



The ENVIRONMENTAL BULLETIN

from the Savannah River Site

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Need more info?

Copies of EAs, FONSIIs, EISs, or RODs, or requests to speak at a public hearing, questions or further information on the DOE NEPA process, contact:

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Groundwater treatment facility starts at SRS

Capable of treating over 100 gallons of contaminated groundwater per minute, the H Area Groundwater Treatment System at the Savannah River Site (SRS) began radioactive operations July 8.

Successful operational testing for the F Area Groundwater Treatment System was conducted in May, and the first water treatment was achieved in June.

The treatment units use reverse osmosis technology, which forces water through a membrane allowing the passage of clean water. Contaminants are concentrated into smaller volumes of water for further processing and on-site disposal.

Groundwater contaminants in the seven F and H area seepage basins include heavy metals and radionuclides, which came from separations facilities' wastewater discharged to the basins in years past. These ba-

sins were closed and remediated in 1991.

The new groundwater system will clean up the groundwater in F and H areas. At other SRS facilities, more than two billion gallons of groundwater, the equivalent of 20,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools, have been cleaned up.

The new treatment system will also recycle groundwater containing tritium (a radioactive contaminant) by pumping and reinjecting the water safely away from streams while it decays. Tritium has a half-life of about 12 years, which means that half of it decays in that time.

The U.S. Department of Energy-Savannah River is working in close conjunction with the Environmental Protection Agency and the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control to ensure clean-up goals are met.

Current NEPA actions affecting SRS

Document

Status

Waste Isolation Pilot
Plant (DOE/EIS-0026-52)

Final Supplemental EIS is scheduled for August 1997 and the ROD is scheduled for September 1997.

Rocky Flats Plutonium Residues and
Scrub Alloy (DOE/EIS-0277)

The draft EIS is expected in late August 1997 with the final issued October 1997.

Shutdown of River Water System
at SRS (DOE/EIS-0268)

The final EIS was issued May 16, 1997. The Record of Decision is scheduled for September 1997.

Accelerator for Production of Tritium
(DOE/EIS-0270)

Preparation of the draft EIS continues with a proposed issue date of December 1997.

Tritium Extraction Facility (DOE/
EIS-0271)

Preparation of draft EIS to begin in July 1997. Publication of draft EIS is projected for February 1998. The Final EIS and ROD are scheduled for August 1998.

DOE Waste Management (DOE/
EIS-0200)

The Final PEIS was issued in May 1997. Multiple RODs are expected to be issued after national dialogue takes place and is subject to the Focus on 2006 Plan. Three pilot field workshops will be held August through September 1997.

SRS Spent Nuclear Fuel (DOE/
EIS-0299)

Preparation of the draft EIS is progressing with a publication date in September 1997. Publication of Final EIS and ROD are scheduled for first quarter 1998.

Surplus Plutonium
Disposition (DOE/EIS-0283)

The public scoping meetings have been completed and the comment period closed July 18, 1997. The draft EIS is scheduled for November 1997.

Wetland Mitigation Bank Program
(DOE/EA-1205)

Preparation of the draft EA is progressing with a proposed issue date of August 1997.

Tritium Facility Modernization/
Consolidation Project (DOE/EA-
0000)

A notification of DOE's intent to prepare this EA was sent to South Carolina and Georgia on July 18, 1997.

EA on proposed SRS Tritium Facility Project

The Department of Energy (DOE) has determined that an Environmental Assessment (EA) will be prepared to analyze potential environmental consequences associated with modernization and consolidation of the existing Tritium Facility at SRS.

The proposed action includes the modernization and consolidation of the tritium processing activities by relocating existing process systems, equipment, and functions from the present building to other existing buildings within the Tritium Facility complex.

Gas processing, metallurgical, and life storage functions would be relocated as part of this proposed project. Support service systems would

be upgraded to accommodate relocated functions. The goal of the proposed action is to improve safety and productivity, reduce future operating costs, and reduce the impact of the environment.

A notification of DOE's intent to prepare this EA was sent to South Carolina and Georgia on July 18, 1997.

To request a copy of the predecisional draft EA, contact: Drew Grainger, Savannah River Site NEPA Compliance Officer, U.S. Department of Energy, Savannah River Operations Office, Building 773-42A, Rm. 212, Aiken, S.C. 29802
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DOE authorizes restart of SRS H Canyon

On July 17, the Department of Energy (DOE) authorized the restart of the H Canyon chemical processing facility at the Savannah River Site (SRS). The restart authorization allows the H Canyon's Phase I operations to begin stabilizing badly corroding fuel elements. The decision to process this material was made last year after a thorough environmental impact analysis.

The H Canyon restart is a major element of DOE's Savannah River Canyon Utilization Strategy recently approved by the Secretary of Energy with established objectives to efficiently and cost effectively stabilize nuclear material deemed at-risk by DOE and the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB). The final strategy will be issued in a report to Congress later this summer. This dual-canyon strategy (the F Canyon facility has been stabilizing plutonium for more than a year) allows a more

effective utilization of resources, expediting the clean up of nuclear materials at SRS.

Both canyons will be operated for a period of time to effectively address health and safety concerns for nuclear materials at SRS and to meet commitments to the DNFSB in response to their Recommendation 94-1.

The canyon's restart is the first step in a phased approach to bring H Canyon into full operation in 1998. Additional reprocessing stages will be brought on line to stabilize materials containing highly enriched uranium as required and previously announced by DOE. Any highly enriched uranium recovered will be diluted with depleted uranium to a low enrichment not usable in nuclear weapons. The schedule calls for H Canyon Phase II - the uranium first cycle extraction process -- to restart in January 1998 and for Phase III - the uranium second cycle extraction process -- to begin

in September 1998.

H Canyon went through and completed several safety and operational evaluations before resuming operations. H Canyon is expected to operate up to six years to complete its stabilization mission. F Canyon is expected to complete operations within the next one to three years.

In addition to stabilizing at-risk materials in the canyons, DOE is continuing to aggressively develop alternative technologies to reprocessing to prepare spent fuel that does not pose a health and safety risk for ultimate disposal. DOE is working with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to maximize the prospect that the technologies being pursued will make the spent fuel acceptable for disposal in a geologic repository.



SRS beneficial reuse program

The Savannah River Site (SRS) received shipments of 100 stainless steel 55-gallon drums made of recycled radioactive scrap metal (RSM). The drums represent approximately five tons of contaminated metal beneficially reused so the metal does not have to be treated as radioactive waste.

The drums were fabricated specifically to store "heavy water" for some SRS operations. If the drums successfully pass the testing period, and funding is obtained, 1,000 additional drums may be procured.

This particular beneficial reuse program began in 1994 to recycle RSM from equipment previously utilized during operations at SRS production facilities. During the process, scrap metal is melted, rolled into sheet metal and fabricated into different products.

Pieces of heat exchangers, pumps, piping and other scrap metal components have been used in the program. Other products fabricated from RSM include 85-gallon drums, 100 cubic foot boxes and Transportable Vitrification System containers used for a certain type of vitrified waste at Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

At SRS, this is the first time recycled metal is being used for anything other than a waste container. As opportunities arise, the project will be expanded to include additional products that can be used on site as well as in the DOE complex. Plans are under way to manufacture test canisters, which could qualify for use at the site's Defense Waste Processing Facility.

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The SRS Environmental Bulletin

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