

News from Beyond Nuclear and Don't Waste Michigan

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Environmental Challenges Against Proposed New Fermi 3 Atomic Reactor Survive

Licensing Board Allows Endangered Species and Toxic Algae Contentions to Proceed to Hearing Stage

Monroe, MI--The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Atomic Safety and Licensing Board (ASLB) presiding over the Fermi 3 combined construction and operating license application (COLA) proceeding ruled on May 20 against nuclear utility DTE's motion for summary disposition on two contentions against the proposed new reactor brought by an environmental coalition. The first contention concerns risks of Fermi 3's construction and operation exacerbating the proliferation of toxic algae in Lake Erie. The second involves risks to an endangered indigenous species -- the Eastern Fox Snake -- from the proposed new atomic reactor.

The environmental coalition includes Beyond Nuclear, Citizens for Alternatives to Chemical Contamination, Citizens Environment Alliance of Southwestern Ontario, Don't Waste Michigan, and the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter. It argued that the proposed Fermi 3 atomic reactor's thermal and chemical discharges to Lake Erie's shallow Western Basin would provide ideal conditions for the spread of a harmful cyanobacteria, *Lyngbya wollei*. The ASLB agreed with the environmental intervenors, that planned calcium discharges into Lake Erie from Fermi 3, as well as scientific documentation of the algae's presence mid-way between Detroit Edison's Fermi nuclear power plant and its coal-burning Monroe Power Plant, merit further study in a full evidentiary hearing.

"I don't know about Detroit Edison, but I prefer walleye linguine over *Lyngbya wollei*," said lifelong Monroe resident Michael Keegan of Don't Waste Michigan. "Lake Erie's Western Basin averages only 23 feet deep, and is one of the most productive fisheries on the planet, which must be protected. The accumulative thermal load from the DTE nuclear and coal complexes have contributed to the eutrophication of Lake Erie," he added.

Similarly, the ASLB ruled in favor of a full hearing on the risks of Fermi 3's construction upon the Eastern Fox Snake. Although Detroit Edison has now admitted sitings of the endangered species on its Fermi nuclear power plant site, has slightly modified its construction location, and

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has drafted a mitigation plan, the ASLB agreed with the environmental intervenors that the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment's (MDNRE) approval is required, as well as more careful study of the impact of construction traffic upon the endangered species.

Lori Sargent, a Nongame Wildlife Biologist in MDNRE's Wildlife Division, has commented on DTE's Environment Report for Fermi 3 that "going forward with the construction would not only kill snakes but destroy the habitat in which they live and possibly exterminate the species from the area. We would like to see a plan for protection of this rare species with regard to this new reactor project."

As observed by the ASLB, DTE has admitted to NRC that "the Eastern Fox snake habitat is primarily associated with wetlands."

"The State of Michigan has commented that the construction of Fermi 3 would represent one of the largest adverse impacts on wetlands in the history of the Great Lakes State," said Terry Lodge, Toledo-based attorney representing the environmental coalition. "We look forward to working with expert witnesses and our environmental coalition partners to provide the licensing board with cutting edge science on the many risks that Fermi 3's construction and operation would inflict on the irreplaceable natural resources of Lake Erie's fragile Western Basin and shoreline wetlands," he added.

The Fermi nuclear power plant's location on the Lake Erie shoreline is in the heart of the Great Lakes basin. The Great Lakes account for 20% of the entire planet's surface fresh water, serve as drinking water for 40 million people in the U.S., Canada, and numerous Native American First Nations, and represent the engine of one of the world's single biggest regional economies.

"Southeast Michigan and Northwest Ohio are home to world-leading renewable energy entrepreneurs, offering a ready alternative to Fermi 3," said Kevin Kamps of Beyond Nuclear in Takoma Park, Maryland. "Wind power, solar power, and energy efficiency are much safer, cleaner, and more cost effective than a new atomic reactor," he added.

United Solar Ovonic in Auburn Hills, solar photovoltaic panel manufacturers First Solar and Xunlight in Toledo, and wind turbine tower manufacturers Great Lakes Towers and Ventower in Monroe are but a few of the growing number of renewable energy firms in the region.

The NRC will host an "open house" on May 23, open to the public, "to discuss Fermi Nuclear Power Plant performance and NRC oversight." The NRC meeting will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Board of Commissioners' Chambers, Monroe County Courthouse, 125 E. 2nd Street, Monroe. The NRC's announcement can be viewed online at <http://pbadupws.nrc.gov/docs/ML1113/ML111310579.pdf>. Fermi 2 is the largest Fukushima Daiichi-style General Electric Boiling Water Reactor of the Mark 1 design in the world, with over 500 tons of high-level radioactive waste stored in its indoor pool.

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