

NEWS from The Savannah River Site



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For Immediate Release

L AREA SEEPAGE BASIN CLOSURE MARKS ANOTHER SRS MILESTONE

AIKEN, S.C. (April 9, 2003) — The last step in closing one of the Savannah River Site's reactor seepage basins has been completed, marking a milestone for environmental remediation activities at SRS.

A protective soil cover, the final step in remediating the basin, was completed at the L Area Reactor Seepage Basin, one of several reactor seepage basins being closed under one Record of Decision. The process was begun in L Area in October 2002.

“Closing the seepage basins reduces the migration of low-level radioactive contaminants and protects future site workers,” said Bruce Schappell, Project Manager for the reactor basin closures. “We have now safely performed closure work on six reactor seepage basins at SRS.”

Remediation consisted of several engineered measures. First, workers removed and chipped the vegetation at the basin, then backfilled the basin with common soil. Next, they placed a 2-foot layer of low permeability soil into the basin. Next came a layer of vegetative soil, which was covered with sod. This remedy will prevent rainwater intrusion and limit migration of radioactive metal contaminants into the groundwater.

The unlined earthen basin, located outside L Area's reactor building, measures approximately 200 feet long by 36 feet wide by 7 feet deep. During reactor operations, it received contaminated purge water from the reactor and liquid waste from tanker trucks.

In addition to tritium and low levels of other radionuclides, the purge water may have contained small amounts of non-radioactive organic and inorganic substances and detergents. By design, the purge water filtered to soil below the basin, and a significant portion of the tritium decayed before the water arrived at surface streams.

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