

Recommendation 317

Fund an Independent Environmental Monitoring Program in Georgia

Background:

The Savannah River Site implements an extensive environmental monitoring program that goes beyond what is necessary to be in compliance with site permits. This separate monitoring program is done to satisfy Department of Energy Order 458.1 “Radiological Protection of the Public and the Environment.” In order to verify that the public and the environment is protected, Savannah River Site conducts a program to assess the potential radiological and nonradiological impacts to air, water, environmental media, and wildlife. Monitoring sites are located in both Georgia and South Carolina.

In addition to the Savannah River Site program noted above, the Department of Energy funds an environmental monitoring program that is carried out by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. This program is called the Environmental Surveillance and Oversight Program. It is important to the citizens of South Carolina because it evaluates the effectiveness of Savannah River Site environmental monitoring activities and provides an independent source of information to the public about the contaminants in the environment from historical and current Savannah River Site missions. South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control issues annual reports of its findings.

In the past, the Department of Energy also funded an environmental monitoring program that was carried out by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to assess the potential impact of Savannah River Site operations on the public and the environment. This program was in effect from 2001-2005.

Comments:

In the past two years, citizens of Georgia have repeatedly expressed concerns about the lack of an independent environmental monitoring program in Georgia similar to the one funded by the Department of Energy in South Carolina. While budget reductions and restrictions have made it difficult for the Department of Energy to fund a renewed environmental monitoring program in Georgia, one of the important functions of the federal government is to protect its citizens. As a result, the Department of Energy should take the concerns of the citizens of Georgia seriously and take actions to satisfy their concerns.

Recommendation:

The Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board recommends that the Department of Energy:

1. Initiate conversations with the State of Georgia for the purpose of funding an environmental monitoring program similar to the Environmental Surveillance and Oversight Program funded in South Carolina.
2. Initiate such conversations with the State of Georgia no later than April 1, 2014, with a goal of phasing in an independent environmental monitoring program no later than 2016.