[7590-01P]

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket No. 50-602; NRC-2025-2195]

University of Texas at Austin; Nuclear Engineering Teaching Laboratory Training, Research, Isotopes, General Atomics Mark II Research Reactor; Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact

AGENCY: Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

ACTION: Notice; issuance.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is considering renewal of Facility Operating License No. R-129, held by the University of Texas at Austin (UTA or the licensee), for the continued operation of its Nuclear Engineering Teaching Laboratory (NETL) Training, Research, Isotopes, General Atomics (TRIGA) Mark II research reactor located in the City of Austin, Travis County, Texas. The NRC staff is issuing an environmental assessment (EA) and finding of no significant impact (FONSI) associated with the proposed action (i.e., renewal of the operating license).

DATES: The EA and FONSI are available on **[INSERT DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*]**.

ADDRESSES: Please refer to Docket ID NRC-2025-2195 when contacting the NRC about the availability of information regarding this document. You may obtain publicly available information related to this document using any of the following methods:

- **Federal Rulemaking Website:** Go to https://www.regulations.gov and search for Docket ID NRC-2025-2195. Address questions about Docket IDs to Bridget Curran; telephone: 301-415-1003; email: Bridget.Curran@nrc.gov. For technical questions, contact the individual listed in the “For Further Information Contact” section of this document.

- **NRC’s Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS):** You may obtain publicly available documents online in the ADAMS Public Documents collection at https://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html. To begin the

search, select “Begin ADAMS Public Search.” For problems with ADAMS, please contact the NRC’s Public Document Room (PDR) reference staff at 1-800-397-4209, at 301-415-4737, or by email to PDR.Resource@nrc.gov. The ADAMS accession number for each document referenced (if that document is available in ADAMS) is provided in a table in the “Availability of Documents” section of this document.

- **NRC’s PDR:** The PDR, where you may examine and order copies of publicly available documents, is open by appointment. To make an appointment to visit the PDR, please send an email to PDR.Resource@nrc.gov or call 1-800-397-4209 or 301-415-4737, between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. eastern time (ET), Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Angela Sabet, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001; telephone: 301-287-1162; email: Angela.Sabet@nrc.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Introduction

The NRC is considering renewal of Facility Operating License No. R-129, held by UTA, which would authorize continued operation of its 1.1 megawatt thermal (MW(t)) TRIGA Mark II research reactor with no fixed license term, located on UTA’s J.J. Pickle Research Campus (PRC), in the NETL building in the City of Austin, Travis County, Texas.

As required by section 51.21 of title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR), “Criteria for and identification of licensing and regulatory actions requiring environmental assessments,” the NRC staff prepared an EA documenting its environmental review. Based on the results of the NRC staff’s environmental review as documented in the EA that follows, the NRC has determined not to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the proposed renewed license and is issuing a FONSI in accordance with 10 CFR 51.32, “Finding of no significant impact.”

II. Environmental Assessment

Facility Site and Environs

The NETL TRIGA Mark II research reactor is an aluminum-lined pool-type non-power reactor that has been licensed to operate since January 17, 1992, for teaching and research purposes. The research reactor is licensed to operate at a steady state of 1.1 MW(t) or in pulsing mode with maximum power levels up to about 1500 MW(t) (with a trip setpoint at 1750 MW(t)) for durations of about 10 milliseconds. The reactor is in the NETL building on UTA's PRC, which lies approximately 10 miles (16 kilometers) north of the main UTA campus. Most of the land adjacent to the UTA PRC is developed for mixed commercial and industrial activities and includes warehouses, manufacturing facilities, and small business parks. The remainder of adjacent land contains apartment complexes and other residences.

Within the NETL building, a concrete, vault-type enclosure serves as the confinement volume for the TRIGA reactor. The TRIGA reactor is housed within an open pool, which serves as part of the cooling system as well as moderator, coolant, and shielding. The reactor is fueled with a metallic alloy of low-enriched uranium in a zirconium hydride matrix. Waste heat is dissipated through the cooling system, which is composed of three subsystems: the reactor pool, pool cooling system, and pool cleanup system. The reactor pool removes waste heat passively by natural circulation. The pool cooling system then removes excess heat from the pool by transferring heat from the pool water to a campus chill water system through a heat exchanger. Finally, the pool cleanup system recirculates pool water through a filter and ion exchanger to remove suspended solids and chemical impurities. Makeup water for the cooling system is provided through Austin Water, the City of Austin's water utility.

During normal operation of the TRIGA reactor, gaseous (airborne) radioactive effluent is almost exclusively Argon-41 (Ar-41). The primary liquid radioactive effluents produced during normal operation include miscellaneous neutron activation products in the primary coolant, many of which are deposited in the mechanical filter and

demineralizer resins and, therefore, disposed of as solid radioactive waste. Non-routine liquid radioactive wastes can result from decontamination or maintenance activities, such as filter or resin replacements. Solid radioactive waste includes waste generated from reactor maintenance operations and irradiation of various experiments. Much of the solid radioactive waste generated at the NETL TRIGA facility is held in a restricted area and allowed to decay to background levels and then disposed of as non-radioactive waste. Solid radioactive waste that is not decayed in storage is transmitted to the UTA Radiation Safety Office for appropriate disposal. No solid radioactive waste is permanently stored on site.

UTA maintains a Radiation Monitoring Program, which involves regular monitoring of airborne, liquid, and solid gamma and beta radiation to ensure that any effluent releases are within the limits of 10 CFR part 20, “Standards for Protection Against Radiation.” The current monitoring program consists of: monthly direct gamma radiation measurements around the perimeter of the facility; quarterly integrated gamma dose measurements using dosimeters located at the perimeter and in the general area of the facility, which are exchanged quarterly; quarterly groundwater samples from under the reactor structure; monthly contamination monitoring on the roof of the reactor building; and quarterly contamination monitoring at the perimeter and in the general area of the facility.

A detailed description of the reactor and its operations can be found in UTA’s Updated Safety Analysis Report (SAR) dated August 4, 2023, and in UTA’s license renewal application dated December 12, 2011.

Description of the Proposed Action

The proposed action would renew Facility Operating License No. R-129 with no fixed license term, in accordance with 10 CFR 50.51(c), “Continuation of license.” The proposed action would authorize UTA to operate its TRIGA reactor at a steady state of 1.1 MW(t) or in pulsing mode with maximum power levels up to about 1500 MW(t) (with a trip setpoint at 1750 MW(t)) for durations of about 10 milliseconds. The proposed

action is in accordance with UTA's application dated December 12, 2011, as supplemented by letters dated January 17, September 17, and December 19, 2012; March 22, June 24, and August 21, 2013; July 15, August 26, and December 22, 2015; February 5, May 2, and December 1, 2016; and August 4 and September 15, 2023 (collectively referred to as "the license renewal application"). The notice of opportunity to request a hearing was published in the *Federal Register* on November 28, 2016 (81 FR 85646). The current license was set to expire at midnight on January 17, 2012. However, the NRC's timely renewal provision contained in 10 CFR 2.109(a) permits the licensee to continue to operate the TRIGA reactor under the terms and conditions of its existing license, and that license will not be deemed to have expired until the license renewal application before the NRC has been finally determined.

Need for the Proposed Action

The proposed action is needed to allow the continued operation of the TRIGA reactor, which is used for education, research, and public service activities. The current reactor research program includes neutron activation analysis, cryogenic irradiation facility neutron depth profiling, prompt gamma activation analysis, fast neutron beam, neutron radiography, and isotope production. The NETL serves a multipurpose role, with the primary function as a "user facility" for faculty, staff, and students from the College of Engineering. The facility supports the UTA Cockrell School of Engineering, Department of Mechanical Engineering's Nuclear and Radiation Engineering Program with laboratory exercises in UTA courses, undergraduate research, and graduate research. The facility also supports development and application of nuclear methods for researchers from other universities, industry, and government organizations. The NETL provides nuclear analytic services to researchers, industry, and other research and industrial laboratories

for testing and evaluation of materials. The NETL provides public education through tours and demonstrations

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

The environmental impacts of the proposed action are described in this notice. As discussed further, the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. The proposed action will not require any physical changes to the facility, and the impacts are similar to those occurring during past operations. Separate from this EA, the NRC staff is performing a safety evaluation. The results of this safety evaluation will be documented in the NRC staff's safety evaluation report.

Radiological Impacts

Environmental Effects of Reactor Operations

Gaseous radioactive effluents resulting from the routine operation of the TRIGA reactor are nitrogen-16 (N-16) and Ar-41. These nuclides are released to the environment from the reactor building through an exhaust stack on the roof that combines the ventilation exhaust from both the main and the purge systems. The NETL TRIGA facility's exhaust stack discharge length is 63 feet (19.2 meters) and has a normal air flow rate of approximately 1,100 cubic feet per minute (31 cubic meters per minute). Because the half-life of N-16 is approximately 7 seconds, the release from the exhaust stack is insignificant considering most of the N-16 produced in the reactor coolant would decay before reaching the stack. Ar-41 is by far the most significant radionuclide released as a gaseous effluent during normal reactor operations. The maximum release of Ar-41 would occur from continuous operation at full power. Assuming maximum full power operation release of Ar-41, the licensee calculated the dose to a member of the public using the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Air Assessment Package - 1988 computer code conservatively to be 66 millirem/year (mrem/yr), which is less than the 100 mrem/yr limit specified in 10 CFR 20.1301, "Dose limits for individual members of the public." UTA's calculation is conservative because operations are not continuous and are not always at full power. The NRC staff finds the

UTA results to be reasonable and conservative. The NETL as low as reasonably achievable (ALARA) program annual reports for the 5 years of operation from 2020 through 2024 show that the annual release of Ar-41 is no greater than 6.8 curies, which would result in a dose of about .01 mrem/yr to a member of the public, which is less than one percent of the 100 mrem/yr limit specified in 10 CFR 20.1301. This radiation dose of 0.0094 mrem/year also demonstrates compliance with the ALARA air emissions dose constraint of 10 millirem (mrem) specified in paragraph (d) of 10 CFR 20.1101, “Radiation protection programs.”

Liquid radioactive waste produced as part of routine operation of the TRIGA reactor typically consists of miscellaneous neutron activation products in the primary coolant. Since most of these activation products can be deposited on mechanical filters and the demineralizer resins, these materials are dealt with as solid sources. UTA minimizes the release of liquid radioactive waste and, when possible, liquid radioactive waste that is generated is normally converted into solid waste for offsite disposal. Rarely, the NETL may have need to release liquid radioactive effluent to the sanitary sewer in compliance with limits specified in 10 CFR 20.2003, “Disposal by release into sanitary sewerage.” The NETL ALARA program annual reports for the 5 years of operation from 2020 through 2024 show that the NETL TRIGA facility had two liquid radioactive waste disposals via the sanitary sewer system, in 2023 and 2024. Liquid waste disposed in 2023 and 2024 originated from contaminated water from storage wells and from cleaning rotary specimen rack rabbits, respectively. No other liquid radioactive waste was generated, disposed of or transported off-site between 2020 and 2024.

Low-level solid radioactive waste generated from reactor operations typically includes laboratory waste such as plastic bags, gloves, absorbent material, and disposable lab coats, as well as reactor demineralizer resins and particulate filters. The maximum average annual solid radioactive waste volume produced by the NETL TRIGA reactor is approximately 25 cubic feet (0.7 cubic meters), though historically the volume of solid radioactive waste produced is much less. One transfer of solid radioactive waste

containing activated experimental components occurred in 2023. There was no other transfer of solid radioactive waste in the remaining 5-year period from 2020 to 2024. Much of this waste contains radioactive material with a relatively short half-life and is held in a restricted area until it has decayed to background levels of radioactivity. Once that waste is decayed in storage and surveyed to confirm that radioactivity levels are at background, the waste can be disposed of as non-radioactive. The remaining solid waste, containing radioactive materials with a relatively long half-life, can average approximately 2 cubic feet (0.06 cubic meters) per year. Radioactive wastes are packaged according to U.S. Department of Transportation waste processor and disposal site requirements, as applicable, and are temporarily stored in a restricted area until transferred for disposal.

No solid radioactive waste is intended to be retained or permanently stored on site. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) retains title to the fuel used in the NETL TRIGA reactor, and DOE is required to take spent fuel from the site for final disposition in accordance with its contractual obligations under Standard Research Subcontract No. 00078206.

According to Section 1.2 of the SAR, the NETL TRIGA reactor's shielding was designed to limit personnel exposure rates from radiation generated during reactor operation in accessible areas of the pool and shield structure at 1.5 MW(t) to less than 1 millirem/hour, while the reactor operates to a maximum steady-state license limit of 1.1 MW(t). Current experimental programs at the beam ports limit routine access to the biological shielding surface near the core. Reactor staff members of the NETL TRIGA reactor and other NETL TRIGA personnel who work in restricted areas are assigned personal dosimeters, which assess whole body and extremity doses.

As described in Chapter 11 of the SAR, and as verified through NRC staff review of the licensee's NETL ALARA program annual reports for the 5 years of operation from 2020 through 2024, personnel exposures are well within the limits set by 10 CFR 20.1201, "Occupational dose limits for adults," and are ALARA in accordance

with 10 CFR 20.1101(b). The licensee tracks exposures of personnel monitored with dosimeters, and the NETL ALARA program annual reports for the 5 years of operation from 2020 through 2024 show that personnel exposures (measured in terms of total effective dose equivalent) ranged from 4 to 14 percent of the occupational limit of 5,000 mrem. The greatest individual annual exposure over the last 5 years was 306 mrem in 2022.

Personnel exposures are within the limits set forth by 10 CFR 20.1201. There are no changes proposed in reactor operation associated with license renewal that would lead to an increase in occupational dose.

The radiation monitoring systems associated with operation of the NETL TRIGA reactor are provided and maintained as a means of ensuring compliance with radiation limits established under 10 CFR part 20, “Standards for Protection Against Radiation.” The NETL TRIGA facility’s monitoring systems consist of remote area monitors, continuous air monitors, cooling water monitors, portable radiation survey instruments, personnel monitors, and stack gas and particulate monitors, as described in Section 11.1.5 of the SAR. The stack particulate and gas monitoring systems measure the beta-gamma activity emitted by radioactive particulates and the activity of gaseous radioactive nuclides, respectively, that are exhausted through the NETL TRIGA facility’s exhaust stack. Perimeter monitoring at the NETL TRIGA facility consists of thermoluminescent dosimeters, which detect X-ray and gamma radiation.

The licensee conducts an environmental monitoring program to record and track the radiological impact of the operation of the NETL TRIGA reactor on the surrounding unrestricted area. The dosimeters are located at six sites in and around the NETL building. UTA staff analyzes the results to ensure that the reported doses are below the dose limits specified in 10 CFR 20.1301, “Dose limits for individual members of the public,” and to monitor for trends that would indicate unusual or elevated exposures. A review of the NETL ALARA program annual reports for the 5 years of operation from 2020 through 2024 shows that the measured doses at six exterior locations around the

NETL building ranged from 1 mrem to 5 mrem (excluding natural background exposure), which are well below the 100 mrem annual limit for dose to the general public specified in 10 CFR 20.1301. The Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS) also monitors five exterior locations near the NETL building with reported measurements ranging from 1 mrem to 28 mrem, which are also well below the 100 mrem annual limit.

Based on the NRC staff's review, as previously discussed, of data from the NETL ALARA program annual reports for the 5 most recent years of operation from 2020 to 2024, the NRC staff concludes that operation of the NETL TRIGA reactor does not have any significant radiological impact on the surrounding environment. No changes in reactor operation that would affect off-site radiation levels are expected or proposed as a result of the proposed license renewal. Therefore, the NRC staff concludes that the proposed action would not have a significant radiological impact.

Environmental Effects of Accidents

Accident scenarios are discussed in Chapter 13 of the SAR. The accidents analyzed in Chapter 13 range from anticipated events to a postulated fission product release with radiological consequences that exceed those of any accident considered to be credible. The latter limiting accident is referred to as the maximum hypothetical accident (MHA). UTA considers a fuel handling accident in air to be its MHA. Calculations have been performed by the licensee that estimate the maximum concentration of fission products that might be present in the reactor room air following the MHA. UTA concluded from its calculations that individual worker exposures from the MHA would not exceed 10 CFR 20.1101 dose limits, and that all effluent releases to the environment would also meet 10 CFR part 20 dose limits.

Separate from the NRC staff's EA herein, the NRC staff is evaluating the UTA MHA analyses of the potential radiological consequences that may result from the proposed license renewal. The results of the NRC staff's safety evaluation and conclusion will be documented in a safety evaluation report that will be made publicly available. If the NRC concludes that the radiological consequences of the MHA are

within 10 CFR part 20 dose limits, then the MHA and the proposed action would not have a significant impact with respect to the radiological consequences of the MHA.

Conclusion – Radiological Impacts

In the license renewal application, the licensee has not proposed any physical changes to the reactor facility design, or adverse changes to facility operating conditions, that would significantly affect facility operation; therefore, there would be no changes in the types or quantities of routine effluents that may be released off site. The licensee has systems in place for controlling the release of radiological effluents and implements a radiation protection program to monitor personnel exposures and releases of radioactive effluents. Accordingly, there would be no increase in routine occupational or public radiation exposure as a result of the proposed action. Based on the information previously discussed, the NRC staff finds that the proposed action will not significantly increase the probability and consequences of accidents.

License renewal would not significantly change reactor operations. As previously discussed, information in the license renewal application and data reported to the NRC by the licensee for the last five years of reactor operation were evaluated to determine the radiological impact. The NRC staff found that releases of radioactive material and personnel exposures were all well within applicable regulatory limits. Based on this evaluation, the continued operation of the reactor would have no significant radiological impacts. A separate safety evaluation is being drafted by NRC staff to determine the probability and consequence of accidents of the proposed action. If the NRC staff concludes in its safety evaluation report that the probability and consequences of accidents are within NRC regulatory requirements, then the proposed license renewal will not have a significant environmental impact with respect to accidents.

Non-Radiological Impacts

The proposed action does not involve any change in the operation of the reactor, any change in the emissions, or any change in the heat load dissipated to the environment. No new construction or other land disturbing activities are proposed. The

proposed action would not result in any land use changes or increase in noise or air emissions and would not have a significant impact on air quality, noise, visual resources, or ecological resources. Water is supplied through the City of Austin and no changes in facility operations are proposed. Data from the National Flood Insurance Program indicates that no portion of the research campus site is within the 100- or 500-year flood zone. The proposed license renewal would have no direct impacts on surface water or groundwater resources because water would continue to be supplied from Austin Water, the City of Austin's water utility, which has adequate capacity. Heat produced by reactor operations is ultimately released to the environment through the secondary cooling system and the facility's cooling tower. No increased thermal effects on the environment would result from the proposed action. Therefore, the NRC staff concludes that the proposed action would have no significant non-radiological impacts.

Other Applicable Environmental Laws and Policies

In addition to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), the NRC has responsibilities that are derived from other environmental laws, which include the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA), the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended (CZMA), the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, as amended (FWCA), and the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (NHPA). The following presents a brief discussion of impacts associated with resources protected by these laws and related requirements.

Endangered Species Act

The ESA was enacted to prevent further decline of endangered and threatened species and to restore those species and their critical habitat. Section 7 of the ESA requires Federal agencies to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) or National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regarding actions that may affect listed species or designated critical habitats.

On December 15, 2025, the NRC staff conducted a search of Federally listed species and critical habitats that have the potential to occur in the vicinity of the NETL

TRIGA facility using FWS's Environmental Conservation Online System Information for Planning and Conservation system. Seventeen Federally listed species occur in Travis County, Texas, where the NETL TRIGA reactor is located: the Austin Blind Salamander (*Eurycea waterlooensis*), Bone Cave Harvestman (*Texella reyesi*), Bracted Twistflower (*Streptanthus bracteatus*), Golden-cheeked Warbler (*Dendroica chrysoparia*), Barton Springs Salamander (*Eurycea sosorum*), Jollyville Plateau Salamander (*Eurycea tonkawae*), Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*), Rufa Red Knot (*Caldris canutus rufa*), tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*), Texas Fatmucket (*Lampsilis bracteata*), Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*), Tooth Cave Ground Beetle (*Rhadine persephone*), Bee Creek Cave Harvestman (*Texella reddelli*), Kretschmarr Cabe Mold Beetle (*Texamaurops reddelli*), Tooth Cave Spider (*Neoleptoneta myopica*), Tooth Cave Pseudoscorpion *(Tartarcreagis texana)* and Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*). However, none of these species are likely to occur near the NETL TRIGA reactor because the reactor is located on the UTA campus, which does not provide suitable habitat for Federally listed species. This is because the UTA campus has been developed and in use for research and educational purposes for many decades. Additionally, operation of the NETL TRIGA reactor has no direct nexus to the natural environment that could otherwise affect Federally listed species. No critical habitats occur in the area. Accordingly, the NRC staff concludes that the proposed license renewal of the NETL TRIGA reactor would have no effect on Federally listed species or critical habitats. Federal agencies are not required to consult with FWS if they determine that an action will not affect listed species or critical habitats. Thus, the ESA does not require consultation for the proposed NETL TRIGA reactor license renewal, and the NRC staff considers its obligations under ESA Section 7 to be fulfilled for the proposed action.

Coastal Zone Management Act

The CZMA, in part, encourages States to preserve, protect, develop, and, where possible, restore coastal resources. Individual States are responsible for developing a

Federally approved Coastal Zone Management Plan and implementing a Coastal Zone Management Program in accordance with such a plan. Section 307(c)(3)(A) of the CZMA requires that applicants for Federal licenses whose proposed action could reasonably affect coastal zones of a State must provide a certification that the proposed activity complies with the enforceable policies of the State's approved Coastal Zone Management Program and will be conducted in a manner consistent with that program.

Travis County, Texas, in which the NETL TRIGA reactor is located, does not contain any coastal zones. Because the reactor is not located within or near any managed coastal zones, the proposed action would not affect any coastal zones and the requirement to provide a certification of compliance with the State's Coastal Zone Management Program does not apply. Therefore, consistency determination is not required for the proposed action.

Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act

The FWCA requires Federal agencies that license water resource development projects to consult with the FWS (or NMFS, when applicable) and the State wildlife resource agencies regarding the potential impacts of the project on fish and wildlife resources.

The proposed action does not involve any water resource development projects, including any of the modifications relating to impounding a body of water, damming, diverting a stream or river, deepening a channel, irrigation, or altering a body of water for navigation or drainage. Therefore, no coordination with other agencies pursuant to the FWCA is required for the proposed action.

National Historic Preservation Act

The NHPA requires Federal agencies to consider the effects of their undertakings on historic properties. As stated in the NHPA, historic properties are any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in, or eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). In accordance with 36 CFR 800.8(c), "Use of the NEPA process for Section 106 purposes," the NRC staff

will comply with NHPA Section 106 through the NEPA process, in lieu of the procedures set forth in 36 CFR 800.3 through 800.6. The Area of Potential Effects (APE) has been identified as the 226-acre J.J. Pickle Research Campus.

The NRC staff initiated NHPA Section 106 consultation with the Texas Historical Commission (THC) and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), on May 1, 2024, and with seven Tribes on April 30, 2024, and twelve Tribes on May 10, 2024.

The NRC staff received a response from ACHP on May 17, 2024, confirming notification pursuant to 36 CFR 800.8(c). Responses were received from three Tribes stating that no properties are present; that there would be no impact to properties of significance to the Tribe; and that the APE is outside the Tribe's area of interest. No response to Section 106 initiation was received from the THC.

The NRC staff conducted a confirmatory review for the presence of historic and cultural resources within and adjacent to the APE through the Texas Archaeological Sites Atlas online database and NRHP online database. No previously recorded historic or cultural resources have been previously identified in or adjacent to the APE. Based on this information and the fact that the proposed license renewal would entail no land disturbance, structure or building modifications, or other changes or refurbishments, the NRC staff has determined that the proposed action and the continued operation of the NETL TRIGA reactor would have no adverse effect on historic properties.

The draft historic and cultural resources section of this EA was submitted to consulting Tribes and the THC, and made publicly available in January 2026. One Tribe responded with their concurrence with the NRC staff's determination and no interest in further consultation. Concurrence with the NRC staff's determination from the THC was received on February 14, 2024.

Environmental Impacts of the Alternatives to the Proposed Action

As an alternative to license renewal, the NRC considered denying the proposed action (i.e., the "no-action" alternative). If the NRC denied the request for license

renewal, reactor operations would cease and decommissioning would be required. The NRC notes that, even with a renewed license, the NETL TRIGA reactor would eventually be decommissioned, at which time the environmental effects of decommissioning would occur. Decommissioning would be conducted in accordance with an NRC-reviewed and -approved decommissioning plan, which would require a separate environmental review under 10 CFR 51.21. Cessation of reactor operations would reduce or eliminate radioactive effluents. However, as previously discussed in this EA, radioactive effluents from reactor operations are well below the applicable regulatory limits. Therefore, the environmental impacts of license renewal and of the denial of the request for license renewal would be similar. In addition, denying the request for license renewal would eliminate the benefits of education, research, and public services provided by the NETL TRIGA reactor.

Alternative Use of Resources

The proposed license renewal does not involve the use of any different resources or significant quantities of resources beyond those associated with current facility operations and previously considered in the issuance of Facility Operating License No. R-129 for the reactor on January 17, 1992.

Agencies and Persons Consulted

The staff did not enter into consultation with any other Federal agencies or with the State of Texas regarding the environmental impact of the proposed action. However, on December 22, 2025, the NRC notified the Texas State officials, TDSHS, and Texas Advance Nuclear Energy Office, Office of the Texas Governor (OTG) of the proposed action. By email dated December 27 and 29, 2025, both TDSHS and OTG indicated that the State of Texas had no comments.

III. Finding of No Significant Impact

The NRC is considering renewal of Facility Operating License No. R-129, held by UTA, which would authorize the continued operation of the NETL TRIGA reactor with no fixed license term in accordance with 10 CFR 50.51(c).

On the basis of the EA included in Section II of this notice and incorporated by reference in this finding, the NRC staff concludes that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. This is because the proposed action will result in no significant radiological impacts from continued operations, as the types or quantities of effluents that may be released off site would not change. No changes in land use would occur or increases in noise or air emissions. Continued operations under the proposed action would have no significant impacts on air quality, noise, visual resources, surface water or groundwater resources, terrestrial or aquatic resources, or on any other environmental resource conditions. Additionally, the proposed action would have no effect on Federally listed species or designated critical habitats and would not affect historic properties. Therefore, the NRC staff concludes that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, the NRC staff has determined that a FONSI is appropriate and that there is no need to prepare an EIS for the proposed action.

The NRC staff's evaluation considered information provided in the license renewal application as supplemented, and the NRC staff's review of related environmental documents. Section IV of this notice lists the environmental documents related to the proposed action and includes information on the availability of these documents.

This EA and FONSI and other related environmental documents are accessible online in the ADAMS Public Documents collection at https://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html. This EA and FONSI can be tracked with identification number NEPA ID EAXX-429-00-000-1771999899. Persons who do not have access to ADAMS or who encounter problems in accessing the documents located in ADAMS should contact the NRC's PDR reference staff by telephone at 1-800-397-4209 or at 301-415-4737, or by email to PDR.Resource@nrc.gov.

IV. Availability of Documents

The documents in the following table are available to interested persons through ADAMS, as indicated.

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION	ADAMS ACCESSION NO.
License Renewal Request	
University of Texas at Austin, Request for Renewal of Facility Operating License R-129, dated December 12, 2011 (redacted).	ML12156A097
University of Texas at Austin, Supplemental Information for Renewal of Facility Operating License R-129, Part 1, dated January 17, 2012 (redacted).	ML12156A196
University of Texas at Austin, Supplemental Information for Renewal of Facility Operating License R-129, Part 2, dated January 17, 2012 (redacted).	ML12030A102
University of Texas at Austin, Supplemental Information Relative to Proposed Safety Analysis Report, Appendix 15.4, Facility Operating License R-129 (TAC ME 7694), dated February 21, 2012.	ML12061A009
University of Texas at Austin – Renewal of Facility Operating License No. R-129, Docket 50-602, dated January 21, 2011.	ML110040316
University of Texas at Austin, Response to Request for Additional Information, dated September 17, 2012.	ML12307A071
University of Texas at Austin, Response to Request for Additional Information, dated December 19, 2012.	ML13002A015
University of Texas at Austin, Response to Request for Additional Information, dated March 22, 2013.	ML13091A006
University of Texas at Austin, Response to Request for Additional Information, dated June 24, 2013.	ML13190A356
University of Texas at Austin, Response to Request for Additional Information, dated August 21, 2013.	ML13246A014
University of Texas at Austin, Response to Request for Additional Information, dated July 15, 2015 (redacted).	ML15211A638
University of Texas at Austin, Response to Request for Additional Information, dated August 26, 2015.	ML15251A234
University of Texas at Austin, Response to Request for Additional Information, dated October 23, 2015.	ML15313A027

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION	ADAMS ACCESSION NO.
University of Texas at Austin, Response to Request for Additional Information, dated December 22, 2015.	ML16015A052
University of Texas at Austin, Response to Request for Additional Information, dated February 5, 2016.	ML16053A094
University of Texas at Austin, Response to Request for Additional Information, dated May 2, 2016.	ML16132A239
University of Texas at Austin, Response to Request for Additional Information, dated December 1, 2016.	ML16347A112
University of Texas at Austin, Updated Safety Analysis Report, dated August 4, 2023 (redacted).	ML23279A146
University of Texas at Austin, Submission of Environmental Report, dated September 15, 2023.	ML23258A162
UTA NETL TRIGA ALARA 2020 - 2024	ML25352A069 (Package)
Other Referenced Documents	
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Endangered Species Consultations Frequently Asked Questions, dated July 15, 2013.	ML16120A505
Letter to SHPO; Re UTA Section 106 Initiation, dated May 1, 2024.	ML24096A043
Letter to ACHP, Re: UTA Section 106 Notification, dated May 1, 2024.	ML24096A042
Letters to seven tribes, Re: UTA Section 106 Initiation, dated April 30, 2024.	ML24096A057 (Package)
Letters to twelve tribes, Re: UTA Section 106 Initiation, dated May 10, 2024.	ML24127A107 (Package)
Letter from ACHP, Section 106, confirming notification, dated May 17, 2024.	ML25346A204
Letter from Comanche Nation, no properties of interest, dated May 16, 2024.	ML26055A177
Letter from Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas, no properties of interest, dated May 13, 2024.	ML26055A180
Email from non-public Tribe, project outside area of interest, dated June 17, 2024.	ML26055A171 (non-public, withheld pursuant to 10 CFR 2.390)
Letter from non-public Tribe, no properties of interest, decline to consult further, dated February 17, 2026.	ML26050A026 (non-public, withheld pursuant to 10 CFR 2.390)
Letter from Texas SHPO, concurrence, dated February 14, 2026.	ML26048A064
UTA NETL TRIGA EA Response from TDSHS, dated December 27, 2025.	ML26055A054
UTA NETL TRIGA EA Response from TANENO OTG, dated December 29, 2025.	ML26055A048

Dated: March 6, 2026.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Stephen Koenick,
Chief,
Environmental Project Management Branch 1,
Division of Rulemaking, Environmental, and Financial Support,
Office of Nuclear Materials Safety and Safeguards.
[FR Doc. 2026-04702 Filed: 3/10/2026 8:45 am; Publication Date: 3/11/2026]