



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

FEB 17 1999

Ms. Ann G. Loadholt  
SRS Citizens Advisory Board  
P. O. Box 365  
Barnwell, South Carolina 29812

Dear Ms. Loadholt:

SUBJECT: High Level Waste (HLW) Tank Closure Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

We appreciate the continued interest and support of the Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) for the Savannah River Site (SRS) HLW tank closure program. SRS is committed to closing additional tanks in a prudent and cost effective manner. SRS will prepare the EIS prior to closing additional HLW tanks. The EIS has as its preferred alternative, bulk waste removal from the tanks followed by water washes and subsequently filling the tanks with a reducing grout, backfill material, and strong grout. This is the same process the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) used to close Tanks 17 and 20.

The EIS is being prepared to open a new round of information sharing and dialogue with stakeholders and the public relative to tank closure activities at SRS. This effort is consistent with efforts at the other DOE sites that manage HLW, continues the DOE's policy of openness and public involvement, and promotes a consistent approach among DOE sites. Preparing the EIS will also ensure lessons-learned from closure of Tanks 17 and 20 will be reflected in future tank closures.

With respect to Recommendation No. 78:

- (1) For the reasons cited above, DOE believes it is important to continue the EIS process we have begun on the closure of SRS HLW tanks. While we know of no new issues, the EIS process requires a harder look at worker and public safety and health issues, and environmental protection issues, than was accomplished with the 1996 environmental assessment. For example, the EIS will present an analysis of the potential impacts of the tank removal alternative that will include an assessment of worker exposures during potential accident conditions, and the expected long-term impacts of relocating the tanks to appropriate disposal locations.
- (2a) We agree to devote the minimum amount of funds and time necessary to complete the EIS. DOE-SR always strives to prepare adequate EISs as quickly and inexpensively as possible.
- (2b) We welcome the opportunity to brief the CAB in March 1999 on the contractor selected to support preparation of the EIS along with the estimated costs and schedule.

Ms. Ann G. Loadholt

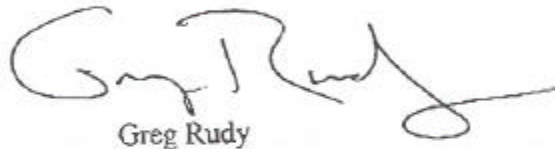
2

FEB 17 1999

- (2c) DOE will make every effort to prepare the EIS properly and promptly.
- (2d) We will ensure that the EIS supports the ultimate Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) closure process. DOE has noted that an explicit recognition of the relationship of the individual tank closure process to the ultimate CERCLA closure of the tank farms was lacking in the 1996 Environmental Assessment.

Again, thank you for the Board's continuing constructive interest in the tank closure program. If you have questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please contact me at (803) 725-2405 or Roy Schepens at (803) 208-6072.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Rudy", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Greg Rudy  
Manager

PB:99-0020