

system operators and regional transmission organizations to ensure that nuclear and coal plants are compensated for their reliability and resiliency attributes (NN, Nov. 2017, p. 28). And on June 1 of this year, the White House announced that Trump had directed Perry to prepare to take “immediate steps” to halt plant retirements (NN, June 2018, p. 17). Those steps reportedly include directing grid operators to purchase electricity from a designated list of nuclear and coal plants for two years.

In response to a question from Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R., Alaska), the committee chairman, regarding the current quality of the grid, all five commissioners expressed confidence, although some expressed it more forcefully than others. “There is no immediate calamity or threat to our ongoing ability to have our bulk power system operate and satisfy the energy needs,” said FERC Chairman Kevin McIntyre, one of



Photo: FERC

four Trump appointees to the commission. Robert Powelson and Richard Glick, however, two other Trump appointees, seemed to specifically criticize the administration’s position in their answers.

McIntyre “These markets are working hyper-efficiently right now,” Powelson said. “Certainly there are things we have to look at around the edges, around resiliency, and I think that to Chairman McIntyre’s credit, we’re having that conversation. But a hard and fast mandate on these markets could really evaporate all the good will that consumers have seen and the environment has seen. To erode that would be a real step back for our U.S. bulk power system.”

According to Glick, “PJM says there’s actually not an emergency. . . . Exelon, as well, said there’s not an emergency. We need to keep on being vigilant and monitor the situation, but we also need to be wary of people using the situation as an excuse to achieve market changes that they haven’t been able to achieve otherwise.”

MILLSTONE

Dominion opens books to prove plant faces closure

Dominion Energy has turned over a number of documents to Connecticut energy regulators in an effort to prove that its two-unit Millstone nuclear plant, the state’s only operating nuclear facility, is at risk of premature retirement. Documents filed by the company on May 31—including audited financial statements, revenue and expense histories and forecasts, and tax returns from the last few years—show “proof of an unsustainable return on equity, with a declining profile,” according to Dominion.

In February, Connecticut’s Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) issued a report concluding that Millstone is “economically viable under expected market conditions through 2035 and thus unlikely to retire prior to that date” (NN, Mar. 2018, p. 22). That conclusion, the report said, was based on the “best available public information” because Dominion had not provided verified historic operation costs for the units prior to the completion of the analysis. According to the report, “Dominion’s incomplete responses to the data requests [made by DEEP and PURA] and failure

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Photo: Dominion Generation

Millstone: The plant provides significant value to Connecticut through its fuel security and environmental attributes, but may be at risk to be retired.

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