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Statement by NIRS Executive Director Tim Judson on Entergy's Announced Closure of Pilgrim Nuclear Power Plant

“NIRS applauds Entergy’s decision to close the unsafe, uneconomical, and polluting Pilgrim Nuclear Power Plant, on Cape Cod Bay in Massachusetts. However, Entergy’s proposed 2019 closure date is unacceptable, and poses the risk that this dangerous reactor could continue operating for nearly four more years. Pilgrim currently has the worst nuclear safety rating in the country, tied with Entergy’s Arkansas Nuclear One plant.

“Entergy has been cutting costs on the aging, uncompetitive reactor at Pilgrim for years, which has resulted in the rise in safety violations, equipment failures and even security lapses, and Entergy’s decision to close the plant is ostensibly to avoid millions of dollars in costs to meet NRC’s minimum safety standards. The NRC cannot allow a reactor to operate without addressing the systemic safety violations that Entergy has at Pilgrim.

“In 2013, NIRS, Citizens Awareness Network, Pilgrim Watch, and other organizations petitioned the NRC for enforcement of the agency’s financial qualifications regulations at Pilgrim. Such action could have avoided this situation entirely, but NRC inexplicably refuses to enforce that regulation. We also call on New England’s electricity grid operator to work with Entergy to release Pilgrim from its capacity commitments and enable the plant to close as soon as possible.

NIRS supports the call of Senator Edward Markey for assistance to Pilgrim workers who may be displaced by the reactors’ closure. That plan should begin with a planned, orderly, and responsible decommissioning of Pilgrim. With approximately \$900 million in a dedicated decommissioning trust fund, most of the workforce could be retained for 10-20 years in securing the nuclear waste and cleaning up the radioactive and toxic materials at Pilgrim, restoring and protecting the ecology of Cape Cod for generations to come.”