The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia has denied the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) efforts to reopen its fight to collect $750 million in annual fees from nuclear energy consumers. The DOE has already submitted the required proposal to Congress to adjust the fee to zero. If Congress does not act within the 90-day period during which the proposal is pending before it, the fee will be reset to zero, relieving those consumers of nuclear-generated electricity the burden of paying for a program that DOE illegally terminated. “For our Participants,” said Steve Jackson, MEAG Power’s Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, “this could mean an estimated $6 million reduction in the cost of operating our nuclear fleet.”

Steve Jackson, MEAG Power’s Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, catches us up on the Plant Vogtle expansion.

**current:** Tell us about the latest activity at the construction site.

**Jackson:** On March 8, 2014, crews successfully placed the CA20 module into the Unit 3 nuclear island. This module will house various plant components, including the used-fuel storage area. The CA20 was assembled on site and the 2.2 million pound component, towering over five stories tall, was lifted into place using the 560-foot heavy lift derrick. This represents the heaviest lift so far and marks another major advance on the project.

**current:** What goes on at the new Operations Control Center?

**Jackson:** This facility is the result of a collaborative effort between Southern Nuclear, CB&I and Westinghouse. It serves as the hub for the reporting, analysis and resolution of issues affecting the project’s quality and progress. It allows the consortium to put all resources together with a single point of accountability to quickly solve problems through tracking and responsibility. The Center is staffed with experienced, seasoned employees, equipped with advanced software and hardware, and is ready 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This facility lets us bring issues to a single point so we can coordinate responses efficiently and effectively.

**Year-end Settlement** The MEAG Power Board approved a year-end settlement of $33 million, the second largest in the agency’s history. Assuming they do not need the funds for rate relief, Participants were encouraged to set their portion of the settlement aside to meet future costs, particularly the Plant Vogtle expansion.

**Cybersecurity** The Commerce Department’s National Institute of Standards and Technology has released its Framework for Improving Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity. It provides a structure that organizations, regulators and customers can use to create, guide, assess or improve comprehensive cybersecurity programs. The American Public Power Association (APPA) commended the administration for releasing the framework, noting that it allows for flexibility in how utilities manage cyber risks and complements the U.S. Department of Energy’s Electricity Subsector Cybersecurity Capability Maturity Model and the mandatory standards set by the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC).

**Plants Hatch and Vogtle** The recent planned refueling outage at Plant Hatch Unit 1 was the third shortest outage ever experienced – 31 days, 7 hours – as we continue to improve our maintenance efficiency. Also, Plant Vogtle Unit 1 ran a record 513 days, 17 hours with no outages before refueling.

**Plant Scherer** On March 18, 2014, each of the pending lawsuits pertaining to Plant Scherer were voluntarily dismissed without prejudice.

**Coal Inventory** Georgia Power briefly put Plant Scherer into coal-conservation mode in March and April as coal deliveries failed to keep pace with burns. The shortfall in deliveries was due in part to higher than expected demand for rail services across many sectors (coal, oil, agriculture, etc.) combined with extreme cold weather in the Midwest. The Plant Scherer co-owners acquired additional rail transportation services from another rail carrier to fill the anticipated gap in deliveries, and MEAG Power does not expect the coal delivery slowdown to negatively impact plant operations.
MEAG Power Board Meetings
May 15
June 19
MEAG Power Annual Meeting
July 14-16