

“There are several U.S. companies pursuing advanced reactor designs that would use fuel enriched with higher levels of uranium-235 and need a source so they can conduct the research and development needed to bring these new technologies to market,” said DOE Deputy Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Technology Research and Development John Herczeg in a November 1 press release. “Being able to provide a source of this fuel would support this research and development and aligns with the Office of Nuclear Energy’s mission to advance nuclear power as a resource capable of meeting the nation’s energy, environmental, and national security needs.”

The draft EA was posted for public review on October 31 at <www.id.energy.gov/insideNEID/PDF/Draft%20HALEU%20EA.pdf>. The 30-day public comment period was to conclude on November 30.

NRC

Draft EA/FONSI issued for Metropolis Works facility

In October, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission issued a draft environmental assessment and finding of no signifi-

cant impact (EA/FONSI) for the proposed renewal of the source materials license for Honeywell International’s Metropolis Works uranium conversion facility in Metropolis, Ill. *Draft Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Renewal of Source Materials License SUB-526, Metropolis Works Uranium Conversion Facility (Massac County, Illinois)* documents the NRC staff’s environmental review of Honeywell’s application for an additional 40 years of operation.

“Based on the information provided in this draft EA, the NRC staff preliminarily concludes that the proposed action—the renewal of Honeywell’s license for operations at the Metropolis Works for a period of 40 years—would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment,” the EA states. The NRC is performing a detailed safety analysis and will document the results in a separate safety evaluation report.

The EA analyzes two alternatives to Honeywell’s proposed action: the reduced duration alternative, which would allow license renewal for a term of less than 40 years, and the no-action alternative, which would deny the license renewal.

At Metropolis Works, yellowcake is converted into uranium hexafluoride, which is shipped to enrichment facilities to be processed into enriched uranium.

The facility was constructed in 1958 and began operations the following year. It is currently the only UF₆ conversion facility operating in the United States. The EA states that the closure of the Metropolis Works facility would have the potential to significantly impact the commercial nuclear fuel industry in the United States.

Honeywell applied for the license renewal in February 2017, proposing no changes to how it processes uranium ore or to authorized operations during the proposed 40-year renewal term. The facility’s current license was issued in May 2007 for a 10-year period.

Metropolis Works’ current authorized capacity is 15,000 metric tons, but the facility has been on standby since late 2017 (NN, Jan. 2018, p. 64). According to the EA, “Honeywell, in response to market conditions, decided to temporarily idle the production of uranium hexafluoride and placed the MTW in a ‘ready idle’ status. Honeywell is maintaining minimal operations to support a future restart when market conditions improve.”

Notice of the availability of the EA/FONSI was published in the October 31 *Federal Register*, and comments were requested by November 30. The documents are accessible on the federal rulemaking website, at <www.regulations.gov>, with a search for Docket ID NRC-2017-0143. **■**

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