

## Recommendation 374

### Planning to Preserve and Establish SRS L- Reactor as a National Historic Site

#### Background

As part of the nuclear weapons program buildup during World War II and subsequent years, the Savannah River Plant was announced in 1950 to produce weapons grade nuclear material. Construction began the following year. By 1953, R Reactor went critical. The following year, Reactors P, L, and K went critical as well as the F Canyon Separations facility. In 1955 C Reactor went critical and the H Canyon Separations facility went online.

By 1988, all reactors had been shut down although K was restarted for a brief period in 1992 when it was permanently shut down. In 2011 P & R reactor closure was complete, leaving L as the only available reactor to preserve.<sup>1</sup>

#### Discussion

The building of the Savannah River Plant (now Savannah River Site) is truly one of the engineering marvels in our Country's history. It is said the construction of the site was so rapid that blueprints were barely dry before construction was implemented. In spite of the unbelievable construction timeline of a facility this large and complex, it operated until there was no further need of the weapons grade material it produced. It did this with an impeccable safety record.

Although parts of the facility are still operational and providing essential nuclear services to our country, many buildings are being decommissioned and torn down or grouted in situ. In the 2004 Programmatic Agreement - Preservation and Public Outreach Program, C Reactor was hoped to be preserved and made available for public tours as a legacy to the work that had been done there. Nothing was done and by 2015 in its Cultural Resources Management Plan update, DOE advised PA stakeholders that they wish to return C Area to the SRS Decommissioning Schedule.<sup>2</sup> This was done mainly because of the condition of the building with mold damage, water damage, and a lack of maintenance for some 25 plus years.

#### Options

Today the clean-up of the Savannah River Site remains a priority of DOE's Environmental Management force. The cleanup of the legacy waste remains a top priority; closure and/or demolition of excess facilities continue. Both L & K reactors remain viable buildings in that they are continuing to be used. K reactor has been extensively modified to meet its current mission while L Reactor is being used to store spent fuel rods. This leaves L Reactor as the only viable reactor to preserve as a part of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.srs.gov/general/about/history1.htm> (Accessed June 21, 2022 @ 22:00)

<sup>2</sup> SRS: COLD WAR PRESERVATION PROGRAM 2022 UPDATE: Presentation to the SRS CAB 16 May 2022 by Hammett, Albenesius, Smith, and Reed  
([https://cab.srs.gov/library/meetings/2022/ms/Historic\\_Preservation.pdf](https://cab.srs.gov/library/meetings/2022/ms/Historic_Preservation.pdf) (Accessed 21 June, 2022 @ 22:36))

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the SRS legacy for generations to witness once the L Reactor completes its current mission currently estimated to end in 2034. Without planning today one of two events will occur:

1. The reactor building will be shut down when its current mission is complete and will be eventually sealed in situ; or
2. Begin the planning process to preserve the facility as a historical structure and as a lasting legacy to the work performed there with the ultimate goals of members of the public and other interested parties may visit the site.

Recommendation

The SRS CAB recommends that DOE immediately begin planning to preserve this facility as a National Historical Site and to keep it in a state to enable public tours to the facility once it has completed its mission, similar to what has been done at the Oak Ridge and Hanford sites.