



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA Forest Service – Savannah River

2024 - Year in Review

DeVela Clark

Forest Manager, USDA FS – Savannah River

March 2025, CAB Presentation

USDA Forest Service – Savannah River

- USDA Forest Service - Savannah River's mission is no different than that of any other national forest. Simply put it is “Caring for the Land and Serving People”
 - In 1952, we were Initially brought on to reforest the site, planting over **10 million trees** in just a few years. (This year we intend to plant close to **500,000 trees.**)
 - Our mission has expanded over the years to include wildlife management (including TES species), timber harvesting and replanting of trees, prescribed fire and emergency response to wildfires, invasive species control, etc.
 - We serve the Department of Energy and local CSRA community through an interagency agreement between the USDA and DOE. We've entered the final year (2025) of our current interagency agreement and the new agreement is being worked on at this time.



DOE-SRS Natural Resource Management Plan

What guides our actions is the DOE-SRS Natural Resource Management Plan to manage natural resources to support DOE missions and objectives within applicable laws, regulations, DOE orders and policies.

The plan contains the following management programs:

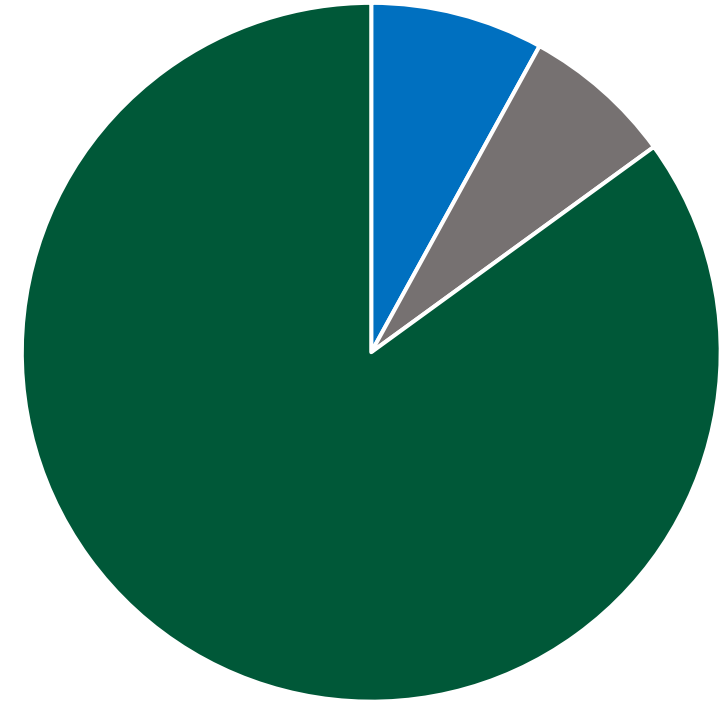
- Habitat, Population and Invasive Species, and TES Species Management
- Forest Products Harvesting and Silviculture Management
- Secondary Roads, Boundaries, and Trails Management
- Watershed Management
- Fire Management
- Research

Programs are reliant on one another to achieve the best outcomes.

Scope of USFS Operations on DOE - SRS

Total Acreage of Savannah River Site is approximately 198,000 acres, or 310 square miles. Comprised of:

- 16,000 acres for Industrial usage
- 14,000 acres dedicated to Research Set Asides
- 168,000 acres managed for natural resources to support the mission of DOE-SRS.
(Mostly managed by the USFS)



Industrial Use Areas

Research Set Aside Areas

Natural Resource Areas

Natural Resource Management – 2024 Year in Review

Hurricane Helene Impacts

Natural resource impacts across SRS from Helene ranged from **immediate loss of TES habitat** to future potential spread of non-native invasive plants species due to changes in habitats and ecosystem structure.

<https://srns-corpcomm.sharefile.com/public/share/web-sf17626c1f2874de5a79492ac51711d2b>

• TES Species Management

Seventy-three RCW cavity trees were damaged during Hurricane Helene. Biologists from Francis Marion and Sumter NF joined Savannah River in placing over **130 new cavity nests** to replace those damaged by the storm.



Natural Resource Management – 2024 Year in Review

Feral Hog Removal

- Contractors and USFS employees removed **1435 feral hogs** in FY 2024.
 - This year we have brought on an additional partner to help remove feral hogs through aerial identification and eradication. (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service – APHIS)
- Utilizing our traditional trapping methods and our new aerial partner APHIS we have removed approximately **550 feral hogs in the last two months.**



Nuisance Animal Removal

Responded to **161 calls** on SRS requesting removal of wildlife that either were impacting work or could potentially impact work or harm employees/wildlife.

One benefit from Hurricane Helene is the availability of new wildlife corridors because of timber salvage operations.

Natural Resource Management – 2024 Year in Review

Crackerneck WMA Habitat Improvement

- Worked with SCDNR and the National Wild Turkey Federation to develop plan of action to improve wildlife habitat and provide greater access to hunters and outdoor enthusiasts at the publicly accessible Crackerneck WMA.
- Mid-story treatments create a healthy and resilient forest while also reducing fuel loads in the area.
- Can be maintained through future use of prescribed fire throughout the area.



Timber Harvesting – 2024 Year in Review

Hurricane Helene Impacts



- Hurricane Helene caused over **2500-acres of damage to forests** across Savannah River Site.
 - Large scale blow down, damage of this scale hasn't been seen since the ice storm of 2014.
 - Much of these areas had already been sold for timber or was in the process of being advertised for sale.
- Storm damage resulted in a four-month temporary pause during one of our peak harvest times of year
- As soon as feasible, contracts were rewritten to accommodate salvage sale for downed timber. (Resulting in lower revenue from sale)
- Salvage harvesting has begun, and additional sale areas are being advertised.

Timber Harvesting – 2024 Year in Review

Timber sold/value 20955 ccf / \$808,114.93
(20955 ccf = Roughly 25 Million board feet)



- Typically, enough wood is harvested from SRS to build approximately **5000 homes**.
 - Based on 2024 harvests, that number is closer to approximately **2000 homes**.
 - Several factors contributed to that lower yield.
 - Hurricane Helene was the largest determining factor in yield.
 - Salvage sales don't yield the same amount as would be a normal harvest.
 - Large volume of downed timber across CSRA from storm.
 - To overcome safety risks of clearing roads and completing assessments, a four month pause occurred between storm and resumption of harvesting.

Timber Harvesting – 2024 Year in Review



Timber harvesting from Savannah River Site is still a strong economic driver in the CSRA.

- For calendar year 2024 timber harvesting generated **over \$800,000 dollars in revenue** that was returned to the U.S. Treasury.
- Past studies indicate that harvesting efforts from SRS contributes roughly a total investment of **\$37.6 million dollars** across six industries across the CSRA and **creates over 300 jobs** across various industries.
 - Forestry Products and Services, Logging, Transportation, Eating, Drinking, and Wholesale Trade.

Fire Management – 2024 Year in Review

Hurricane Helene Impacts



Most significant impact from Hurricane Helene on our fire management program has been the large number of downed trees/debris across the site.

- Blocking roadways
- Debris across previously establish fire control lines
- Large scale of debris alongside roadways could cause for fire spillover across control lines and roadways.

Areas previously identified for fuel treatments had to be re-assessed to ensure the safety of continuing with yearly program goals.

- Longstanding control lines must be reestablished prior to burning.

Fire Management – 2024 Year in Review

Fire Wise Community Efforts

Over the last three years, we have worked closely with homeowners in the **Three Runs Plantation** to develop stronger communication efforts and aid in their efforts to become a **Fire Wise Community**.

- Conducted prescribed burns adjacent boundary reducing the amount of potential fire fuels.
- By reducing available fuels on SRS property, minimized the risk of fire carrying over property boundary lines.
- Worked with community leaders to plan burning activities to enable maximum resources on hand should they decide to burn in the same area adjacent to our burns.



Fire Management – 2024 Year in Review



Acres Treated with Prescribed Fire

In 2024, over **37,000 acres** on SRS were treated with prescribed fire. Areas that received treatment were:

- RCW habitat improvement
- Research areas
- Timber plantations
- Hardwood encroachment removal areas
- Area removal of non-native invasive plants
- Wildfire fuel reduction efforts

Fires occurring on SRS

So far in Fiscal Year 24 and 25, SRS has had **12 fires** involving **55 acres**.

Engineering and Roads – 2024 Year in Review



Hurricane Helene Impacts

Over 1000 miles of primary and secondary roads were impacted by Hurricane Helene.

- USFS road crews consisting of staff from Engineering, Natural Resources, and Fire were on site immediately following Helene working on opening access roads to critical infrastructure clearing primary and secondary roads on SRS.

Continuing to remove debris from road shoulders and identify culvert/road damage in remote areas of the site to improve overall driving safety and protect important watershed areas. (Ongoing)

Engineering and Roads – 2024 Year in Review

Phytoremediation

Safely irrigated 6.6 Million gallons of Tritium contaminated groundwater through phytoremediation process that would have eventually flowed into the Savannah River.



Secondary Road Work

Prior to Hurricane Helene, completed over **1700 miles** of secondary road maintenance on SRS consisting of road grading, roadside mowing and heavy brushing.

Vegetation Management

Maintained access roads and conducted vegetation management functions such as mowing and other grounds maintenance on over 1500 acres ensuring access to over 4500 monitoring wells.

Forest Research – 2024 Year in Review

Hurricane Helene Impacts

Due the sensitive structure of research areas, Helene's impacts caused significant damage to ongoing research at the site.

- The Corridor project which has been ongoing for over **25 years** studying plant movement between connected and unconnected but adjacent habitats incurred significant timber damage in study areas from Hurricane Helene.
 - By working with research partners and Forest Service research staff, downed storm debris was removed, additional planting have taken place and study parameters have been reset for areas affected.
- Other impacts affected wildlife studies where study equipment were damaged and repairs to these are ongoing.



Above image: Side view of Corridor Research Project area

Forest Research – 2024 Year in Review

Designated as the nations **1st National Environmental Research Park**, SRS's forests continue to be used as premier research areas for long term wildlife and plant habitat studies.

Presently, Savannah River is involved with **17 research projects** representing **40 different partners and universities** across the nation securing a joint funding **budget from partners of over \$3 Million dollars** since 2023.

Our longest running research study is the Corridor Research Project **(25 years)**

Other Studies involve:

- Firefighter Health from Smoke Impacts
- RCW survival rates based on cluster densities
- Hydrology and Water Studies
- Plant Biodiversity
- Longleaf pine restoration
- Computer LIDAR forest composition studies



USFS Southern
Research Station and
Pacific Northwest
Station



WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



**UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA**



U.S. Forest Service – Savannah River – 2024 Year in Review



AmeriCorps

Other Significant Accomplishments

- **Hosted NCC AmeriCorps Forest Module for six-weeks in Spring of 2024. (2nd year)** (NCC – National Conservation Corps)
 - Provided support across all USFS- SR program areas - Planting trees, Prescribed Fire, Timber marking, Wildlife surveys
- Provided early season fire qualification training to **7 different fire fighting modules** from across the nation, aiding in the national wildfire firefighting response effort.
- Savannah River maintains its own Forest Service Dispatch service tracking **42,049** individual and **14,204** group remote workers during FY24.



U.S. Forest Service – Savannah River – 2024 Year in Review

Other Significant Accomplishments

- Completed over **50 miles of SRS Boundary maintenance** and signage replacement.
- Survey and maintained **11 miles of Wellness trails** for SRS employee to use.
- **Connected with over 11,000 CSRA residents** through our Fire Prevention efforts at schools, events, and other CSRA happenings.
- Biologist located a **new Bald Eagle breeding nest**.



U.S. Forest Service – Savannah River – 2024 Year in Review

Questions?



Forest Service

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.