Savannah River Site (SRS) Citizens Advisory Board (CAB)
Full Board Meeting Summary
September 22, 2026
Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative

DOE SRS Public Release Review
No: DOE-ROI-69899
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Attendance

Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board
Full Board Meeting | September 22, 2026

CAB Members Present

Deborah Creech, Chair
Wanda Jackson, Co-Chair
Pat Kilroy
Dell Priester
Willie Priester
James Schacht
Janie Scott
John Thomas

U.S. Department of Energy Representatives (DOE-SR)

Matt Baker
Khari Bell
Chuck Bryan
Brittany Califf
John Clark
Edwin Deshong
Jonathan Jones
James Tanner, DDFO

CAB Support Staff

Juanita Campbell
Public Outreach Administrator
S&K Logistics

Other SRS Personnel

Doug Aubrey, SREL
Jim Beasley, SREL
Travis DeVault, SREL
Kiran Karanth, SRNS
Stacey Lance, SREL
Dr. Gene Rhodes, SREL
Larry Romanowski, SRMC
Lucia Ross, AMC
Justin Steadman, SRNS
Mtesa Wright, SRNS

Agency Representatives

Anita Brown, SCDES
Madeleine Kellett, SCDES
Gregg O'Quinn, SCDES
Jon Richards, EPA
Crystal Robertson, SCDES

Members of the Public

Tom Clements
Johnny Kauffman
Pete LaBerge
David Rose

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Meeting Summary
SRS CAB – Full Board Meeting
Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative
4345 Trolley Line Road, Aiken, SC
September 22, 2026

Meeting Introduction

James Tanner (CAB Facilitator/DDFO): Welcomed attendees to the September Full Board meeting at the Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative (AMC).

Deborah Creech (CAB Chair): Called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

James Tanner (CAB Facilitator/DDFO): Invited those seated around the table to introduce themselves and asked whether anyone needed a review of the agenda. Hearing no response, the meeting proceeded to the Chair's update.

Chair Update

Deborah Creech (CAB Chair): Commended Savannah River Site (SRS) for its community involvement. She described her visit to South Carolina Public Works and highlighted their hiring and training programs, including opportunities that inspired young men exploring career options to pursue positions with the site's fire department. She also thanked support staff, subcommittee participants, and fellow CAB members for their contributions.

Environmental Management (EM) Manager Update

Edwin Deshong (EM Manager): Thanked Ms. Creech for her remarks and welcomed attendees to the AMC. He noted that Savannah River National Laboratory (SRNL) celebrated AMC's first anniversary and its fourth CRADA this year. He also thanked the Department of Energy (DOE) team and corporate partners for their efforts to advance the cleanup mission before presenting the following updates to the Board:

SRNL Recent Achievements

- Completed the C-Reactor Complex transition, finalizing the Advanced Technology Proving Ground (ATPG) for global missions.
- Began construction and procurement to renovate 17 miles of powerlines, advancing grid-resilience innovation.
- Accelerated the Mk-18A isotope recovery program; recovered isotopes support Californium production at Oak Ridge for reactor startups.
- Established a CRADA with 3D Systems to advance additive manufacturing research, equipment, Super Intelligence/Machine Learning (SI/ML) optimization, cybersecurity, and workforce development at the AMC.

Budget

- A continuing resolution begins October 1, funding the government through December 11, 2026.

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Nuclear Materials

- L Area continues receiving and processing domestic and foreign research-reactor used fuel for L-Basin storage.
  - Completed receipt and unloading of fuel from 13 domestic and seven foreign research reactors in FY26.
- H Canyon is preparing to resume uranium-recovery operations.
  - DOE and the contractor completed startup reviews for H-Canyon Head End restart.
  - DOE expects Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) to begin Head End hot operations next month.
- K Area completed all 19 planned FY26 down-blends of EM surplus plutonium.
- SRS completed 36 of 38 planned FY26 TRU waste shipments to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).
  - Twelve shipments originated from E Area and 24 from K Area.

Liquid Waste

- Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF) marked 30 years of operation in March and produced more than 81 vitrified high-level waste canisters this fiscal year.
  - DWPF has produced more than 4,550 canisters; the revised plan projects 7,440 total canisters to complete vitrification.
- Salt Waste Processing Facility (SWPF) processed more than 5.1 million gallons of high-curie salt waste and is on track for a Fiscal Year (FY) record of about 5.7 million gallons.
- SDU 10–12 projects remain on schedule and under budget.
  - SDU 10 received CD-4A approval on June 30, 2026—10 months early.
  - SDU 11 concrete construction is complete; shotcrete and prestress cable wrapping are underway.
  - SDU 12 is 35% complete, with floor, wall, and column construction progressing.

Area Closure

- Area Completion Projects completed 73 of 76 FY26 Federal Facility Agreement (FFA) Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) deliverables and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) commitments; the remaining three are on schedule.
- Since 1993, SRNS has met 4,320 combined milestones and commitments on or ahead of schedule.
- Completed preliminary cease-waste removal for Tank 14, extending compliance through 2027.
- Issued the Seventh Five-Year Remedy Review Report for SRS groundwater-remedy operable units.
- Issued the Record of Decision for Early Construction and Operational Disposal Sites (ECODS) L-3 and L-Area Rubble Pit operable units.
- Submitted an Early Action Record of Decision supporting beneficial use of coal ash and coal ash fines at SRS.
- Completed conceptual design and is advancing detailed design for 235-F decommissioning; field subcontract procurement is expected in FY27.
- Completed FY26 crack repairs and sealant coating across 21 acres at the R-Reactor Seepage Basin.

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EM Manager Update Q&A

James Schacht (CAB): Asked Mr. Deshong to repeat the update for the area closure projects; the issuance of the seventh five-year remedy review.

Edwin Deshong (EM Manager): In response, he clarified whether the question pertained to the report on Savannah River Site operable units with groundwater remedies and subsequently confirmed that it had been published.

James Schacht (CAB): Requested guidance on where to locate the information.

Edwin Deshong (EM Manager): Responded that someone would follow up with the requested information.

Pat Kilroy (CAB): Inquired whether the Site would produce fuel rods in connection with H-Canyon operations.

Edwin Deshong (EM Manager): Clarified that the primary mission of H-Canyon is to process spent nuclear fuel bundles from both foreign and domestic research reactors. He noted that the bundles are initially managed in L-Area before being transferred to H-Canyon, where uranium is recovered to produce High-Assay Low-Enriched Uranium (HALEU) for advanced reactor designs. He also outlined the process for routing residual material to the tank farms and into the liquid waste system.

Pat Kilroy (CAB): Asked about the projected operating lifespan of the salt storage facility tanks.

Edwin Deshong (EM Manager): Stated that he would consult with engineering personnel to provide an exact operational lifespan.

Pat Kilroy (CAB): Requested an update regarding reports of seepage and cracking, noting he had missed the previous briefing on the topic.

Edwin Deshong (EM Manager): Confirmed the inquiry pertained to the R-Area and reiterated the status of the basin asphalt repairs.

Deborah Creech (CAB Chair): Commended the Site for its uranium recovery plans and expressed appreciation to Mr. Deshong for his update.

Agency Updates

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Jon Richards (FFA Project Manager for Region 4): Outlined his role overseeing complex projects at large sites like SRS, in coordination with DOE and partner agencies, supported by a dedicated team of specialists and project managers. He then provided the following updates on key EPA activities:

- **Beneficial reuse of coal ash:** A key initiative involves using coal ash as structural fill material during closure of the F- and H-Area tank farms and the Saltstone area. Following DOE's summer release of the proposed plan for public review, a formal Record of Decision (ROD) is expected early next year. EPA leadership views this positively and may leverage it as a model to streamline similar reuse efforts across other sites.

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- **Five-year review process:** Savannah River has more than 100 operable units, far more than a typical Superfund site, due to the site's size and long remediation history since the 1993 Federal Facility Agreement. Rather than conducting one large five-year review, the reviews are categorized and rotated over a five-year cycle.
- **Current review:** The review nearing completion focuses on engineered cover systems. EPA has approved comment responses, and South Carolina is concluding its review, and final signatures from DOE and the state are anticipated by mid-November.

South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (SCDES)

Crystal Robertson (SCDES): Provided the following updates on decision documents, public comment periods, and regional oversight activities:

- **Record of Decision (ROD):** On August 18, DES signed and submitted the ROD to EPA for the Early Construction and Operational Disposal Site L3 and L-Area Rubble Pits Operable Unit.
- **Public Comment Periods:** Two Statement of Basis/Proposed Plan documents are open for a 45-day review period (September 16 through October 31):
  - *D-Area Ash Basin Wetlands*, supporting the Savannah River and Floodplain Swamp Upper operable unit.
  - *Beneficial use of select coal ash and coal fines* across multiple operable units (A-Area Ash Pile, A-Area Coal Pile Runoff Basin, F-Area Ash Landfill, and H-, K-, and L-Area Ash Basins) with a ROD targeted early next year.
- **Regional Oversight and Inspections:**
  - **July 28:** Completed drinking-water compliance sampling at A-Area Loop, PAR Pond, L-Area Fire Station, and A Range.
  - **August 18:** Conducted monthly solid-waste inspection at the Saltstone Facility (ongoing monthly inspections continue).
  - **August 18:** Completed comprehensive SRS Title V air permit inspection with zero violations identified.
  - **August 20 and September 2:** Executed monthly ambient surface-water monitoring at Upper Three Runs and Highway 125.

Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD)

Shelly Culpepper was not in attendance; no update was provided.

Agency Updates Q&A

Wanda Jackson (CAB Co-Chair): What kind of violations do the inspectors look for?

Crystal Robertson (SCDES): Inspectors review each item listed on the permit to determine whether any conditions or requirements are not being met.

Willie Priester (CAB): Regarding community input, do more responses come from individuals or groups and organizations?

Crystal Robertson (SCDES): Unsure of the specific breakdown at this time but will follow up with Mr. Priester once confirmed.

Pat Kilroy (CAB): Regarding environmental monitoring (water, air, and other resources), what are the overall results? Are environmental indicators getting better or worse?

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Crystal Robertson (SCDES): Results are available online, though broad trends can be difficult to summarize concisely. Historical trend data (e.g., over a 5-year span) is documented in the Environmental Surveillance and Oversight Program (ESOP) report. Copies can be re-distributed to the board.
Pat Kilroy (CAB): To clarify: what is the overall trend across the 310-square-mile Site? Are contaminant levels rising or falling?

Madeleine Kellett (SCDES): The ESOP report details five-year trends, which do experience fluctuations (for example, due to weather events like hurricanes stirring up material). EPA and state regulatory thresholds are indicated by a red benchmark line on the graphs; Site measurements consistently remain well below that line.

Pat Kilroy (CAB): What were the standards 10 to 20 years ago, and have those standards changed over time?

Madeleine Kellett (SCDES): EPA standards serve as the primary benchmark and are reviewed annually for updates and revisions.

Dell Priester (CAB): What is "ash"? Is it an acronym?

Crystal Robertson (SCDES): No, it is not an acronym; it refers directly to burnt residue material.

James Tanner (CAB Facilitator/DDFO): Noted that the topic of ash will be addressed in greater detail per the agenda. He then opened the floor for any additional questions.

Waste Tank Closure Process – Closure Completion

Mr. Larry Romanowski, Manager of Closure & Determinations, presented the final session in a three-part series on liquid-waste tank closure. The presentation focused on closure completion - the steps that occur after waste removal and before, during, and after a tank is filled with grout.

Liquid Waste Program Overview

Savannah River Site manages 43 active waste tanks, having already achieved operational closure on 8 tanks. Approximately 32 million gallons of waste remain in the F and H Tank Farms across three distinct physical forms:

1. **Salt Supernate:** Liquid waste that can generally be pumped out.
2. **Salt Cake:** Crystallized evaporative salts requiring dissolution with water prior to removal.
3. **Sludge:** Insoluble solids that settle on tank bottoms and require agitation before pumping.

Salt waste accounts for roughly 90% of the remaining volume, while sludge, though less than 10% by volume, contains about half of the radioactive activity.

Waste Processing Pathways: Waste processing flows through two primary disposition conduits before tank stabilization can commence. The two facilities are:

- **Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF)**: Treats high-activity sludge alongside concentrated radionuclides separated during salt processing. Waste is vitrified into borosilicate glass and stored in canisters.

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- **Salt Waste Processing Facility (SWPF):** Processes salt waste by separating solids, certain radionuclides and cesium (routed to DWPF) from decontaminated salt solution. The remaining decontaminated salt solution goes to the Saltstone Production Facility, where it is mixed with dry materials to form grout and placed in Saltstone Disposal Units (SDUs) for disposal. SWPF operations have substantially increased processing rates compared with earlier interim processes.

Current Progress

- About 9 of 17 planned sludge batches have been processed, and approximately 4,500 of nearly 7,500 projected glass canisters have been produced.
- Sixteen of 79 salt batches have been processed, with processing rates continuing to rise.
- SDU 6 was recently filled, while SDUs 7, 8, 9 and 10 are available or nearing availability.
- Across the facility, all 51 tanks will undergo a Preliminary Cease Waste Removal (PCWR) decision process.
- Eight tanks have been operationally closed. Tank 2 recently completed PCWR, bringing the total to nine.

Tank Types and Closure Priorities

Older Type 1, Type 2, and Type 4 tanks lack full secondary containment and are considered "old-style" or non-compliant tanks. Consequently, these older tanks represent the primary focus of FFA milestones and closure planning. Furthermore, several ancillary structures that handle high-level waste such as evaporators and diversion boxes will follow a similar closure process.

Tank Closure Process

Every tank must progress through a rigorous six-stage regulatory and operational framework. The six stages are:

1. **Waste Removal:** Salt, sludge, and other waste are removed as completely as practicable. Waste removal must be coordinated with available storage capacity and the operating needs of DWPF and SWPF.

2. **Preliminary Cease Waste Removal (PCWR):** DOE presents a preliminary case to the SCDES and EPA that sufficient waste has been removed, and performance objectives are to be met. This is not a final closure decision; if later sampling or analysis indicates objectives cannot be met, further waste removal may be required.

3. **Sampling and Analysis:** Residual waste is mapped using cameras, crawlers, long-reach equipment, and increasingly drones. Samples are collected and analyzed to determine the remaining waste inventory. The inventory is incorporated into long-term performance models that evaluate protection of groundwater and the environment over thousands of years.

4. **Closure Module and Public Involvement:** A tank-specific closure module documents waste removal, sample results, remaining inventory, and performance-modeling results. The document is released for public comment. Following review and revisions, DOE, EPA, and the state make the final decision as to whether the tank can be stabilized and operationally closed.

5. **Isolation and Stabilization**: The tank is isolated from waste-transfer systems to prevent additional material from entering. Utilities such as ventilation, water, and power may remain in service temporarily when this improves efficiency and safety. The tank, and where applicable its annulus, is filled with grout in controlled stages.

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6. **Final Configuration Report:** This report documents what was completed, including grout placement, grout properties, equipment and cooling-coil treatment, and any deviations from the planned work. The state approves the report, and regulators may conduct walkdowns.

Purpose of Grout

Grout formulation and placement fulfill vital roles including:

- **Stabilizes the tank** and prevent subsidence.
- **Provides chemical conditions** that can slow radionuclide movement.
- **Limits water movement** through the tank.
- **Provides physical strength** that may help protect against future intrusion.
- **Supports a future engineered closure cap**, if selected in the final tank-farm remedy.

Grout is placed in carefully managed "lifts" to avoid damaging tank walls. Crews monitor placement with cameras, track truck volumes, conduct routine grout testing, and verify that the expected volume has been placed.

Post-Closure Monitoring and Maintenance

Operational closure is an interim step. Final decisions for the entire F and H Tank Farms, including soils, structures, and any engineered cap will be made later through the broader operable-unit process.

In the interim, closed tanks undergo rigorous post-closure monitoring, including:

- Annual inspections and photographic documentation.
- Preventative maintenance of visible barriers and site conditions.
- Investigation of observed issues, such as surface concrete spalling.
- Groundwater monitoring in both F and H Tank Farms.
- Inclusion in five-year remedy reviews.

Upcoming Priorities and Milestones

2028 Target: Achieving operational closure of Tanks 9, 10, and 11, prioritized due to their legacy design and location partially submerged withing the local water table.

Near-Term Operations: Tank 13 is currently in active waste removal; preparation is underway for Tanks 1 and 7.

Next on the Horizon: Tanks 13, 14 and 15 are slated in the next priority group due to water table proximity.

In conclusion, Mr. Romanowski stated that tank closure is a multi-step, regulated process involving waste removal, preliminary and final agency decisions, detailed sampling and modeling, public comment, isolation, grouting, and long-term monitoring. Operational closure stabilizes individual tanks, but final closure decisions for the tank farms will occur later through the Federal Facility Agreement process.

Waste Tank Closure Process – Closure Completion: Q&A

Deborah Creech (CAB Chair): How does the worker safety process operate during tank closure activities?

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Larry Romanowski (SRMC): Each worker is continuously monitored for contamination, and potential exposure levels are evaluated thoroughly before any project starts. In addition, new equipment is deployed for the removal process, while used equipment is safely contained and disposed of.

John Thomas (CAB Member): Referencing slide 5 of the presentation, does the composite inventory image represent one of the 43 waste tanks?

Larry Romanowski (SRMC): The composite image illustrates the total cumulative volume of sludge and salt across the entire tank farm, rather than a single tank. For instance, there are approximately 2.8 million gallons of sludge distributed across all 43 tanks.

John Thomas (CAB Member): Are there active discussions or decisions regarding moving the vitrified glass canisters out of South Carolina?

Larry Romanowski (SRMC): stated that he was not the person to speak on that. That falls outside my area of responsibility.

James Tanner (CAB Facilitator/DDFO): Nothing will change until a final federal repository is established. Because this is a nuclear energy initiative, the canisters will remain safely stored at the Savannah River Site until a repository is designated and operational.

John Thomas (CAB Member): To clarify: has a formal decision been reached, and are discussions currently taking place regarding the canisters?

James Tanner (CAB Facilitator/DDFO): That specific topic cannot be addressed here because it pertains to the broader nuclear energy program. Environmental Management's (EM) scope is focused on cleaning up the tanks and ensuring the glass canisters remain safely managed and stored.

John Thomas (CAB Member): Regarding the use of drones for tank sampling: what are they inspecting, do they enter the tanks, and do they become contaminated?

Larry Romanowski (SRMC): Yes, the equipment does become contaminated. Previously, robotic crawlers costing $300,000 to $400,000 each were used—often three per tank—requiring long tethered cables to navigate the interior. Drones offer a far simpler, more cost-effective alternative. A drone lowers a sampling cup on a tether into the waste, retrieves the sample, and returns to an isolated glove bag where the sample is packaged into a transport canister. While some drones have been left in tanks after losing stability and will ultimately be encapsulated during grouting, the drone bodies generally remain outside the bulk waste and are reused whenever possible before being treated as contaminated equipment that is handled appropriately.

John Thomas (CAB Member): What is an annulus?

Larry Romanowski (SRMC): Type I, II, and III tanks feature a primary steel tank positioned within a protective concrete vault. The space between the primary vessel and vault wall - approximately five feet wide, forms an annular space (annulus) designed to capture and detect any liquid that might leak from the primary tank. In contrast, older designs utilized an annular pan extending approximately five feet up the sidewall (as shown on slide 19), whereas Type IV tanks are single-shell structures that lack an annulus entirely.

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Dell Priester (CAB Member): Referring to the composite inventory diagram on slide 5, does the salt cake get transferred directly to DWPF once dissolved?

Larry Romanowski (SRMC): Salt waste consists of salt supernate (already liquid) and salt cake (solid salt). Fresh water is added to dissolve the salt cake, creating a dissolved salt solution. This liquid may contain both original salt supernate and dissolved salt cake.

The dissolved salt solution is routed to the Salt Waste Processing Facility (SWPF), where it is treated in four steps:

1. **Filtration:** Insoluble solids entrained in the liquid are filtered out.
2. **Actinide removal:** Monosodium titanate (MST) is added to bind and remove certain radionuclides, particularly actinides. The MST and solids are transferred to the Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF), where they are combined with sludge.
3. **Cesium removal:** SWPF removes high-activity cesium-137from the liquid then sends to DWPF for vitrification into glass.
4. **Saltstone disposal:** The remaining decontaminated salt solution is mixed with dry materials to form grout and placed in Saltstone Disposal Units.

SWPF's primary purpose is to separate the higher-activity soluble radionuclides, including actinides and cesium, from the salt waste. Those high-activity materials are routed to DWPF for vitrification in glass, while the much larger volume of decontaminated salt solution is disposed of as Saltstone grout.

Dell Priester (CAB Member): How long does the tank closure process take?

Larry Romanowski (SRMC): Historically, full closure has taken up to two years per tank due to rigorous sampling, analysis, documentation, closure-module requirements, and regulatory oversight by DOE and the NRC. Efforts are underway to expedite this timeline, such as using drones to accelerate sampling without reducing sample access or quality.
The physical grouting and stabilization phase generally takes three to four months, involving multiple concrete deliveries and, when needed, separate work on the tank annulus. Once grouted, the tank is enters remedy selection and documentation so it can be included in the next annual inspection cycle, (typically within 12 months), after which it is integrated into the site's hazardous-waste permit to ensure continued regulatory coverage and annual inspections before being removed from wastewater-permit requirements in coordination with the state. Overall, each of the eight closed tanks took roughly two years to complete the entire regulatory and operational cycle.

Dell Priester (CAB Member): How long did it take to close the first eight tanks?

Larry Romanowski (SRMC): The process took a couple of years.

Dell Priester (CAB Member): Why are waste-removal activities occurring in multiple tanks at the same time, including newer tanks, instead of focusing only on older tanks with known leakage concerns?

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Larry Romanowski (SRMC): Closure sequencing is driven by risk, prioritizing our oldest and most vulnerable tanks. However, more than 20 tanks may be in active stages of waste removal or preparation at once because the site must balance closure priorities with the need to continuously supply salt and sludge waste-processing systems.

Closure and Risk Priorities

- **Tanks 9–12:** Highest priority for closure due to being older-style tanks without full secondary containment and full submersion within the local water table. Their condition presents the highest risk.
- **Tanks 13–16:** Secondary priority because they sit partially within the water table, are older-style tanks and have a history of leakage from the primary tank into the annulus.
- **F Tank Farm Tanks 1–8:** Priority focus as Type I older-style tanks have less robust containment than newer tank designs.

Although older tanks are prioritized for closure, work must continue on other tanks including Type III tanks to ensure uninterrupted waste processing. These activities may be needed to:

- Produce salt batches for the Salt Waste Processing Facility (SWPF).
- Prepare and qualify salt batches, a process that can take several years.
- Support sludge-processing operations.
- Install equipment, complete designs, and prepare future waste-removal campaigns.

Dell Priester (CAB Member): Will the larger Saltstone Disposal Units (SDUs) provide sufficient volume for all remaining waste?

Larry Romanowski (SRMC): Yes, system planning accounts for units through SDU 12, and current projections indicate SDU 12 will not be completely full. No additional units beyond SDU 12 are planned because the existing capacity should be sufficient to complete tank waste removal and processing.

Approximately 120–140 million gallons of material is expected to be disposed of in grout form in the SDUs. Tanks 1–6 are essentially full, and Tanks 7–10 are already available for operations, each with more than 38 million gallons of capacity. Tanks 11 and 12 are also nearing completion. In addition, not all waste will go into the SDU tanks. Low-activity waste will be grouted into several thousand canisters, providing additional storage capacity. Overall, there is more than enough capacity to manage the remaining waste.

Edwin Deshong (EM Manager): To reinforce that point, SRS is grouting low-activity waste into several thousand canisters outside of the SDU's, ensuring more than enough to cover capacity.

James Schacht (CAB Member): Does the definition of "mission completion" mean that the farms are sealed and does not include decommissioning activities?

Larry Romanowski (SRMC): That is correct. Final remedies and decisions regarding above-grade structures and farm capping fall under the FFA milestones, targeted around the 2040 timeframe.

James Schacht (CAB Member): How is project funding structured?

Edwin Deshong (EM Manager): Funding is allocated annually. Long-term system plans span from 2037-2041; The pace is strictly contingent upon annual budget allocations. SRMC is accelerating

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operations by integrating advanced technologies including drones and Super Intelligence (SI) systems and delivering strong returns on investment and we are happy with the progress being made.

Pat Kilroy (CAB Member): What is the projected design life of the tanks once they are filled and grouted?

Larry Romanowski (SRMC): While I cannot provide a guess, our performance assessments and degradation models establish specific timelines for each tank design.

Pat Kilroy (CAB Member): What is the evaporative ratio, and is excess water evaporated?

Larry Romanowski (SRMC): Water is not evaporated directly from the tanks during these operations; it is processed through SWPF.

Pat Kilroy (CAB Member): Exactly how many tanks have experienced leaks?

Larry Romanowski (SRMC): I will follow up on that and get the information to you.

Pat Kilroy (CAB Member): How many monitoring wells are in place?

Larry Romanowski (SRMC): We monitor roughly 60 different well locations or well heights across different elevations and aquifiers that are currently being monitored (16 in the F Tank farm and the rest in H tank farm).

Pat Kilroy (CAB Member): Is there a continuous flow when pouring grout?

Larry Romanowski (SRMC): No, they don't, they would run into problems. If they did a continuous pour in the middle, they would have to consider the structural integrity of the tank and the heat of hydration that were to build up with that much grout at one time, and the problems it would cause.

Pat Kilroy (CAB Member): Which radionuclides are permitted in the SDUs?

Larry Romanowski (SRMC): Short answer, a little bit of everything, but they are restricted on what can go in the SDU's and limited by the permit on how many total curies of material that can go in the SDU's. They have an annual inventory where they pull samples of the decontaminated salt solutions that gets provided to the state to demonstrate we are still meeting those permits, and there are also limits on their performance assessments where they have modeled the different rads.

Pat Kilroy (CAB Member): Will the land ever be usable for anything else where the tank farms are?

Larry Romanowski (SRMC): Replied that he can only say what they have to assume in their modeling. They have to assume once closure is done, that DOE maintains institutional control for 100 years, then it's turned over to the public.

Willie Priester (CAB Member): Are the older tanks monitored differently due to their construction?

Larry Romanowski (SRMC): No, during operations, the annulus is monitored continuously as well as annual visible camera inspections. A report is generated every June/July and made available to DES and others.

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Willie Priester (CAB Member): How does public input influence SRS operational decisions?

Larry Romanowski (SRMC): Formal closure modules for example, goes out for public review. All feedback received is evaluation and address in a revision before the agencies issue their final decisions.

The meeting recessed for a 10-minute break.

L-Area and UNF Update: Kiran Karanth, SRNS

Mr. Kiran Karanth, Fuel Receipts Program Manager (L-Area) provided an overview of domestic fuel receipts and foreign research reactor fuel receipt programs and a briefing on current L-Area operations, facility inventory status, receipt and transfer programs and planned activities for the upcoming fiscal year. The Core Mission of L-Area has three central operational pillars:

1. **Receipt:** Safely receive used nuclear fuel (UNF) from domestic and international research reactors.
2. **Safe Storage:** Maintain wet and dry interim storage configurations compliant with TSR guidelines.
3. **Transfer:** Package and transfer fuel assemblies and targets to H-Canyon or SRNL for processing, isotope recovery, and disposition.

Mr. Karanth provided the following information in his Operations & Facility Inventory Report:

Facility & Storage Basin Status

- **Basin Characteristics:** Storage pool holding 3.4M gallons of water, with depths ranging from 17 to 50 feet.
- **Used Nuclear Fuel Inventory:**
  - *Aluminum-Clad Fuel:* 9 Metric Tons of Heavy Metal (MTHM) (300 containers).
  - *Non-Aluminum Clad Fuel (Stainless Steel / Zirconiumc / Cladding Material):* 20 MTHM (395 containers).
- **Storage Capacity:** Materials Test Reactor (MTR) fuel storage capacity is at 83% with 3,650 storage positions available; High Flux Isotope Reactor (HFIR) storage is at ~69% with 120 positions available.

Heavy Water (Moderator) Management

- Sourced from five legacy production reactors; total volume is ~530,000 gallons.
- Stored across large bulk tanks and 6,800 standard 55-gallon drums (350,000 gallons in drums).
- Current average tritium concentration sits at ~1,000 microcuries per milliliters (μCi/mL).
- The DOE Request for Information (RFI) regarding industry capability for commercial detritiation, purification, and isotope management closed on September 21.

Integrity & Monitoring Programs

- **Basin Chemistry:** Technical Safety Requirements (TSR) - Water chemistry and administrative controls remain active to inhibit corrosion on racks, coupons, and fuel cladding.
- **AMCAP (Augmented Monitoring and Condition Assessment Program):** Continuous remote camera and sensor inspections of basin concrete and fuel containers, with high prioritization on non-aluminum clad fuels previously altered during reactor testing.

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Programs and Milestones

Mr. Karanth provided the following updates on L-Area programs and milestones:

- **Foreign Research Reactor (FRR) Receipts:** Program extended through 2040 under NNSA Nuclear Materials Removal (NA-232). Recent receipts include an NAC-LWT cask from Venezuela and two casks containing 120 JMTR and 80 JRR-3 assemblies from Japan.
- **Domestic Research Reactor (DRR) Receipts:** Authorized through FY 2032 (MURR, MIT, NIST, Rhode Island, HFIR). TRIGA fuel continues direct rerouting to Idaho National Laboratory (INL).
- **H-Canyon Transfers:** Operational focus shifting toward "dissolve and recover" per Executive Order 14302 using 70-ton casks.
- **HFIR Carrier Material Transition:** 60 HFIR cores were successfully transitioned from 6061 aluminum to 6063 aluminum carriers to enhance dissolution efficiency.
- **SRNL Collaboration & Project Athena:** Completed the fuel transfer of three Mark-18A targets (Pu-244 recovery) and one INL drum. Supporting lab-scale glovebox feasibility testing for isotope extraction from diverse fuel types.
- **RBOF Cask Pad Cleanup**: Packaged and removed 18 storage containers in support of targeted site closure by 2028–2029.

Planned Activities & Action Items (Upcoming FY)

Description	Responsible Party	Status / Target
Domestic Cask Receipts: 11 casks (6 HFIR/ORNL, 3 MURR, 1 MIT, 1 INL pilot)	Fuel Receipts Ops	Planned (FY)
Load and ship two 70-ton shipping casks to H-Canyon	L-Area Operations	Planned (FY)
Transfer 4 Mark-18A targets and 1 Mound drum to SRNL (Project Athena)	Program Transfers	Scheduled
Conduct HFIR Dry Storage Demo (vacuum drying vs. forced helium drying on 3 inner cores)	Engineering / Tech Staff	Pending Execution
Facility infrastructure modernization (focus on air compressor replacements)	Maintenance & Facilities	Ongoing

Mr. Karanth concluded by stating they will continue to receive fuel from both domestic and foreign research reactors, and as the recovery mission ramps up, L-Area will continue to transfer fuel to H Canyon and continue performing AMCAMP inspections looking at the fuel containers, storage positions, etc. Then again, year over year, continuously invest in infrastructure so fuel can be stored long term.

L-Area and UNF Update Q&A

Pat Kilroy (CAB Member): Could you clarify what the High Flux Isotope Reactor (HFIR) dry storage project is used for?

Kiran Karanth (SRNS): The HFIR dry storage project serves as a pilot and data demonstration to evaluate safe, long-term road ready dry storage for HFIR. Through this process of how it's dissolved into glass form and made road ready for dry storage, drying the fuel and sealing it into concrete storage systems on site until a permanent repository is ready for final shipment.

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Pat Kilroy (CAB Member): What do you mean by "take this and go to concrete"?

Kiran Karanth (SRNS): This initiative is about generating technical data for DOE. While processing fuel through H Canyon remains an option, having proven alternatives is essential if DOE chooses to store it dry or in the event an active processing facility is unavailable.
While dry storing commercial fuel and Materials Test Reactor (MTR) plate type fuel is already proven, HFIR fuel is more complicated because of the construction of the fuel assembly itself, and that is the data point they are trying to get to DOE.

Pat Kilroy (CAB Member): Is the heavy water currently in storage contaminated, and are we permanently stuck with it?

Kiran Karanth (SRNS): We are not permanently stuck with it. When they say contaminated, it means the heavy water has impurities embedded in it because of the reactor operations. If it is 99.6% pure or above, there are Canadian reactors that can use it for the reactor operations. There are only 3 countries that can produce heavy water, and that is Brazil, India and the U.S. The others don't want to supply us, and we are running low on heavy water supply. Canada has been building facilities to clean this kind of water. There is technology that is in the process of RFI. If they can remove the TDM and other impurities, and clean it, then it becomes a national asset.

John Thomas (CAB Member): What happens to incoming receipt containers that have radioactive contamination?

Kiran Karanth (SRNS): All receipts arrive in NRC-approved Type B packages (casks) loaded with fuel assemblies. Any residual surface contamination is maintained well below DOT and NRC highway transport limits, and once fully assembled and sealed, there is zero external contact dose. If external surfaces happen to pick up contamination during handling operations, the packages are routed through our decontamination facility to ensure they fully comply with DOT transport regulations before leaving.
John Thomas (CAB Member): Where are these casks transferred?

Kiran Karanth (SRNS): As outlined in Slide 8 (*FY-26 Overview – 1. Fuel Receipts*), transfer locations depend on the specific cask type and reactor of origin. These routes include domestic facilities such as Oak Ridge, the University of Missouri, and various Tennessee sites, as well as international receipt programs from Japan and Venezuela.

SRS Coal Ash Beneficial Reuse Strategy: Justin Steadman, SRNS

Mr. Justin Steadman, Technical lead for the Environmental Compliance and Area Completions Project Organization, Savannah River Site outlines the beneficial reuse of select coal ash and coal fines across the facility. The presentation outlines the background and geographic distribution of the site's ash units across multiple watersheds, compliance with RCRA and CERCLA closure requirements, the current status of the project, the proposed remedial action strategy, and the anticipated schedule for remaining project activities.

Justin describes what Coal Ash is and how it came to exist, including a background on how it was remediated in the past and the approach they are using. Coal Combustion Residuals (CCR) is generated from coal-fired powerhouses previously used across SRS industrial and administrative areas to produce steam and electricity. Currently, SRS has identified nine remaining ash units across various watersheds with common problems warranting action. In 2022, DOE proposed a Consolidated Approach. Rather

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than remediating units individually under separate long-term waste management, DOE proposed a consolidated, holistic strategy leveraging beneficial use (recycling/reuse in lieu of disposal).

The consolidated strategy covers six primary ash units:

1. **A Ash Pile (AAP):** Small footprint; heavily vegetated; formed by stockpiled ash from the A-Area powerhouse.
2. **A Coal Pile Runoff Basin (ACPRB):** Small basin containing coal yard runoff; all material self-contained; heavily vegetated.
3. **F Ash Landfill:** Active Class II permitted landfill (last received ash ~5–6 years ago); maintained against woody growth within the cell, but heavily vegetated perimeter; ash extends beyond unit boundary.
4. **H Ash Basin:** Large unit; ash sluiced from H-Area powerhouse; substantial ash extent outside boundaries; heavily vegetated.
5. **K Ash Basin:** Large unit; similar sluicing history to H-Area; heavily vegetated.
6. **L Ash Basin:** Large unit; sluiced ash from L-Area powerhouse; densely vegetated.

Justin goes on to outline how the units are closed or come up with some type of remedial design to mitigate the risk that exists. He explains that SRS is a superfund site, meaning it's an area of land that has received hazardous waste deemed for cleanup. SRS operates under a FFA between DOE, EPA, and SCDHES. Remedial decisions are governed as a three-party Core Team agreement following standard CERCLA steps: Remedial Investigation/Baseline Risk Assessment (RI/BRA), Corrective Measures Study/Feasibility Study (CMS/FS), Proposed Plan / Statement of Basis, Record of Decision, and Remedial Action.

Once the record of decision has been determined and the remedial action plan developed, they implement the remedial action and complete the post construction/remedial action completion report. Next, they go through how the ash units are applied to the closure process. He explained that ash tends to migrate outside of the unit boundaries on site. A visual verification sampling is conducted to define the extent of ash outside the unit boundary, as well as analytical sampling of the ash to conduct their risk assessment. What they found was that the ash was comparable from unit to unit, and they were able to consolidate the analytical samples and use them across the risk assessment. The risk assessment identified three possible risks. (1) Human Health, which is arsenic and select naturally occurring radionuclides identified in surface soils/ash above the 1x10^6 risk threshold under future resident and industrial worker scenarios; (2) Contaminant Migration, potential migration to groundwater within 1,000 years identified for barium and uranium isotopes at H and L Ash Basins, and (3) Ecological / Principal Threat Source Material, which none were identified.

From this risk assessment, they developed three different alternatives to determine the selected remedy.
Evaluated Alternatives:

1. *No Action* (baseline).
2. *Land Use Controls (LUCs) with Beneficial Use* (Preferred Alternative).
3. *Class 3 Cover System with Land Use Controls* (synthetic cap over each site).

Once the alternatives were evaluated, they were evaluated against the nine CERCLA criteria listed in the National Contingency Plan. From there, the selection rationale is that both alternatives 2 and 3 met

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threshold and balancing criteria, but Beneficial Use yields an estimated $20M cost savings over individual capping systems.

A phased implementation strategy was developed for the beneficial use alternative, comprising the following phases:

Phase 1 (Immediate / Interim):

- Implement Land Use Controls (signage, deed restrictions, site use permits) to prevent exposure.
- Install monitoring network for H and L basins (contaminant migration tracking).
- Maintain 5-year remedy reviews.

Phase 2 (Remedial Action):

- Clear and grub vegetation.
- Excavate all ash within and outside unit boundaries to achieve clean closure (verified by confirmation sampling).
- Transport ash for beneficial reuse.
- Restore excavated sites to natural contours.

The preferred Beneficial Use Applications & Program Benefits consist of **Primary Beneficial Use, a** Lower fill/backfill for the Saltstone Disposal Unit (SDU) Cover System. The SDU cover requires approximately 4 million cubic yards of fill. The six ash units will supply >1 million cubic yards (supplying ~25% of total required borrow material). The **Alternative Reuse Channels** is the Tank farm closure cover backfill, concrete additive, lightweight aggregate, or asphalt paving.

The programmatic benefits are schedule efficiency; it saves approximately 7.5 years by consolidating regulatory documentation and closing six units simultaneously under one package. The Footprint is reduced; it eliminates separate waste footprints across six areas into a unified, managed disposal cap. This also has Cost & Materials saving as it avoids clean borrow procurement costs and off-site disposal fees.

Schedule & Near-Term Milestones

- **ROD / Proposed Plan Submission:** Submitted (~late summer).
- **Public Comment Period:** Open through end of October (45-day review).
- **LUCIP (Land Use Control Implementation Plan**): Submission: February (next year).
- **Final ROD Issuance:** Following LUCIP submittal.
- **Remedial Action Execution:** Scheduled to commence February 2028.

SRS Coal Ash Beneficial Reuse Strategy Q&A

Dell Priester (CAB Member): Is the vegetation taking over the previously referenced area considered a good thing?

Justin Steadman (SRNS): No, it is not. Crews will need to clear and properly dispose of the vegetation prior to excavating the coal ash.

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John Thomas (CAB Member): Is SRS currently generating any new coal ash?

Justin Steadman (SRNS): Not to my knowledge; there are no active coal-fired powerhouses operating on site.

Edwin Deshong (EM Manager): Could you return to the slide on beneficial coal use? Note the highlighted box: we are able to leverage this coal ash as backfill and supplement concrete materials elsewhere on site. While performing cleanup, we are saving taxpayer dollars by repurposing coal ash into a beneficial form that directly supports the mission.

James Schacht (CAB Member): What makes it better or useful as backfill, and why is it preferable to relocate it rather than leaving it in place?

Justin Steadman (SRNS): Consolidating the ash significantly reduces long-term operational and maintenance costs required for remediation—managing one consolidated site instead of six. The primary driver is cost efficiency rather than physical contaminant risk. When placed as lower backfill, it is encapsulated beneath compacted soil, a vegetative cover, and a geosynthetic liner to prevent water infiltration.

Savannah River Ecology Lab

Dr. Gene Rhodes, Director of the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory, provided an update about the lab, their mission, structure and activities. The Savannah River Ecology Laboratory (SREL) traces its roots to 1951, when the Atomic Energy Commission invited local universities to conduct baseline ecological research on 300 square miles of newly acquired land. The initial agreement was awarded to Dr. Eugene Odum, widely regarded as the father of modern ecology and a member of the National Academy of Sciences. Starting with Odum and a small group of University of Georgia students and scientists, the initiative gradually expanded, eventually leading to Department of Energy funding for the laboratory building that stands today.

The SREL, operated by the University of Georgia (UGA) under a cooperative agreement with the Department of Energy (DOE), provides an independent evaluation of the ecological impacts of Savannah River Site (SRS) operations. The organization serves as an embedded, cost-effective partner, leveraging every DOE dollar with matching external funds from state, federal, and university sources. Operating through a tripartite mission of research, education, and outreach, the lab ensures that environmental evaluations remain scientifically rigorous and transparent to both DOE and the public.

SREL's research portfolio spans radioecology, ecotoxicology, environmental remediation, and wildlife stewardship across the 300-square-mile site. Key investigations focus on low-dose radiation impacts, contaminant movement through biotic food webs, potential consumption risks of game and long-lived species, and human-wildlife conflicts such as vehicle and aircraft collisions. Analytical capabilities continue to expand with the addition of high-resolution ICP-MS for trace metals, newly certified PFAS testing infrastructure, and a systematic cryo-archive designed to track long-term environmental trends.

Education and workforce development are integral components of the laboratory's value proposition. Having trained hundreds of graduate students and undergraduates who gain essential experience navigating heavily regulated DOE environments, SREL serves as a key talent pipeline for the site and the broader scientific community. Concurrently, its environmental outreach initiatives reach

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approximately 30,000 children and adults annually through school visits, public site tours, STEM events, and hands-on programs such as "Ecologist for a Day."

Looking forward, new initiatives like the "Solutions for a Secure Tomorrow" undergraduate experiential learning program and the SoFAST graduate program aimed to recruit and retain regional talent for local employment. Core priorities for the coming period include finalizing a new 10-year cooperative agreement with NNSA, navigating federal funding uncertainties, and managing workforce succession as key personnel approach retirement.

Savannah River Ecology Lab Q&A

Dell Priester (CAB Member): When ecologists conduct fieldwork, are they required to wear hazmat suits/equipment, or is the radiation level too low to require dressing out?

Dr. Gene Rhodes (SREL): No hazmat gear is required for typical field work. In most areas visited by field ecologists, external exposure isn't a concern because contaminants reside within the soil or under water. Industrial handling areas on the site do require specific protective measures, but fieldwork in the woods does not pose acute exposure risks. Special safety protocols are only triggered if samples brought back to the laboratory test above designated threshold limits.

Dell Priester (CAB Member): Do most animals remain within the 300-square-mile radius of the Savannah River Site, or do they travel beyond it?

Dr. Gene Rhodes (SREL): It depends on the species:

- **Migratory / Wide-Ranging Species:** Highly mobile animals like ducks, swamp alligators, feral pigs, and vultures travel extensively. Vultures, for instance, can move between states like Florida and South Carolina within days. These mobile species are of primary monitoring interest.
- **Resident Species:** More sedentary animals, including white-tailed deer, squirrels, and turkeys, generally remain within local home ranges with minimal encroachment beyond site boundaries.

John Thomas (CAB Member): What effects have been observed regarding low-dose radiation?

Dr. Gene Rhodes (SREL): Studies evaluate exposure levels spanning 5, 50, and 500 mGy/day:

- **High Doses (500 mGy/day):** Clear damage occurs, including total loss of reproductive function (e.g., non-functional gonads/ovaries in fish).
- **Low to Mid Doses (5–50 mGy/day):** Organisms trigger an active physiological response, specifically upregulating DNA repair proteins. This aligns with the concept of *radiation hormesis*, where low-level stress prompts cellular repair systems to activate.
- **Long-term & Multi-generational Impacts:** Research evaluates exposure across vulnerable life stages (such as fish fry) and tracks impacts 2–5 generations later.
- **Biological Aging:** Exposure is shown to accelerate biological aging. Researchers utilize DNA methylation techniques to assess chronological versus biological age shifts and changes in overall life expectancy.

Wanda Jackson (CAB Co-Chair): Are tracking devices placed on wildlife like deer and turkeys?

Dr. Gene Rhodes (SREL): Yes. Radio transmitters and tracking devices have been deployed across

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many species over time, including pigs, raccoons, birds, and other wildlife for various ecological studies.

Wanda Jackson (CAB Co-Chair): Is a population count maintained for species like deer?

Dr. Gene Rhodes (SREL): Yes, through multiple scientific methods:

- **Catch-Per-Unit-Effort Models:** For harvested species (deer and feral pigs), data collected by the US Forest Service on hunting effort versus harvest numbers is used to calculate population estimates.
- **Mark-Recapture Studies:** For species like raccoons, individuals are trapped, tagged, released, and tracked based on recapture rates to determine total population sizes.

Wanda Jackson (CAB Co-Chair): During hunting season, are hunters required to report how many deer they take?

Dr. Gene Rhodes (SREL): The entire process is strictly controlled by site operations. Hunters are transported by bus, placed at specific stands, and all harvested deer are checked and collected directly by officials.

Research on Invasive Pigs at SRS and National Concerns

Jim Beasely, a Scientist with the Savannah River Ecology Lab provided an overview of the management of the invasive wild pig crisis in terms of ecology, innovation and conservation.

Across the nation, wild pigs have emerged as one of the most destructive and resilient invasive species, threatening critical ecosystems, agricultural productivity, and public health. Effectively confronting this rapidly expanding crisis requires moving beyond traditional eradication methods toward science-driven, adaptive wildlife management. This presentation explores the ecological scale of the wild pig threat, groundbreaking mitigation research conducted at the Savannah River Site, and scalable management strategies that are successfully safeguarding vulnerable habitats and native wildlife.

Wild pigs represent a widespread invasive threat across the United States, causing billions of dollars annually in agricultural damage, vehicle collisions, disease transmission risks, and wetland habitat destruction. Because of their remarkable dietary adaptability and rapid reproductive capacity—requiring a 40–75% annual removal rate merely to stabilize population numbers—traditional lethal control often behaves like "mowing the grass," with populations rebounding almost immediately once control efforts lapse.

The Savannah River Site (SRS) serves as a primary research hub for studying wild pig ecology and optimizing mitigation strategies. Researchers utilize extensive GPS collar tracking, population modeling, and diet analyses to better understand habitat usage, juvenile survival, and environmental impacts—particularly rooting damage to wetlands and predation on native reptiles and amphibians. This work has helped evaluate trapping tools, uncover that trap placement matters more than specific baits, and pioneer dual-tandem helicopter operations using thermal imaging to locate pigs hidden beneath dense forest canopies.

Applying these ecological insights to management programs has delivered measurable economic and conservation benefits. Research on Farm Bill removal projects on private lands showed a 70–90% reduction in pig density, resulting in significant drops in crop and habitat damage. Furthermore, targeted

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research-led interventions on coastal wildlife refuges reduced local pig populations to near extinction, eliminating predation on vulnerable sea turtle nests and establishing a viable framework for broader regional conservation efforts.

Research on Invasive Pigs at SRS and National Concerns Q&A

Pat Kilroy (CAB Member): What percentage of the pigs killed at the SRS are edible?

Jim Beasley (SREL): I've never heard of a pig that's not been considered edible on the SRS. There is a monitoring program where every deer and pig harvested on the SRS is screened, and I've never heard of one failing those screenings.

Dell Priester (CAB Member): How do you get close to the pigs like that? And how do you handle the larger ones?

Jim Beasley (SREL): For baby pigs (like the 24-hour-old ones shown), we took them directly out of a pig nest. For larger ones, we catch them in traps where they can't go anywhere, then administer anesthetics—just like at a vet—to put them under. While they are sedated, we work them up, attach a tracking collar, collect samples, and then wake them up and send them on their way.

Dell Priester (CAB): How often are pig hunts conducted now on the Savannah River Site?

Jim Beasley (SREL): Pigs are managed in several ways:

- **Public Deer Hunts:** Pigs are harvested during public hunts (roughly two hunts per week over a month or two).
- **Forest Service Trapping:** The U.S. Forest Service oversees private contractors who trap pigs 365 days a year.
- **Helicopter Operations:** Over the past couple of years, USDA APHIS has been granted access to conduct aerial culling via helicopters.

All these groups work both independently and collectively to remove pigs.

John Thomas (CAB Member): When helicopters use heat-sourcing to locate and shoot pigs, are the carcasses cleaned up or left in place?

Jim Beasley (SREL): It depends on location. Across the broader U.S., they often leave them due to sheer numbers. However, the SRS is unique because our research team works closely with USDA APHIS to go out, take samples, and handle carcass removal.

Wanda Jackson (CAB Co-Chair): How many live monitoring cameras do you have set up to track animal activity?

Jim Beasley (SREL): Several ecologists use cameras across different studies. Within my specific program, we typically have 100 or more cameras deployed at any given time to monitor wildlife populations, and other groups monitor additional species.

Wanda Jackson (CAB Co-Chair): What happens if a motorist collides with wildlife, such as a deer or a pig, on the road?

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Jim Beasley (SREL): Pig collisions are especially dangerous because pigs are low to the ground, have dark coloring, and unlike deer, their eyes do not reflect headlight glare at night, making them very hard to see. Because they can be aggressive and opportunistic feeders, it is always recommended to remain safely inside your vehicle after an incident.

Reintroduction Programs for Gopher Frogs

Stacey Lance, a Scientist with the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory provided an overview of the critical conservation efforts surrounding the gopher frog, a specialized, state-endangered amphibian native to our southeastern longleaf pine ecosystems. Historically abundant across the SRS, habitat degradation and fire suppression have reduced this species to a single persisting population breeding in just four local wetlands. This presentation details how a multi-faceted recovery strategy combining bioacoustic monitoring, conservation canines, head-starting, and post-release tracking couples with large-scale habitat restoration to secure a future for the gopher frog and the fire-adapted wildlife sharing its home.

The gopher frog is a specialized amphibian native to the longleaf pine ecosystems of the southeastern United States, reliant on both fire-maintained, open pine uplands and open, herbaceous ephemeral wetlands that dry annually to exclude predatory fish. Historically common across the Savannah River Site (SRS), gopher frogs are now state endangered in South Carolina and under review for federal listing, primarily due to catastrophic habitat loss, forest fire suppression, and the overgrowth of their breeding wetlands. Currently, only one population persists in the northeast corner of SRS and adjacent Energy Solutions land, with breeding documented in merely four wetlands over the past three years. To reverse this decline, researchers and graduate students at SRS employ a comprehensive monitoring and recovery strategy. acoustic loggers track male breeding calls, trained conservation canines locate cryptic adults, and a dedicated head-starting program rears field-collected eggs in cattle tanks to boost tadpole survival to roughly 95% before releasing juveniles back into their native habitats. Because post-release juvenile mortality remains a significant bottleneck due to predation, researchers design simple artificial burrows that provide immediate underground refuge, while radio-telemetry tracking reveals how surviving frogs navigate the terrestrial landscape and utilize coarse woody debris.

Long-term population recovery depends fundamentally on large-scale habitat restoration. In partnership with the Department of Energy and the U.S. Forest Service, SRS has initiated a formalized restoration plan covering seven core sectors. This initiative establishes open ecotones around wetlands; thick encroaching pine stands within 500 meters and reinstates prescribed fire regimes to recreate the open-canopy forest structure vital for amphibian survival.

Beyond stabilizing the localized SRS population, these research findings and techniques are actively shared with regional working groups, state agencies, and nonprofit conservation partners throughout the Southeast. Because the gopher frog occupies both terrestrial longleaf pine forests and isolated wetlands, these restoration practices ultimately benefit an entire suite of endemic, fire-adapted southeastern wildlife.

Reintroduction Programs for Gopher Frogs Q&A

James Schacht (CAB Member): Besides the obvious tragedy of losing a species, what is the significance of the gopher frog? Do they have medical or research value?

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Stacey Lance (SREL): No, nothing like that. They're too rare to be used for any kind of research purposes. Rather, they serve as an indicator species showing that we're losing that habitat and lots of other species along with it. Like anything living in that habitat, things eat them, they eat other things, and they keep that whole ecosystem in balance. Whenever you lose one species, you really can't predict the domino effect it could have on others. That's one of the main reasons we're always working to conserve biodiversity.

Dell Priester (CAB Member): You mentioned that gopher frogs are associated with fire-maintained environments. Can you explain that again?

Stacey Lance (SREL): Yes. The longleaf pine ecosystem is considered a fire-adapted forest. Longleaf pine trees require fire to reproduce and maintain their habitat—other competing vegetation is killed off by it, but they are not.

Fire suppression has been the single biggest driver of habitat loss here. For decades, the message was "Smokey Bear: no fire, no fire, no fire." Now we understand that Southeastern habitats depend on fire to persist, and periodic burns also help prevent catastrophic wildfires.

While it sounds counterintuitive that wetlands need to be burned, historically, these wetlands dry out during the summer. Summer thunderstorms bring lightning strikes that spark fires, which naturally burn the wetlands and prevents trees from encroaching on them. Hundreds of species are adapted to this long-leaf pine ecosystem and depend on regular fire cycles.

Phytoremediation of Tritium at Savannah River Site

Mr. Doug Aubrey, a Forest Ecologist with the Savannah River Ecology Lab provided an overview of the tritium phytoremediation project at the Savannah River Site (SRS), established in 2001 across a designated 65-acre block. The project operates through multi-agency collaboration between DOE (project funding), SRNS (regulatory compliance), the U.S. Forest Service (day to day operations and maintenance of the irrigation system) and SREL (regulatory monitoring, data collection and targeted applied ecological research to optimes performance.

A technical overview of tritium was provided. Tritium is a low-energy beta-emitting radioisotope of hydrogen with a half-life of 12.3 years, decaying into stable helium. It predominantly exists as tritiated water (HTO). While tritium does not penetrate human skin and clears biological systems rapidly upon ingestion or inhalation, remediation is required when present in environmental pathways.

The EPA regulatory drinking water standard is set at 20,000 pCi/L. The presenter contextualized radiation doses using the Banana Equivalent Dose (BED), comparing concentrations at project inception to post-Fukushima water levels (11 banana equivalents). Current pond concentrations in 2026 have decreased markedly to approximately one-third of a banana equivalent, though concentrations remain above the 20,000 pCi/L regulatory threshold. Long-term forecasting models project another ~25 years of remediation before concentrations reach regulatory closure limits (target circa 2050).

Groundwater contamination originated from the Old Radioactive Waste Burial Ground—a 60-acre mixed-waste site operated from the 1960s to mid-1980s and capped in 1991. Legacy contamination generated a tritium plume migrating south toward Fourmile Branch, a tributary of the Savannah River.

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Following costly and inefficient pump-and-treat trials, a containment system was deployed: a sheet-pile dam intercepts groundwater to form a collection retention pond. Water is pumped from this pond to irrigate forest plots, dispersing tritium into the atmosphere through plant transpiration and soil evaporation. The site began with 22 acres of mixed hardwood-pine forest in 2001, expanding in 2008 and 2012 with loblolly pine plantations across eastern and western sectors to enable year-round evergreen transpiration during winter periods.
SREL conducts bi-annual monitoring via soil core extraction to develop mass balance calculations comparing applied versus retained tritium. System efficiency metrics are delivered to SRNS for inclusion in mandatory Corrective Action Reports.

Research focused on mitigating pond overtopping events into Fourmile Branch by maximizing forest water consumption and evaporation:

- **Litter Removal (Pine Straw Raking):** Testing evaluated evaporation rates with and without forest litter. Intact litter yielded ~230 mm of annual evaporation, while raking increased evaporation to ~425 mm (compared to ~1,030 mm total annual precipitation and ~600 mm typical forest transpiration). Operational models from 2024 data showed raking could reduce pond overtopping from 136 days down to 100 days.
- **Irrigation Thresholds and Litter Interception:** Analysis of 313 historical irrigation events revealed that 93% failed to alter or increase underlying soil moisture, as water was primarily captured by the pine litter layer and re-evaporated before root uptake. Precipitation data indicated a threshold of approximately 4 mm is required to saturate the litter layer before infiltration occurs.
- **Optimized Application Rates:** Modeling an increase in irrigation depth (adding ~4 mm per application to satisfy both litter interception and tree transpiration requirements) demonstrated a significant performance improvement, reducing annual pond overtopping days from 136 days down to 71 days.

SREL is currently preparing to integrate these modified hydraulic threshold models into daily USFS operational irrigation schedules to enhance pond withdrawal capacity and mitigate future overflow risks.

Phytoremediation of Tritium at Savannah River Site Q&A

Pat Kilroy (CAB Member): You use that word "plume." I hadn't heard that word until about two years ago, and I had no idea in what context it was used. Today you mentioned this plume occurred in 2001.

Doug Aubrey (SREL): I believed it was identified earlier than that but 2001 is when the phytoremediation system went live.

Pat Kilroy (CAB Member): Okay. In reference to that, I was told about the one in Los Alamos where they tried to use some chromium chemical to reduce a radioactive spill. But what does "HTO SW plume" mean? What is HTO?

Doug Aubrey (SREL): HTO is tritiated water.

Pat Kilroy (CAB Member): Okay. How many plumes have we had at SRS over the last 20 years?

Doug Aubrey (SREL): I can't give an exact number across the board, let alone for tritium itself. I'm very familiar with this specific one, but Matt might be a good person to give a broader perspective on

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different plumes. When we talk about plumes, there are all kinds of substances. For example, back when security was provided on site, there were accounts of plumes from weapons cleaning solvents.

Pat Kilroy (CAB Member): I'm mainly concerned about radioactive materials. It just seems like if you don't ask the right question, you don't always get the answers. Anyway, thank you.

Reducing Risk in Animal Vehicle Collisions

Mr. Travis DeVault, PhD, a Scientist with the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory gave an overview understanding and preventing animal-vehicle collisions through ecological research at Savannah River Site.

Introduction and Background

Animal-vehicle collisions (AVCs) represent a substantial public safety hazard as well as an urgent conservation concern. Over the last five decades, mammal roadkill mortality has seen a four-fold increase, now accounting for approximately 12% of total known mortality for North American mammals. Reptiles and amphibians bear an even heavier regional toll, sometimes comprising more than 90% of local vehicle-related wildlife mortality, while birds account for an estimated 200 million annual collisions in the United States alone, outpacing impacts from wind turbines.

Deer represent the primary driver of damage costs nationwide, with approximately 1.25 million deer-vehicle collisions occurring annually, translating to roughly 3,500 daily incidents or two every minute. These claims total roughly $4 billion per year, averaging about $4,000 per insurance claim. Regionally, Georgia ranks 20th and South Carolina ranks 13th in overall deer-vehicle collision risk. Concurrently, wild pigs have surfaced as an emerging high-risk threat responsible for roughly $36 million in damages nationally. At the Savannah River Site, wild pig collisions match or exceed those involving deer, averaging 50 to 60 incidents each year. Wild pigs present a particularly acute risk because they are low to the ground, darkly colored, lack noticeable eye shine, and tend to freeze rather than flee oncoming traffic. Most AVCs occur during dusk, dawn, and nighttime hours due to peak animal activity, reduced driver visibility, and standard headlights blinding animals whose dark-adapted eyes cannot accurately gauge a vehicle's approach.

Study 1: Driver Detection of Free-Ranging Wildlife

To address driver visibility limitations, researchers designed a study to quantify nighttime driver detection distances and evaluate the efficacy of high-beam headlights. Over the course of a year, researchers monitored a 75 km route at SRS starting 30 minutes post-sunset using a 2018 Ford F-150 equipped with a forward-looking infrared (FLIR) camera. Across 33 test drives involving 24 staff and student volunteer drivers spanning more than 2,400 km, the team documented 240 deer encounters, approximately 50 wild pigs, and multiple sightings of canids and raccoons, cross-verifying callout times and positions with FLIR and GPS tracking.

Using a standard 55 mph safe braking threshold, the findings revealed that drivers using high beams detected deer at a safe stopping distance only about 50% of the time, while low beams performed below the 50% threshold. For pigs and smaller wildlife, safe-distance detection was virtually nonexistent. Detection probabilities also dropped sharply as the animal's distance from the road increased. Furthermore, driver fatigue significantly impaired detection distances over the span of a single 60-minute drive. Detection with low beams plummeted from approximately 75 meters at the start of the drive to 33 meters after an hour, though high beams consistently maintained an average 21-meter

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detection advantage over low beams. The researchers strongly recommend habitual use of high beams where possible and limiting nocturnal transits through high-density wildlife areas.

Study 2: Wildlife Behavior and Vehicle Lighting Mitigation

A secondary study assessed wildlife flight responses to different headlight technologies, comparing standard Halogen and LED setups against an experimental rear-facing light bar. Mounted to illuminate the vehicle's front hood and grill, the experimental light bar provided approaching animals with an illuminated, looming silhouette rather than two pin pricks of blinding lights.

When encountering deer under standard headlight illumination, the likelihood of deer fleeing diminished as vehicle speed increased from 60 km/h to 90 km/h, highlighting an elevated freeze response at higher speeds. However, activating the rear-facing light bar inverted this pattern, prompting higher flight probabilities at elevated vehicle speeds. While deer exhibited no significant behavioral variance between Halogen and LED lights, wild pigs responded markedly better to LEDs. Pigs showed significantly greater flight initiation distances under LED illumination than Halogen, likely due to visual sensitivity to the blue-wavelength spectrum. As with deer, the rear-facing light bar notably increased pig flight initiation distances at higher speeds, successfully overcoming the hazardous freezing behavior typically provoked by standard headlights.

Key Takeaways and Future Work

Illuminating the vehicle's frontal body using rear-facing auxiliary light bars effectively counters the dangerous animal freezing behavior observed at high transit speeds. Additionally, adopting LED headlights offers direct safety benefits by improving detection and earlier flight initiation among wild pig populations. The research team recommends further engineering development to transition these experimental vehicle-illumination prototypes into commercially viable mitigation equipment.

Reducing Risk in Animal Vehicle Collisions Q&A

John Thomas (CAB Member): What are your thoughts about deer whistles?

Travis DeVault (SREL): There have been two studies done on deer whistles. One was conducted at the University of Georgia about a decade ago, and they found that they are completely useless for two reasons.
First, if you're not aware of what deer whistles are, they are small plastic devices fitted to your bumper. The idea is that humans cannot hear them, but air passing through the moving vehicle creates a sound that deer, having different hearing capabilities, can detect, prompting them to move out of the way. However, researchers found that deer whistles aren't loud enough to produce any sound deer can perceive until the vehicle is right upon them.
Second, another study reproduced the sound at higher volumes to see if louder whistles would work. They found that even when deer could hear the sound, it had no repellent effect; they just stood there. They still sell them, mind you, but they do not work.

John Thomas (CAB Member): What about car horns? If you honk your horn, will they move out of the way?

Travis DeVault (SREL): There isn't any definitive research on that, but anecdotal experience shows that deer responses to horns are highly variable. Some individuals react, while others don't, because deer exhibit different temperaments, some are bold, while others are shy.

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The most important rule when encountering a deer is to **not swerve**. Many fatal collisions occur not from hitting the deer itself, but from swerving into oncoming traffic, a utility pole, or a tree. The best action to take is controlled braking, brake as safely and quickly as possible

Monosodium Titanite (MST)/Sludge Solids (SS) to Tank Farm

Ms. Brittany Califf, Program Manager with DOE-SR Waste Disposition, gave a brief presentation to address a question raised at the previous CAB meeting regarding routing to Monosodium Titanite (MST)/Sludge Solids to the Tank Farm.

Current Baseline Approach

Currently, sludge batch compilation involves two waste streams originating from the Salt Waste Processing Facility (SWPF): the MST sludge solids stream and the strip effluent stream. These streams transfer via a low-point pump pit directly to the Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF). Specifically, the MST goes to the Precipitate Reactor Feed Tank (PRFT) and strip effluent goes to the Strip Effluent Feed Tank (SEFT) before moving into the Sludge Receipt and Adjustment Tank (SRAT) for batch compilation. From there, material moves through the Slurry Mix Evaporator (SME), where frit is added, before being processed in the melter and poured into canisters as vitrified glass.

Proposed Alternative & Operational Benefits

An opportunity has been identified to reroute the MST solids stream to the tank farm rather than sending it directly into DWPF. This project requires an estimated $12 million capital investment and yields substantial operational advantages:

- **Facility Decoupling:** Decouples SWPF from DWPF, providing operational flexibility so that SWPF can continue operating through DWPF outages.
- **Reduced Cycle Time:** Lowers SRAT batch processing cycle times at DWPF, facilitating increased SRAT batch throughput per year.
- **Additional Surge Capacity:** Yields approximately 6,000 gallons of working volume for lag storage of strip effluent beyond the current capacity in 512-S.

Process Flow Modification

Under the proposed pathway, instead of transferring MST directly into DWPF's PRFT, it will be directed to a shared sludge route tank. The solids will then be routed to a sludge preparation tank (Tank 40), where they will be incorporated and subsequently transferred to DWPF as a single blended stream for the SRAT batch.

Implementation Status

The project team is actively advancing safety basis documentation updates (including calculations and What-If/HAZOP evaluations) and completing design modifications, including physical fabrication of jumpers. System implementation is targeted for January 2028.

Monosodium Titanite (MST)/Sludge Solids (SS) to Tank Farm Q&A

Pat Kilroy (CAB Member): If you go back to that other screen...so you eliminate the MST stream. You've got the high stream and then the sludge. How does the new configuration work?

Brittany Califf (DOE-SR): Currently, the configuration sends the MST to our feed tank here, and strip effluent to the feed tank over there. We then add it as we compile it into the SRAT batch: sludge first,

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then MST, then acid, and finally strip effluent on top of that, with the shared sludge route running up and down.
With this change, it eliminates having to send it there. We can now directly send it into the sludge batch prep tanks to be incorporated as a single sludge addition.

Pat Kilroy (CAB Member): How do you control the amounts and batching of each component? Do you have specific volume requirements for each?

Brittany Califf (DOE-SR): They use software to compile everything into one sludge batch. From there, it goes through their qualification process to get qualified.

Brittany Califf (DOE-SR): One more detail, the PRFT that is no longer being used for MST will be repurposed into strip effluent lag storage to provide extra storage capacity for strip effluent (the cesium-bearing stream from SWPF).

Public Comments

No public comments.

Board Business:

Recommendation

James Schacht (CAB Member): Insights from the July Board Meeting indicate that the 2037 deadline remains achievable only if current funding is not reduced. The proposed recommendation is to establish formalized commitments and assurances to maintain at least the current baseline funding level on an annual basis to ensure long-term program sustainability and goal achievement.

James Tanner (CAB Facilitator/DDFO): Opened the recommendation for discussion.

Discussion

Pat Kilroy (CAB Member): Expressed concern based on recent data review, noting that there is currently insufficient information available to finalize and adopt the recommendation at this stage.

Motions and Voting

Deborah Creech (CAB Chair): Moved to return the recommendation to the subcommittee for further review and refinement.

Pat Kilroy (CAB Member): Seconded the motion.

James Tanner (CAB Facilitator/DDFO): Noted this motion triggers an immediate vote. Votes were tallied:

In Favor: 7

Opposed: 1

Abstentions: 0

Outcome: Motion passed. The recommendation will move back to the subcommittee for further review.

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Closing Remarks & Adjournment

Deborah Creech (CAB Chair): I just wanted to say that the presentations were awesome and very explanatory. I enjoyed each one. I'm grateful for the cards at the end so that we can review the tanks. All the information received was educational and helps us better understand our work across the subcommittees.

Edwin Deshong (EM Manager): I want to echo the Chair's comments. This session was phenomenal, greatly appreciated it. Watching you guys, I can tell the questions are getting more thorough because the background knowledge is there. I want to thank James and Juanita and the whole team for putting this together and getting a great rhythm. Thank you all for being an asset to the department. Appreciate it.

Dell Priester (CAB Member): Raised concerns regarding whether in-ground legacy materials remain sufficiently contained to prevent migration into groundwater.

James Tanner (CAB Facilitator/DDFO): Clarified that legacy waste encompasses Cold War-era liquid and transuranic waste. Recommended planning a dedicated session on site groundwater plumes and ongoing remediation projects.
Matt Baker (DOE-SR): Confirmed that detailed presentations regarding groundwater plumes and trends can be scheduled. Pointed to the upcoming November meeting, which includes the Annual Site Environmental Report (ASER) presentation delivered jointly with the state environmental surveillance team.

Upcoming Schedule & Administrative Items:

- **October Meeting:** Confirmed it will be a virtual subcommittee meeting on October 20, 2026, at 3:30 p.m.
- **November Meeting:** Full in-person board meeting to be held on November 17, 2026, featuring the Annual Site Environmental Remediation (ASER) presentation in conjunction with the state that will give their Environmental Surveillance and Oversight Program presentation.
- **Catering Query (Wanda Jackson):** Inquired if lunch could be catered for the November session.
- **Policy Clarification (James Tanner):** Complex-wide DOE/CAB regulations prohibit the use of departmental funds or staff facilitation for catered meals. Members are welcome to independently coordinate and self-fund lunch as a group.

Official Adjournment

Deborah Creech (CAB Chair): Formally adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m.

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