News from

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Don't Waste Michigan * Green Party of Ohio

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Environmental Coalition Defends Its Challenge Against "Radioactive Russian Roulette"

of 20 Year License Extension at Davis-Besse Atomic Reactor

Wind and Solar Can Replace Nuclear Power,

Accident Consequences Low-Balled, Groups Allege

Oak Harbor, Ohio --- Digging out from this winter's intense snow storms has proven challenging enough for area residents and municipalities. But imagine the chaos of evacuating the entire region if a catastrophic radioactivity release were to occur at the aged and degraded Davis-Besse nuclear power plant on the Lake Erie shore east of Toledo. Unthinkable as it is, evacuation preparedness -- as well as post-accident cleanup lines of authority and funding sources -- are sorely lacking at best, or entirely non-existent. Notification is not necessarily required in such an event, not even for Canadians living within just 50 miles of the problem-plagued atomic reactor. These hypothetical, yet all too real, risks are at the heart of contentions being raised by citizen groups opposing the 20 year license extension of Davis-Besse.

Last Friday, an environmental coalition defended its intervention against First Energy Nuclear Operating Company's (FENOC) license renewal application. Both the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory

Commission (NRC) staff and FENOC have moved to have the contentions dismissed and groups' standing denied. The joint petitioners – Beyond Nuclear, Citizens Environment Alliance of Southwestern Ontario, Don't Waste Michigan, and the Green Party of Ohio – allege that wind and solar photovoltaic (PV) power, and certainly a combination of the two renewable energy sources, can readily replace Davis-Besse's electricity by the end of its 40 year operating license in 2017. The December 27, 2010 intervention petition and request for a hearing to NRC's Atomic Safety and Licensing Board (ASLB), as well as its January 28, 2011 defense against NRC staff and FENOC counter challenges, is posted at the top of Beyond Nuclear's homepage, www.beyondnuclear.org. The ASLB empaneled for this proceeding has announced that it will hold an oral pre-hearing on March 1, 2011 at the Ottawa County Common Pleas Court in Port Clinton, Ohio to review the environmental coalition's intervention, NRC staff's and FENOC's objections to the intervention, and the Intervenors' "Combined Reply" in defense of its environmental contentions.

In addition to its renewable energy alternatives to Davis-Besse's 20 year license extension, the environmental coalition also asserts that the potential casualties and economic costs that could be caused by a severe radioactivity release from Davis-Besse have been grossly underestimated. Outrageously, the NRC staff and FENOC have moved to exclude the involvement of any Southwestern Ontario residents from this proceeding, because representatives from Citizens Environment Alliance sleep a mere 300 feet beyond the "approximate 50 mile radius" from Davis-Besse routinely observed under legal precedents for standing. Further research by the Intervenors has revealed that Canadians would not necessarily be informed even if a severe accident were to occur.

Kevin Kamps of Beyond Nuclear, a party to the intervention, said "Granting Davis-Besse 20 additional years to operate would be playing radioactive Russian roulette on the Great Lakes shoreline."

Beyond Nuclear has prepared a background summary on Davis-Besse's trouble-plagued history, including some of the closest-calls to major accidents in U.S. history. Among these were a Three Mile Island reactor meltdown precursor accident in 1977, a 1985 loss of cooling to the reactor core, a 1998 tornado strike, and the infamous 2002 hole-in-the-head reactor lid corrosion accident (a 2010 lid leak shows the problem is recurring). Each of these four incidents came unacceptably close to causing a reactor core loss-of-coolant-accident, which could have led to a full nuclear meltdown. The Davis-Besse backgrounder is posted at the Beyond Nuclear website at http://www.beyondnuclear.org/storage/Davis_Besse_Backgrounder.pdf.

The environmental intervenors' expert witness on renewable power sources, such as wind and solar PV readily replacing Davis-Besse, is Alvin D. Compaan, Ph.D., Distinguished University Professor of Physics, Emeritus, at the University of Toledo, and former Chair of UT's Physics and Astronomy Department. UT physics undergraduate student, Kathryn Hoepfl, has also provided intervenors with analysis showing that a combination of wind and solar could readily replace Davis-Besse.

“The good news is that vast renewable energy sources, such as wind power and solar PV, coupled with energy efficiency, are ready and cost-effective today. Efficiency and renewables will benefit everyone's pocket book, health, safety, and environment, and do not risk catastrophic radioactivity releases for the sake of corporate greed,” said intervenor Joe DeMare of Rossford, Ohio, a Wood County Green Party member. “Opposition to nuclear power is in keeping with the Greens' Key Principle of Ecological Wisdom,” he added.

The intervention filing and its defense extensively documented the vast offshore wind power potential of Lake Erie, as well as vast on-land wind power potential in Ohio, and the ability of a combination of wind power and solar PV to readily displace Davis-Besse. A recent NRC ruling in separate proceeding may provide a significant precedent for the Davis-Besse license extension dispute. On December 28, 2010, the ASLB overseeing the Calvert Cliffs Unit 3 new reactor application in Maryland ruled in favor of environmental intervenors, including Beyond Nuclear, ordering NRC staff and the nuclear utility to more realistically consider the vast potential of offshore wind power, as well as a combination of renewable energy technologies, such as wind and solar, as alternatives to nuclear power. A link to the Calvert Cliffs 3 ASLB ruling has been posted at Beyond Nuclear’s website:

http://www.beyondnuclear.org/nuclear-power/2010/12/29/nrc-licensing-board-bolsters-argument-that-renewables-can-re.html.

The intervenors’ concluding contention holds that FENOC has vastly understated the true costs that would occur in the aftermath of a catastrophic radioactivity release at Davis-Besse.

“Davis-Besse risks a Chernobyl-type nuclear catastrophe in the heart of the Great Lakes,” said intervenor Derek Coronado, coordinator of the Citizens Environment Alliance of Southwestern Ontario, based in Windsor. “Its current, ongoing leaks of hazardous tritium into the watershed are bad enough, but a catastrophic radioactivity release at Davis-Besse could instantly ruin the drinking water supply for many millions of people downstream in the U.S., Canada, and numerous Native American and First Nations.” Coronado expressed dismay when he learned that Canadians would not necessarily be alerted about a severe accident, saying "No wonder they attempted to exclude our standing by 300 feet, they want to duck the question."

Intervenor Michael Keegan of Don’t Waste Michigan in Monroe said “This radioactive rust bucket has got to go before it blows.”

The NRC’s 1982 report “Calculation of Reactor Accident Consequences,” based on 1970 Census data, determined that a major accident at Davis-Besse could cause 10,000 fatal cancers downwind, 1,400 “peak early fatalities,” 73,000 “peak early injuries,” and $84 billion in property damage in the region. Intervenors have challenged the conclusions on casualties as severe underestimates, based on population growth over the past 40 years. Adjusted for inflation, property damages would now top $184 billion, in Year 2009 Dollars.