hazardous chemicals labeling regimes which may be posing technical barriers to trade so as to better inform agency decisions with respect to the global harmonization process. The U.S. government has identified seven broad areas of concern:

(1) Chemical hazard information may or may not be received routinely with imported chemicals and products (including mixtures) and may or may not be understandable when received. Hazard information which is received may not be consistent with what is required under U.S. law, (e.g., sufficient to comply with OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard). Without sufficient information, importers must independently take steps to ensure that the chemical or product complies with U.S. law.

(2) When shipping chemicals or products (including mixtures) overseas, problems may have been encountered in determining what is necessary to comply with the laws of other countries. Information about these laws may be difficult to obtain and compliance with them may have led to changes in U.S.-compliant labels or MSDSs. Such changes may involve more than simply translating the U.S. label information into the language of the country to which the material is being shipped.

(3) If national laws or international requirements in this area are harmonized, each country or organization with existing systems will be required to compromise and change its requirements to some extent. In experiences dealing with the rules of different organizations, there may be particular definitions, procedures, or components of existing systems that would be desirable with regard to their inclusion in a harmonized approach. Components of some already existing systems may have been proven to be problematic in terms of either understanding or implementation.

(4) The extent or amount of animal testing that must be conducted in order to classify products may be affected by harmonization. Criteria to assess existing test methodologies to ensure they are equally acceptable in the harmonized approach may need to be developed.

(5) In order to implement a globally harmonized system, changes might have to be made in existing U.S. laws or regulations. How much time would be needed to phase-in any new requirements is not clear.

(6) Issues regarding protection of legitimate confidential business information while maintaining the protection of those exposed to the chemicals would have to be resolved.

(7) Information about experience in these different areas will assist the U.S. government as work progresses on international harmonization and could include samples of different labels and MSDSs for the same substance or mixture when shipped to different countries. This would be helpful to illustrate the kinds of problems encountered. Information about the costs of complying with multiple requirements, and potential cost savings from harmonization, would also help. Information about applying the mixture rules of the existing systems to products would assist in discussions addressing this part of the issue.

In addition to the input received from stakeholder representatives actively involved in the process, the USG agencies are interested in learning more about the experiences of other affected or interested U.S. industry, labor, environment, or consumer groups dealing with hazardous chemicals. Please submit any comments, experiences, information or opinions with respect to the above seven areas of concern or any other issues that may be of relevance.

Signed at Washington, DC, this 28th day of March 1997.

Rafe Pomerance,

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Environment and Development.

[FR Doc. 97–8505 Filed 4–2–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4710–09–M

[Public Notice No. 2525]

Shipping Coordinating Committee Subcommittee on Safety of Life at Sea Working Group on Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue; Notice of Meeting

The Working Group on Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue of the Subcommittee on Safety of Life at Sea will conduct an open meeting at 1:30 PM on Thursday, May 1, 1997. This meeting will be held at the Radio Technical Commission for Maritime Services Annual Assembly, in the Tradewinds Hotel, 5500 Gulf Boulevard, St. Petersburg Beach, FL 33706. The purpose of this meeting is to prepare for the Third Session of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Subcommittee on Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue which is tentatively scheduled for the week of February 23, 1998, at the IMO headquarters in London, England. Among other things, the items of particular interest are:

—The implementation of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS).

—Maritime Search and Rescue matters.

Further information, including meeting agendas, minutes, and input papers, can be obtained from the Coast Guard Navigation Information Center Internet World Wide Web by entering: ''http://www.navcen.uscg.mil/marcomms/imo/imo.htm''

Members of the public may attend these meetings up to the seating capacity of the conference room. Interested persons may seek information by writing: Mr. Ronald J. Grandmaison, U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, Commandant (G–SCT–2), Room 6509, 2100 Second Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20593–0001, by calling: (202) 267–1389, or by sending Internet electronic mail to rgrandmaison@comdt.uscg.mil.

Dated: March 17, 1997.

Russell A. La Mantia,

Chairman, Shipping Coordinating Committee.

[FR Doc. 97–8515 Filed 4–2–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4710–7–M

TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

Kingston Fossil Plant (KIF) Alternative Coal Receiving Systems, Roane County, Tennessee

AGENCY: Tennessee Valley Authority.

ACTION: Issuance of Record of Decision.

SUMMARY: This notice is provided in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations (40 CFR parts 1500 to 1508) and TVA's procedures implementing the National Environmental Policy Act. TVA has decided to adopt the preferred alternative (Alternative C) identified in its Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on Kingston Fossil Plant (KIF) Alternative Coal Receiving Systems. The Final EIS was made available to the public on January 15, 1997. A Notice of Availability of the Final EIS was published in the **Federal Register** on January 31, 1997. Under Alternative C, TVA would construct a new rail spur from the existing CSX Rail Yard or a direct tie in to the Norfolk Southern (NS) line at Walnut Hill in Harriman to the existing TVA coal delivery yard at KIF. The route would involve crossings of the Emory River and an embayment of Watts Bar Reservoir.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Harold M. Draper, NEPA Specialist, Environmental Management, Tennessee Valley Authority, 400 West Summit Hill Drive, WT 8C, Knoxville, Tennessee

37902–1499; telephone (423) 632–6889 or e-mail hmdraper@tva.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The KIF receives by rail about 4 million tons of medium sulfur coal per year. This coal is transported by Norfolk Southern (NS) and CSX Railroads to Harriman, Tennessee. At Harriman (CSX origin), the coal is transported over a short NS spur for transport to NS's Emory Gap rail yard and then to TVA's Caney Creek yard. TVA then moves the coal by rail from Caney Creek yard to KIF, a distance of about 4 miles. While NS has directed access to Caney Creek, CSX trains are charged a switching fee, now approximating $2 million annually for use of the NS spur. This switching fee contributes to higher fuel costs at KIF when compared to the fuel costs at other TVA fossil plants. In order to enhance the competitiveness of the KIF plant and to provide more economical access to lower sulfur coals, which will be required to meet new air quality regulations, TVA investigated alternative methods of coal delivery to the plant.

TVA provided public notice of its intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement on alternatives for coal delivery to KIF on May 22, 1995. A public meeting on the proposal was held on June 29, 1995. TVA released a draft EIS on May 15, 1996, and held a public meeting to receive comments on the document on June 11, 1996. After considering all comments, TVA revised the EIS appropriately. The Final EIS was distributed to commenting agencies and the public on January 15, 1997.

Alternatives Considered

In order to reduce the fuel costs for KIF, direct rail delivery was evaluated because it would eliminate rail line switching fees, reduce operation and maintenance costs, and increase competition between the rail carriers. Alternatives initially considered included construction of an overland conveyor, a new barge unloading facility, and a coal slurry pipeline. Also, increased truck deliveries were considered. However, all of these were rejected because they were not feasible from an economic or engineering standpoint. A longer 13-mile rail line from Oliver Springs was also rejected on economic and other grounds. Three alternatives were formulated that represented economically feasible options. These were no action and two alternatives that involved construction of a new rail spur.

Under *Alternative A*, No Action, conditions and impacts resulting from the existing coal delivery system would not change. However, this route, which passes through downtown Harriman, blocks several street crossings and impacts the ability of the city and county governments to provide emergency services during portions of the day. There are also ongoing noise impacts resulting from 30-car rail trips to the plant about six times per day.

Under *Alternative B*, Rail Spur Route No. 1, new rail spurs would originate at the CSX Harriman Yard or near the NS line at Walnut Hill. From north to south, the route would cross Bullard Branch and Quarry Branch (CSX spur only), pass south of the Fiske Road community, pass through the Harriman Industrial Park, cross the Emory River, and extend overland about three miles to the plant. Proceeding south from the Emory River, the route would cross Swan Pond Circle Road, cross an unnamed stream, pass under existing transmission lines, cross Swan Pond embayment on a causeway, cross Swan Pond Circle Road, cross Swan Pond Road, cross Swan Pond Creek, and link up with the existing rail line.

Implementation of Alternative B would result in a rail spur approximately 4.5 miles in length. From an infrastructure standpoint, trains would bypass downtown Harriman; however, in order to avoid two road crossings in a short distance, Swan Pond Road and Swan Pond Circle would need to be relocated near their junction, creating one crossing. Bridges would need to be constructed across the Emory River and two small creeks; and there would be a new causeway across Swan Pond embayment. Other traffic impacts would be that one existing and two new crossings would be blocked to allow trains to pass; however, because the roads are less-used then the ones crossed by the current route, fewer vehicles would be impacted. Under this alternative, there would be 24,730 fewer vehicle crossings of the rail route per day than under the No Action alternative.

Trains following the new rail line would increase noise levels in the Fiske Road community of Harriman. However, the largest potential noise increase in this community over existing levels is 0.4 decibels (dBA). The quieter Swan Pond Circle Road community south of the Emory River would also be impacted by operation of a new rail line. Noises in this community would result from crossing bridges, road crossing bells, train whistles, and wheel squeal due to track curvature. In this area, the largest potential noise increase would be 2.0 dBA over existing levels. In order to reduce this impact, welded rail would be used rather than jointed rail in the Swan Pond Circle area.

Construction of the rail spur in Alternative B would result in the loss of 7 acres of prime farmland and a 5-acre beaver-created wetland. However, to the extent practicable, TVA would locate the rail spur above the 750-foot contour in the Swan Pond embayment area to avoid wetland involvement. With strict adherence to Best Management Practices during construction of the proposed rail spur, no significant impacts to water quality, floodplains, wildlife, recreation, or endangered species are expected. However, because the rail construction would take place in a karst geology area, there is some risk of sinkhole subsidence. This would be minimized by proper geotechnical investigations. Approximately 43 views from residences would be affected. There would be a 31 percent reduction in locomotive emissions as compared to the No Action alternative. An archaeological survey of the proposed route identified four sites that were eligible or potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places that could be impacted by the proposed route. TVA would continue consultation with the State Historic Preservation officer prior to construction to define measures to avoid or reduce adverse effects to these sites. Although most of the area is sparsely populated, it appears that compared to the No Action alternative, fewer minority population groups would be affected; however, slightly more low income individuals would be affected.

Under *Alternative C*, Rail Spur Route No. 2, the route would not cross Swan Pond embayment after crossing under transmission lines, but would proceed south along the east side of Swan Pond, cross Swan Pond Circle Road, cross the narrow embayment fronting the KIF ash stack on a causeway, and run parallel with Swan Pond Road and the existing rail line to the plant rail yard. Implementation of Alternative C would result in construction of a rail spur 4.75 miles in length. Under this alternative, there would be 28,600 fewer vehicle crossing of the rail route per day than under the No Action alternative. Construction along the Alternative C route would not result in loss of prime farmland and would only involve minor wetland crossings. Approximately 37 residential views would be affected. There would be slightly higher impacts on low-income individuals than Alternative B. Other impacts would be similar to those of Alternative B.

TVA Decision

The Final EIS identified Alternative C, Rail Spur Route No. 2, as the preferred alternative. The northern end

of this rail spur route includes options to link to both the CSX yard and the NS rail line. Of the two action alternatives, Alternative C avoids the most wetland and prime farmland impacts. It also involves fewer intersections, fewer vehicles affected at railroad crossings, fewer terrestrial ecology impacts, and fewer aesthetic impacts on neighboring residents. In comparison to the No Action alternative, a new rail delivery option would reduce the fuel costs of KIF through increased competition between rail carriers for coal deliveries, reduced operation and maintenance costs for TVA, and the elimination of switching fees currently associated with CSX deliveries. All of these benefits would help to provide TVA's customers with electricity at the lowest possible rate.

In choosing its preferred alternative, TVA carefully considered and addressed all comments submitted on the Draft EIS. In addition, TVA has considered comments received from the Environmental Protection Agency on the Final EIS comment responses. These additional considerations are discussed below, along with the comment response number from the FEIS:

• *Comment No. 3.* EPA believes that environmental considerations associated with alternatives that were not considered in detail due to economic reasons, including the coal slurry pipeline alternative and the overland flexible pipe conveyor alternative, should be discussed in the EIS along with economic and feasibility considerations. Because the coal slurry pipeline alternative and overland flexible pipe conveyor alternative would follow the same routes as the other alternatives, TVA believes that many of the environmental impacts would be the same; however, had they been economical, there may have been some noise and air quality benefits of these alternatives. In addition, EPA believes TVA should have been more definitive in its statement of whether the Walnut Hill spur would have been constructed as part of Alternative C. The analysis of environmental impacts for each alternative considered both the route that would originate at the CSX yard as well as the Walnut Hill variation. As it turned out, the impacts for the route that would originate at the CSX yard are higher than impacts for the Walnut Hill variation for all areas except Environmental Justice. Accordingly, the Environmental Justice analysis identifies the impact of the Walnut Hill spur.

• *Comment No. 15.* EPA expresses concerns about the potential for derailment at a critical Swan Pond Circle Road intersection that might isolate residents east of Alternative C from emergency vehicles. The length of a unit coal train, including locomotives, is approximately 6700 feet. One of the earlier preliminary railroad alignment studies measured near that distance between the north and south intersections of Swan Pond Road. TVA will design the final centerline alignment such that the distance between crossings is greater than 7000 feet. With this commitment the scenario no longer exists where both crossings could be simultaneously blocked.

• *Comment No. 21.* EPA requests that an independent entity review spill plans to determine if the plans have been tested previously in the field and whether they are effective. Federal and state regulations require the development of Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures (SPCC) Plans. These plans have to be kept at the site and made available to state and EPA inspectors upon request. The KIF SPCC Plan covers preventive measures required for TVA contractors and associated temporary tanks on TVA properties. The plan also provides for emergency response measures that have been successfully employed in the past. TVA SPCC Plans have been supplied to EPA Region IV along with spill incident reports, and no shortcomings have been identified. TVA has trained response personnel at the site as well as an emergency strike force located in strategic positions across the valley that can respond within an hour's notice. The SPCC Plan has been certified by a Professional Engineer and has been tested previously in the field.

• *Comment Nos. 24 and 25.* EPA expresses concern that the proposed earthen fill causeway across Swan Pond embayment would restrict water circulation and result in water quality problems in the embayment. EPA requests that a bridge over the embayment be considered. The earthen fill causeway proposed for crossing the Watts Bar Embayment area for Alternate C should allow good circulation and fish passage. Both navigational clearance considerations and drainage considerations influence the size of the culvert through the causeway. TVA shallow draft bridge clearance standards for the culvert in this causeway will be adequate in accommodating small recreational vessels. As stated in the FEIS, the standards require a minimum elevation of 6 feet vertically above normal maximum pool Elevation 741 and a horizontal clearance of a minimum 8 feet. Drainage considerations and sizing indicate the necessity for a large culvert. Preliminary culvert sizing indicates a concrete double barrel box culvert of size 13′ × 36′ as a minimum. This size box culvert is in effect a small bridge. The wind, rain, and inflows in the Watts Bar Embayment area should adequately flush the waters through the larger culvert and, thus, allow a good circulation in the embayment. In addition, the costs associated with bridging are substantial, and a bridge would not be the most economical decision.

• *Comment No. 31.* EPA states that the frequency and magnitude of train whistles near residential areas should be discussed. TVA has estimated the impacts at the closest residence in a ''worst-case'' scenario in the FEIS. Typically, there would be two train trips per day during daylight hours past a given point, with the train whistles lasting several seconds.

• *Comments No. 42–44.* EPA requests that Environmental Justice mitigation be provided for low-income populations affected by the Walnut Hill spur. All mitigation commitments to reduce noise and to ensure safety of the rail would apply throughout the route of the proposed rail line. TVA does not feel that special mitigation at this site is necessary for the following reasons. Under Alternative C (with Walnut Hill spur), virtually all of the minority population is located in Census Tract 308, Block Group 3. This block group also has a poverty rate of 30.1 percent, much higher than the 21 percent in the rest of the impact area. However, most of the residents of this block group are far enough removed from the rail site that the impacts range from minimal to essentially nonexistent. Within this block group, the rail will run through a largely unpopulated area between Fiske Road and the Emory River. The population of the block group is on the other side of Fiske Road extending toward the north for some distance. This consideration essentially eliminates impacts to minority populations and reduces the low-income population to a share not much higher than the county and state rates. If the proposed Walnut Hill spur is not built, all the coal would go the CSX Harriman Yard. The additional area impacted in transporting coal to the CSX Harriman Yard is about 10.6 percent minority, with a poverty rate of 26.9 percent. The overall impact area for the new rail line combined with the area between Walnut Hill and the CSX Harriman Yard has a 6.5 percent minority population, well below the state average of 17 percent but well above the county average of 3.8 percent. The poverty rate is well above both the state and county rates. However, the

route through the additional area to the CSX Harriman Yard would be on existing rail, not new rail, and would add routine transient traffic to an existing facility. EPA also requests data on how many of the affected people are low-income minorities. With the proposed Walnut Hill spur, the project impact area has approximately 53 persons (2.3 percent of the total population) who are both minority and low-income. Without the Walnut Hill spur (the coal goes to the CSX Harriman Yard), the impact area would have approximately 109 persons (2.8 percent of the total population) who are low-income minorities. TVA does not believe that these impacts are disproportionately high.

After carefully considering EPA comments, TVA has decided to implement Alternative C as identified in its Final EIS.

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

Because Alternative A, No Action, would result in no change in existing conditions, it could be characterized as the environmentally preferable alternative. However, Alternative A does not accomplish the goal of reducing fuel costs. Further, none of the action alternatives would be environmentally destructive and none would likely result in significant environmental impacts. Of the action alternatives, Alternative C is environmentally preferable due to fewer impacts to wetlands and prime farmlands.

Environmental Consequences and Commitments

In choosing Alternative C, all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental harm have been adopted. These measures are listed below:

- To minimize noise impacts in the rural Swan Pond Circle community, the radius of track curvature would be kept as high as possible to minimize wheel-squeal. Noise will also be reduced by the use of welded rail in the Swan Pond community area. Also, all construction equipment will be equipped with noise attenuating devices, such as mufflers and insulated engine housings.
- On-site open burning will not be conducted when an air stagnation advisory or a special dispersion statement issued by the National Weather Service is in effect for the area. Where necessary, a water wagon will be used to control dust associated with construction activities.
- Should a potentially adverse water pollution incident occur in association with construction, state regulators and upstream and downstream water supply operators will be notified. During construction, Best Management Practices for silt control will be utilized, including straw dikes, filter fabric, and where necessary, retention basins.
- Sinkhole subsidence or collapse will be avoided by appropriate planning and design based on sound geotechnical investigations. Proper spill prevention procedures will be put in place to prevent contamination of groundwater from fuels, oils, and solvents during construction.
- Appropriate hydraulic analyses will be performed to ensure that the project is consistent with local floodplain regulations.
- Direct impacts to riparian zone forests at the Emory River bridge crossing will be minimized by crossing the river at a 90-degree angle.
- Wetlands will be avoided in the Swan Pond embayment by keeping all construction for the rail spur above the 750-foot elevation except at stream crossings.
- Phase II and III archaeological surveys will be conducted during the Spring of 1997 to determine the significance of the four archaeological sites in the corridor, and to allow any needed data recovery from the sites.
- TVA will design the final centerline alignment such that the distance between road crossings is greater than 7000 feet.

Dated: March 10, 1997.

Gregory M. Vincent,

Vice President, Fuel Supply and Engineering Fossil and Hydro Power.

[FR Doc. 97–8513 Filed 4–2–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8120–01–M

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Office of the Secretary

Proposed Agency Information Collection Activities; Comment Request

AGENCY: Federal Railroad Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 and its implementing regulations, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) hereby announces that it is seeking renewal of 8 currently approved information collection activities. Before submitting these information collection requirements for clearance by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), FRA is soliciting public comment on specific aspects of the activities identified below.

DATES: Comments must be received no later than June 2, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Submit written comments on any or all of the following proposed activities by mail to either: Ms. Gloria Swanson, Office of Planning and Evaluation Division, RRS–21, Federal Railroad Administration, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590, or Ms. MaryAnn Johnson, Office of Information Technology and Productivity Improvement, RAD–20, Federal Railroad Administration, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590. Commenters requesting FRA to acknowledge receipt of their respective comments must include a self-addressed stamped postcard stating, ''Comments on OMB control number _____.'' Alternatively, comments may be transmitted via facsimile to (202) 632–3843 or (202) 632–3876, or by E-mail to Ms. Swanson at gloria.swanson@fra.dot.gov, or to Ms. Johnson at maryann.johnson@fra.dot.gov. Please refer to the assigned OMB control number in any correspondence submitted. FRA will summarize comments received in response to this notice in a subsequent notice and include them in its information collection submission to OMB for approval.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Gloria Swanson, Office of Planning and Evaluation division, RRS–21, Federal Railroad Administration, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590 (telephone: (202) 632–3318) or MaryAnn Johnson, Office of Information Technology and Productivity Improvement, RAD–20, Federal Railroad Administration, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590 (telephone (202) 632–3226). (These telephone numbers are not toll-free.)

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA), Pub. L. 104–13, section 2, 109 Stat. 163 (1995) (codified as revised at 44 U.S.C. 3501–3520), and its implementing regulations, 5 CFR part 1320, require Federal agencies to provide 60 days notice to the public for comment on information collection activities before seeking approval for reinstatement or renewal by OMB. 44 U.S.C. 3506(c)(2)(A); 5 CFR 1320.8(d)(1), 1320.10(e)(i), 1320.12(a). Specifically, FRA invites interested respondents to comment on the following summary of proposed information collection activities regarding (i) whether the information collection activities are necessary for FRA to properly execute its functions, including whether the activities will have practical utility; (ii)