News from the Savannah River Site
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For Immediate Release

SRS hosts area educators at annual environmental justice workshop

AIKEN, S.C. – (August 21, 2024) Over 40 educators, community leaders, and student interns recently visited the University of South Carolina Aiken (USC Aiken) for the Teaching Radiation, Energy and Technology (TREAT) Workshop— held annually by the Department of Energy (DOE) Savannah River Operations Office for nearly 30 years.

Local educators, community leaders and student interns visited the University of South Carolina Aiken for the Teaching Radiation, Energy and Technology Workshop held by the Department of Energy Savannah River Operations Office.

Through an environmental justice grant, DOE partners with Savannah State University (SSU) to educate Central Savannah River Area (CSRA) teachers and community leaders about environmental radiation, safety, education outreach programs, job training skills, environmental monitoring and emergency preparedness.

“Our goal with this long-standing environmental justice initiative is to educate attendees on radiation, DOE missions and the benefit of having a strong relationship with SRS,” said James Tanner, DOE Public Accountability Specialist. “Our hope is that attending educators take this information back into the classroom to inspire hundreds of students, year after year.”

Attendees were welcomed by Melinda Downing, DOE-Headquarters Environmental Justice Program Manager; Mike Budney, Manager, DOE-Savannah River Operations Office; Daniel Heimmermann, Chancellor of USC Aiken; and Lessie B. Price, Aiken City Council.

“TREAT workshops are a collaboration of academia, DOE, and its contractors and regulators who come together for the purpose of education and progress. DOE is proud to be on this team,” Budney shared with TREAT participants. “We are grateful for these knowledge-sharing exchanges that help open doors for career opportunities for students and future leaders.”

Environmental Monitoring Program Scientist Colleen Davis presented air and fish surveillance information and showed electrofishing equipment to participants. The SRS Environmental Monitoring Program is responsible for confirming compliance with applicable regulations and DOE orders as well as monitoring any effects that SRS operations may have on the environment.

“Presenting at the workshop allows for us to discuss environmental monitoring from the standpoint of how we measure the health of our environment and how this surveillance aids in determining dose and risk assessments to members of the surrounding community,” said Davis. "We assured the public of their safety living near the Site and the absence of increased radiation exposure risks from our operations.”

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions Education Outreach program’s Kim Mitchell and Taylor Rice brief attendees on the SRNS Education Outreach Program during the TREAT workshop.

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) Education Outreach’s Kim Mitchell, Taylor Rice and Cindy Hewitt provided an overview of their programs.

“This was a great way for teachers to learn about all the education opportunities offered by SRNS and how SRNS Education Outreach works to meet the needs of education communities in the CSRA and Orangeburg County,” said Rice.

Additional speakers included:

- Kyle Bryant, Environmental Protection Agency, “EPA’s EJ and Climate Resilience Grants and Resources.”
- Jon Richards, SRS Federal Facility Agreement Remedial Project Manager, “United States Environmental Protection Agency.”
- Rev. Alexander Pope of Aiken, “Environmental Justice 101.”
- SRNS Radiological Control Jamellia Reid and Skip Johnson, “Radiation 101.”
- SRNS Emergency Operations Greg Hightower and Glenn Duffer, “Savannah River Emergency Response.”

In addition, experts from the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, SRS Citizens Advisory Board and Aiken City Council came together to teach, answer questions and share potential career opportunities.

Tanner expressed, “Our aim is for attendees to leave this workshop having a clearer understanding of SRS missions and feel confident in our commitment to safety, community engagement, and environmental stewardship.”

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor and HII partnership company, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, located near Aiken, South Carolina.

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