

Groups: Fermi 3 nuclear plant would create pollution

BY TINA LAM • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • MAY 5, 2009

MONROE -- Environmental groups told federal regulators today that a new Fermi 3 nuclear plant is not needed and would cause new air and water pollution. That includes warm water and phosphorus that could add to algae blooms already happening in recent summers in western Lake Erie.

They're also concerned about the destruction of wetlands and seven threatened or endangered species that live on the site where the new plant would be built, including the Eastern fox snake.

The environmental groups said the plant's licensing proceeding should take into account the environmental effects not only of the new nuclear plant, but those of five nearby coal plants and two other nuclear plants. They contend the nation still hasn't found a permanent home for high-level nuclear waste the plant will produce, and that the design for the plant, which is new, hasn't been certified so licensing shouldn't be moving ahead for Fermi 3.

Lawyers for DTE Energy said they've already addressed the issues the groups raise and that all are being addressed. They will be required to get federal permits to do any dredging or filling of wetlands, where protected species live, and will need state or federal permits for anything they discharge into waterways.

The groups, including Beyond Nuclear and the Sierra club, also questioned the evacuation plans for 3,000 workers who would be at Fermi 2 and Fermi 3 and said new roads will be needed to handle workers from both nuclear plants in case of an accident.

A three-judge panel of the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board is hearing the environmental groups' concerns as a step in the licensing of a proposed 1,500-megawatt nuclear plant. The panel will decide which concerns might need more thorough public hearings.

The plant won't get a license for several years, after its new design is certified.

Peter Bradford, a law professor in Vermont and former member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission told people here at a public meeting last month there is no certainty that the design DTE has chosen for its new plant will be licensed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. He also questioned the need for the new plant since demand for electricity in Michigan is shrinking.

DTE said it's looking ahead to future demand and that in the next few decades, there is no question there will be a need for a large new plant, in addition to renewables like wind and solar, because existing plants will be retired.

DTE submitted an application for the plant's licensing last September. It would be the first new nuclear plant in Michigan in 20 years and is expected to cost \$10 billion.