

For Immediate Release

Media contact:

Rick Kelley

803.208-0198

rick.kelley@srs.gov

SRS Waste Tanks Closer to Closure Thanks to ARRA

AIKEN, S.C. (October 13, 2011) – Savannah River Remediation’s (SRR) mission to close old-style hazardous waste tanks at the Savannah River Site is more of a reality today than ever, thanks to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

SRR received \$200 million in ARRA funding and began work September 23, 2009, on 41 activities identified to accelerate the operational closure of waste tanks. At the project’s completion on September 30, 2011, all activities were essentially complete with final project closeout scheduled for March 2012.

During peak construction over 600 employees were either hired or jobs retained under the program. Thanks to the funding and the diligent, safe work of employees, ARRA was a true success.

For Mark Schmitz, the SRR ARRA Project Manager, the work has been nothing short of excellence.

“Two years ago we prepared for ARRA funding by defining activities and work scopes just in case we received some ARRA funding,” Schmitz said. “We did and we went right to work. Wasting little time, we accomplished a great deal by providing upgrades to much of the liquid waste infrastructure and improvements to waste treatment processes that will enable us to close tanks quicker.”

A key accomplishment was the installation of bubbler technology at the Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF), the nation’s largest nuclear waste processing facility where over 3.4 million gallons of high-level radioactive waste has been vitrified into a stable glass form and placed into large stainless steel canisters suitable for long-term storage.

With the bubbler installation and when all process enhancements are in place, the average annual canister production is expected to increase to 400 canisters representing a 40 percent improvement over past performance. Expedited glass-waste processing through the bubbler technology is only one technology being used to expedite closure of the remaining 49 underground waste tanks.

(more)

(add one – ARRA ends)

Also with the benefit of ARRA funding, more underground waste storage tanks are in the closure process at Savannah River Site (SRS) that at any time in the Site's history. ARRA funding has, for example, supported the development and deployment of robot devices being used to sample the composition of tank waste.

Two tanks are nearing completion of operational closure and, following regulatory approval, will be ready for grouting and final closure in 2012. Four other tanks, also with ARRA support, are following closely behind in the operational closure process.

Significant improvements to aging SRS liquid waste operations infrastructure have also been beneficiaries of ARRA funding. Upgrades to infrastructure will avoid delays due to equipment failure and disruptions to scheduled waste processing. Enhancements to electrical systems, added protective pipe shielding and construction of waste storage facilities have prepared liquid waste operations for integration with the Salt Waste Disposal Facility, which is under construction and slated for startup operations in 2014.

Other accomplishments included the procurement and installation of major items of equipment, all necessary to accelerate waste removal and tank closure. These items included a 9,000-gallon nitrogen tank, 3,000-gallon argon tank, two 60,000-gallon salt solution receipt tanks, a 35,000-gallon waste concentration hold tank, and 14 mixing, blending and transfer pumps.

But most noteworthy of the ARRA work has been the safety accomplishments of the project team, according to Dave Olson, SRR President and Project Manager.

“At peak project activity, over 600 workers were supporting ARRA projects and they have performed their work safely,” Olson said. “Despite the challenging nature of much of the construction activity, more than 1.5 million hours were worked by the ARRA workforce with no injuries. This is an outstanding accomplishment.”

SRS is owned by the U.S. Department of Energy. The SRS Liquid Waste contract is managed by SRR, a team of companies led by URS Corp. with partners Bechtel National, CH2M Hill and Babcock & Wilcox. Critical subcontractors for the contract are AREVA, Energy Solutions and URS Safety Management Solutions.

SRR-2011-54