



# Environmental Bulletin

Volume 14, Number 25  
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*from the Savannah River Site*

*Corrective Action Upgrades Proposed for Mixed Waste Management Facility Groundwater*

## **Hazardous Waste Permit Modification Requested**

The Department of Energy (DOE)-Savannah River Operations Office submitted to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) a modification to Savannah River Site's (SRS) 2000 Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Part B Permit Renewal Application for Volume VII. This modification details upgrades at the Mixed Waste Management Facility (MWMF).

The revision (Revision 9) proposed to construct a new retention dam intake structure to improve the performance of the corrective action. Construction of the intake structure involves driving additional sheet pile in the existing pond to act as a collection structure with a concrete pad placed at the bottom. The pond behind the dam will be drained to facilitate this work. Additional equipment upgrades are included in the revision. These activities are considered a Class 1 modification that does not require SCDHEC approval prior to implementation.

More information, including the actual permit applications, is available for review and copying at the DOE Public Reading Room located in the University of South Carolina-Aiken Library, or by contacting personnel identified in this notice.

For additional information, contact:

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or

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## **Change to Floodplain and Wetland Regulations**

To reduce procedural burdens and add flexibility to its environmental protection program, DOE has revised its regulations for *Compliance with Floodplain and Wetland Environmental Review Requirements*, 10 CFR Part 1022 (68 FR 51429, August 27, 2003, effective September 26, 2003). The revisions are based on over 20 years experience with the existing regulations, first issued in 1979.

Under the new regulations, more classes of action will be exempt from assessment; about half of the assessments prepared since 1994 would not have been required had these exemptions been in place. Public notice procedures are simplified by emphasizing local media instead of the *Federal Register* (unless an action may result in effects of national concern). The environmental review process under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act is now an alternative to using the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for compliance with the regulations. Immediate action can be taken in an emergency. Other changes make the rule easier to use and update resources for identifying floodplains and wetlands. There are no new requirements in the revised rule.

Response to Comments Required

No Substantial Revision to Proposed Rule

DOE received three sets of public comments on the proposed regulations (67 FR 69487, November 18, 2002). Responding to requests to clarify terms in the regulations, DOE

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## Floodplain and Wetlands ...

added a definition of “effects of national concern,” examples for actions exempt from assessment, and examples of government agencies to be notified and given documents. Responding to concerns about DOE’s discretion to issue a floodplain statement of findings in a final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or separately, and the conforming change to the DOE NEPA regulations at 10 CFR 1021.313(c), DOE explained in the preamble that steps to mitigate impacts (that must be identified in the statement of findings) may not be determined until after a final EIS is issued.

For more information on the regulations or on implementation guidance being prepared, contact Steve Danker, DOE-Savannah River at Phone/FAX: (800) 881-7292  
e-mail: nepa@srs.gov.

## Explanation of Significant Difference for P-Area Reactor Seepage Basin Operable Unit

This Explanation of Significant Difference (ESD) is being issued by DOE with concurrence by the United States Environmental Protection Agency-Region IV (EPA) and South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) to document the decision that the P-Area Reactor Seepage Basin (PRSB) meets the criteria specified in the Plug-in Record of Decision (ROD). The detailed determination of how this unit meets the criteria is in the Technical Evaluation Report available in the Administrative Record File as noted in the locations identified below.

The PRSB is located in the central portion of SRS, approximately 800 feet west of P-Reactor. The PRSB, consisting of three connected basins and the associated pipeline, received low-level radioactive wastewater from 1959 to 1986. The PRSB meets the criteria specified in the Plug-In ROD for using the plug-in remedy. The criteria are: (1) is radioactively contaminated, (2) is near a nuclear facility, (3) contains principal threat source material (PTSM), and (4) the PTSM is not in contact with groundwater or surface water.

The remedy includes the following components:

- Stabilizing the PTSM soils to the depth of 2 to 10 ft. in the first basin and to 4 ft. in the second basin using a cement-based grout mixture. This treatment will stabilize the waste in

a form less likely to result in human exposure to radionuclides.

- Placing a low permeability soil cover over all three basins. This will reduce infiltration through the stabilized soil and prevent exposure of humans or animals to radionuclides in the stabilized soil.
- Grouting the pipeline. This will prevent exposure to burrowing animals.
- Using land use controls to prevent human contact with the stabilized PTSM soils.

This remedy will be the final remedy for this Operable Unit (OU), since the groundwater associated with this OU is being addressed in conjunction with the P-Area Reactor Groundwater OU.

DOE is required by CERCLA to publish an ESD whenever there is a significant change to a component of the remedy identified in the ROD. This ESD is unique in that it does not detail a change from a remedy selected in the ROD, but rather documents the waste unit for which the remedy will be implemented. EPA, SCDHEC, and DOE have determined that using an ESD format to present the waste unit selected for implementation is a key component in communicating remedial decisions for the Plug-in ROD. This ESD is available for public review during normal business hours at the following information repositories:

- DOE Public Reading Room at the Gregg-Graniteville Library at the University of South Carolina-Aiken campus in Aiken, SC;
- Thomas Cooper Library Government Documents Department at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, SC;
- Reese Library at Augusta State University in Augusta, GA; and
- Asa H. Gordon Library at Savannah State University in Savannah, GA.

Any comments or questions may be directed to:

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# Current NEPA Actions Affecting SRS

- **Disposition of Scrap Metals Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) (DOE/EIS-0327)**

This PEIS 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, unrestricted release of scrap metals for recycling, and disposal. The notice of intent (NOI) for this PEIS was issued on July 12, 2001. A public scoping meeting was held on July 31, 2001, in North Augusta, SC. The draft PEIS has not been issued. The final PEIS is scheduled for January 2004 and the ROD in February 2004.

- **Supplemental PEIS on Stockpile Stewardship and Management for a Modern Pit Facility (DOE/EIS-0236-S2)**

This PEIS will evaluate alternative sites (Los Alamos National Laboratory, Nevada Test Site, Pantex Plant, Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, and Savannah River Site) for a Modern Pit Facility, to provide the capability to manufacture plutonium pits for the United States nuclear weapons stockpile. This PEIS will be followed by a site-specific EIS to address the impacts of construction and operation of the Modern Pit Facility at the selected site. The NOI for this PEIS was issued on September 23, 2002. A local public scoping meeting was held on October 29, 2002, in North Augusta, SC. The final PEIS is projected for March 2004, and the ROD is scheduled for April 2004. Interested parties may view the draft PEIS which was issued in June 2003, at [www.mpfeis.com](http://www.mpfeis.com). Information regarding the draft PEIS can be found at 68 FR 33487, June 4, 2003.

- **West Valley Demonstration Project (WVDP) Draft Waste Management EIS (DOE/EIS-0337D)**

DOE's proposed action (and preferred alternative) is to ship radioactive wastes that are either currently in storage on the WVDP site, or that will be generated from WVDP operations over the next ten years, to offsite disposal locations, and to continue managing its onsite waste storage tanks. The potential environmental consequences of the proposed action are evaluated in the draft EIS, including impacts to workers and the public from waste transportation and waste management. The draft EIS also analyzes a No Action Alternative, under which most wastes would continue to be stored over the next ten years, and an alternative under which certain wastes would be shipped to interim offsite storage locations including SRS prior to dis-

posal, along with the addition of retrievable grout to the waste storage tanks for interim stabilization. Indefinite waste storage onsite was considered but not analyzed. The draft PEIS can be viewed at <http://tis.eh.doe.gov/nepa/docs/deis/eis0337D/TOCindex.html>. The final PEIS is scheduled to be available during October 2003 and the ROD during November 2003.

- **Construction and Operation of a Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility at SRS (NUREG-1767)**

DOE has contracted with Duke Cogema Stone & Webster to design, construct, and operate a proposed Mixed Oxide (MOX) Fuel Fabrication Facility that would convert depleted uranium and weapons-grade plutonium into MOX fuel. The proposed MOX facility would be located on the DOE's Savannah River Site in South Carolina. Use of the proposed facility to produce MOX fuel would be part of the DOE's surplus plutonium disposition program. The purpose of the DOE program is to ensure the plutonium produced for nuclear weapons and declared excess to national security is converted to proliferation-resistant forms. The comment period for the draft EIS is now closed. The final EIS is scheduled to be available in November 2003. The Final Safety Evaluation Report is scheduled to be available in December 2003. The draft EIS can be viewed electronically at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/nuregs/staff/sr1767>.

- **Natural Resources Management Activities at SRS (DOE/EA-0826)**

DOE prepared an environmental assessment (EA) in 1993 to analyze the potential environmental impacts of continued management of SRS natural resources. Based on the analyses in the EA, DOE determined the proposed action was not a major Federal action significantly affecting the human environment within the meaning of NEPA, and issued a finding of no significant impact (FONSI). In 2000, DOE issued a revised FONSI that determined implementation of a revised red-cockaded woodpecker Management Plan would have impacts no greater than those described in the 1993 EA. DOE now proposes a second revised FONSI which will address minor differences between the 1991 Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP) and the next issue of this plan. The NEPA review is on hold until the next version of the NRMP is finalized.

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## The SRS Environmental Bulletin

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