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Article in Question:

Utilities Seek Licenses to Build 33 Additional Nuclear Reactors

By: Nolan Hicks

Posted: 7/25/2007 © *The Daily Texan*

Reports of warming temperatures, growing demands on the power supply and a need to move away from coal-fired power plants that have provided power to both Texas and the nation for the past 50 years have sparked renewed interest in nuclear power as a potential savior.

A document obtained from the Nuclear Energy Institute, an industry lobbying firm in Washington, D.C., shows utilities around the nation plan to submit applications for licenses to build and operate an additional 33 nuclear reactors in 2008.

TXU Corp. plans to build an additional two reactors at its Comanche Peak facility in Glen Rose, Texas, about 77 miles southwest of Dallas. Exelon has announced intentions to build new reactors in Texas, but the number and location were not disclosed in the document.

Nuclear power is the cheapest form of conventional power, costing 1.7 cents per kilowatt hour, and it emits no greenhouse gases, said Mitch Singer, a spokesman for the Nuclear Energy Institute.

"It costs about the same amount to build a cleaner coal plant as it does to build a new reactor, and it should only take up to four years to complete construction," said Singer.

Singer also said the streamlining of the permitting process reduces the chances a plant could be delayed due to multiple lawsuits, which have slowed down plant construction in the past.

Forty percent of U.S. carbon dioxide pollution comes from power generation facilities. Coal-fired power plants, the kind Texas depends on for much of its electricity, contribute the lion's share of that pollution. Dan Metzger, director of *Environment Texas*, said moving away from such power sources is key to reducing U.S. carbon dioxide output and slowing global warming.

A report issued by Metzger's group Tuesday warned that hotter summers and more extreme, unpredictable weather are in the multi-year forecast for Austin and the rest of the country because of climate change.

"Warmer surface temperatures cause more evaporation," Metzger said. "More water in the atmosphere causes more downpours like the ones we've seen this summer."

Metzger's organization supports expanding conservation efforts and using renewable and cleaner energy sources such as solar, wind and geothermal power. His organization does not support the expanded use of nuclear power due to issues regarding the storage of spent fuel.

[In spite of all the favorable factors cited above for nuclear power, and not mentioning the fact that solar, wind, and even geothermal energy do not scale up well, they are only applicable far from the principal power grids in remote regions of the U.S.]

According to the group's report, the summer of 2006 was the second-hottest summer on record for both Texas and the continental United States. The report blames carbon dioxide emissions for the increasing temperatures and variability of the weather.
