[6450-01]

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Finding of No Significant Impact
Fuel Materials Facility, Savannah River Plant,
Aiken, South Carolina

AGENCY: Department of Energy

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact for the construction and operation of the Naval Reactor Fuel Materials Facility.

SUMMARY. The Department of Energy has prepared an environmental assessment for the construction and operation of the Naval Reactor Fuel Materials Facility at the Department's Savannah River Plant near Aiken, South Carolina. Based upon the analyses in the environmental assessment, and after consideration of comments received during a 30-day review period on a proposed Finding of No Significant Impact, the Department has determined that preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required.

BACKGROUND: Notice of availability of the environmental assessment and a proposed Finding of No Significant Impact were published in the Federal Register on May 19, 1982. The proposed Finding and copies of the environmental assessment were distributed to interested individuals and organizations. The 30-day public comment period expired June 18, 1982. Only one comment letter

was received. This letter was from the U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration. The Department of Energy has prepared an appendix to the environmental assessment which contains the comment letter and the responses to the few issues raised by the Department of Labor letter.

Since no issues bearing on the significance of the environmental impacts of the Naval Reactor Fuel Materials Facility were raised during the comment period, the Department has made a final determination that preparation of an environmental impact statement, pursuant to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, is not required. The final Finding of No Significant Impact is presented below.

ADDRESS: Copies of the environmental assessment and the new appendix can be obtained from:

Roger P. Whitfield, Director
Fuel Materials Facility Project Office
Department of Energy
P.O. Box A
Aiken, South Carolina 29801

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The action involves the construction and operation of the Naval Reactor Fuel Materials Facility at the Department of Energy's Savannah River Plant (SRP) near Aiken, South Carolina. The facility will convert enriched uranium into a form suitable for use in the fabrication of reactor cores for propulsion

of the ships of the Naval Nuclear Fleet. The Fuel Materials Facility will augment the production of fuel material, currently limited to an existing commercial supplier, as a contingency against unforeseen events.

There are no known significant environmental impacts associated with the action. The Fuel Materials Facility will be located on a previously cleared 6-acre site in an existing SRP operating area. Minor construction impacts will be experienced, including minimal increases in particulate emissions and noise levels at the SRP boundary. The peak construction work force demand for 580 employees will primarily be met by the local labor force. Inmigration of an estimated 180 construction employees should have a minor effect on land use, housing and social services. No impacts are expected on historic or archeological sites or ecological resources.

The routine operation of the Fuel Materials Facility will result in atmospheric and liquid radiological releases that will be substantially below naturally occurring (background) levels. Similarly, even the most serious accident (tornado) would result in a maximum individual dose (at the SRP boundary 6 miles away) of 1.9 millirem, which is 2 percent of naturally occurring levels and 0.4 percent of the Department's standard for radiation protection (DOE Order 5480.1).

Nonradiological releases will not significantly affect the environment. Atmospheric emissions will result in maximum offsite concentrations that are substantially below background levels and will have a negligible effect on air quality. The liquid effluents will result in increased concentrations of pollutants in onsite streams; however, levels will be well below drinking water standards (40 CFR Part 140 and Part 143) and any changes in offsite concentrations in the Savannah River will be undetectable.

The alternatives to the action considered were: no action, commercial production, alternative processes and alternative DOE sites. The no-action alternative is considered unacceptable because of project need. Commercial production of fuel materials was eliminated as a viable alternative due to requirements by commercial firms for Government funding and assumption of financial risks. Alternative processes were precluded from consideration since only one process is technically qualified for producing fuel materials. A siting study identified an alternate site at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, which was assessed; no significant differences between it and the SRP site were found.

Dated: July 19, 1982

William A. Vaughan
Assistant Secretary
Environmental Protection, Safety,
and Emergency Preparedness