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**CONCERNS OVER WATER IMPACTS
FROM NUCLEAR POWER UPHELD:**

Groups Ask Southern Company to Pull the Plug on New Nuclear Reactors

Savannah, GA—A recent ruling by the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board's three-judge panel upheld concerns that several environmental organizations have raised over water impacts to the Savannah River from proposed nuclear power expansion in Georgia. Today in a letter to Southern Company, the organizations requested that the utility drop its plans to build two additional nuclear reactors at Plant Vogtle and that the company withdraw its permit application to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for this expansion. The groups cited the recent legal decision that ruled against the utility's motion to dismiss the groups' legal challenges based on water impacts to the Savannah River. This decision allows the David-versus-Goliath struggle to continue within the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the federal agency responsible for licensing new nuclear plants.

In their letter to Southern Company CEO David M. Ratcliffe, Atlanta WAND, Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, Center for a Sustainable Coast, Savannah Riverkeeper and Southern Alliance for Clean Energy outlined the economic and environmental reasons for their permit withdrawal request.

"Georgia Power has less risky ways to meet Georgia's increasing demand for energy, protect our water resources, and combat global warming," said Sara Barczak of Southern Alliance for Clean Energy. "Investing in efficiency and renewables instead of costly nuclear power would benefit the company and provide more jobs, without draining our water resources or our pocketbooks."

The recent decision by the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board supported the groups' argument in favor of alternative cooling technologies that would greatly reduce water use. The groups are intervenors in the licensing application for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and are represented by attorney Larry Sanders of the Turner Environmental Law Clinic at Emory University School of Law.

The letter points to widespread drought conditions in the South which could lead to the shut down of nuclear power plants that rely on huge amounts of surface water to operate. Southeastern lakes are approaching the minimum levels required by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Janet Marsh, Executive Director of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League said, “Drought conditions in the Southeast are both dramatic and dangerous. We are hearing from homeowners and farmers in Burke County whose wells are already running low. If Southern Company is a good corporate neighbor, they need to prove it by not hoarding all the water.”

The groups stated that the high cost of nuclear power plants would lead to cost overruns and rising electric power rates. They said nuclear reactors have tripled in price and contract negotiations between Southern Company and Westinghouse may have broken down. Proposed nuclear power expansion plans in Idaho and South Carolina have recently been shelved due in part to these large cost increases.

Bobbie Paul of Atlanta WAND summed up the organizations’ objections, “Southern Company continues to pursue building an extremely expensive dinosaur even when clean and sensible energy sources exist that don’t cause us to fear radioactive leaks, a meltdown, or a terrorist attack. We hope the company will change course.”

David Kyler, executive director of the Center for a Sustainable Coast, agreed, stating that, “Georgia would make far better use of the state’s natural resources by turning away from nuclear and fossil fuel power sources toward a combination of energy conservation measures and the harvesting of our vast offshore wind energy.”

To download the full letter and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s Atomic Safety and Licensing Board’s January ruling, visit <http://www.cleanenergy.org/programs/programs.cfm?ID=4>.

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Southern Alliance for Clean Energy is a nonprofit organization that promotes responsible energy choices that create global warming solutions and ensure clean, safe, and healthy communities throughout the Southeast. For more information, go to: www.cleanenergy.org