



# Action Alert

April 15, 2008

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## Help Prevent Plant Vogtle Water Waste

Georgia utilities are trying to get federal approval to build new nuclear reactors at Plant Vogtle along the Savannah River. If approved, the existing and proposed reactors would consume more water than the residents of Atlanta, Augusta, and Savannah combined. The Atomic Safety and Licensing Board will hear public comments on the utilities' proposal on April 26 and 27 in Augusta. We must voice our serious concerns with the water impacts of Plant Vogtle. Please join us for this important opportunity.

### *Come in Person to Speak on Sunday, April 27, 4-6pm or Monday, April 28, 7-9pm:*

- DoubleTree Hotel and Convention Center, 2651 Perimeter Parkway, Augusta
- **Pre-registration by April 23** is strongly encouraged, but not required:
- By Email: [map4@nrc.gov](mailto:map4@nrc.gov) and [gpb@nrc.gov](mailto:gpb@nrc.gov), or fax: (301) 415-5599

### **ACTION NEEDED:**

Please voice your concerns with the federal permit application process that would allow Southern Company and its utility partners to pursue building up to two more nuclear reactors at the existing Vogtle nuclear power plant in Burke County. The GWC groups that have legally intervened are NOT allowed to make comments so it is up to others to raise concerns.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Georgia utilities are trying to get federal approval to build new nuclear reactors at Plant Vogtle along the Savannah River and have applied for an "early site permit." Several GWC member groups legally challenged the permit and the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board agreed with some of their concerns including that threats to the Savannah River and surrounding environment need to be further examined by Southern Company. This includes concerns about the impacts of withdrawing large amounts of water from the river and the resulting thermal discharge, or heated water, on the river from the proposed reactors. The sheer volume of water evaporated by cooling towers, instead of being returned to the river, is a major concern for all downstream communities, human and aquatic. The groups argued that Southern Company did not acknowledge the impacts that the additional reactors would have on the fish and river ecosystem; the proposed reactors would essentially double both the amount of water being withdrawn and the amount of discharge going back into the Savannah River.

Plant Vogtle is located near Waynesboro along the Savannah River, approximately 26 miles southeast of Augusta. If approved, the permit would allow Southern Company and its utility partners in Georgia to use the permit at any time for up to 20 years in any future applications with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

### **GWC's CONCERNS FOR ENOUGH CLEAN WATER NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE:**

#### **Water Quantity**

- Plant Vogtle is one of the largest water users on the Savannah River with a flow regulated by the Army Corps of Engineers to meet needs of users along its full length.
- The two existing reactors already require large amounts of water and additional supply for new reactors will be competing with existing uses or future water needs.
- Of the water that is currently withdrawn (64 million gallons per day "mgd"), only one-third

is being returned to the Savannah River.

- This means that 43 mgd is consumed or lost and not returned to the Savannah River. This is larger than the water supplies for many towns and cities in Georgia!
- Doubling the number of reactors at the Plant Vogtle site will only worsen the excessive water withdrawal and excessive consumptive use.
- To put this into perspective, with average per capita daily water use in Georgia at 75 gallons from surface and ground water, more water will be lost as steam from the possible four reactors at Plant Vogtle than is used by all residents (2005 census) of Atlanta (470,688), Augusta (190,782) and Savannah (128,453) combined.

### **Water Quality**

- The water discharged from nuclear Plant Vogtle is hotter than the water that is withdrawn and more reactors will only make this situation worse.
- Temperature changes negatively affect the fish, plant, and animal life that depend on the river for food and habitat.
- The water intake systems at nuclear power plants can kill fish and fish larvae, among other organisms; having more reactors will only make this worse.
- The Savannah River may need extensive dredging to transport new reactors and materials to Plant Vogtle; this could have extremely negative impacts on water quality.

### **Future Water Needs & Future Energy Choices**

- Plant Vogtle's excessive use of water threatens the water supplies for municipalities, industries, agriculture, recreation, and aquatic species, in communities upstream and downstream, especially in times of drought.
- Georgia is in one of the worst droughts on record; moving ahead with the most water-intensive energy option does not make sense for Georgia's economy or its citizens.
- Since the Early Site Permit process allows a company to potentially 'bank' a site for up to 20 years, the NRC should have to look not only at Georgia 'today,' but the Georgia we are likely to live in several decades from now, especially in terms of our water resources.
- Less water intensive energy choices exist. These energy choices are best exemplified not only by energy efficiency and conservation measures but also by renewable energy supplies, such as wind and solar.

**More information:** Speakers have 5 minutes to speak or as time allows. Contact Sara Barczak with Southern Alliance for Clean Energy at 912.201.0354 or visit their website for information on nuclear power at [www.cleanenergy.org/programs/programs.cfm?ID=4](http://www.cleanenergy.org/programs/programs.cfm?ID=4). View the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's information on the Vogtle application process at [www.nrc.gov/reactors/new-licensing/esp/vogtle.html](http://www.nrc.gov/reactors/new-licensing/esp/vogtle.html).

***The GWC is 161 Partners Strong!  
Thanks to all of your efforts in helping to strengthen the Georgia Water Coalition!***

**[www.georgiawater.org](http://www.georgiawater.org)**