

NOTICE: U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Portsmouth/Paducah Project Office

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI); Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant Environmental Assessment (EA) for Potential Land and Facilities Transfers, McCracken County, Kentucky

DATE:

1) SUMMARY:

The Proposed Action is to transfer DOE real property at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant (PGDP) site to one or more entities for a use that is different from its current use. DOE's *Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant Environmental Assessment for Potential Land and Facilities Transfers, McCracken County, Kentucky* (DOE/EA-1927) assesses the consequences of the potential transfer of PGDP real property. The Purpose and Need for DOE's Proposed Action is to reduce the footprint of the site, which would reduce the cost to maintain the site. A portion of the community is interested in real property transfer to help offset job losses by attracting business to the area and using the land and facilities for potential community reuse.

The Proposed Action to transfer real property at the PGDP site would have no significant impact on the environment. The transfer action itself would not have environmental impacts; rather, future development and use by a new owner(s) could have the potential for environmental impacts. To provide information and context to decision makers and other document reviewers, DOE developed a Conceptual Project as the basis for estimating a representative and realistic range of potential environmental impacts from industrial and commercial uses. Although this Conceptual Project is not part of the Proposed Action, it served as an analytical tool to provide context for actions that might take place if one or more transfers occur. Before any transfer for a potential future use by any subsequent owner, DOE would conduct an adequacy review under the *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969* (NEPA). Potential future uses by any subsequent owner would be contingent upon receipt of necessary permits, authorizations, and additional environmental reviews.

Based on the results of the analyses reported in the EA, DOE has determined that the Proposed Action is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of NEPA. Therefore, the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not necessary, and DOE is issuing this FONSI.

2) FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Further information, including an electronic copy of the EA, and other supporting NEPA documents can be found on the following websites:

<http://energy.gov/nepa/nepa-documents/environmental-assessments-ea> and the Portsmouth/Paducah Project Office website at <http://pppo.energy.gov/documents/>.

For further information on the EA contact:

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3) SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

DOE held a public information meeting on the proposed EA on Tuesday, March 19, 2013, at the West Kentucky Community and Technical College in Paducah. About 40 people attended. The meeting included a formal presentation and a question and answer session.

The public comment period on the Draft EA began on June 12, 2015, and ended on July 27, 2015. During the public comment period, DOE accepted comments on the EA by mail, facsimile, and e-mail. On Thursday, July 9, 2015, DOE hosted a second public comment meeting at the West Kentucky Community and Technical College in Paducah. Approximately 30 people attended.

Both meetings were announced by postcards and advertisements in the *Paducah Sun*, the *West KY News*, and the *Lone Oak News/The Good Neighbor*.

4) PURPOSE AND NEED:

The Purpose and Need for DOE's Proposed Action is to reduce the footprint of the site, which would reduce the cost to maintain the site. A portion of the community is interested in real property transfer to help offset job losses by attracting business to the area and using the land and facilities at PGDP for potential community reuse.

5) DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVE:

The Proposed Action is the transfer of DOE real property at the PGDP site to one or more entities for a use that is potentially different from its current use.

Under the No-Action Alternative, DOE would not transfer any the lands and facilities at the PGDP. DOE would maintain a level of security and maintenance appropriate to site activity. DOE also assumes 1,989 acres would continue to be licensed to Kentucky as part of the West Kentucky Wildlife Management Area (WKWMA).

6) ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF PROPOSED ACTION:

a) Beneficial and Adverse Impacts (40 CFR Part 1508.27(b)(1))

Transfer of the PGDP real property would benefit DOE by reducing its operational footprint and reduce operational and maintenance costs. The analyses indicates there would not be any significant adverse impacts from implementing the Proposed Action. Key findings of the EA related to beneficial and adverse impacts follow:

- i) Land Use. Land use impacts could be minimal if new users sited industrial facilities in the developed area. Construction in the undeveloped areas would have the potential to affect public activities, including recreational activities. The extent of the impact would be dependent on the size and location of the construction activities. Future land use would be expected to be compatible with historical land uses. Recreation and wildlife management uses in the developed or undeveloped areas would have negligible impacts and would be consistent with current land use practices at the WKWMA.

ii) Aesthetics. Any future facility would be similar to current facilities in the viewshed and would comply with any height requirements under local zoning ordinances.

iii) Geology and Soils. Future use of the PGDP site for industrial uses could involve land-disturbing activities such as clearing, grading, and otherwise changing the topography of the land. Such actions would not affect the site's underlying geologic formations. The site is subject to identified seismic hazards from the New Madrid seismic zone. New structures would have to be designed and constructed in accordance with appropriate seismic standards.

iv) Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice. Future uses of the PGDP site could have positive impacts to the regional economy. Based on the existing demographics around the site, no disproportionately high and adverse impacts to minority or low-income populations would be expected.

v) Infrastructure and Transportation. The utility infrastructure and transportation system in the area is adequate to support any reasonably foreseeable future demands.

vi) Waste Management. For purposes of analysis, DOE assumed construction waste to be about 4,000 tons of nonhazardous wastes, with no hazardous wastes generated. Operational waste would be expected to not exceed present levels.

b) Public Health and Safety Impacts (40 CFR Part 1508.27(b)(2))

The analysis indicates that there would not be significant adverse impacts to public health and safety from implementing the Proposed Action. Key findings of the EA related to public health and safety follow:

i) Air Quality. New facility operations would be required to obtain applicable air quality permits. Dust suppression measures would be taken during the construction of new facilities. Air quality would be expected to be in attainment for all criteria pollutants.

ii) Noise. Noise impacts from demolition, remediation, or new construction are expected to be intermittent, temporary, and mainly planned to occur during daytime hours. Future industrial or recreational uses could have noise impacts on the surrounding areas. New site owners would have to comply with all local regulations and ordinances.

iii) Water Resources. Water use for any new facilities would be expected to be within the range of what has been experienced historically at the PGDP site. Use of groundwater would continue to be prohibited in some areas. The groundwater restriction is to ensure protection of human health and safety by preventing exposure to known groundwater contamination in certain areas.

iv) Human Health and Safety. Potential occupational impacts to workers would be expected to be comparable to or smaller than historical trends at the PGDP site. Potential impacts to the public would be minimal.

c) Unique characteristics of the geographical area (40 CFR Part 1508.27(b)(3))

i) Prime Farmland. The location of the PGDP site is not considered prime farmland.

ii) Impact to Wetlands. Although the National Wetlands Inventory shows a relatively minor number of potential wetlands in the PGDP area, more detailed studies have determined there are scattered areas totaling about five acres of jurisdictional wetlands in drainage ditches within the fenced industrial center of the PGDP and large numbers of wetlands throughout the entire PGDP area. There are an estimated 400 acres of wetlands on the PGDP. Based on a NEPA adequacy review of specific proposals, a wetlands delineation might be required.

d) Degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial (40 CFR Part 1508.27(b)(4))

Public comments submitted on the Draft EA indicate that the Proposed Action is not controversial. There were very few comments submitted on the Draft EA. Technical comments were received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, and the Kentucky Heritage Council. Other comments focused on the desire for continued cleanup of the site and strong opposition to accepting and storing nuclear waste on the site. Appendixes A and B of the EA provides the responses to comments and all of the correspondence associated with the NEPA process.

e) Uncertain or unknown risks to the human environment (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5))

PGDP operations historically involved the types and magnitude of impacts associated with the conversion of nuclear materials for use in nuclear reactors. The expectations for future uses of PGDP would likely be industrial in nature but not necessarily nuclear-related. Given that specific uses are currently not known, there is uncertainty. However, based on specific future proposals DOE would conduct a NEPA adequacy review for any proposed transfer and proceed as appropriate.

f) Precedent for future actions (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6))

Precedents for the potential transfer of DOE real property have been set through previous real property NEPA documents and DOE guidance.

g) Cumulatively significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7))

DOE evaluated the cumulative impacts of the Ohio River Triple Rail Megasite and the Tennessee Valley Authority Shawnee Fossil Plant. Based on the evaluation, DOE determined that there are no significant cumulative impacts associated with the Proposed Action.

h) Effect on historical or cultural resources (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8))

No known cultural resources are in the industrial areas of the site. DOE informed the Kentucky Heritage Council that it would follow Section 4 of the *Cultural Resources Management Plan for the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant Paducah, Kentucky*.

i) Effect on endangered or threatened species or critical habitat (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9))

The potential impacts of constructing and operating a facility within the industrial areas would have minimal impacts to biological resources due to the existing character of the site and

limited habitat. Based on NEPA adequacy reviews of specific proposals, habitat surveys might be conducted for the Indiana and northern long-eared bats.

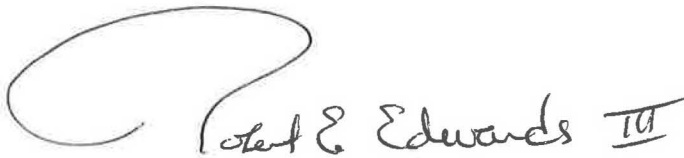
j) Violation of Federal, State, or local law (40 CFR 1508.27)(b)(10)

The Proposed Action would not violate any Federal, Commonwealth of Kentucky, or local laws imposed for the protection of the environment.

7) DETERMINATION

In accordance with NEPA and DOE's implementing regulations at 10 CFR Part 1021, based on the analyses in the PGDP EA (DOE/EA-1927), and after careful consideration of all public and agency comments, DOE finds that the transfer of PGDP real property is not a major federal action significantly affecting the human environment within the meaning of NEPA. Therefore, the preparation of an EIS is not required and DOE is issuing this FONSI for the Proposed Action.

Issued at the Portsmouth/Paducah Project Office, the day of 14TH of December 2015

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Robert E. Edwards III". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "R" that loops around the first part of the name. The "III" is written in a slightly different, more formal script at the end.

Robert E. Edwards, III
Acting Manager, Portsmouth/Paducah Project Office
Department of Energy