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Nuclear Power Riskier Than Ever Too Risky, Too Expensive, Too Dangerous

An NRC Environmental Scoping Meeting will be held on Jan. 6th in Glen Rose, Texas to take comment on the environmental impact study for two nuclear reactors proposed for the existing Comanche Peak site. A coalition of environmental and consumer groups and their members will be telling the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and Luminant (formerly TXU) that nuclear plants are "too risky, too expensive and too dangerous" to help Texas meet its power needs, and makes no sense when clean, safe, affordable options exist. The coalition of groups said they only learned of the hastily called public meeting to seek input on environmental issues on December 24th.

"We've been down this road before," noted Cyrus Reed, Conservation Director of the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club. "The utility industry sold Texas on Comanche Peak and the South Texas Project and consumers have been paying the 'stranded' costs ever since, even as valuable water resources are expended and radioactive waste piles up on-site."

Luminant proposes to build two more nuclear reactors at the existing Comanche Peak nuclear site near Glen Rose, in Somervell County, using an unproven, untested technology known as USAPWR.

"The design of the reactors has not been certified and has never been built anywhere in the world. Why should Texas serve as guinea pigs for a dangerous radioactive experiment?" asked Karen Hadden, Executive Director of the Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED) Coalition. "Design problems as well as human error led to numerous problems and shutdowns of Comanche Peak reactors in the past. The competence and character of Luminant need to be

examined closely since the history of the existing reactors is disastrous. In the past, there was a chance to fix nuclear reactor construction problems before an operating license was issued, but that safeguard is gone with the new licensing process.”

“The rush to build new nuclear power plants is simply an attempt to take advantage of federal subsidies while they are available, and then hope to pass the building and operating costs on to the public,” noted Tom “Smitty” Smith, director of Public Citizen’s Texas office. “Luminant has said that costs could go as high as \$22 billion and the Comanche Peak reactors could cost even more due to its design and the rising costs of uranium, steel and cement. Comanche Peak Unit One ran ten times over budget and was years late coming online.”

The cost of solar concentrated power plants and solar panels are coming down and wind energy is booming. Energy efficiency now returns twice the amount invested according to the Public Utility Commission of Texas. “Investing in nuclear power means increased risks of accidents, terrorist attacks and dealing with radioactive waste for millions of years. With clean affordable options, why even consider risky nuclear power?” asked Hadden.

A report by the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE) found that Dallas/Ft.Worth can reduce projected energy needs by 101% in the next 15 years. Peak demand can be reduced by 38% in the area. Expensive nuclear plants are not needed. (http://www.cleanenergyfortexas.org/dallas_ftworth.html)

“Renewable energy production was up about 5% between 2007 and 2008, while nuclear power production decreased,” noted Jim Duncan, President of North Texas Renewable Energy, Inc. “With the success of wind power and progress in solar technology, why would Luminant even consider sinking money into an obsolete nuclear technology?”

With the most recent ERCOT projections reporting that Texas’ existing generating capacity will meet its reserve margin needs until at least 2013, the Sierra Club’s Reed agreed that it makes better sense to invest in energy efficiency, demand response and emerging renewable technologies like wind, solar, geothermal and ways to store energy.

“There are a wide range of interest groups from industrial customers, to new players in the solar and wind energy markets, to low-income advocates who believe we need to look forward to reducing our demand and investing in new technologies like solar and energy storage, not using 20th century technology like coal-fired and uranium-fired power plants. Luminant should get on board,” said Reed.

The Seed Coalition, Public Citizen and Sierra Club are sponsors of the website NukeFreeTexas.org, which has additional information on the dangers of nuclear power in Texas.

The NRC Environmental Scoping meeting will occur at the Glen Rose Expo Center, 202 Bo Gibbs Boulevard, Glen Rose TX and will have two sessions, one from 1-4 pm and one from 7-9 pm. Hour long NRC presentations will precede each meeting.