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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SRS, Regulators Reach Agreement for Liquid Waste Cleanup Milestones

AIKEN, S.C. (March 28, 2023) – The [Savannah River Site](#), in partnership with state and federal regulators, has finalized a high-level waste tank milestones agreement guiding the work to clean up one of the largest environmental risks in South Carolina.

Over the last several months, the Department of Energy-Savannah River (DOE-SR), state regulator [South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control \(DHEC\)](#), and federal regulator [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#) have reviewed, negotiated, and agreed upon revisions to the SRS Federal Facility Agreement (FFA). The FFA establishes procedural framework and directs comprehensive remediation at SRS, including high-level waste tank milestone agreements and other site cleanup priorities.

The revision to the FFA outlines the schedule for the waste removal and operational closure of the 16 oldest-style tanks at SRS. All 43 remaining tanks are slated to be operationally closed by 2037.

The radioactive liquid waste stored at SRS was generated as a byproduct from the processing of nuclear materials for national defense, research, medical programs, and outer space missions. Totalling about 34 million gallons, the waste is stored in underground carbon-steel waste tanks grouped into two tank farms at SRS.

Revising the FFA and the waste tank milestone commitments ensures regulatory requirements align to allow DOE's liquid waste facilities to operate as efficiently and effectively as possible, according to Jim Folk, DOE-SR's assistant manager for waste disposition.

"The number-one goal agreed upon by all parties is to reduce risk to the environment by removing waste and closing tanks," Folk said. "DOE will continue its ongoing positive relationship with our regulators by involving DHEC and EPA throughout each stage of the waste removal process to explain the activities undertaken, results of removal operations, challenges, and next steps."

The revised agreement also outlines a set of shared SRS Liquid Waste Program values and goals, in priority order:

Values

1. Maintain transparency with open communication between regulators, DOE, and the contractor on program progress, and significant emerging issues.
2. Ensure DOE's strategy and plans are subject to stakeholder engagement and input, including DHEC per



DOE-Savannah River, state regulator South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), and federal regulator Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have signed an updated Savannah River Site (SRS) Liquid Waste Program milestone agreement incorporated in the SRS Federal Facility Agreement.

mitting processes as appropriate.

3. Maximize the amount of curies (especially long-lived radionuclides) vitrified and ready for ultimate disposal out of state.
4. Limit disposal of curies onsite at SRS so that residual radioactivity is as low as reasonably achievable.

Goals

1. Reduce risk to the environment by removing waste and closing tanks with a goal of completion of the liquid waste program by 2037.
2. Reduce operational and environmental risk by aggressively removing curies from the waste tanks.
3. Reduce operational and environmental risk by optimizing operations to minimize liquid waste program total life cycle.
4. Complete waste removal and subsequent grouting of all waste tanks and ancillary structures with a risk-based priority order: first to tanks in the water table, followed by F Tank Farm tanks, followed by remainder of waste tanks, followed by ancillary structures, recognizing the potential for future emergent conditions or opportunities.

The liquid waste contractor at SRS, [Savannah River Mission Completion \(SRMC\)](#), assisted with FFA milestone negotiations. For the first time, a single contractor now has responsibility for all the liquid waste processing facilities at SRS, which is a significant benefit to completing the liquid waste mission, according to SRMC President and Program Manager Dave Olson.

“Having the milestones set today allows us to focus on delivering results and executing the work that will drive our mission to completion,” Olson said. “With many facility improvements and process optimizations in place and being implemented, SRMC plans to aggressively pursue early success to meet the FFA milestones.”

Henry Porter, DHEC’s chief of the Bureau of Land and Waste Management, signed the agreement on behalf of the environmental regulator.

“The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control considers the high-level waste at the Savannah River Site one of the largest environmental risks in the state,” Porter said. “Collaborating with the federal government to agree upon these milestones, values, and goals is critical in achieving the site’s waste cleanup mission and protecting the community and environment beyond the barricades.”

Randall Chaffins, EPA’s Region 4 acting director for the Superfund and Emergency Management Division, described the importance of partnering with DOE and DHEC to ensure accountability.

“Safely remediating the radioactive liquid waste and removing the tanks from service at the Savannah River Site protects human health and the environment,” Chaffins said. “EPA is appreciative of the mutually beneficial partnership with DOE and its contractors.”