for our nation. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Charles N. Utley  
Environmental Justice Campaign Coordinator  
Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

## ENCLOSURES

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<sup>i</sup> Letters to Rev. Willie Tomlin from Lois M. James, NRC Senior Allegations Coordinator, dated June 5, 2012 and July 31, 2012

<sup>ii</sup> *Environmental Injustice in Siting Nuclear Plants*, Mary Alldred and Kristin Shrader-Frechette, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, Volume 2, Number 2, 2009

<sup>iii</sup> Letter to Cindy Bladey, Chief of NRC Rules Announcements and Directives Branch, Re: Docket ID NRC-2008-0252, Vogtle Draft Supplemental EIS, NUREG-1947, from Louis A. Zeller, Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, January 24, 2010

<sup>iv</sup> "Under the Foot of the White Man," Claude C. Howard, Waynesboro, Georgia

<sup>v</sup> Letter to Dr. Steven Chu, Secretary, US DOE, re: Loan guarantees for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant Units 3 and 4, from Louis A. Zeller, Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, March 19, 2012