



Click to Print

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Web Posted: 07/29/2009 12:00 CDT

Nuclear plant proponents overlook drought's reality

By Jerry Morrisey- Special to the Express-News

Two recent Express-News articles were highly predictive of South Texas's future: “This dry spell may be the drought of record” and “Energy giant wants to keep Guadalupe River water rights.” The two highlight the relationship between nuclear power and water.

Global warming studies predict South Texas will experience longer and more severe droughts. The first article reported that the “U.S. Department of Agriculture said San Antonio experienced its driest 22-month period on record through June, with less than 24 inches of rain since September 2007. That's 39 percent of normal and beat the prior record — set from December 1908 to September 1910 — by more than two inches ... ”

The article added, “Nowhere else in the continental United States is there a drought as extreme as what South and Central Texas are experiencing ... ” The drought is accompanied by record temperatures.

The future is here and its reality is staring us in the face.

The proponents of adding two reactors to the South Texas Project argue that the reactors have no water problem because of a firm Lower Colorado River Authority commitment. But the commitment terminates when a drought exceeds the worst drought of record, which may be what we are having right now. When that occurs, the reactors get a pro-rated share, as do all others entitled to LCRA water. If there is insufficient water available to STP, the operators will have to turn the reactors off.

Without water that is cool enough, nuclear reactors have to shut down. That is happening right now in France, which must shut down one-third of its reactors because the cooling water is too warm. U.S. reactors have also gone off-line for the same reason.

Nuclear reactors are water hogs. STP Units 1 and 2 currently evaporate on average 37,100 acre-feet each year from the main cooling reservoir. Two additional units would increase that evaporation by 37,300 acre-feet, about 25 percent of San Antonio's Edwards

Aquifer allocation during extreme drought.

The second article reported that Exelon Energy plans to retain its rights to take 75,000 acre-feet of water from the Guadalupe River, though the two reactors planned for Victoria are now on hold. A dispute erupted between people wanting water for agricultural and municipal needs and the energy giant wanting to keep its potential for building the reactors in the future.

The newspaper reported, “The situation highlights the tension between those looking to serve the power needs of a growing state and those worried about a water supply that seems increasingly stressed under the pressure of growth — and now, severe drought.”

Nuclear proponents ignore climate change reality and the needs of people at the peril of new nuclear power not delivering when most-needed in times of extreme heat and drought.

Jerry Morrisey has participated in San Antonio water discussions for two decades.

Find this article at:

<http://www.mysanantonio.com/opinion/commentary/51931267.html>

FAIR USE NOTICE

This document contains copyrighted material whose use has not been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. The Texas Living Waters Project, which is a nonprofit undertaking, is making this article available in our efforts to promote comprehensive water planning in Texas. We believe that this constitutes a "fair use" of the copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. If you wish to use this copyrighted material for purposes of your own that go beyond "fair use", you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.