

the required wording was incorporated into this TS by Amendment Nos. 71 and 60, issued by the NRC on February 14, 1995, in response to another amendment request.

For further details with respect to this action, see the application for amendment dated November 8, 1994, and the licensee's letter dated March 14, 1995, which withdrew a portion of the application for license amendments. The above documents are available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room, the Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, NW., Washington, DC, and at the local public document room located at the Wharton County Junior College, J. M. Hodges Learning Center, 911 Boling Highway, Wharton, TX 77488.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 17th day of April 1995.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Lawrence E. Kokajko,

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[Docket No. 030-20457]

Environmental Assessment: Finding of No Significant Impact and Notice of Opportunity for Hearing Related to Amendment of Materials License No. 11-27380-01

AGENCY: Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).

ACTION: NRC plans to issue an amendment to License No. 11-27380-01, authorizing Idaho State University to use carbon-14 (C-14) labeled particulate organic material in dispersion studies in two streams in Idaho. Three streams were chosen with one being a backup location. These are the Bloomington, Deep, and Toponce Creeks, which traverse the Cache and Caribou National Forests and the Curlew National Grasslands. The study calls for releases of 25 microcuries of C-14 at a time, with no more than 100 microcuries used in each stream in a year.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Joseph Wang, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, D.C. 20555, Telephone: (301) 415-7909.

Environmental Assessment

Identification of the Proposed Action

The proposed amendment action would authorize personnel from Idaho State University to use C-14 labeled

particulate organic material in dispersion studies in two streams in Idaho. Three streams were chosen with one being a backup location. These are the Bloomington, Deep, and Toponce Streams, which traverse the Cache and Caribou National Forests and the Curlew National Grasslands. The study calls for release of 25 microcuries of C-14 at a time, with no more than 100 microcuries used in each stream in a year. The amount of C-14 used in an experiment is such that the radioactivity is "instantaneously" diluted to concentrations below drinking water standards and additional dilution occurs continuously thereafter.

Background

Idaho State University (ISU) submitted a letter to the NRC, dated December 9, 1994, requesting to amend its Byproduct Material License No. 11-27380-01. ISU's request is for authorization to use C-14 as radioisotopic tracers to study the dispersal and fate of "fine particulate organic matter" (FPOM) in lotic ecosystems. This study is funded through a grant by the National Science Foundation to the Stream Ecology Center at ISU. Along with its letter, ISU also submitted an Environmental Assessment (EA) for its proposed action based on guidelines provided by NRC's RIV Office.

Need for the Proposed Action

FPOM constitutes that bulk of particulate organic matter carried in the suspended matter in streams and is a major component of food webs, energy flow, and organic matter budgets in stream ecosystems. The issues involved in FPOM dynamics cover a range of disciplines, and workers from many different areas, from water treatment engineering to population dynamics of marine organisms, face similar questions about how particles exchange between surfaces and the suspended state. The proposed research by ISU is important to further major advances in the understanding of the ecology of stream ecosystems because it will result in determination of: (1) The detailed dynamics of FPOM transport over a range of flow and channel conditions, (2) the specific mechanisms of transport and deposition, and (3) the relative importance of physical and biological factors in the transport of organic matter in streams.

In its submitted EA, the applicant has considered alternatives to the proposed isotope study. Specifically, two alternatives to radiolabeled natural FPOM have been reviewed for the proposed study: Use of exotic pollen

and use of plastic microspheres. Although both of these options may hold promise for future FPOM research, certain characteristics of each may cause these particles to behave differently from natural FPOM, thus defeating the purpose of the proposed study.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

In the EA submitted by ISU, and based on telephone discussion with the licensee, the applicant stated that its current plan is to conduct approximately two or three releases per year, per stream. The study will be for 2 years using no more than two streams. ISU identified three streams (i.e., Bloomington Creek, Deep Creek, and Toponce Creek) for this study, with the Toponce Creek being a backup location. The releases would be in medium-sized surface waters (i.e., flowing streams having discharge rates of 0.25 to 0.75 cubic meters per second or more) located in remote areas, on Federal lands, miles away from human habitation and domestic animals. Each release would be separated by 7 or more days and involve 25 microcuries of C-14; thus, the total amount of C-14 introduced into any stream in any year would not exceed 100 microcuries. The introduction of C-14 into a stream takes place over several hours and the concentrations in the stream are immediately diluted to 26 picocuries per liter or less at the point of release. These levels are well below Environmental Protection Agency's established drinking water standard of 2500 picocuries per liter for C-14 (40 CFR 141.16), even at the point (and time) of introduction.

The study sites have been selected so that the nearest human residence is located several miles from the study area. The nearest human community is located about 5 miles away in Bloomington, Idaho. No endangered plants or species will be affected by this study. According to National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements (NCRP) Publication No. 45 on Natural Background Radiation, there are 303.3 million curies or 303.3 trillion microcuries of natural C-14 in the environment. Despite this large inventory of natural C-14 in the environment, the average annual whole body dose, due to natural C-14 to an adult member of the general public, is estimated to be 0.7 millirem (page 42, NCRP 45) per year. Therefore, the dose to an adult member of the general public, due to no more than 200 microcuries of C-14 released per year over a predominately remote Federal lands, is insignificant.