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# State of Utah

## DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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### State Engineer Approves Applications to Use Green River Water for Nuclear Power Plant

Salt Lake City, Utah -- Two water right change applications for a proposed nuclear power plant near Green River, Utah have been approved by Kent Jones, State Engineer with the Utah Division of Water Rights. The decisions follow more than two years of study.

Kane County Water Conservancy District and San Juan County Water Conservancy District are leasing rights to Blue Castle Holdings that wants to provide water from the Green River for a nuclear power plant. The request has raised many concerns such as the safety and oversight of nuclear power, local water use interference, wildlife concerns including endangered fishes, over-appropriation of Colorado River water, the economic viability of the project, and the financial ability of Blue Castle to complete the project.

“We have listened to and very much appreciate the concerns raised by those in the local community and others,” said Jones. “Those concerns helped us look carefully and critically at the proposal as we considered the appropriate action on these applications.”

The water right approval criteria dictated in state law directs the state engineer to evaluate and investigate applications. An application is statutorily required to be approved if the state engineer believes: water is available from the source; the proposed use will not impair existing rights or interfere with the more beneficial use of water; the project is economically and physically feasible; it would not be detrimental to the public welfare; the applicant has the financial ability to complete the project; and, the application is filed in good faith and not for speculative or monopolistic purposes.

Almost 4.4 million acre-feet of water flows by the city of Green River every year. Blue Castle is seeking 53,600 acre-feet of that water to be allocated for its project. “That amount of water is not a lot on the Green River,” said Jones. “But it is a significant portion of the water Utah has left to develop on the Colorado River and a significant new diversion from the Green River where efforts are underway to provide habitat for recovery of endangered fish.” Approval of the application does not guarantee sufficient water will always be available from the river to operate the plant. Plant design will need to address the possibility of interruptions in water supply.

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Nuclear power plants in the United States are developed and licensed for operation by the federal government under the regulation of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), which is charged with promoting the use nuclear energy to benefit public welfare and protect the radiological health and safety of the public. In pursuing NRC licensing of this project, Blue Castle plans to invest \$100 million. Billions of dollars more will be required to construct the facility.

The state engineer's decision on these applications authorizes the use of water for the plant after NRC approvals for the project are obtained. Prior to any construction, NRC will oversee an exhaustive design process to make certain the proposed site is safe for a nuclear power plant and the National Environmental Protection Act and Endangered Species Act requirements are complied with.

Interested parties may view a copy of the decisions from the Utah Division of Water Rights website: [www.waterrights.utah.gov](http://www.waterrights.utah.gov)

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