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## **Nuclear power is not the answer...**

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Last week's article on the Utah Appeals Court decision upholding the appropriation of water for the proposed Blue Castle Project nuclear reactor at Green River needs to be corrected and supplemented. In 2007, the predecessor to Blue Castle Holdings (BCH) leased 53,600 acre-feet (approximately 87 million gallons per day) of water from the Kane County and San Juan County Water Conservancy Districts. The KCWCD water was to be withdrawn from the Colorado River and SJCWCD water from the San Juan River for energy projects proposed many years ago.

In 2009 Green River farmers and river companies, dozens of individuals, and local, state and national environmental groups (including Living Rivers, Uranium Watch, HEAL Utah, Sierra Club, and Center for Biological Diversity) protested that change. The Grand County Council, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation weighed in with their concerns. There were, and still are, many unresolved issues, including availability of water and the economic and physical feasibility of the project.

In January 2012, State Engineer Kent Jones approved a change application that allowed both water districts to change the points of diversion, use and place of use. Living Rivers, Uranium Watch, HEAL Utah and others appealed the State Engineer's decision to 7th District Court. Judge George M. Harmond, Jr. heard a week of testimony at a September 2013 hearing in Price and later upheld the State Engineer's decision. Harmond's decision was recently upheld by the Utah Court of Appeals.

BCH claims that it intends to submit an application for an early site permit (ESP) to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. An ESP would only permit the site. To construct and operate a two-unit reactor, as proposed, requires a construction and operation license. It is unclear what it means to be halfway through an ESP process, as claimed by BCH. It will take \$30 to \$80 million more, an emergency response plan approved by the county, public participation, and 3 to 5 years to complete the process.

It will take millions more and another 3 to 5 years for a construction and operation license. At that stage, BCH (or other entity) must demonstrate that they have the money necessary to complete the project. BCH does not own the land for the project and no longer owns the pipeline company whose profits BCH was relying on for funding. No utility has joined the project. A two-unit reactor would cost \$10 to \$20 billion, and no Western state allows utilities to charge ratepayers up front to fund reactors, as is the case in the Southeast where the only new reactors are being built. PacifiCorp, which provides electricity for most of Utah, has stated it is not joining the project. Utilities must provide their ratepayers with the least costly source of electricity, and nuclear power is not it.

—Sarah Fields

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