



# Environmental Bulletin

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*from the Savannah River Site*

ROD expected after August 20

## Preferred alternative technology for salt processing announced in SEIS

The Department of Energy (DOE) Savannah River Operations Office (SR) has announced the availability of the *Savannah River Site Salt Processing Alternatives Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement* (SEIS).

Based on DOE's evaluation of research results and comments received on the Draft Supplemental EIS, the Final Supplemental EIS identifies the Caustic Side Solvent Extraction technology as the preferred alternative for separating the high-activity and low-activity salt waste from the liquid high-level radioactive waste now stored in underground tanks at the Savannah River Site (SRS). The Caustic Side Solvent Extraction technology will use a highly specific organic extractant to separate cesium from the high-level waste salt solution.

After separation, the high-activity fraction of the salt waste would be vitrified in the Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF) and stored until it could be disposed of as high-level waste in a geologic repository. The low-activity fraction would be disposed of as saltstone in vaults at SRS. High-level radioactive sludge waste continues to be successfully vitrified at DWPF, with over 1100 glass waste canisters produced since radioactive operations began in 1996.

In March 2001 DOE issued the Draft Salt Processing Alternatives SEIS for comment, and held public meetings in North Augusta on May 1 and Columbia on May 3. DOE received a number of comments on the Draft SEIS, and each comment is addressed in the Final SEIS.

A Record of Decision on the *Salt Processing Alternatives* SEIS will be issued no sooner than August 20, 2001, and will document DOE's selection of a salt processing technology.

### **Need Copies?**

The *Savannah River Site Salt Processing Alternatives Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement* (DOE/EIS-0082-S2D) is available online at [tis.eh.doe.gov/nepa/docs/docs.htm](http://tis.eh.doe.gov/nepa/docs/docs.htm).

If you would like a copy of the Final SEIS, please write to

Andrew R. Grainger  
NEPA Compliance Officer  
U.S. Department of Energy  
Savannah River Operations Office  
Building 742A  
Room 185  
Aiken, South Carolina 29802

Toll-free phone and fax (800) 881-7292 or email [nepa@srs.gov](mailto:nepa@srs.gov).

## DOE publishes amended ROD for the transportation and treatment of low level and mixed waste at SRS

The Department of Energy (DOE) has published an Amended Record of Decision (ROD) to the Savannah River Site (SRS) Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement (DOE/EIS-0217). This ROD modifies earlier decisions concerning the treatment and disposal of low-level radioactive waste (LLW) and mixed hazardous and low-level radioactive waste (MLLW) at SRS. This modification brings the earlier decisions into conformity with DOE's programmatic ROD for LLW and MLLW, and reflects regulatory and budgetary conditions at SRS.

DOE has decided to continue onsite treatment and disposal of about 90 percent of SRS LLW, to the extent practicable, at existing facilities. Certain LLW streams, about 10 percent, for which onsite treatment is not practicable, will be sent to another DOE facility or to an offsite commercial treatment facility. Certain LLW streams for which onsite disposal is not practicable, about 10 percent, will be sent to a DOE regional disposal facility (i.e., either the Hanford Site or the Nevada Test Site) or to an offsite commercial disposal facility, consistent with the facility's waste acceptance criteria.

DOE will also continue onsite treatment of SRS MLLW, about 20 percent, for which SRS has the capacity. Certain mixed waste, about 80 percent, for which onsite treatment capacity does not exist or is not cost effective, will be treated at two of DOE's four regional treatment facilities (i.e., either at the Hanford Site or the Oak Ridge Reservation) or possibly at a commercial facility. All treated MLLW and residuals, 100 percent, from onsite or offsite treatment will be disposed of at a DOE regional disposal facility (i.e., either the Hanford Site or the Nevada Test Site) or at an offsite commercial disposal facility, consistent with the facility's waste acceptance criteria.

For copies of the ROD, contact: Andrew R. Grainger, NEPA Compliance Officer, U. S. Department of Energy, Savannah River Operations Office, Building 742-A, Room 185, Aiken, SC 29808, or e-mail your request to: [nepa@srs.gov](mailto:nepa@srs.gov), or make your request by phone at: 1-800-881-7292. The ROD may also be accessed electronically at the following website: "[http://www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/fedreg/a010628c.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/a010628c.html)" under the heading "Energy Department".

### DOE Announces Public Meeting on Scrap Metals

The Department of Energy (DOE) has initiated a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) on the disposition of scrap metals that may have residual surface contamination. Details about this PEIS can be found in the DOE Notice of Intent announcing the PEIS (66 Federal Register 36562, July 12, 2001), available on the Internet at: <http://tis.eh.doe.gov/nepa/>. The public comment period will close on September 10, 2001.

You are invited to learn more about this PEIS and provide comment on the proposed scope at a public scoping meeting:

**When:** July 31, 2001

**Time:** 2 - 5 p.m. or 8 - 11 p.m.

(At 1 and 7 p.m. prior to each meeting, an information/open house will be offered to persons interested in radiation fundamentals, including sources and health effects, not specifically related to metal recycling.)

**Where:** North Augusta Community Center  
495 Brookside Avenue  
North Augusta, SC 29841

## Current NEPA actions affecting SRS

- **Evaluate an Alternative Approach for the Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF) Glass Waste Canister Storage Facility at SRS (DOE/EA-1327)** The Environmental Assessment (EA) will analyze potential environmental consequences associated with building and operating onsite above-ground concrete pads for casks containing DWPF canisters. The storage casks would be made using SRS's inventory of depleted uranium trioxide powder. The action would significantly reduce the onsite inventory of depleted uranium trioxide powder. This EA has been cancelled. (See related article located below)
- **Removal, Transportation and Storage of Strontium-90 Radioisotopic Thermoelectric Generators (RTG) (DOE/EA-1351)** This EA is being developed jointly by DOE and the U.S. Air Force. It addresses the (1) removal and transportation of 10 Strontium-90 RTGs from Burnt Mountain Seismic Array Laboratory in Alaska to a DOE site or an Air Force facility, and (2) long-term storage of the 10 identified plus about 50 other RTGs. The draft EA is expected in August 2001.
- **SRS High Level Waste Tank (HLW) Closure (DOE/EIS-0303)** The proposed action is to close the SRS HLW Tanks in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, DOE Orders and South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control permit requirements. The draft environmental impact statement (EIS) was released in November 2000. Public meetings were held in January 2001. The final EIS is expected in October 2001.
- **Disposition of Scrap Metals from Radiological Areas** DOE will evaluate alternatives for disposition of scrap metals from DOE sites that may have been in radiological areas. The disposition options to be analyzed include continuation of the suspension on unrestricted release of metals for recycling, and unrestricted release of scrap metals. The Notice of Intent for this programmatic EIS was issued on July 12. Public meetings are set for July 31 in North Augusta, SC. (See related notice on page 2.)
- **SRS Salt Processing Alternatives Final Supplemental EIS (DOE/EIS-0082-S2)** The proposed action is to construct and operate a process to replace In-Tank Precipitation as part of the SRS High Level Waste Management System. The draft supplemental EIS (SEIS) was distributed in March 2001. Public meetings were May 1 at the North Augusta Community Center and May 3 at the Holiday Inn Coliseum. The public comment period extended through May 14. The final SEIS was distributed in July and a Notice of Availability was listed in the *Federal Register* on July 20.
- **Geologic Repository for the Disposal of Spent Nuclear Fuel and High-Level Waste at Yucca Mountain (DOE/EIS-0250)** This EIS assesses the potential environmental impacts from construction, operation, and closure of a Nuclear Regulatory Commission-licensed geologic repository for disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level waste. The draft EIS was released August 1999. An SEIS was distributed in May 2001 to address a new engineering design.

## EA on DWPF alternate storage approach cancelled

In April of 2000, the Department of Energy (DOE) Savannah River Operations Office (SR) issued a draft environmental assessment (EA) (DOE/EA-1327) that analyzed the potential consequences of a proposed alternative approach for storing the Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF) stainless steel canisters filled with high-level waste at the Savannah River Site (SRS) pending shipment to a geologic repository for disposal.

The alternative under evaluation in that draft EA involved the construction and operation of onsite aboveground concrete storage pads for casks containing the DWPF canisters. Following completion of the draft EA and additional project cost evaluations, DOE-SR has chosen not to pursue this pro-

posed alternative storage approach. Therefore, DOE-SR will not finalize the EA. Notifications of DOE-SR's intent to cancel this proposal are being sent to those who received copies of the draft EA.

Questions regarding the cancellation of this proposal and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process that DOE-SR followed should be sent to:

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 U.S. Department of Energy,  
 Savannah River Operations Office  
 Building 742-A, Room 185, Aiken, SC 29808  
 e-mail: drew.grainger@srs.gov  
 Fax/telephone: 1-800-881-7292 or 1-803-952-8001

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## The SRS Environmental Bulletin

For more information on this or other environmental and compliance activities at SRS, please contact:

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Public Involvement

mail: jim02.moore@srs.gov (803) 725-7169

Access the Environmental Notice web site:  
[http://www.SRS.GOV/general/srenviro/  
envbul/ebinex.htm](http://www.SRS.GOV/general/srenviro/envbul/ebinex.htm)

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