

6/15/17: Opening Statement – Sara Barczak, High Risk Energy Choices Program Director, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, re: TVA’s Small Modular Reactor Early Site Permit at Clinch River, TN

Thank you all for joining us today. My name is Sara Barczak and I’m the High Risk Energy Choices Program Director for the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy. We are a regional, not-for-profit, clean energy advocacy organization working on energy policy in Tennessee, the Tennessee Valley Authority’s service territory and throughout the southeastern United States. We were founded in 1985 and have a long history both watchdogging TVA and working with TVA to transform the region’s electricity production to be cleaner, safer and more affordable for Valley residents and businesses.

The Southern Alliance for Clean Energy is pleased to be joined by the Tennessee Environmental Council and supported by the experts and legal counsel you will hear from today in challenging TVA’s highly speculative proposal to pursue expensive, untested and water-intensive small modular reactor technology, or SMRs, at the Clinch River site.

The accurate description of what SMRs will actually do for TVA and its customers is *squander more resources*. We hope our intervention will prove successful and prevent TVA from making a bad decision that would be too expensive for TVA customers and potentially put local communities and the environment at risk.

For those unaware, the Clinch River site has a very long, troubled and expensive history because of a failed nuclear experiment – the Clinch River Breeder Reactor program. Some experts in the nuclear power field have said that it's possibly only behind the Shoreham nuclear power reactor for the most expensive electricity *never generated* record. Original costs were surpassed by billions of dollars with delay after delay and eventually, the project was scrapped.

We are very concerned that history is once again repeating itself and a July 2015 U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on SMRs confirmed this – billions of dollars could be spent on this technology that is unproven, untested and significantly more expensive than other types of energy technologies that are actually available to TVA today, including renewables such as solar and wind and energy efficiency and demand side management measures.

An important point to stress is that TVA does not need SMRs as identified by TVA itself in the utility’s most recent long term energy plan known as the Integrated Resource Plan. In more recent discussions, TVA has again iterated that the power is not needed. Additionally TVA has questioned investing again in new nuclear power given the costly experience they had with finishing Watts Bar 2 (which is offline for an undetermined period of time), as stated by Chief Executive Bill Johnson in a recent [Reuters article](#), “*You would really have to be brave to try it. We just finished one and I’m not anxious to try it again.*” [“Johnson said aid referring to the 1,150-MW Unit 2 at TVA’s Watts Bar nuclear plant in Tennessee, which entered service in late 2016 at a cost of \$4.7 billion.”]

As anyone following the nuclear industry knows, new nuclear power projects are disasters as exemplified by the financial meltdown and bankruptcy of the designer/builder for the AP1000 nuclear reactor, Toshiba’s Westinghouse – due to the extremely over budget and delayed reactor construction projects in Georgia at Southern Company’s Plant Vogtle and in South Carolina at SCANA’s V.C. Summer plant.

In closing, after all the money and all the years wasted during the first round of evaluating Clinch River for a breeder reactor, after TVA's troubled experience with completing the Watts Bar 2 reactor and now with the warning flags being waved at the under-construction nuclear projects in Georgia and South Carolina, it is time to stop throwing good money after bad and repeating the mistakes of past and current history. TVA leadership has to extricate itself from the clutches of the nuclear industry, including the proponents within the Department of Energy. Given the increasingly speculative nature of this costly, risky project and the unacceptable impacts SMRs could have on Tennesseans' environment and public health and safety along with TVA customers' wallets, this project should never go forward. SMRs do not make any sense, not today and not tomorrow.

Thank you. We will now hear from Dr. Edwin Lyman, a Senior Scientist with the Union of Concerned Scientists' Global Security Program.