

## Opponents petition NH power plant license renewal

By Kathy McCormack

Associated Press Writer / August 18, 2010

CONCORD, N.H. Citizens' groups filed a petition Wednesday to protest an application from New Hampshire's lone nuclear power plant to extend its license for 20 years. The NextEra Energy Seabrook Station has been operating since 1990. Its existing license runs out in 2030, but it applied in June to extend its license to 2050 under Nuclear Regulatory Commission provisions. The application is about 2,000 pages long. The petitioners, who plan to testify at a public hearing on the matter Thursday, have asked the commission to suspend the NRC's lengthy review process, which is not expected to be completed before 2012.

In the meantime, they've asked that the license extension process start no more than 10 years before the expiration date. Petitioners also say the license renewal process is premature because it can't take into account key factors affecting plant maintenance, reliability and safety; climate change; technology; and future power needs.

"To get a permit for an action that actually isn't going to be implemented for 20 years, in our view, places too wide of a time separation between the permit and the action," said Raymond Shadis of the Friends of the Coast, based in Edgecomb, Maine.

"It's like getting a permit to put up a 7-Eleven 20 years from now," he said. The neighbors, the town, the planning commission would all question the wisdom of giving a permit when you don't know what the surrounding conditions are going to be 20 years from now."

Other groups that have joined the petition include Beyond Nuclear, based in Takoma Park, Md.; New England Coalition on Nuclear Pollution of Brattleboro, Vt.; Seacoast Anti-Pollution League in New Hampshire; Pilgrim Watch in Duxbury, Mass.; and C-10 Research & Education Foundation in Newburyport, Mass.

The NRC says there are 104 reactors in the nation originally licensed to operate for 40 years. The NRC has approved license renewal for 50 reactors.

The Seabrook plant has more than 1,100 employees and generates electricity for more than 1.4 million families and business in the region. A University of New Hampshire study this year said 82 percent of residents surveyed supported the license renewal if the plant met regulations.

Plant spokesman Alan Griffith said the license renewal process is extremely rigorous and comprehensive.

"We have an outstanding safety and operating history that we know fully meets the requirements for license renewal under the NRC process," he said. "As we've done through our entire operating history, we're ready to address any issues or answer any questions that the public has at any time."

# Petitioners fight nuke plant relicensing effort

By **Jennifer Feals**

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PORTSMOUTH HERALD

HAMPTON FALLS Citizens groups, members of whom fought more than 20 years ago against the opening of Seabrook Station, have filed a petition against the nuclear power plant's request to extend its operating license an additional 20 years.

In the petition, filed Wednesday with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the commission is asked to change its current rule, which enables the plant to submit a license extension request 20 years before the expiration of its 40-year operating license.

Petitioners want the extension process to begin no more than 10 years before the expiration date of a nuclear power plant's operating license.

Further, the petitioners ask the NRC to suspend the plant's relicensing process, which is not expected to be completed before 2012. They said the early application request takes away the opportunity for younger generations to be involved in the process.

NextEra Energy Seabrook applied in June to extend its 40-year operating license to 2050. The plant has been in operation for 20 years today, and its existing license runs out in 2030.

Petitioners said Seabrook's license renewal request is "premature" because it can't take into account plant maintenance, safety, climate and environmental change, technology and power needs 40 years down the road.

"The verdict is in on nuclear power, and it's been in on Seabrook. It's expensive, dangerous, and dirty, and so has it ever been," said Paul Gunter of Beyond Nuclear, who is also a co-founder of the Clamshell Alliance, which opposed the power plant starting in the 1970s. "We need to be looking at safer, cleaner, more benign ways of generating electricity than splitting the atom and, in the process, creating nuclear waste."

The petition was filed by Beyond Nuclear, as well as Friends of the Coast, New England Coalition on Nuclear Pollution, Seacoast Anti-Pollution League, Pilgrim Watch, and C-10 Research and Education Foundation. Representatives of the groups plan to testify today at a public hearing on the plant's license request.

"To be able to say that NextEra Energy or the NRC can predict what environmental challenges will be facing the Seacoast or New Hampshire in 40 years is relatively ludicrous," Gunter said. "It's based on a rule that's antiquated and obsolete and needs to be changed. Our proposal promotes health, safety and benefits to the public."

There are 104 nuclear power plants operating in the country, according to the NRC, and the commission has approved license renewal for 50 of them.

NextEra Energy spokesman Al Griffith said the plant is simply following the NRC's process.

"The reason that we're applying now is that the NRC regulations allow that," he said. "We just follow the existing process."

While it's the goal of petitioners to halt Seabrook's relicensing process, they say a petition has not done so in the past.

"We feel this is a strong case to be made, that this rule change is necessary," Gunter said.

NextEra Energy will not speculate how its relicensing process will be affected at this time, Griffith said.

"We're just going to keep on track and follow the process as laid out for us, that the NRC has already established," he said. "We're in the process. We'll continue to follow that process and take it as it comes."

If their petition is not approved by the NRC, petitioners said they can take their case to federal court. They have also filed an intervention request with the state attorney general's office, petitioners said.

In the 1970s, thousands including members of the Clamshell Alliance staged protests at the Seabrook site; on Wednesday, petitioners declined to say if that's a route they will take again in their battle.

"We're looking at any and all strategies," said Doug Bogen of the Seacoast Anti-Pollution League

***Foster's Daily Democrat***

***Portsmouth Region***

## **Groups oppose 'premature' license renewal for Seabrook Station in Seabrook**

By GEOFF CUNNINGHAM Jr.  
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**Thursday, August 19, 2010**

**SEABROOK** An Exeter-based anti-pollution group has joined a coalition seeking to suspend early authorization of an operating license extension for Seabrook Station Nuclear Power Plant.

Plant operators are looking to obtain early authorization to have their operating license extended through 2050. The current license is set to expire in March of 2030.

As power plant operators from NextEra Energy prepare to sit down with federal officials today to begin reviewing their licensing application, opponents have filed a petition with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) challenging a rule allowing extensions to be requested 20 years before existing 40-year licenses expire.

Paul Gunter of the Maryland-based anti-nuclear group "Beyond Nuclear" didn't hold back

Wednesday when he called such extension requests "premature" and beneficial to a power production process he described as "expensive, dangerous and dirty."

Gunter said such early issuance of license extensions is damaging to future generations, whom he said are robbed of the chance to weigh in on the safety of such facilities and whether technological advancements afford more environmentally-friendly power alternatives.

"It's a violation of their due process," Gunter said of a NRC federal regulation that has been on the books since 1995.

NRC officials are slated to meet today in Hampton at the Galley Hatch Conference Center for two public meetings that will begin the public portion of the review process.

The petition effort represents the combined efforts of the Seacoast Anti-Pollution League, Beyond Nuclear, C-10 Research & Education Foundation and Friends of the Coast.

Leaders behind the four organizations are concerned about early extension requests, calling such a practice unsafe and an "end-around" of the spirit of the National Environmental Policy Act.

"We find this whole license renewal process to be highly premature, since it cannot possibly take into account all of the key factors affecting plant maintenance, reliability and safety, from the deterioration of vital plant systems and infrastructure to climate change and future power needs over the next 40 years," said Doug Bogen, executive director of the Seacoast Anti-Pollution League.

Supporters of the petition say Seabrook is the first nuclear plant to apply for an extension 20 years out from the expiration of its current license and Gunter said the allowance of such an early request essentially renders any application "dated and obsolete" by the time the acting licensing period begins.

Sandy Gavutis the executive director of a C-10 group that monitors the release of radiation from the Seabrook plant expressed concerns that the license renewal request comes during a time when her group has ongoing concerns about the facility.

She said C-10 has particular concerns about the condition of infrastructure in the plant that cannot be inspected like subsurface electrical cables Gavutis said are under the ocean. Gunter a longtime activist in opposing nuclear power plants said previous petitions have resulted in rule changes, but admitted there is no precedent for a license review process to be halted by such action. However, the group said federal regulators can suspend such a review in the face of a petition calling for a rule change.

Gunter said the group has yet to take steps to bring their case to court, but the coalition has notified the N.H. Attorney General's office about their petition and related concerns.

NextEra Seabrook Station spokesman Alan Griffith said energy company officials are aware of the coalition's concerns and have been meeting with those launching the petition request.

However, he said the issue of the coalition is largely focusing on NRC regulations that NextEra is simply following.

"We are following the established process the rest of the industry is held to," Griffith said

during a Wednesday interview with Foster's.

Griffith said Seabrook Station has an excellent safety record and noted the license renewal process is "extremely rigorous," providing ample opportunity for public input. He noted the review can take upward of two years to complete. The spokesman said license renewal approval at this stage of the plant's operating life allows them to do the best job possible planning maintenance activities and expending funds for new equipment to ensure the plant remains in top condition.

Griffith said he didn't know if Seabrook Station was the first to request such an early extension, but noted that plant is among the younger in the nation having been in operation for 20 years.

Seabrook Station is among the largest single-source power generators in New England providing enough electricity at any one time to power roughly 1.4 million homes and businesses.

NRC officials will meet today in Hampton at the Galley Hatch Conference Center at 815 Lafayette Road in Hampton for two "scoping" meetings that will offer more information on the license renewal process. The meetings will be held at 1:30 p.m. and 7 p.m.

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## **Anti-nuke groups want Seabrook license delayed**

By Angeljean Chiamida Staff writer

HAMPTON FALLS A coalition of anti-nuclear organizations is petitioning the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to suspend its review of the Seabrook nuclear power plant's request to extend its operating license to 2050.

At a press conference in Hampton Falls yesterday, Newburyport-based C-10, established in 1990 and financed by the state of Massachusetts to monitor the power plant, was joined by the Exeter-based Seacoast Anti-Pollution League and Maryland-based Beyond Nuclear to announce their opposition to the 20-year license extension.

NextEra Energy Seabrook, which came online in 1990 and produces 1.244 megawatts of energy for the electric grid, had discussed its intention to apply for the extension for almost two years. It filed its formal application in June, however, in accordance with an NRC regulation allowing a nuclear power plant to apply for such an extension once it's been up and running for 20 years, a requirement the Seabrook plant met this year.

But representatives from three groups yesterday claimed even though the NRC allows it, the application has been made too soon.

"We find this whole license renewal process to be highly premature, since it cannot possibly take into account all of the key factors affecting plant maintenance, reliability and safety from the deterioration of the vital plant systems and infrastructure to climate changes and future power needs over the next 40 years," said Doug Bogen, executive director of the Seacoast Anti-Pollution League.

The representatives of the groups want the NRC to allow such applications only within 10 years of the expiration dates of the nation's nuclear power plants.

According to the NRC, its review for license extensions are extremely rigorous and comprehensive, taking between 22 to 30 months of analysis. The review includes two major components, the safety and environmental tracks, according to NRC spokesman Neil Sheehan.

The NRC looks at the management and programs for the key safety systems, structures and components, especially as it concerns the aging of these systems, to ensure the systems are maintained and operate as they should be.

NRC environmental experts study any potential environmental impact the plant might have if it continues for another 20 years, Sheehan said.

However none of that is sufficient for the petitioners.

Paul Gunter, of Beyond Nuclear, said the NRC's rule allows the plants "to make an end run around" the National Environmental Policy Act as well as around technological advances that could make wind and solar power more affordable and practical in decades to come.

"They can't predict the environment 20 to 40 years in advance," said Gunter, who promoted the potential of hundreds of wind turbines built in the ocean 50 miles off the coast of Maine and New Hampshire as a safer, cleaner way of satisfying New England's ever-growing thirst for energy.

Gunter said he's been an antinuclear activist since 1975, as a founding member of the Clamshell Alliance. The group earned its fame with numerous on-site demonstrations in Seabrook and lawsuits against the plant's owner, which held up the completion of the power plant for years. However, Gunter said, it's premature to discuss similar methods of "civil disobedience" to halt the review of the license extension.

Hundreds of protesters were arrested during the Clamshell Alliance's heyday as it unsuccessfully tried to stop the building of the Seabrook nuclear power plant. The alliance's actions are often blamed for increasing the cost of the plant's construction by hundreds of millions of dollars, putting its original owner, Public Service of New Hampshire, into bankruptcy and raising the cost of electricity for New Hampshire residents significantly.

Public Service of New Hampshire eventually divested itself of Seabrook Station after New Hampshire passed deregulation, selling it to Florida Power and Light, which recently reorganized into NextEra Energy, Inc.

"Nuclear energy is expensive, dangerous and dirty," Gunter said yesterday.

In a previous interview, Sheehan said NextEra Energy Seabrook's request was neither a surprise nor an anomaly in the nuclear energy industry. Of the 104 nuclear power plants in the country, the NRC has already approved 59 reactors for 20-year license extensions, with 20 license renewal applications, including Seabrook's, currently under review, Sheehan said.

Asked if he thought the NRC would grant the coalition's request to suspend its review of NextEra Energy Seabrook's license extension and change its rules, Gunter said he's optimistic; although, such a suspension has never occurred.

"There is no precedent for a license review to be halted by the rule-making process," Gunter said,

"but that doesn't preclude this petition from being successful."

Today, NRC officials are in the area and will hold two public hearings related to the environmental review for the license extension. The meetings take place at the Galley Hatch Conference Center at 815 Lafayette Road in Hampton. Two identical sessions will be held at 1:30 p.m. and 7 p.m., with open houses held one hour prior to each meeting when NRC staff will be on hand to provide information.

## **Public voices divided on nuke plant relicensing**

### **Residents, businesses voice praise, concern**

By Jennifer Feals  
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August 20, 2010 2:00 AM  
Portsmouth Herald

HAMPTON Opponents and supporters of Seabrook Station's request to extend its operating license 20 years presented a mix of arguments Thursday that will be added to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's review.

Two meetings held during the day were the public's first opportunity to speak out since June when NextEra Energy, owner of the Seabrook nuclear power plant, applied to extend its 40-year operating license to 2050. Thursday marked the operating plant's 20th anniversary, and its existing license runs out in 2030.

Approximately 50 people attended the earlier meeting Thursday afternoon. Both hearings were held by the NRC and focused on environmental aspects of the licensing review. Concerns raised included air and water emissions, a changing climate, cleanup and evacuation, and suggestions included that alternative forms of energy like wind and solar power should be examined.

"Environmental impacts can be from normal operation and design-based to a severe accident. Reading the application is akin to reading a fairy tale," said Mary Lampert of Pilgrim Watch. She said she wants to see detailed analyses of environmental issues like climate change on the Seacoast, cleanup in the event of a disaster, and storage of nuclear waste.

"We will not accept, and nor will you (the NRC), simply to read what they did and describe it in Reader's Digest form. We expect analysis," she said.

NRC staff will take the public's suggestions and concerns into consideration when preparing an Environmental Impact Statement. The statement will investigate and disclose environmental impacts of continuing the plant's operation for another 20 years, staff said Thursday, and will determine if adverse environmental impacts are great enough to deny the license renewal. The statement will be completed and brought before the public in June 2011.

Environmental aspects to be reviewed by the NRC within the statement include fish and wildlife, water and air resources, historical and cultural resources, socioeconomic impacts like taxes, human health and

land use.

A number of those who added their input Thursday asked the NRC to examine "environment" in the broadest sense. Janet Guen, senior director of the United Way of the Greater Seacoast, suggested the term include the quality of life and health and human services needs of those in the community.

The plant provides a large number of jobs and taxes to the local community and is a "good citizen," Guen said. That includes the \$150,000 NextEra Energy provides UWGS annually which makes them the second largest local supporter of the organization.

Joe Casey, who is president of New Hampshire Building and Construction Trades, said the plant is instrumental in the livelihood of craftsmen. Approximately 110 craftsmen work at the plant year-round, and that number rises to 600 every 18 months when the plant undergoes its refueling cycle, Casey said. Over the past three years, those workers have accumulated 1.4 million manhours at the plant, he said.

For businesses, the plant supports industry and tourism, said Tim Noonis, chairman of the Hampton Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors.

"The long-term viability of Seabrook is integral to the success of our members," he said.

The NRC's review of Seabrook's application is estimated to take approximately 22 months. In addition to the Environmental Impact Statement, an independent safety review will take place at a later date. Hearings can be requested by members of the public through Sept. 20.

Comment via mail:

Those who could not attend Thursday's public meetings can submit written comments by Sept. 21. Comments should be mailed to Chief, Rules, Announcements, and Directives Branch Division of Administrative Services, Office of Administration, Mailstop TWB-05-B01M, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, D.C. 20555. They can also be faxed to (301) 492-3446 or submitted online through [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) by searching for Docket ID number NRC-2010-0206.

More info:

For up-to-date information related to Seabrook Station, including its license renewal, sign up for its e-mail list at [www.nrc.gov/public-involve/listserver/plants-by-region.html](http://www.nrc.gov/public-involve/listserver/plants-by-region.html).