

News from the Savannah River Site

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For Immediate Release

Annual Turkey Hunt at SRS Breaks Barriers for Disabled Sportsmen



The annual Wheelin' Sportsmen/Savannah River Site (SRS) Ultimate Turkey Hunt provides disabled turkey hunters a unique opportunity at SRS.

AIKEN, S.C. (May 13, 2024) - On an early April morning, 15 hunters and their hunting escorts made their way to their assigned hunting locations for the 19th Annual Wheelin' Sportsmen/Savannah River Site (SRS) Ultimate Turkey Hunt.

Sponsored by the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), Department of Energy - SRS, United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service – Savannah River, and a recent new partner The Outdoor Dream Foundation, this annual hunt provides disabled sportsman with a

unique opportunity to hunt the eastern wild turkey across designated areas spanning 170,000 acres of the Savannah River Site's pristine woodlands.

"The collaboration between the different SRS entities and nonprofit organizations are invaluable because they unite a wide range of resources to accomplish a shared objective," said U.S. Forest Service Savannah River Wildlife Program Manager Tal Mims. "These partnerships foster an environment where the hunters feel welcome and, hopefully, will leave SRS with unforgettable memories."

Mims went on to say that the hunt offers a truly exceptional experience, allowing hunters to hunt a vast area where forest management has ensured forest conservation and diverse habitat.

Steve Fleming was one of 15 hunters selected to participate this year. In 2007, Fleming suffered from a stroke that left him with a mobility impairment on his left side. The hunt provided him with the necessary assistance needed to experience a successful weekend in the woods.

"I wouldn't miss this hunt for anything," said Fleming. "Thanks to this event, I was able to take home two turkeys and a lifetime of memories."

His wife Tracey Fleming joined him on the hunt. She added, "Each year, we look forward to being drawn for this event. We are thankful for the sponsors, volunteers and staff who put this together, so that sportsmen like Steve can continue doing what they love."

To ensure their safety, each hunter is paired with an SRS-badged employee familiar with the Site's hunting areas and safety protocols. Prior to leaving for their assigned hunt area, teams are issued radios to coordinate their location and potential emergencies with event staff.

"The morning of the hunt begins with an extensive safety briefing followed by the hunters being escorted to and from their designated hunting locations across the Site," said Mims. "The hunt escorts are the heart of this program, ensuring a safe and successful hunt for all involved. We could not do it without them."

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) Construction Coordinator Curtis Crenshaw has served as an escort for the annual hunt since 2014.

"I look forward to the Wheelin' Sportsmen Turkey Hunt every year," said Crenshaw. "Experiencing the excitement on the hunter's face when they hear the first gobble of the hunt is priceless. It's a great event that is helping people get back in the outdoors doing stuff they thought they would never be able to again."



SRNS Construction Coordinator Curtis Crenshaw escorts Steve Fleming during the 19th Annual Wheelin' Sportsmen Turkey Hunt.

Several other SRNS employees participated as escorts for this event — some taking kids who were sponsored by the Outdoor Dream Foundation, an organization that grants outdoor adventures to children and youth who have been diagnosed with terminal or life-threatening illnesses.

Over the course of the two-day hunt, nine birds were harvested. Wildlife biologist from the U.S. Forest Service measured and recorded the harvested turkeys' weight, beard and spur length. The information will facilitate future research on the management of wild turkeys.

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor and HII partnership company, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy's Savannah River Site, located near Aiken, South Carolina.

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