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**Palisades Is One of the Most Dangerous Atomic Reactors in the Country**

***Keeping It on Life Support with a Taxpayer-Funded Bailout Would Risk Radioactive Catastrophe***

Covert Township, Michigan and Washington, D.C.—Yesterday, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced she will apply to the Biden administration for a massive federal taxpayer-funded bailout, to prop up the economically failed and very dangerously age-degraded Palisades atomic reactor. However, Palisades' owner, Entergy Nuclear of New Orleans, has responded that it is too late to prevent the long-planned closure for good by May 31, 2022. The U.S. Department of Energy, headed by Secretary Jennifer Granholm, herself a former governor and attorney general of Michigan, announced on April 19, 2022 the commencement of its \$6 billion Civil Nuclear Credit Program, authorized by the November 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

“Palisades has more high-risk pathways to catastrophic reactor core meltdown than any other nuclear power plant in the country,” stated Kevin Kamps, radioactive waste specialist at Beyond Nuclear in Takoma Park, Maryland. “The previous owner, Consumers Energy, persuaded the Michigan Public Service Commission to allow Palisades' sale to Entergy in 2007, claiming that the new owner would address needed repairs or replacements of major, safety significant systems, structures, and components, including the worst neutron-embrittled reactor pressure vessel in the U.S., a degraded reactor lid, worn out steam generators, and fire protection enhancements. But this was a bait and switch, a con job, as Entergy has done none of this in the past 15 years, and the risks have only grown that much worse,” Kamps added.

A 1982 U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission commissioned report, carried out by Sandia National Lab, most commonly referred to as CRAC-2 (short for Calculation of Reactor Accident Consequences), made dire predictions for casualties and property damage if Palisades has a core meltdown. The report, also referred to as the Sandia Siting Study, or NUREG/CR-2239, estimated a Palisades meltdown would cause 1,000 peak early fatalities (radiation poisoning deaths), 7,000 peak early (radiation) injuries, 10,000 peak cancer deaths (latent cancer fatalities), and \$52.6 billion in property damage. However, adjusting for inflation alone to Year 2021 dollar figures, property damages would now surmount \$150 billion. And, as the Associated Press reported in its 2011 four-part investigative series "Aging Nukes," populations have increased significantly since 1982 around atomic reactors, meaning CRAC-2's predicted casualty figures would today be much worse. AP also cited the weakening of reactor pressure vessel embrittlement safety standards as the top example of NRC regulatory retreat.

Terry Lodge, an attorney based in Toledo, Ohio who has often served as legal counsel for groups challenging Palisades' continued high-risk operations over the past two decades, pointed out that "Entergy undoubtedly knows that Palisades is at the breaking point, which is why the May 31, 2022 shutdown date was decided years ago. Entergy is racing to escape the astronomical safety, security, health, and environmental liabilities by transferring Palisades' license to Holtec International for decommissioning, which NRC is poised to approve," Lodge added. He serves as legal counsel for Beyond Nuclear, Don't Waste Michigan, and MSEF, in their intervention before NRC to block the Holtec takeover. The Office of the Attorney General of the State of Michigan, Dana Nessel, and Environmental Law and Policy Center of Chicago, have likewise legally intervened against the Holtec takeover.

As of May 31, 2022 the 15-year Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) between Entergy and Consumers Energy, approved by the Michigan Public Service Commission in 2007, ends. This PPA, in which every kilowatt-hour of electricity generated by the Palisades reactor is sold to Consumers Energy for distribution via its electric grid above fair market value. "Governor Whitmer, Energy Secretary Granholm, and President Biden's scheme is to replace the concluded ratepayer-funded bailout with a massive federal taxpayer-funded bailout," said Michael Keegan, co-chair of Don't Waste Michigan, who has watch-dogged Palisades for four decades. "Michiganders served by Consumers Energy pay both electric bills, as well as federal income taxes. Palisades will have picked both pockets if this latest bailout goes through. This Corporate Welfare comes at a time when Solar and Wind are 4-5 times less expensive," Keegan added.

“Lake Michigan is a major headwaters for the rest of the Great Lakes, which comprise 95% of our country’s surface fresh water, 84% of North America’s, and 21% of the entire world’s,” said Iris Potter, coordinator of the Michigan Safe Energy Future-Kalamazoo Chapter (MSEF), as well as the Palisades Shutdown Campaign, for the past decade. “48 million people in eight U.S. states, two Canadian provinces, and a very large number of Native American First Nations depend on the Great Lakes for drinking water. We need to save Lake Michigan by shutting down Palisades before it melts down,” Potter added.

“NRC has allowed Entergy to defer maintenance and repairs since it was going to close anyway this spring,” said Terry Lodge. “If that is not the case, and Palisades continues operating till 2031, then we will legally challenge the very long list of deferred maintenance jobs, as well as cancelled repairs or even replacements of several major safety systems, structures, and components,” Lodge added. Lodge served as legal counsel for Don’t Waste Michigan and Nuclear Information and Resource Service in 2005-2007, when the environmental coalition challenged Palisades’ license extension from 2011 to 2031.

“While we commend Governor Whitmer for striving to protect the Great Lakes against Enbridge’s age-degraded oil pipeline at the Straits of Mackinac, we protest her scheme to put the Great Lakes at risk of radioactive catastrophe, by propping up the very dangerously age-degraded Palisades atomic reactor with a massive federal taxpayer-funded bailout,” said Bette Pierman of Michigan Safe Energy Future-Shoreline Chapter in Benton Harbor. “Similarly, while we commend Energy Secretary Granholm for her good work advocating for renewable energy, like wind power, we have long resisted her advocacy of dirty, dangerous, and expensive nuclear power,” Pierman added.

“Another nine years of reactor operations at Palisades would generate hundreds of additional tons of forever deadly, highly radioactive irradiated nuclear fuel for which there is no safe, sound solution,” Kamps of Beyond Nuclear said. “Holtec and the U.S. Department of Energy have proposed barging these high-level radioactive wastes on Lake Michigan, into the Port of Muskegon. ‘Just one mistake and we could lose the Lake’,” Kamps added, quoting a lyric by Great Lakes singer/songwriter Victor McManemy, about Big Rock Point, Palisades’ sibling atomic reactor near Charlevoix, Michigan.