



Savannah River Site Watch

**Savannah River Site Watch
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MOX Services Takes Step to Make Revival of Terminated MOX Project Irreversible – Wants US Nuclear Regulatory Commission to Terminate “Construction Authorization” (License) for the Failed MOX Project; SRS Watch Continues to Call for Investigations and Congressional Hearings into Fraud, Waste, Abuse and Mismanagement at MOX Boondoggle

Columbia, SC – The company in charge of the bungled plutonium fuel (MOX) project at DOE’s Savannah River Site has requested that the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission terminate the construction license for the facility.

The request of the NRC is significant in that termination of the license would preclude any future restart of the project once the license is abandoned, according to Savannah River Site Watch.

The initial “construction authorization” (aka “construction license”) was issued on March 30, 2005 for a 10-year period. Due to massive schedule delays and chronic construction problems, a second ten year period for the license was granted in 2014, to March 30, 2025 (at which time the MOX facility could not have been completed if construction had continued). SRS Watch opposed the license extension and correctly asserted that the extension underscored the massive schedule delays facing the bungled project.

MOX Services requested in a letter to the NRC that the license termination take place within 30 days: “In order to support termination activities, MOX Services requests that the NRC issue the requested Construction Authorization termination within 30 days.” The termination notice has not yet been posted by the NRC.

The November 1, 2018 letter by MOX Services to the NRC was posted publicly this week in the NRC’s digital library (ADAMS). It is unknown why it has taken almost 6 weeks for the letter to be made public.

“The request to terminate the MOX construction license is important in that it indicates both MOX Services and DOE firmly believe that there is no belief that the MOX project could be revived at some point in the future,” said Tom Clements, director of Savannah River Site Watch. “The termination of the construction license will put an end to any speculation by MOX boosters that the project can one day be

restarted,” added Clements. “Once terminated, obtaining a new MOX construction license would be painstaking and near impossible due to a host of remaining construction problems that may well have not been properly documented by MOX Services and the NRC,” according to Clements.

The MOX Services letter states: “Due to the cessation of NRC regulated construction activities at the MFFF and the Notice of Termination, MOX Services requests that the NRC terminate Construction Authorization No. CAMOX-001 (the “Construction Authorization”).” The Construction Authorization is commonly referred to as the construction license. A second authorization for operations would have to have been secured from the NRC for the poorly constructed facility to operate, a step that some MOX workers believe would not have been possible given shoddy construction and lingering design issues.

In its letter to the NRC, MOX Services affirms that construction activities have ceased: “There are no ongoing activities associated with NRC regulated design and construction. MOX Services’ work now primarily involves activities to preserve the site in a safe and secure manner and inventory materials and design documents for the DOE/NNSA.”

No matter the ultimate status of the Construction Authorization, SRS Watch will continue to call for multi-agency and congressional investigations into fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement at the MOX project. “Contractors including Areva/Orano and CB&I Project Services Group and DOE/National Nuclear Security Administration must be held accountable for what happened with the massively bungled MOX project,” added Clements. “It is quite telling that politicians who most loudly support the failed MOX project – Senator Lindsey Graham and Representative Joe Wilson – are totally silent when it comes to investigating what happened with the MOX project and who must be held responsible for its failure. They and other politicians should be clamoring for in-depth investigations and a series of congressional hearings into the MOX debacle and any fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement that may have taken place. Termination of the MOX project does not absolve lawmakers or DOE from the responsibility of peering behind the screen to discover details as to who is responsible for this unprecedented and costly debacle perpetrated on the US taxpayer,” said Clements.

On December 11, 2018, Orano Federal Services announced another round of layoffs of 70 workers, to be implemented on February 4, 2019. This layoff announcement brings to 1168 the number of MOX workers who have been given their layoff notices. (See: https://www.scworks.org/media/Layoff/2018_Layoff_Notifications_121118.pdf) In its job advertising, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions is giving priority in its hiring at SRS for applicants who have had experience at the MOX project. It is believed that the bulk of laid-off MOX workers may be able to find non-MOX positions at SRS.

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Notes:

1. November 1, 2018 letter from MOX Services to the NRC, requesting termination of the “Construction Authorization”:

<https://adamswebsearch2.nrc.gov/webSearch2/main.jsp?AccessionNumber=ML18305A356>

2. More information on MOX licensing on the NRC website: “Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility Licensing”:

<https://www.nrc.gov/materials/fuel-cycle-fac/mox/licensing.html>

3. Initial Construction Authorization issued for 10 years to Duke Cogema Stone & Webster on March 30, March 30, 2005”:

<https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML0506/ML050660392.pdf>

4. Due to massive schedule delays, the initial ten year period for the MOX construction n license was inadequate and “On November 13, 2014, The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) issued an [Order extending the construction expiration date of Construction Authorization CAMOX-001](#) for the Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility from March 30, 2015, to March 30, 2025.”:

<https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML1422/ML14225A705.pdf>

SRS Watch on line:

<http://www.srswatch.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/SavannahRiverSiteWatch>