Water Commission (USIBWC) proposes to gather information necessary to analyze and evaluate the impacts of a River Management Plan by the USIBWC on the existing Rio Grande Canalization Project in Sierra and Doña Ana counties, New Mexico and El Paso County, Texas and prepare an EIS to document those effects. This notice is being provided as required by the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (40 CFR 1501.7) and the USIBWC's Operational Procedures for Implementing Section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, published in the **Federal Register** September 2, 1981 (46 FR 44083–44094) to obtain suggestions and information from other agencies and the public on the scope of issues to be addressed in the EIS. Public meetings will be held to obtain community input to ensure all concerns are identified and addressed in the EIS.

DATES: The USIBWC will conduct two public scoping meetings from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. MST on Tuesday, October 5, 1999 at the Las Cruces Hilton, 705 South Telshor Boulevard, Las Cruces, New Mexico, and on Wednesday, October 6, 1999 at the EL Paso Airport Hilton, 2027 Airways Boulevard, El Paso, Texas. Full public participation by interested federal, state, and local agencies as well as other interested organizations and the general public is encouraged during the scoping process which will end 60 days from the date of this notice. Public comments on the scope of the EIS, reasonable alternatives that should be considered, anticipated environmental problems, and actions that might be taken to address them are requested.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Comments will be accepted for 60 days following the date of this notice by Mr. Douglas Echlin, Environmental Protection Specialist, Environmental Management Division, USIBWC, 4171 North Mesa Street, C–310, EL Paso, Texas 79902. Telephone: 915/832–4741, Facsimile: 915/832–4167. E-mail: dougechlin@ibwc.state.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: .

1. Proposed Action

The Rio Grande Canalization Project (Canalization Project) extends for about 106 miles along the Rio Grande from Percha Diversion Dam, located downstream from Caballo Dam in Sierra County, New Mexico, to the vicinity of American Diversion Dam in El Paso County, Texas. The Canalization Project was constructed between 1938 and 1943 in compliance with the convention between the United States and Mexico concluded May 21, 1906, to provide for the equitable division of the waters of the Rio Grande for use in the two countries. The project included acquisition of right of way for the river channel and adjoining floodways and improvement of the alignment and efficiency of the river channel to convey deliveries to Mexico, as well as conveyance of deliveries to the United States Bureau of Reclamation Rio Grande Project in the El Paso valley of Texas. The Canalization Project also controls floods in the river reach which extends through the Rincon and Mesilla valleys of New Mexico. Proposed construction activities that will be studied in this EIS include but may not be limited to raising and strengthening existing levees, channel improvements such as widening or armoring with riprap, and installation of grade control structures. In addition, the EIS will study the environmental effects of a long-range maintenance plan that will be developed.

2. Alternatives

The USIBWC as lead agency proposes to collect information necessary for the preparation of an EIS; to analyze flood protection measures and alternatives to current management, including watershed-oriented and non-structural alternatives and collaborative measures with other agencies and landowners; to determine to what extent project management can support restoration of native riparian and aquatic habitats, as well as the restoration of natural fluvial processes such as channel meanders and overbank flooding. The EIS will consider a range of alternatives, including the no action alternative, based on issues and concerns associated with the project.

The EIS will identify, describe, and evaluate the existing environmental, cultural, sociological and economical, and recreational resources; explain the flood protection project; and evaluate the impacts associated with the alternatives under consideration. Significant issues which have been identified to be addressed in the EIS include but are not limited to impacts to water resources, water quality, cultural and biological resources, threatened and endangered species, and recreation.

Coordination with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service will ensure compliance with the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act and section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. Cultural resources reconnaissance for the project area will be coordinated with both the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer and the Texas State Historic Preservation Officer. Other federal and state agencies, as required, will also be consulted to ensure compliance with federal and state laws and regulations.

The USIBWC has invited several agencies including the United States Bureau of Reclamation and United States Fish and Wildlife Service to participate as cooperating agencies pursuant to 40 CFR 1501.6, to the extent possible. Other agencies may be invited to become cooperators as they are identified during the scoping process.

The environmental review of this project will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of NEPA, CEQ Regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500—1508), other appropriate federal regulations, and the USIBWC procedures for compliance with those regulations. Copies of the EIS will be transmitted to federal and state agencies and other interested parties for comments and will be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency in accordance with 40 CFR Parts 1500–1508 and USIBWC procedures.

The USIBWC anticipates the Draft EIS will be made available to the public by March 2001.

Dated: August 10, 1999.

William A. Wilcox, Jr.,

Legal Advisor.

[FR Doc. 99–21390 Filed 8–16–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4710–03–M

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Permit Applications Received Under the Antarctic Conservation Act of 1978 (P.L. 95–541)

AGENCY: National Science Foundation.

ACTION: Notice of permit applications received under the Antarctic Conservation Act of 1978, P.L. 95–541.

SUMMARY: The National Science Foundation (NSF) is required to publish notice of permit applications received to conduct activities regulated under the Antarctic Conservation Act of 1978. NSF has published regulations under the Antarctic Conservation Act at Title 45 Part 670 of the Code of Federal Regulations. This is the required notice of permit applications received.

DATES: Interested parties are invited to submit written data, comments, or views with respect to these permit applications by September 13, 1999. Permit applications may be inspected by interested parties at the Permit Office, address below.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be addressed to Permit Office, Room 755,

Office of Polar Programs, National Science Foundation, 4201 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia 22230.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Nadene G. Kennedy at the above address or (703) 306–1030.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The National Science Foundation, as directed by the Antarctica Conservation Act of 1978 (Public Law 95–541), has developed regulations that implement the ''Agreed Measures for the Conservation of Antarctic Fauna and Flora'' for all United States citizens. The Agreed Measures, developed by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties, recommended establishment of a permit system for various activities in Antarctica and designation of certain animals and certain geographic areas requiring special protection. The regulations establish such a permit system to designate Specially Protected Areas and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

The applications received are as follows:

1. *Applicant:* Steven D. Emslie, Department of Biological Sciences, University of North Carolina, Wilmington, NC 28403

[Permit Application No. 2000–001]

Activity for Which Permit Is Requested

Take, Enter Antarctic Specially Protected Areas and Import Into the U.S.A.

The applicant proposes to conduct surveys and excavations of modern and abandoned penguin colonies by surveying ice-free areas to locate evidence of a breeding colony (pebble and/or bone sconcentrations, and rich vegetation). The sites will be sampled by placing a test pit, no more than 1x1 meter in size, in the colony and excavating in 5–10 cm level until bedrock or non-ornithogenic sediments are encountered. To minimize impacts, test pits will be placed in areas with little or no vegetation when possible. Upon completion of the excavation, test pits will be refilled and any vegetation disturbed on the surface will be replaced. Collected sediments will be taken to the laboratory for processing. Sediments will be washed through fine-mesh screens; all organic remains will be sorted from the sediments and preserved for identification and analysis.

The applicant proposes to enter the following Antarctic Specially Protected Areas to conduct surveys: ASPA 106—Cape Hallett, Victoria Land; ASPA 113—Litchfield Island, Arthur Harbor; ASPA 121—Cape Royds, Ross Island; ASPA 124—Cape Crozier, Ross Island; ASPA 125—Fildes Peninsula, King George Island; ASPA 128—Western shore of Admiralty Bay, King George Island; ASPA 129—Rothera Point, Adelaide Island; ASPA 132—Potter Peninsula, King George Island; ASPA 139—Biscoe Point, Anvers Island; and ASPA 151—Lions Rump, King George Island.

The applicant also wishes to salvage and import into the U.S. whole remains of native Antarctic birds, or partial specimens, that are found on beaches or at the colonies. The specimens will be shipped to the University of North Carolina, Wilmington, for identification and analysis. All specimens will remain at the University or other appropriate universities or museums for permanent storage.

Results of the research will provide information on the former distribution of penguins in Antarctica. These data will be compared to the paleoclimatic record to investigate patterns in population fluctuations of penguins in relation to climate change in the past. This information, in addition to data on modern population changes with global warming, will test hypotheses on how penguins respond to climate change and will help develop predictive model for future responses by these species to continued global warming.

Location

ASPA 106—Cape Hallett, Victoria Land;
ASPA 113—Litchfield Island, Arthur Harbor;
ASPA 121—Cape Royds, Ross Island
ASPA 124—Cape Crozier, Ross Island;
ASPA 125—Fildes Peninsula, King George Island;
ASPA 128—Western shore of Admiralty Bay, King George Island;
ASPA 129—Rothera Point, Adelaide Island;
ASPA 132—Potter Peninsula, King George Island;
ASPA 139—Biscoe Point, Anvers Island; and
ASPA 151—Lions Rump, King George Island.

Dates

January 1, 2000 to December 31, 2005

2. *Applicant:* Donald B. Siniff, Department of Ecology, Evolution and Behavior, 100 Ecology Building, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota 55108

[Permit Application No. 2000–003]

Activity for Which Permit Is Requested

Taking, Export from the U.S. and Import into the U.S.

The applicant proposes to tag and collect epidermal and adipose tissue (0.5 cm by o.5 cm) from the rear flipper of several seal species. Modern molecular genetic methods will be used to analyze the DNA extracted from the tissue samples. The project is part of a large international program studying Antarctic Pack Ice Seals (APIS). This particular project is to address the genetic patterns among the four species of Antarctic pack ice seals (Weddell, Leopard, Ross and Crabeater seals). The project is investigating the patterns of heterozygosity among the four species and relating these patterns to their overall life history characteristics. The work will contribute to the understanding of the evolutionary history of pack ice species with respect to the origin of ecological separation. Samples collected by other investigators will contribute to a continent-wide assessment of the degree of genetic variation with populations of Antarctic phocids.

In addition, the applicant wishes to salvage any seal skulls that are found. These samples will be cleaned and analyzed for age and placed on permanent loan to the National Marine Mammal Lab or the University of Minnesota Bell Museum of Natural History and will be used for educational purposes.

Location

Pack ice areas in the Ross Sea and Bellingshausen Sea

Dates

December 12, 1999 to February 15, 2000

3. *Applicant:* Paul J. Ponganis, CMBB/ Scripps Institute of Oceanography, University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, CA 92093–0204

[Permit Application No. 2000–004]

Activity for Which Permit Is Requested

Taking and Import Into the U.S.

The applicant proposes to capture up to 60 Emperor adults and equip them with various depth recorders, physiological recorders, or a video camera unit. These instruments will measure temperature change and mechanisms of heat loss during diving. The video camera research will document the frequency and techniques of prey capture, and relate feeding events to temperature change.

The applicant also proposes to capture up to 40 Emperor chicks to biopsy muscle samples. This will allow examination of myoglobin mRNA content in relation to myoglobin concentration in both adults and developing chicks. The chicks will be biopsied over several months to sample different age groups. In addition, a

group of approximately 15 Emperor chicks will be transported to McMurdo and maintained there for about a month in order to obtain samples in older (post-fledge) chicks. All birds will be released back into the wild at the end of the study.

The applicant also wishes to salvage up to 10 Emperor carcasses per year and transport them back to the U.S. for anatomical studies at Scripps Institute of Oceanography.

Location

McMurdo Sound sea ice, Cape Washington and McMurdo Station

Dates

September 1, 1999 to February 28, 2002

4. *Applicant:* Michael A. Castellini, Institute of Marine Science, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska 99775

[Permit Application No. 2000–005]

Activity for which Permit is Requested

Taking and Import into the United States

The applicant is a participant in a multi-institutional program to study Antarctic Pack Ice Seals (APIS). As a component of this project, the applicant proposes to capture up to 200 Weddell, Crabeater and Leopard seals each, and up to 10 each of Ross, Fur and Elephant seals. Blood and biopsy samples of blubber will be collected. The blood and biopsy samples, along with a suite of morphometric analyses, will be collected from all seals to assess a suite of bio-indicators of health. Data will be taken along with other program components which will provide medical examinations of each seal, acoustic and behavioral studies, oceanographic, ice and weather observation and capture of prey items. The combined results will provide the most detailed model of the link between ice seals and their environment.

Location

Sea Ice areas of the Ross and Amunden Seas

Dates

December 15, 1999 to April 1, 2001

5. *Applicant:* Wayne Z. Trivelpiece, P.O. Box 271, Antarctic Ecosytsem Research, Southwest Fisheries Science Center, La Jolla, CA 92038

[Permit Application No. 2000–006]

Activity for Which Permit is Requested

Take and Enter Antarctic Specially Protected Area.

The applicant is continuing a study of the behavioral ecology and population biology of the Adelie, Gentoo, and Chinstrap penguins and the interactions among these species and their principal avian pedators: skuas, gulls, sheathbills, and giant petrels. The applicant proposes to band 1000 Adelie and Gentoo penguin chicks, plus adults of all three penguin species, as needed (not greater than 150 per species), to fulfill research goals. In addition, bands will be applied to adults and chicks of the avian predator species as necessary. The applicant will continue a study of the penguins' foraging habits which involves the application of radio-transmitters (Txs), satellite tags (PTTs), and time-depth recorders (TDRs) to a maximum of 50 adult penguins per species. The study of foraging habits also involves the stomach pumping of a maximumn of 40 adult penguins per species. Finally the applicant will collect one (1) milliliter blood samples from a maximum of 20 breeding adults of each penguins species for use in DNA analysis.

Location

Admiralty Bay (ASPA #128 King George Island, South Shetland Islands

Dates

October 1, 1999 to April 2000

6. *Applicant:* David Ainley, H.T. Harvey & Associates, P.O. Box 1180, Alviso, CA 95002

[Permit Application No. 2000–007]

Activity for Which Permit Is Requested

Taking and Enter Antarctic Specially Protected Areas

The applicant is conducting research to attempt to explain why penguin populations have been increasing in the Ross Sea, by intensive studies at colonies on Ross Island. This work will be incorporated into the long-term study of populations dynamics mentioned in the Royds management plan. The applicant proposes to enter Cape Crozier (ASP #124) and Cape Bird for purposes of banding up to 1,000 chicks at each site. Furthermore the applicant proposes to band up to 400 chicks each at Cape Royds (ASPA # 121) and Beaufort Island (ASPA #105). Approximately 150 adults will be banded at these four sites. The banding of chicks at Beaufort Island is necessary to test the theory that the Adelie Penguin Colony at Beaufort could be a ''source'' colony for emigrants that eventually breed at other Ross Island colonies. It is believed Beaufort is a source colony because there is very little availability of additional nesting sites. Banding a sample of chicks and looking for them at nearby colonies in subsequent years would test this theory.

Approximately, 15 adult Adelies per year at Royds, Bird and Crozier, and 7 at Beaufort Island will be fitted with radio transmitters to be worn for 2–3 weeks during January and then removed. The radio transmitters will provide information on the penguins foraging area offshore. Additionally, 25 adult Adelies at Cape Bird and Cape Crozier and 15 adults at Cape Royds will be fitted with time-depth-recorders (TDRs). The TDR's will record swimming depth, frequency of dives and number of dives per foraging trip. PIT tags (Passively Interrogated Transponder) will also be fitted to 10–20 adults each year at Capes Bird, Royds and Crozier. The goal is to have 70 tagged birds at each colony each year; thus, new birds given the tags each year replace only those that did not reappear one year to the next.

To obtain an index on chick condition, between 30–50 chicks will be measured and weighed weekly for a month at Capes Royds, Bird and Crozier. Only 30 chicks will be weighed and measured at the Beaufort Island colony on one of two trips to the site during the season. The applicant proposes to conduct studies of the foraging energetic of Adelie Penguins on Ross Island. This involves the capturing of up to 25 birds each at Cape Crozier and Cape Bird and possibly Cape Royds. The birds will be weighed, a 3 cc blood sample drawn and then injected with 0.6 cc's of double-labeled water. The birds will be held for 3 hours to allow the injected water to equilibrate, then a second blood sample will be drawn. The doubly labeled water studies will provide information on the energetics of foraging, and specifically, if longer foraging trips are more energy demanding than shorter ones for penguins at Cape Bird or Cape Royds.

Samples collected in the field will be returned to the U.S. for complete analysis.

Location

Cape Crozier (ASPA #124), Cape Royds (ASPA #121) and Cape Bird, Ross Island, and Beaufort Island (ASPA 105), Ross Sea.

Dates

December 1, 1999 to February 15, 2002

7. *Applicant:* W. Berry Lyons, Department of Geology, University of Alabama, Box 870338, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487–0338

[Permit Application No. 2000–008]

Activity for Which Permit Is Requested

Enter Antarctic Specially Protected Area

The applicant proposes to enter Antarctic Specially Protected Area (ASPA #131), Canada Glacier, Lake Fryxell, Taylor Valley, for purposes of conducting studies under the Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) Program. The applicant proposes to enter the site to conduct maintenance on the previously installed continuously recording stream gage station that provides one of the longest records of discharge in the Taylor Valley. In addition, the applicant proposes to collect water quality samples of the meltwater coming off the Canada Glacier and along the length of the stream to study in-stream biogeochemical processes. Samples of the microbial mats may also be collected once per summer field season.

The applicant also proposes to enter the Antarctic Specially Protected Area to study the site's unique soil content. The Canada stream has occasional algal blooms, and the system is of interest because of its relatively high primary production unlike the typical dry valley soils. The LTER team plans to collect soil samples on a transect starting in the stream channel and working eastward perpendicular to the stream channel.

The Canada Glacier is the most intensively studied glacier in the LTER study program. One particularly import aspect of the glacier mass balance study is the calving and melting of ice from the glacier walls. Therefore, the applicant requests access to the glacier wall twice during each field season to take measurements.

Location

Antarctic Specially Protected Area #131: Canada Glacier, Lake Fryxell, Taylor Valley, Victoria Land

Dates

October 1, 1999 to February 2005

8. *Applicant:* John E. Carlstrom, Center for Astrophysical Research in Antarctica (CARA), Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics, University of Chicago, 5640 South Ellis Avenue, Chicago, IL 60637

[Permit Application No. 2000–010]

Activity for Which Permit Is Requested

Introduce a non-indigenous species into Antarctica

The applicant plans to ship 200 pounds of active dry baking yeast (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae*) to Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station as part of an educational outreach project in conjunction with NASA and their new thrust in astrobiology and extremophiles. The commercial packaging consists of strips of 3-quarter ounce packages. The yeast will remain in the commercial packaging, in plastic bags, in a container while in Antarctica. The containerized yeast will be exposed to the extreme climate of the South Pole during the summer and winter months. Middle and elementary school students will be able to follow the deployment of the yeast, and the weather conditions at the Pole via a web site. The web site will have many facets such as a question and answer section, a travel log of the deployment, weather conditions, digital images of the trip and the yeast container as the season progresses. The goal of the project is to motivate students to try hands-on experiments to learn more about Antarctica and the scientific research conducted there. After a year, the yeast container will be shipped back to the States where the yeast packages will be distributed nationally to schoolchildren. The students will conduct experiments to look for changes in the yeast's metabolic activity and volume of carbon dioxide production, under given conditions, after being exposed to months of extreme cold temperatures.

Location

Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station

Dates

October 1, 1999 to January 1, 2002

9. *Applicant:* Brent S. Stewart, Hubbs-Sea World Research Institute, 2595 Ingraham Street, San Diego, CA 92109

[Permit Application: 2000–011]

Activity for Which Permit is Requested

Taking and Import Into the United States

The applicant is a participant in a multidisciplinary research program to study the foraging ecology, reproduction, demography, disease and pathology, and population and immunogenetics of Antarctic seals in the circumpolar pack ice zone. The applicant proposes to capture, collect samples, and release up to 800 Crabeater seals, 400 Leopard and Weddell seals, and 75 Ross, Antarctic Fur and Elephant seals. Physical exams will be performed to evaluate the musculoskeletal system, cardiovascular system, integument, eyes, ears, nares and oral cavity. Blood will be collected from the extradural vein or interdigital vein of phocids and from the caudal gluteal vein of otariids. Approximately 40–60 ml will be collected from each seal for evaluation of petroleum hydrocarbon and pollutant exposure, hematology, serum biochemistry, disease exposure, genetics, nutritional status, and reproductive endocinology. Ocular, nasal, vaginal, and rectal microbiological samples will be collected. Ectoparasites will be collected when encountered. Urine will be collected opportunistically. Skin scrapings and cultures will be made when lesions are observed and to provide normal control samples. Hair, skin and blubber samples will also be collected. All collections of samples will be coordinated directly with other components of the multidisciplinary research program to prevent duplicate takings and to maximize use of collected materials.

The applicant plans to import collected samples into the United States for further scientific study. In addition, the applicant wishes to export samples from the U.S. and share them with investigators collaborating in other countries.

Location

Circumpolar pack ice and sites ashore

Dates

September 1, 1999 to August 30, 2004

10. *Applicant:* Ron Naveen, Oceanities, Inc., P.O. Box 15259, Chevy Chase, MD 20825

[Permit Application: 2000–012]

Activity for Which Permit Is Requested

Taking; and Enter Antarctic Specially Protected Area

The applicant plans to continue data collection under the Antarctic Site Inventory Project. Various sites will be regularly surveyed and censused in the Antarctic Peninsula/South Shetland Islands region, with a concentration of visits expected at heavily visited tourist sites. The applicant wishes to enter Antarctic Specially Protected Area #128, Western Shore of Admiralty Bay, to coordinate the Site Inventory Project with the researchers working within the site.

Location

Antarctic Peninsula and South Shetland Island sites, and ASPA #128, Western Shore of Admiralty Bay, King George Island

Dates

September 1, 1999 to August 31, 2000

11. *Applicant:* Norbert Wu, Norbert Wu Productions, 1065 Sinex Avenue, Pacific Grove, CA 93950

[Permit Application: 2000–013]

Activity for Which Permit Is Requested

Enter Antarctic Specially Protected Area

The applicant is a participant in the U.S. Antarctic Program's Artists and Writers Program and is continuing work on ''A Photographic Survey of Antarctic Marine Species'' and producing a film entitled ''Under Antarctic Ice.'' The applicant proposes visit and camp at Cape Crozier during two different time periods to ensure filming success.

The applicant proposes to conduct general photography and filming of Adelie penguins, Emperor penguins, Leopard seals, Orcas, and Minke whales. Some of the work will involve underwater photography. Visit to the site will be selected to target Adelie penguin events (nesting, egg tending, and hatching), such as population peak in the rookery. The applicant plans to skirt the edges of the Adelie and Emperor rookeries and will not enter into the midst of the nesting penguins.

The applicant plans to camp near the East Colony outside the Specially Protected Area for easier access to the water and ease the encumbrance of hauling heavy photography and dive equipment.

Location

Antarctic Specially Protected Area #124, Cape Crozier, Ross Island

Dates

November 1, 1999 to February 28, 2000

12. *Applicant:* Gary miller, Biology Department, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131–0001

[Permit Application: 2000–014]

Activity for Which Permit Is Requested

Taking and Import into the United States

The applicant plans to continue his analysis of the phylogenetic relationships and population genetics of 2 major genera of penguins. He will collect blood and tissues samples from Magellanic (*S. magellanicus*), Adelie (*P. adeliae*), Chinstrap (*P. antarctica*), Gentoo (*P. papua*), Macaroni (*Eudyptes chrysalophus*), and Emperor (*Aptenodytes* forsteri) penguins throughout their distribution. The Macaroni and Emperor samples are to be used as out-groups to help elucidate the relationships of the other species. Using a combination of Cytochrome b and microsatellite markers, he will investigate their genetic variation on a variety of geographic scales.

The applicant will travel onboard tour ships as a lecturer and will repeatedly visit many sites during the next two Antarctic summer season. He plans to collect 1.0–1.5 ml of whole blood from live penguins and collect tissue samples from penguin carcasses. No more than 15 samples will be collected from any given site. Blood samples will be stored in a lysis buffer, and tissue samples will be homogenized into a buffer solution to stabilize the DNA. Samples will be returned to either the University of Western Australia or to the University of New Mexico for processing.

In addition, the applicant will work in collaboration with a research team from the University of Western Australia who will investigate the diseases of penguins and skuas around Australia's Davis Station. Blood samples and swabs from the throat and cloaca of each bird will be collected. Blood samples will be spun down to separate the plasma and then preserved for later laboratory work. The Australian research team will secure all necessary permits for this project.

Location

Antarctic Peninsula and associated islands, South Shetland Islands, South Orkney Islands, East Antarctica and the Ross Sea region

Dates

October 1, 1999 to April 1, 2001

Nadene G. Kennedy,

Permit Officer, Office of Polar Programs.

[FR Doc. 99–21204 Filed 8–16–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7555–01–M

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket No. 50–289]

GPU Nuclear Inc., et al., (Three Mile Island Nuclear Station, Unit 1); Confirmatory Order Modifying License, Effective Immediately

I

GPU Nuclear Inc. (GPUN or the Licensee) is the holder of Facility Operating License No. DRP–50, which authorizes operation of Three Mile Island Nuclear Station, Unit 1 located in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania.

II

The staff of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has been concerned that Thermo-Lag 330–1 fire barrier systems installed by licensees may not provide the level of fire endurance intended and that licensees using Thermo-Lag 330–1 fire barriers may not be meeting regulatory requirements. During the time period 1992–1994, the NRC staff issued Generic Letter (GL) 92–08, ''Thermo-Lag 330–1 Fire Barriers,'' and subsequent requests for additional information that asked licensees to submit plans and schedules for resolving the Thermo-Lag issue. The NRC staff has obtained and reviewed corrective plans and schedules from all licensees. The staff is concerned that some licensees may not be making adequate progress toward resolving the plant-specific issues, and that some implementation schedules may be either too tenuous or too protracted. For example, several licensees informed the NRC staff that their completion dates would be delayed between 6 months and 3 years. The NRC staff has met with licensees of plants that have scheduled completion beyond 1997 to discuss the progress of the licensees' corrective actions and the extent of licensee management attention regarding completion of Thermo-Lag corrective actions. In addition, the NRC staff discussed with licensees the possibility of accelerating their completion schedules.

At the meeting with GPUN, NRC staff reviewed the schedule of Thermo-Lag corrective actions described in the eight GPUN submittals to the NRC dated February 10, and December 5, 1994; July 7, 1995; August 16, November 5, and December 31, 1996; and August 19, and November 23, 1997, to complete implementation of Thermo-Lag 330–1 fire barriers corrective actions by December 31, 1999, except for those corrective actions that were the subject of a pending exemption request dated December 31, 1996, and supplemented by three letters dated July 31, September 8, and December 30, 1997. On the basis of the information submitted by GPUN and presented during the meeting, the NRC staff concluded that the GPUN schedule was reasonable and issued a Confirmatory Order Modifying License on May 22, 1998, with regard to that schedule.

Subsequently, the NRC staff denied portions of the Licensee's exemption request of December 31, 1996, and the Licensee has committed in its letter of June 2, 1999, to complete additional Thermo-Lag corrective actions in areas which were the subject of those parts of the exemption request that was denied by June 30, 2000. The staff has concluded that this schedule is reasonable. This conclusion is based on (1) The amount of installed Thermo-Lag, (2) the complexity of the plant-specific fire barrier configurations and issues, (3) the need to perform certain plant modifications during outages as opposed to those that can be performed while the plant is at power, and (4)