

News from Beyond Nuclear
For Immediate Release, September 28, 2017

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Media Statement by Kevin Kamps, Beyond Nuclear, re: Entergy Nuclear's and Consumers Energy's announced decision to continue operating Palisades atomic reactor till 2022

Covert, MI—"Consumers and Entergy have rejected the Michigan Public Service Commission's (MPSC) offer. The October 1, 2018 permanent shutdown date, announced last December, is now not to happen. They are sticking with their 15-year Power Purchase Agreement, from 2007 to 2022, and continuing to operate the dangerously age-degraded Palisades atomic reactor for another five years.

The hostage takers demanded a ransom from ratepayers. MPSC did not agree to the full amount demanded. So the hostage takers have refused to release the hostages. Given the stakes for public health, safety, and the environment, Consumers and Entergy are holding residents of the region downwind and downstream hostage to the increasing risk of a meltdown and catastrophic release of hazardous radioactivity. The radioactive Russian roulette on the Great Lakes shore will go on.

As objectionable as it was for ratepayers to have had to pay \$142 million, or \$186 million, or even more, for the termination of the Power Purchase Agreement contract between Consumers Energy and Entergy Nuclear, it would have been a bargain compared to the catastrophe that could occur if the high-risk Palisades atomic reactor is operated for another five perilous years.

Palisades is one of the most risky atomic reactors in the country, and perhaps the world. It has the most embrittled reactor pressure vessel in the U.S., at risk of pressurized thermal shock fracture. This would lead to a full-scale meltdown, with no contingency. If the containment then failed, as happened at Fukushima Daiichi in Japan, catastrophic amounts of hazardous radioactivity would be released onto the winds and waves, to fallout downwind, and contaminate the food chain downstream.

But the age-degraded, 46-year old Palisades has a number of other pathways to meltdown as well. The reactor lid was supposed to be replaced more than ten years ago, but never has been. Lid corrosion at the Davis-Besse atomic reactor in Ohio on the Great Lakes shore in 2002 was the closest call to catastrophe since the Three Mile Island, Pennsylvania meltdown of 1979. Palisades has refused to learn those lessons, and its neglected lid corrosion risks an uncontained disaster.

In addition, the steam generators have needed to be replaced for the second time, uniquely bad in industry. A cascading failure of steam generator tubes could

likewise lead to reactor core meltdown, and containment breach. The danger of steam generator failure led to the closure of two reactors at San Onofre, California four years ago. While Palisades has refused to replace its steam generators, it has also refused to close. Thus our peril grows.

Another uniquely bad problem at Palisades is its plague of control rod drive mechanism seal and through-wall leaks of primary reactor core coolant, which began in 1972. As Union of Concerned Scientists has reported, most reactors solve such problems once and for all. Palisades has merely repeatedly made band-aid fixes. Given the vital role control rods play in safety, Palisades has long played with fire in this regard too.

How bad could the consequences be? A 1982 report commissioned by NRC (which the agency then attempted to conceal, unsuccessfully) revealed that a Palisades meltdown could cause 1,000 peak early fatalities (as from radiation poisoning), 7,000 peak early radiation injuries, 10,000 peak latent cancer deaths, and \$52.6 billion in property damage. But populations have soared in southwest Michigan in the past 35 years, so casualties would now be significantly worse. And adjusting for inflation, property damage would now surpass \$132 billion. That is three orders of magnitude more than the amount requested by Consumers and Entergy from ratepayers, and approved by MPSC. Thus, even the full ransom payment would have been a bargain, compared to holding our future hostage to such catastrophic risks.

But even these casualty and property damage figures, as shocking as they are, do not account for such things as the impact on the Great Lakes drinking water supply. Palisades sits on the Lake Michigan shore, drinking water for Chicago and many millions in four states. It is one of the major headwaters for most of the rest of the Great Lakes, drinking water supply for tens of millions downstream, in two countries.

After Palisades suffered many significant incidents and accidents shortly after the beginning of the Fukushima nuclear catastrophe, citizen watch-dogs redoubled decades-long efforts to hold feet to the fire, at Entergy, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and state and federal legislatures and executive branch agencies. Our pleas and demands for protection of health, safety and the environment have, largely to entirely, fallen on deaf ears.

In the aftermath of Fukushima, the Japanese Parliament warned that the root cause of the nuclear catastrophe was collusion between regulator, industry, and government officials. We have such nuclear collusion in spades at Palisades.”

We will redouble efforts to overcome such potentially catastrophic collusion. We demand the Palisades reactor shut down. Everything we hold dear is at stake.”

Kamps also serves as a board of directors member of Don't Waste Michigan, representing his hometown Kalamazoo chapter. He also serves as an advisory board member for Citizens for Alternatives to Chemical Contamination.

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Beyond Nuclear aims to educate and activate the public about the connections between nuclear power and nuclear weapons and the need to abolish both to safeguard our future. Beyond Nuclear advocates for an energy future that is sustainable, benign and democratic.