

# NEWS FROM NIRS

## **Nuclear Information and Resource Service**

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### **NEW ATOMIC REACTOR WOULD BE ECONOMIC BOONDOGGLE FOR MARYLAND RESIDENTS, ENVIRONMENTAL MESS FOR CHESAPEAKE BAY**

#### **NIRS WILL SEEK TO STOP NEW REACTOR AT CALVERT CLIFFS**

The Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS) today warned that a proposed new atomic reactor at the Calvert Cliffs nuclear complex would be an economic boondoggle for Maryland residents and an environmental nightmare for the Chesapeake Bay.

NIRS executive director Michael Mariotte added that “it would be simply foolhardy to place such a tempting terrorist target—one capable of causing massive death and destruction--so close to both the nation’s capital and Maryland’s capital.” Both Washington, DC and Annapolis are within 50 miles of the Calvert Cliffs site. If built, the 1,600 Megawatt reactor would be the largest single nuclear reactor in the United States.

According to published reports, Constellation Energy has submitted a partial license application with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for a new French-designed reactor (the EPR) at Calvert Cliffs. The application appears to be jumping the gun: the NRC Commissioners are currently (through August 10, 2007) accepting public comments on a draft policy statement for how the NRC will address such partial applications. A final policy statement is likely weeks, and perhaps months, from completion.

The EPR is designed by the French firm Areva, which is currently building the first such model in Finland in what is generally viewed as a complete debacle. Construction on the EPR there began in April 2005, and already is running about two years behind schedule because of faulty construction and foundation work. Areva is building the plant for a fixed-price contract of \$3 billion Euros (about \$4 billion), but last year already had to write off \$900 million because of construction delays. Private economists, such as Steve Thomas of the University of Greenwich in the UK, predict final actual costs for the reactor could top 5 Billion Euros--or more than 6 billion dollars.

Constellation Energy hopes to obtain billions of dollars in federal loan guarantees, tax breaks and other taxpayer support for the new reactor. “If Constellation had to spend its own money, or raise it in the private investment market, no one would be talking about a new reactor at Calvert

Cliffs,” said Mariotte. “But if Constellation gets its way, Maryland residents will be hit twice—first as taxpayers, and later to pay the inevitably escalated costs for electricity this reactor would cause.”

“Maryland would be far better off—economically, environmentally, and in reduction of carbon emissions--if the \$4 to \$6 billion this reactor would cost were instead spent on aggressive energy efficiency programs and further development of wind and solar power resources in the state,” said Mariotte.

NIRS also pointed out the environmental degradation the proposed reactor would cause. The Chesapeake Bay already takes in radioactive emissions from seven reactors in Pennsylvania and Maryland. All reactors emit radiation into the air and water as part of their routine operation. Unless built with an expensive cooling tower (which neither of the current reactors at Calvert Cliffs has), the new reactor would be expected to take in an additional half-million gallons of Chesapeake Bay water per minute, and return that water—except much hotter and slightly radioactive—back into the Bay, causing damage to animal and plant life in the vicinity.

In addition, high-level radioactive waste from Calvert Cliffs already is in a semi-permanent position on the shores of the Bay. “The odds that a permanent high-level nuclear waste storage site is going to open in any of our lifetimes become smaller by the day,” said Mariotte. “Do Marylanders really want more lethal high-level radioactive waste stacked up on the Chesapeake Bay for the foreseeable future? We doubt it.”

Mariotte said that the Takoma Park-based NIRS would take every step appropriate to prevent construction of a new reactor at Calvert Cliffs, should Constellation Energy attempt to proceed with its application. Because Constellation filed only a partial application, and in advance of a final decision on the draft policy statement addressing partial applications and other licensing process issues, the timing of further activity is unclear. At some point—not imminently—there will be an opportunity for legal hearings before an NRC Atomic Safety and Licensing Board. Litigation in federal courts is possible following those hearings. Public opposition also can manifest itself in the Maryland legislature and in other types of protest.