



## USDA Forest Service-Savannah River Fiscal Year 2015 Savannah River Site Environmental Report

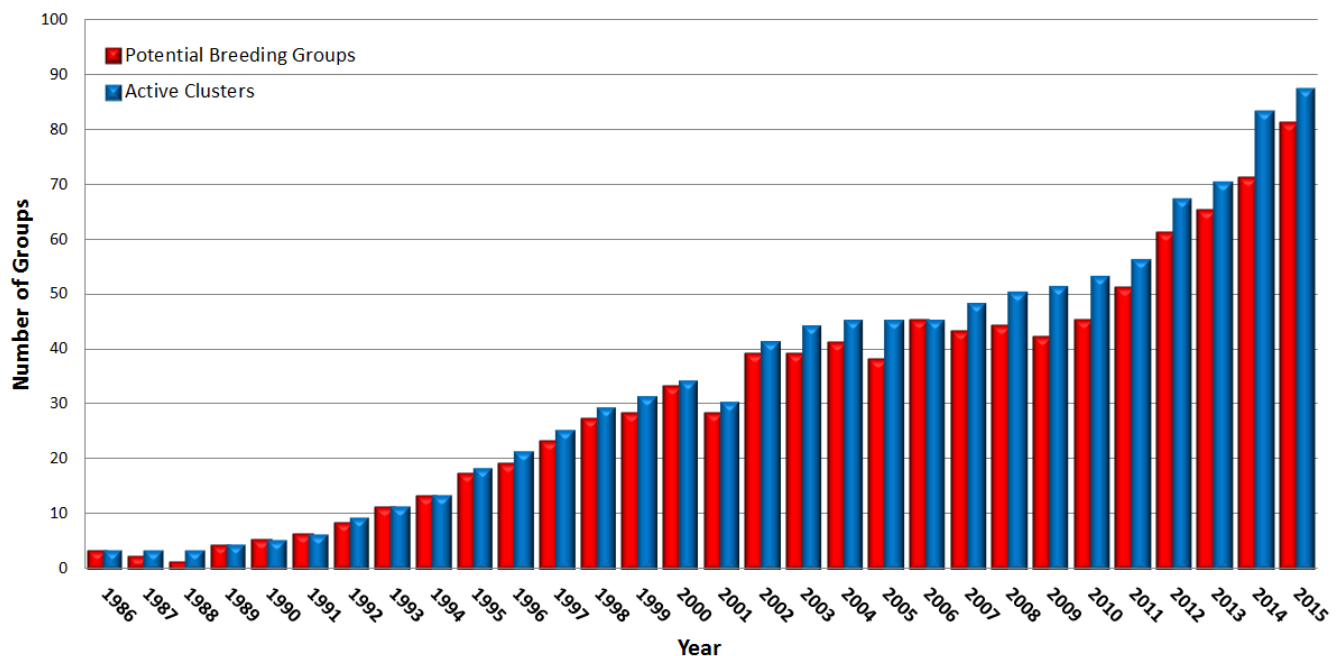
In support of the environmental stewardship mission, the USDA Forest Service – Savannah River (USFS-SR) manages natural resources at the U.S. Department of Energy's Savannah River Site (DOE-SRS). Operating under an Interagency Agreement with the SRS Operations Office, the USFS-SR follows SRS' Strategic Plan goals and objectives to implement the United States Department of Energy's Natural Resources Management Plan for the SRS.

The following initiatives and accomplishments reflect the various ways in which USFS-SR worked to implement the plan in fiscal year 2015.

### Maintained and improved habitat to meet recovery population objectives for threatened, endangered and sensitive species

USFS-SR continued to improve habitat conditions for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker by removing brush and small hardwood vegetation from over 66 acres of longleaf pine forest. This is a reduction in acres over previous years as our earlier herbicide and prescribed fire treatments have effectively maintained the habitat. Prescribed fire was also used extensively to reduce hazardous fuels and to improve habitat on a larger scale. Since 1985 through fiscal year 2015, the number of active red-cockaded woodpecker clusters has increased from three to 87 due to successful habitat restoration.

RCW Status, 1986-2015



*Number of red-cockaded woodpecker active clusters at SRS*

Additionally, five golden eagles were observed foraging at SRS, one of which was a return from the prior year. This reclusive species was previously thought to come down only to the Appalachian Mountains. Intensive surveys were completed for endangered coneflower and pondberry to further the species progression. Invasive non-native plant species at ten home sites were targeted for eradication, and native pollinator habitats were enhanced within right of ways and forest stands.

### **Managed natural resources and harvested forest products**

The USFS-SR sold 79.7 million cubic feet of forest products through active forest management. Forest products were sold to meet security needs; encourage habitat development for threatened, endangered and sensitive species; promote forest health; and generate revenue. Management activities were and continue to be implemented in support of the Site's nuclear mission and in compliance with best management practices.

### **Evaluated the effects of management on the environment**

Through partnerships and collaborations with a number of universities as well as with USDA Forest Service Research Stations, the USFS-SR added applied knowledge and understanding in support of the Interagency Agreement, including:

- Impacts of intensive management on water quality at SRS were summarized. The results showed no impact if forestry Best Management Practices were followed.
- The study of the effect of plant community composition on pollinators was initiated in conjunction with native savanna restoration efforts.
- A method to estimate potential emissions of radionuclides during prescribed fires was developed from the rate of fuel consumption and nominal activity of the radionuclide.
- Monitoring of wild hog territoriality continued in order to guide trapping and control strategies at SRS and minimize infrastructure impacts.

### **Excelled in environmental and occupational safety and health performance**

The USFS-SR employees and contractors reported 301,401 hours worked with only one Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 300A Log recordable injury. The USFS-SR drove 245,320 vehicle-miles without a collision with other vehicles or wildlife.

USFS-SR is an active participant in the DOE Integrated Safety Management System (ISMS), which has resulted in a higher level of safety awareness and sound application of safety requirements.

USFS-SR implemented Facilitated Learning Analysis (FLA) discussions during safety meetings and improved electronic safety reporting through E-Safety. USFS-SR submitted the required annual Safety and Health Management Plan to DOE-SRS on January 27, 2016.

### **Continued environmental restoration**

The Mixed Waste Management Facility Phytoremediation Project, one of SRS's Area Closure Projects which is operated and maintained by USFS-SR, treated approximately 14.2 million gallons of tritiated water. This project employs a natural remedy (phytoremediation), using vegetative processes to reduce risk to the environment.

Additionally, USFS-SR managed 2,000 acres of vegetation caps and 5,351 monitoring well sites through mowing, pesticide and herbicide application, prescribed fire and seeding. This allows SRS personnel to continue the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) mandated water and groundwater monitoring.

### **Safely maintained infrastructure in an environmentally sound state of operational readiness**

USFS-SR completed maintenance on 1,000 miles of SRS secondary roads and 60 miles of exterior boundary fence. Normal maintenance activities performed include; blading and calcium chloride application for dust abatement for roads and fence repair and trespass warning sign replacements for the exterior boundary.

USFS-SR constructed 0.80 miles of secondary roads and replaced three culverts in support of site activities and maintained 11.6 miles of multipurpose trails used primarily by SRS wellness programs. Twelve miles of Site boundary along the Savannah River was inspected and maintained, including replacement of trespass warning signs.

### **Reduced risk of catastrophic wildland fires through systematic and safe application of prescribed fire**

USFS-SR, Fire Management burned 19,203 acres of hazardous fuel reduction and suppressed ten wildfires totaling 25 acres. More burning during the growing season would have been accomplished if the western fire situation was not so severe and the National Preparedness Level was not so high.

Smokey Bear went to 18 local elementary schools, visiting 1,564 children. Smokey also participated in the New Ellenton Atomic City Festival with 500 contacts.

### **Communicated SRS stewardship**

USFS-SR outreach efforts to educate stakeholders about natural resource management included participation in Take Our Children to Work Day, SRS Ultimate Turkey Hunt, SRS Ultimate Fishing Challenge and SRS Safety Blitz. Public communication included various reports showcasing monthly accomplishments, as well as a presence at community events, Atomic City Festival and the New Ellenton Christmas parade. Internal and external planning and communications included participation in the SRS Citizens Advisory Board combined and committee meetings.

### **USDA Forest Service–Savannah River**

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