

Principal Media Contact: DT Townsend  
Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, LLC  
803.952.7566  
[dt-lawrence.townsend@srs.gov](mailto:dt-lawrence.townsend@srs.gov)

DOE Media Contact: Monte Volk  
803.952.8283  
[monte.volk@srs.gov](mailto:monte.volk@srs.gov)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Wounded Warriors and Mobility-Impaired Residents “Cast” for Trophy Fish at SRS during Day of Honor

AIKEN, S.C., May 23, 2019 – U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and U.S. Forest Service personnel from the Savannah River Site (SRS), working with the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), recently held the fifth annual Ultimate Fishing Challenge at SRS to honor our nation’s wounded warriors and mobility-impaired residents from throughout the region.

“We have a wide variety of natural resources at SRS that we can share from time to time with members of those groups who have risked their lives for us, such as our military veterans and first responders,” said Tony Towns, DOE Natural Resources Program Manager. “Along with our annual Wounded Warrior Deer Hunt and SRS Ultimate Turkey Hunt, this fishing event is one more way we can express our appreciation for their service to our country.”

Recently, dozens of military veterans wounded in combat and U.S. citizens with serious mobility issues enjoyed hours of fishing on a lake at SRS, appreciating the near-wilderness conditions.

“I had a blast. I’m thankful my name was picked,” said Army veteran Jeffrey Lanier, a former Apache Helicopter Crew Chief in Afghanistan and current SRNS employee. “This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience that makes you not want to fish anywhere else. I really appreciate this opportunity.”

Each year, dozens of volunteers prove they are the heart of what makes this outdoor adventure so successful and



*Savannah River Nuclear Solutions employee and veteran Jeffrey Lanier (right), a former Apache Helicopter Crew Chief in Afghanistan, and his brother Ronald, each hold a large bass caught during the Ultimate Fishing Challenge, recently held at SRS to honor wounded warriors and the mobility impaired from throughout the region.*

rewarding for the tournament fisherman. “It’s not just the fact that the volunteers devoted most of their weekend to create such special memories for our guests. These men and women truly care, and they want to demonstrate their appreciation,” said Tal Mims, Wildlife Program Manager, U.S. Forest Service Savannah River. “Most of them come from SRS organizations.”

The catch-and-release fishing contest was held Saturday, May 18, and ended with a cookout and awards ceremony for the two largest fish caught, as well as the single largest fish presented at the weigh-in. The record for a single fish caught since the inception of this event is 10.4 pounds.

“What we love about this program is that everyone leaves having successfully caught several fish, most of which are quite large,” said Mims. “The comradery, time enjoying life on the lake and some friendly competition means so much to our participants. The stories I’ve heard over the last five years at this event, from many of our participants, is touching. Often, they have tears in their eyes as they attempt to express their gratitude.”

The participants are chosen through a lottery system administered by NWTF personnel at their office located in Edgefield, S.C. According to Mims, more than 80 applications were received for this year’s competition, with 25 being selected.

“The water is pristine and virtually untouched by man,” added Mims. “These fish have never seen a lure. So, there’s probably some truth to that old rumor that all it takes is to drop in a shiny hook to boat a fish.”

*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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