



Department of Energy
Savannah River Operations Office
P.O. Box A
Aiken, South Carolina 29802
JUN 28 2005

Ms. Jean Sulc, Chair
Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board
24 Harbor River Circle
St. Helena Island, South Carolina 29920

Dear Ms. Sulc:

SUBJECT: Savannah River Site (SRS) Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) Recommendation Number 216 – End State Vision (ESV)

Thank you for your recommendation regarding the SRS ESV. The Department of Energy (DOE) acknowledges your concerns noted in the three-part recommendation and is addressing each part and sub-part, individually.

Part 1: In an effort to strengthen the ESV process, the SRS CAB offers the following and expects a progress report on each recommendation on or before September 27, 2005:

On or before September 27, 2005, DOE will provide a progress report on each of the following recommendations that relates to ongoing or future actions.

- **DOE apply the risk-informed approach proposed by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to determine the acceptable end states for all buildings, waste management facilities, reactors and active and inactive waste units containing radionuclides, heavy metals, or organic contaminants (e.g., tritium, etc.).**

DOE recognizes the NAS risk-informed approach and its value in decision making. DOE utilizes those principles in determining end states for various hazards (e.g., the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act risk assessments for soil and groundwater waste units, and performance assessments for radioactive waste management facilities). The NAS recognizes the difficulties and uncertainties associated with risk analysis, and that the results of the risk analysis are only a part of a decision-making process, not the sole basis for the final decision (*Risk and Decisions About Disposition of Transuranic and High-Level Radioactive Waste*, National Academy of Sciences, 2005). Many factors—political, economic, engineering, legal/regulatory, and risks to workers, the public, and the environment—will be considered in determining acceptable end states for all SRS hazards.

- **DOE use a risk-informed application to determine the end state for Plutonium (Pu) 238 waste.**

As DOE evaluates the end state alternatives for Pu-238 waste, DOE plans to use a performance assessment to evaluate the risk of near-surface disposal. Additionally,

DOE plans to review and consider the final National Research Council report (*Risk and Decisions About Disposition of Transuranic and High-Level Radioactive Waste*, National Academy of Sciences, 2005) related to this issue. However, while the decision must be risk-informed, there are other factors that will be considered, as described above.

- **DOE release decision documents to the public at the same time they are released for the external agency review.**

DOE intends to facilitate early community involvement in cleanup decision making under the Federal Facility Agreement (FFA), as stated in the draft *SRS Community Involvement Plan* (May 2005). In this way, the stakeholders can understand cleanup issues and express their preferences for DOE's management of them before decision documents are written. This will allow for informed stakeholder involvement when it can have its greatest effect on decision making. The same approach to early stakeholder involvement will be used for cleanup and end state issues that are not explicitly covered by the FFA.

DOE, as a courtesy, provides pre-decisional documents to DOE Headquarters (HQ) or SRS regulators before releasing them to the public. The SRS ESV document will provide a schematic diagram that depicts the decision process for FFA-related decisions (soil, groundwater, and deactivation and decommissioning) and other end state decisions. The diagram highlights the public involvement milestones and opportunities that are required by law or regulations, or those that DOE will provide to increase stakeholder awareness and allow for informed input.

- **DOE evaluate the impact to SRS end states and risk to stakeholders if Yucca Mountain does not open and consider alternate plans should the repository not open.**

DOE plans to use the repository, as required by law, and does not plan to develop an alternative "what-if" scenario for the related wastes and materials in the SRS ESV document at this time. DOE will continue to address the issues regarding Yucca Mountain and the need for its availability to meet the Performance Management Plan objectives. DOE will provide information to the SRS CAB on waste prioritization and the schedule for the shipment of high level waste and spent nuclear fuel to the Federal repository as it is made available.

DOE is continuing to put tank waste into a stable, retrievable form for temporary storage and shipment to the repository. Spent nuclear fuel will transition from wet to dry storage, a more stable form, in preparation for shipment to the repository.

- **DOE-HQ identify necessary actions to provide perpetual Federal ownership of and responsibility for SRS.**

DOE is working with the End States Working Group to reach agreement on the benefits of and determine what actions are needed to attain perpetual Federal ownership of

SRS. The End States Working Group is a national team of DOE stakeholders and regulators that was chartered by the Office of Environmental Management (EM-1) to provide guidance for a collaborative, periodic review and reevaluation of site-specific end states. The Group will discuss the importance of perpetual Federal ownership to DOE from a national perspective in the next several months.

- **DOE-HQ identify necessary actions to formally/legally name SRS as a National Environmental Research Park (NERP) and discuss the types of current and end state research in the ESV.**

SRS was formally named a NERP in 1972 by the Atomic Energy Commission. It was the first of seven DOE sites to be so designated.

The objectives of the research parks are, and will continue to be, to conduct research and education activities that will:

- Develop methods for assessing and documenting the environmental consequences of human actions related to energy and weapons use;
- Develop methods for predicting the environmental consequences of ongoing and proposed energy development;
- Explore methods for eliminating or minimizing predicted adverse effects of various energy and weapons activities on the environment;
- Train people in ecological and environmental sciences; and
- Use the parks for educating the public on environmental and ecological issues.

NERP-related activities will provide a recognized science base to verify and support the protectiveness and value of remedies, end states, and long-term stewardship activities.

NERP-related research will be addressed in Chapter 1 of the July 2005 ESV.

Part 2: DOE-HQ investigate and pursue Congressional Authorization to legitimize perpetual Federal ownership of SRS and the identification of SRS as a NERP.

DOE is working through the End States Working Group to pursue Congressional Authorization of perpetual Federal ownership. Perpetual Federal ownership of SRS will support the continuous study of the effects of nuclear and industrial operations on the environment, land use management resulting in the protection of largely undisturbed ecosystems, and DOE land-use control credibility. Such ownership must be established in law. DOE will consider pursuing NERP legislation in conjunction with pursuing Congressional Authorization regarding perpetual federal ownership of SRS.

JUN 28 2005

Ms. Jean Sulc

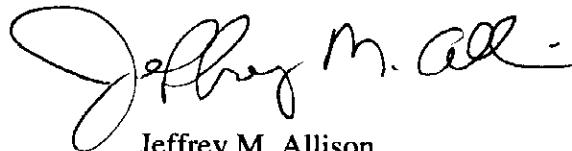
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Part 3: DOE use performance assessments to determine risks and should provide results to the SRS CAB.

DOE will use performance assessments as required by DOE Order 435.1, "Radioactive Waste Management," to ensure that low level waste disposal facilities meet protective performance criteria. DOE will also discuss with the SRS CAB other appropriate uses for a performance assessment process. Consistent with DOE's desire for early stakeholder involvement in cleanup, the performance assessment results will be made available in time to support early SRS CAB and stakeholder involvement in cleanup or end state decisions.

If you have any questions, please call me or Mr. Brian Hennessey, of my staff, at (803) 952-8365.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeffrey M. Allison". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Jeffrey M. Allison
Manager

SGP-05-016