

**WASHINGTON STATE
ENERGY FACILITY SITE EVALUATION COUNCIL**

RESOLUTION NO. 310

**ENERGY NORTHWEST – COLUMBIA GENERATING STATION
TERMINATION OF NON-RADIOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENTAL
MONITORING PROGRAM**

Nature of Action. The Site Certification Agreement (SCA) issued to Energy Northwest to construct and operate the Columbia Generating Station (formerly WNP-2) required that environmental monitoring be conducted during the preoperational and operational phases of the plant. Based on almost thirty years of environmental monitoring results, Energy Northwest has concluded that the operation of the Columbia Generating Station (Columbia), and specifically its cooling tower operation, has not revealed any discernible environmental effect on vegetation or soil in the surrounding area. Energy Northwest is requesting that the Council consider terminating the Non-Radiological (Terrestrial) Environmental Monitoring Program and close out Resolution No. 266 that directs the current program.

Background. The Columbia SCA requires that environmental monitoring be conducted during the preoperational and operational phases of site development and use. The objective of the monitoring program is to provide an environmental measurement history for evaluation by Energy Northwest and the Council (or EFSEC) to identify significant effects of plant operation on the environment. A key focus of the program was to monitor the operation of the Columbia cooling tower system to determine if drift from the towers would produce an effect in the surrounding plant communities.

Since its inception in 1975, the Terrestrial Environmental Monitoring Program has been modified on several occasions to accommodate technical changes or to delete requirements for completed studies. EFSEC Resolution No. 266, adopted in May 1993, made modifications and set monitoring parameters for ongoing terrestrial monitoring. The water quality-related elements of the program were closed out in 1995 because they were superseded by the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit that was reissued that year. As required by the resolution, Energy Northwest has submitted annual reports describing vegetation and soil sampling results.

In support of its request to terminate the Terrestrial Environmental Monitoring Program, Energy Northwest compiled a summary report of monitoring data collected from 1975 through 2002. Their analysis of the results of the monitoring program revealed that no discernible impact or effect on the environment can be attributed to the operation of Columbia and its cooling towers. In the summary report, Energy Northwest presents their conclusions that the “studies of soil and vegetation chemistry, shrub and vegetation cover, and phytomass suggest that fire and weather have substantially more influence on

the surrounding environment than drift from plant cooling towers. This conclusion is corroborated through the aerial photography portion of the monitoring program. Overall, the Ecological Monitoring Program has determined that cooling tower operation has not affected the surrounding plant communities since Columbia Generating Station became operational in 1984.”

Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Ecology, and Council staff have reviewed the vegetation and soil sampling results and find that the data collected supports Energy Northwest’s determination that the operation of Columbia and its cooling towers has not had any discernible environmental effect.

Conclusion. The Council concludes that Energy Northwest has, through the preoperational and operational phases of Columbia, carried out an environmental monitoring program that meets the objectives of the SCA for providing adequate environmental sampling and studies to determine the impacts of the plant on the environment. Based on its review of the monitoring results, the Council further concludes that the operation of Columbia and its cooling towers has not had a discernible impact on the surrounding environment, and therefore the Terrestrial Environmental Monitoring Program sampling and studies may be terminated.

Resolution. Having considered Energy Northwest’s request; all supporting documentation; comments from Fish and Wildlife and Ecology; and the recommendation of EFSEC staff, the Council hereby takes the following actions:

1. Closes Resolution No. 266, which defined the scope and sampling parameters of the Columbia Non-Radiological (Terrestrial) Environmental Monitoring Program.
2. Terminates the Columbia Terrestrial Environmental Monitoring Program, effective the end of the calendar year 2003.

Dated and effective this 19th day of April, 2004.

Washington State Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council

By: _____
Tony Ifie, Acting EFSEC Chair

By: _____
Allen Fiksdal, EFSEC Manager