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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## SRS Celebrates 20th Annual Deer Hunt for Wounded Warriors and the Mobility Impaired

*SRNS managed hunt provides an opportunity of a lifetime for physically impaired sportsmen*

AIKEN, S.C., October 29, 2019 – Twenty-five physically disabled hunters recently participated in the 20th annual deer hunt for the mobility impaired and wounded military veterans held at the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Savannah River Site (SRS).

During the event, mobility impaired participants hunted alongside Wounded Warriors to pursue the opportunity of a lifetime at no charge. Nearly all the participating hunters continue to live with a serious physical impairment.

"I understand their commitment and devotion to duty due to my previous military service," said Joe Solesby, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) Deer Hunt Program Manager. "Over time, I have come to fully realize the high value each our guests place on attending this event held in their honor and for their enjoyment."

Hunt activities begin with an early morning safety meeting and hearty breakfast and then transitions to quiet seclusion in the forest watching and listening carefully for the telltale signs of the nearby animals. Each participant is assigned an escort who ensures their safety and helps as needed. Meanwhile, volunteers work a large outdoor grill and move quickly about the kitchen to prepare a savory meal for the hunters to close out a memorable morning.



*Robert Starnes (right) a wounded warrior and U.S. Army veteran patiently waits with his son and escort Rob Starnes as they look and listen for wild hogs and deer at the Savannah River Site.*

Last year saw a record number of harvested deer and hogs. Each harvested animal is prepared for the hunters to take home or delivered to the charitable organization of their choice.

The mobility-impaired hunters are typically from throughout the southeast, while many of the wounded veterans are local residents.

According to Robert Starnes, a wounded warrior who served in the U.S. Army for 30 years and continues to suffer from extensive back-related injuries, just getting out in the forest is an important experience for him. “I really like to hunt and especially enjoy time in the woods with my son,” said Starnes. “Last year, I got a hog. I’m hoping for a deer this year.” His son, Rob, is an SRNS employee and served as his father’s escort. Both are residents of Aiken County.

“This was a wonderful opportunity, and we really appreciate it,” added Starnes. “Getting to this hunt was a dream come true for me. I’ve wanted to do this for years.”

SRS offers over 150,000 acres of pristine, government-owned forest to be hunted each year, benefiting not only the hunter, but drivers travelling the roadways at the DOE site as well. The hunt helps reduce the site’s deer and hog population, decreasing the potential for animal-vehicle collisions.

“We experience a significant number of animal-vehicle collisions annually at SRS, and the hunts help to prevent these collisions,” said Tony Towns, Natural Resources Program Manager, Environmental Quality Management Division, DOE-Savannah River. “Partnering with the SRNS and our dedicated volunteers, we work to ensure a safe and controlled environment for our hunters.”

SRNS manages the hunt and provides sponsorship in conjunction with DOE and the Wheel’in Sportsman National Wild Turkey Federation.

*Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor-led company with Newport News Nuclear and Honeywell, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, including the Savannah River National Laboratory, located near Aiken, South Carolina.*

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