July 30, 2003

The Honorable Spencer Abraham, Secretary
U. S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Abraham:

As you are probably aware, the Savannah River Site (SRS) Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) is a non-partisan group of individual stakeholders from South Carolina and Georgia. Charter under the Federal Advisory Committee Act the CAB provides informed and timely recommendations on waste management, environmental restoration, and other activities affecting SRS to the Department of Energy (DOE), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC).

In 2003, the CAB identified the treatment of salt waste as one of the top ten issues facing the SRS. The CAB believes the processing and disposal of salt waste from the high level waste (HLW) system is key to the accelerated cleanup strategy. The Waste Management (WM) Committee is tasked with following this issue and is deeply concerned, along with the CAB, about the recent U.S. District Court decision invalidating the Waste Incidental to Reprocessing (WIR) provision.

We agree with the statement of the Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management, Ms. Jessie Hill Roberson, to the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation that this ruling jeopardizes the Department's ability to provide safe, cost-efficient, and risk-based treatment and disposal of certain wastes. Specific to the SRS, this ruling has major impacts on HLW tank closures, tank space management, the types and volumes of waste classified as HLW, and the vitrified disposal of HLW through the DWPF process.

In addition, the ruling increases the risk and cost of continued HLW storage. Furthermore, Mr. David Wilson, the Assistant Chief for the Bureau of Land and Waste Management at the SCDHEC, testified to the same Subcommittee, that the HLW storage activity at SRS presents the single most potentially hazardous condition to the environment and the people of South Carolina.

The CAB and the WM Committee fully expect DOE to immediately address this increased risk to the environment and the people of South Carolina. We desire a path forward that continues to accelerate the HLW program at SRS. To accomplish this objective, we request that DOE appeal and/or seek legislative relief from this ruling. No action and/or capitulation are unacceptable.
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We request a formal response on the Department’s proposed action on or before September 22, 2003. We will continue to monitor the progress toward accelerating cleanup and reducing risks at SRS and will continue to issue appropriate recommendations to help achieve these goals.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Mr. Wade Waters
CAB Chairperson
308 Pinewood Drive
Pooler, GA 31322

[Signature]
Mr. William Willoughby, P.E.
WM Committee Chairman
506 Killington Court
Columbia, S.C. 29212

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