DOCKET NO. 46

AN APPLICATION SUBMITTED BY THE CONNECTICUT RESOURCES RECOVERY AUTHORITY, THE METROPOLITAN DISTRICT AND THE CONNECTICUT LIGHT AND POWER COMPANY FOR A CERTIFICATE OF ENVIRONMENTAL COMPATIBILITY AND PUBLIC NEED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SOLID WASTE PROCESSING FACILITY, RECONSTRUCTION OF A POWER BLOCK (STEAM GENERATING) FACILITY, AND REFURBISHMENT OF THE SOUTH MEADOW ELECTRIC GENERATING STATION.	:	CONNECTICUT SITING COUNCIL
	:	December 20, 1984

O P I N I O N

The Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority (CRRA), the Metropolitan District (MD), and the Connecticut Light and Power Company (CL&P), applied to the Connecticut Siting Council for a certificate of environmental compatibility and public need for the construction of a solid waste processing facility, reconstruction of a power block (steam generating) facility, and refurbishment of the South Meadow Electric Generating Station.

The Council held public hearings in Hartford on November 7, 1984, and in New Britain on November 9, 1984, at which the applicant presented testimony and witnesses to support its contention that the project is consistent with state policy, is necessary, and will have minimal environmental impact. The record includes exhibits that specify the applicants' intention to use a dry scrubber/baghouse filter system (scrubbers) to control air emissions from the facility, rather than electrostatic precipitators as originally proposed.

The state of Connecticut faces a solid waste problem of significant magnitude and there is a public need for this project to dispose of municipal solid waste (MSW). As great as this need is, however, the Council's primary responsibility is to examine the need for and environmental effect of the proposed generating capacity. It may be, and was,

argued that not to proceed with the project would pose a greater environmental threat. Whether the Council must specifically consider MSW disposal needs in ruling on a generating facility is moot in this case since state energy policy, as expressed by statute, Department of Public Utility Control decisions, and the Connecticut Energy Advisory Board, declares the need for diversified, renewable, indigenous resource generation as proposed in this application, and the potential adverse environmental effects of this project are not so severe as to outweigh that public need.

Although Connecticut's two large electric utilities are involved in major nuclear facility construction projects, NU's latest forecasts indicate that additional generation will be required on its system late in the 1990's. The 68 MW of generation proposed in this application is not insignificant, and will help meet those requirements. Perhaps more important, the proposed facility will operate as a baseload generator, displacing some 750,000 barrels of oil that would otherwise be required each year.

Adverse effects associated with a generating facility may be wide-ranging and significant. In this case, such effects are mitigated at the outset by the fact that the site is already developed as a generating station and most of the necessary facilities are in place. It should be noted that the proposal will not preempt other uses of the site for future generating capacity if found necessary.

The modifications necessary on the existing facility may entail marginal increases in such environmental parameters as visual, noise, and recreational impacts. The first will be caused by the addition of a new stack for plant emissions as tall as the tallest existing stack and bearing Federal Aviation Administration-required warning lights and

markings. Additional, but minor, visual impacts will be caused by the restoration of a coal storage pile and coal handling equipment. Construction noise may be perceptible from residential areas, but at the nearest residence noise from operations will be far below state guidelines. Recreational impacts will include visibility of new structures and activities from boats on the Connecticut River. In addition, the plans of Riverfront Recapture, Inc., for a continuous riverwalk may be thwarted by reactivation of the site. Because of the Council's concern for such unquantifiable environmental amenities as access to the state's largest river, the Council will order good-faith negotiations by the applicant to reach the most beneficial compromise possible.

Air pollution, the most troublesome environmental issue in this proceeding, was resolved in proceedings before the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection. In those proceedings the CRRA agreed to equip the generating facility with a dry scrubber/baghouse filter system to control emissions. Although the Council avoided duplicating the considerations of the DEP, the Council carefully examined the issues and can endorse confidently the revised proposal. The use of scrubbers will reduce air pollution, including toxic pollutants about which inconclusive information is now available, and thereby reduce the facility's potential adverse environmental effect.

The Council is concerned that the uncovered coal pile may become a source of fugitive dust, especially if the washed coal dries out in storage. Therefore, the Council will order that the applicant establish a monitoring system and report regularly to the Council. Identification of a problem will trigger additional coal pile management requirements.

The addition of a waste processing facility to the site is not an insignificant modification, but details of the proposal reveal that such factors as noise, odors, and visual impacts are to be well controlled or minimized by design. Increased traffic, particularly trucks, will have some impact on the roadways, but since access from the controlled access highways is through commercial and industrial areas, no problems will be created for residential communities. Additionally, the applicant has assumed responsibility for improving access roads as necessary.

The issue of water pollution has also been satisfactorily addressed through leachate control, waste water treatment, and groundwater monitoring systems included in DEP permit approvals. Additionally, the project as proposed includes acceptable plans for off-site disposal of combustion residue, oversized waste, unacceptable wastes, and MSW in the event of facility outages.

The potential effects of the project, while individually minor, in the aggregate have the potential for environmental disruptions. However, the Council is confident that careful design and attention to environmental and community concerns, particularly the incorporation of scrubbers to control air emissions, eliminate this potential. On the other hand, the project represents a significant contribution of diversified, non-oil, small scale, baseload generation to the state's capacity mix. These factors combine to more than outweigh the potential adverse effects of the proposed facility. In addition, this facility represents a new and improved method of generating electricity in Connecticut, which the statutes direct the Council to encourage.

Based on the foregoing, the Council concludes that a certificate of environmental compatibility and public need is warranted for the Mid-Connecticut project and hereby directs that such certificate be issued subject to the terms, limitations, and conditions of the Decision and Order that accompanies this Opinion.