

Public Hearing on Massive Water Withdrawal Permit from the Savannah River for Additional Nuclear Reactors at Plant Vogtle:

Protect our communities, economy and wildlife – Say NO to the permit!

Here are some facts you can use to speak at the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) public hearing regarding the potential water use from Plant Vogtle reactors 3 and 4 currently under construction in Burke County, Georgia. Georgia and South Carolina residents, communities and businesses upstream and downstream of Vogtle that rely on the Savannah River are strongly encouraged to share their concerns with EPD as the agency considers approving the massive surface water withdrawal permit request from Southern Nuclear (subsidiary of Southern Company). You may also submit written comments until 4:30 pm on Thursday, May 15, 2014 — see how at the end of this fact sheet. **This is your opportunity to stand up for the future health of the Savannah River and all those who depend on it!**

Two nuclear reactors currently operating at Plant Vogtle are already using 127 million gallons of water per day (MGD) from the Savannah River. The proposed additional two reactors would take up to 74 MGD from the river. Tens of millions of gallons of water would be lost every day, never returned to the river. This will obviously have adverse impacts on communities, businesses, agriculture and wildlife that depend on the Savannah River.

The Official Code of Georgia states that EPD must consider whether water withdrawals are “reasonably necessary” to meet the applicant's needs and if the need is established, can grant a permit only if the withdrawal will not have “unreasonably adverse effects on other water uses in the area, including public use, farm use, and potential, as well as present, use.”

**Stand up for the Savannah River — tell EPD:
“Don’t approve the Vogtle water withdrawal permit!”**

The Vogtle Project Isn’t Needed, so the Water Permit is not Needed

- Georgia Power’s own data from 11 years of annual reports filed with the US Securities and Exchange Commission shows that sales have gone down, not up, for the 11-year period from 2002 to 2013.
- Georgia Power’s 4% annual growth forecast used to justify constructing two additional reactors at Vogtle has not materialized.
- Georgia Power data shows that 45% of its existing electricity production capacity is not being utilized.
- Georgia Legal Code requires EPD to take into consideration the extent to which water use is reasonably necessary to meet the applicant’s needs. Since Vogtle 3&4 are not needed, Georgia Power does not need to use the Savannah River’s water and EPD should deny the permit.
- Because the potential power generated from Plant Vogtle is not needed, Georgia Power will attempt to sell it to neighboring states (who also do not need more power), draining one of Georgia and South Carolina’s important water resources without any benefit to its residents.

Public and Environmental Impact

- Over one million people, including residents of Augusta and Savannah, depend upon the river for drinking water.

- Many rural communities use the river for subsistence fishing. Endangering the ecosystems and fish in the Savannah River means endangering the communities who depend on the ecosystem and fish for survival.
- Healthy rivers require sufficient water to dilute residential and industrial waste.
- The additional reactors at Vogtle, which could operate for 60 or more years, would withdraw up to 74 million gallons of water per day (MGD) from the river, in addition to the 127 MGD that the existing two reactors are already permitted to withdraw. Together, this represents much larger withdrawals than the cities of Augusta and Savannah combined.
- The average consumptive loss from just the new reactors alone, water that is never returned, is significant, estimated at over 43 MGD. EPD has acknowledged a worst-case scenario of consumptive losses up to 88%, causing diminished flow rates in the Savannah River.
- 2012 saw the lowest measured annual river flow rates since 1954. Lower flow rates, according to the Savannah River Site's 2012 annual report, mean higher concentrations of certain contaminants in the river, leading to higher concentrations of contaminants in fish and vegetation local communities depend on for food.
- The lack of a robust radiological environmental monitoring program in place at EPD further exacerbates this issue as communities have little information about how lower flow rates and increased contaminants are affecting their food sources.
- The Savannah River is home to 18 species of fish federally recognized as threatened or endangered and an additional 55 species recognized as threatened or endangered by the State of Georgia. Increased water withdrawals heighten the threat to these fragile populations. Lower flow rates are detrimental to species of fish that depend on deep river areas with high flow rates for spawning, such as the Atlantic Sturgeon and the Robust Redhorse. Studies show that non-endangered species are also negatively affected by lower flow rates and temperature increases. Not only wildlife, but also subsistence fishers and the three Georgia state fisheries in the Savannah basin would suffer the consequences of these impacts.
- Georgia has experienced prolonged, historic droughts and is embroiled in "water wars" with several neighboring states. It would be irresponsible for EPD to issue a permit for massive withdrawals of water from the Savannah River, recently designated the fourth most polluted river in the U.S., for unneeded power plants.

Impacts to Industry and Other Users

- Besides energy production, other industries and users that rely on sufficient flow in the Savannah River include shipping, manufacturing, agriculture, cities, army bases, manufacturing, paper, logging and chemical production.
- EPD has failed to take into account the current and future needs of Georgia's farmers and other industries when balancing the use of the Savannah River as it relates to Vogtle 3&4's proposed water permit. For example, it should be noted that in July 2013 the Georgia Public Service Commission approved the continued operation of Plant McIntosh, a coal-fired power plant that EPD has permitted to use 130 MGD from the river. Combined, this is a staggering amount of water tied up by just two power plants.

How to Submit Written Comments

The EPD is accepting written comments until 4:30 pm on Thursday, May 15. Public comments may be emailed to EPDComments@dnr.state.ga.us with the subject line "Plant Vogtle" or by regular mail: Branch Chief, Watershed Protection Branch, Suite 1152, 2 Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. SE, Atlanta, Georgia, 30334.