

Environmental Bulletin

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from the Savannah River Site

DOE-SR to issue revised FONSI for the SRS Sanitary Wastewater Treatment System

In 1993, the U. S. Department of Energy (DOE) prepared an environmental assessment (EA) for the centralization and upgrading of the sanitary wastewater treatment system at the Savannah River Site (SRS), located near Aiken, South Carolina. Based on the analyses in that EA (DOE/EA-0878), DOE issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on September 30 of that year. In a recent effort to reduce the cost of onsite collection and treatment of SRS sanitary wastewaters bearing trace amounts of radionuclides, DOE is considering a modification in the original scope of the proposed action presented in that EA.

For several years, SRS has refrained from using the sanitary sewer system to dispose of wastewaters bearing trace radionuclides, regardless of the level of concentration. This practice unnecessarily limited the site's wastewater disposal options, as some wastewaters are not contaminated enough to be considered as even low-level radioactive waste. National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits have allowed some of these wastewaters (for example, human urine from bioassays that has been spiked with a known radionuclide for quality control purposes) to be discharged directly to a receiving stream rather than being treated in one of the onsite sanitary wastewater plants. The proposed treatment of these wastewaters in the SRS sanitary wastewater system would provide the means for a better disposal option than the current practice of discharging directly to site streams, since it would result in the reduction of radionuclides discharged to the streams.

In addition, the current site practice is unnecessarily stringent and does not conform to the standard commercial practice of allowing the disposal of low levels of radioactivity from medical facilities and research institutions into sanitary sewerage, as regulated by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC). The radiation exposures resulting from this commercial practice are so low that the regulatory authorities consider them to pose no threat to

the health and safety of the public or sanitary wastewater treatment plant workers.

The revision to the original scope described in the 1993 EA would be to allow SRS to discharge small quantities of radionuclides into site sanitary sewerage. This modification was developed using regulatory guidelines from NRC and SCDHEC. Following treatment, most of the radioactivity in the sanitary sewerage would be bound in the biosolids (that is, sanitary sludge), which SRS beneficially reuses by land applying this material onsite to enhance pine tree growth. Overall, this scope change would result in a decrease in the amount of radionuclides being discharged offsite. No changes in existing permits would be required. Analyses of potential doses to an offsite, maximally-exposed individual determined that there would be no excess latent fatal cancers as a consequence of this proposed change in scope.

Based on existing SRS procedures and additional analyses on the human health impacts that could result from the proposed modification, DOE concluded that the environmental impacts of the proposed discharge of trace amounts of radionuclides to the sanitary wastewater treatment system at SRS is not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) would not be required, and DOE will issue a revised FONSI.

The public comment period on the draft revised FONSI ends on January 10, 2000. To provide comments, request additional information, to request a review copy of the draft revised FONSI or other NEPA documents, contact:

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CAB Recommendations

The SRS Citizens Advisory Board met November 15-16 in Charleston, S.C. Following are the recommendations:

Tritium Health Motion

The CAB recommended that DOE continue studying impacts of tritium on SRS workers and examine the work history of those having excess cancers and associations with tritium exposures.

Hazardous Waste Combustors-CIF

The CAB recommended that DOE choose the alternative that minimizes cost and balances equity across the DOE complex. The Board also recommended that DOE and SCDHEC discuss equity issues concerning with stakeholders. Future shipments of waste for the Consolidated Incineration Facility (CIF) from other sites will not be acceptable until equity issues are satisfactory to stakeholders.

WMPEIS Orphan Waste

The CAB recommended that DOE-HQ publish Records of Decision for Low Level and Mixed Low Level Waste by December and provide to the CAB by March 2000, the estimated plan and scope of work that meets the SRS Waste Acceptance Criteria to dispose of orphan waste at SRS. A draft waste disposal equity plan was also requested.

RCRA Permit Modification for Mixed Waste Management Facility

The CAB requested that DOE, EPA and SCDHEC schedule and hold a public meeting with stakeholders in order to develop a "common sense approach" to remediating the Southwest Plume. The Board also requested a list of adverse health effects, the criteria used to determine these effects and the remediation costs and benefits based on the inventory of contaminants in the SW Plume today and at the end of institutional controls.

Tank 19 Closure

The CAB recommended that DOE expedite the release of the Tank Closure EIS from DOE-HQ and expedite the waste removal from Tank 19 in FY00 and closure of the tank in FY01.

Fish Consumption Advisories

The CAB recommended that SCDHEC fish advisory documents put the information in perspective; that the CAB be allowed to review the draft 2000 fish advisories; and that final documents have wide distribution including Spanish translations. The CAB also asked SCDHEC to continue developing salt water fish information.

VIA planned for TNX Operable Unit

DOE has determined that a NEPA values impact assessment (VIA) will be prepared to accompany the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) review remediation alternatives for of the TNX-Area Operable Unit (OU). DOE will determine the appropriate action to remediate the impacts of contaminants in the TNX Area on the environment. Agency and site guidance directs that NEPA values (i.e., cumulative, off-site, ecological, and socioeconomic impacts) be integrated into DOE CERCLA documents to the extent practicable.

The VIA will be included in the TNX Area CERCLA documentation and submitted concurrently as a reference for public review and comment with the CERCLA "Statement of Basis/Proposed Plan"; CERCLA is the regulatory driver for remedial action.

DOE-SR Requests Hazardous Waste Permit Modification

DOE-Savannah River Operations Office has requested from SCDHEC modifications to SRS 1992 Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Permit, SC1890008989.

This request is to modify two commitment dates. Specifically, the request is to change Phase II CAP submittal dates for F-Area and H-Area Hazardous Waste Management Facilities from "within 36 months of receipt of Phase I Operating Permit" to "July 31, 2001."

This notice begins a 60-day comment period. More information, including the actual permit applications, is available for review and copying at the DOE Public Reading Room located in the University of South Carolina-Aiken library, or by contacting personnel listed below. The permittees compliance history during the life of the permits being modified is available from the Agency contact person.

A public meeting will be held January 6, 2000, at 7 p.m. at the Aiken County Public Library. Representatives from SRS will be available to answer questions. Written comments may be sent to SCDHEC. All comments will be considered in the final decision. Call Jim Moore at 1-800-249-8155 for more information. Send your comments to

J.T. Litton, Director
Division of Hazardous and Infectious Waste Bureau of
Land and Waste Management

SRL Basin remedy selected

DOE, EPA and SCHDEC announce the completion of the final design of the remedy selected for the Savannah River Laboratory (SRL) Seepage Basin Operable Unit and the availability of a Pre-construction Fact Sheet. This fact sheet provides a description of the remedy selected for the SRL Seepage Basins at the Savannah River Site (SRS). The remedy will address two areas: the four basins and approximately 375 ft of process sewer line to the first manhole. Institutional controls will be implemented that restrict future use of the land and limit access to the units. No health hazards to off-site communities are expected.

The Pre-construction Fact Sheet for the action is available at the following locations: DOE Public Reading Room at the Gregg-Graniteville Library at the University of South Carolina-Aiken campus; Thomas Cooper Library Government Documents Department at USC in Columbia, SC; Reese Library at Augusta State University; and Asa H. Gordon Library at Savannah State University. For additional information contact Jim Moore at 1-800-249-8155 or at jim02.moore@srs.gov.

Current NEPA actions affecting SRS

- **Construction and Operation of the Low Enriched Uranium Loading Station and Modification to the Existing Highly Enriched Uranium Blending Facilities at SRS (DOE/EA-1322)**, The proposed action is to construct and operate a low enriched uranium loading station and modify existing highly enriched uranium blending facilities. The EA will evaluate environmental impacts of this proposal. South Carolina and Georgia were notified in September 1999.
 - **Offsite Transportation of Certain Low-level and Mixed Radioactive Waste from SRS for Treatment and Disposal at Commercial Facilities (DOE/EA-1308)**, This EA will analyze the potential environmental consequences associated with shipping low-level waste and mixed low-level waste to treatment facilities in Texas and/or Tennessee and subsequently to Environcare of Utah. This EA is on hold pending other DOE decisions.
 - **EA to Evaluate an Alternate Approach for the Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF) Glass Waste Storage Facility at SRS (DOE/EA-1327)**, The EA will analyze the potential consequences associated with building and operating an onsite aboveground concrete storage pad for casks containing DWPF canisters. The storage casks would be made with SRS's inventory of depleted uranium trioxide powder, significantly reducing the onsite inventory of depleted uranium trioxide powder. The draft EA is underway.
 - **Interim Measures for the Mixed Waste Management Facility Groundwater at the Burial Ground Complex at SRS (DOE/EA-1302)**, State notification letters regarding this proposed action were sent in July 1999. The Federal Register wetland notification was published on July 20, 1999. The draft EA for the project was sent to the states on August 5, 1999. A decision (FONSI or EIS) is expected in fourth quarter, 1999.
 - **Surplus Plutonium Disposition (DOE/EIS-0283)**, The final EIS was released on November 19, 1999. DOE stated SRS as the preferred location to conduct the mixed oxide, immobilization and pit disassembly and conversion. The ROD is expected in December.
 - **SRS High-Level Waste Tank Closure EIS (DOE/EIS-0303)**, The proposed action is to close the SRS High Level Waste Tanks in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, DOE Orders and SCDHEC permit requirements. The draft EIS is expected for release the first quarter of 2000.
 - **SRS Spent Nuclear Fuel Management (DOE/EIS-0279)**, This EIS evaluates management strategies using existing, modified and new facilities or processes for spent nuclear fuel assigned to SRS. This includes foreign and domestic receipt and fuel stored at SRS totaling 68 metric tons through 2014. The draft was released in December 1998; December 1999 is the earliest release date for the final EIS.
 - **DOE Waste Management (DOE/EIS-0200)**, This EIS recommends the types of wastes shipped from one site to another to support the DOE complex waste management program. Multiple RODs have been issued, with the low level waste and low level mixed waste RODs expected in December 1999.
 - **SRS Salt Disposition Alternatives (DOE/EIS-0082-S2)**, The proposed action for this supplemental EIS is to construct and operate a process to replace In Tank Precipitation as part of the SRS High Level Waste Management System. The draft EIS is expected for release the first quarter of 2000.
- EA -- Environmental Assessment**
EIS -- Environmental Impact Statement
FONSI -- Finding of No Significant Impact
NOI -- Notice of Intent

Draft SRS Strategic Plan soon to be released

The draft Savannah River Site Strategic Plan will be released mid-December for public review and comment. After the plan is released, there will be a three-week period for public review and comment, ending on January 7, 2000. The draft SRS Strategic Plan was developed using input from site employees, formal and informal public meetings, draft reviews, and professional planning critiques. The final SRS Strategic Plan will be published in early 2000.

SRS has three mission areas associated with products and services that are essential to achieving the Department of Energy's goals: Nuclear Weapons Stockpile Stewardship, Nuclear Materials Stewardship, and Environmental Stewardship. The draft SRS Strategic Plan separately highlights each stewardship area and outlines the strategies for achieving their respective goals and objectives. Additionally, the plan includes a Cor-

porate Management section that addresses fundamental business principles, or "SRS Focus Areas," critical to the success of each of the Site's stewardship missions.

You may request a copy of the draft plan or make comments on the plan in a variety of ways, as listed below. The draft plan will also be available as a direct link from the SRS Home Page on the internet at <http://www.srs.gov>.

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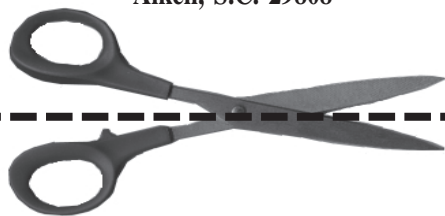
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