



Environmental Bulletin

Volume 15, Number 13
June 1, 2004

from the Savannah River Site

Documents available for public review

SRS X-001 Outfall Drainage Ditch Operable Unit Removal Action open for public comments

The U. S. Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to perform a non-time critical removal action at the X-001 Outfall Drainage Ditch Operable Unit (OU). Under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) a Removal Site Evaluation Report (RSER) must be completed prior to performing non-time critical removal actions. CERCLA also requires an Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA) to evaluate removal alternatives.

The X-001 Outfall Drainage Ditch OU includes the drainage ditch that emanated from the headwall of a drainage system for a sump at Building 677-T. The X-001 Outfall is relatively flat and is located east of where Building 677-T was located prior to its removal. The area gently slopes from the mouth of the drainage system to the location where the ditch crosses under the road near the New TNX Seepage Basin (NTSB), a subunit of the TNX-Area OU. The X-001 Outfall Drainage Ditch OU is bounded on the east by site Road A-4.7; the area east of the road is part of the NTSB OU. The ditch runs to the east.

The purpose of the EE/CA, as required by the national Contingency Plan (NCP) is to identify the objectives of the removal action and to develop various alternatives that might satisfy those objectives. This EE/CA evaluates three alternatives, recommends a removal action, and provides for public comment.

The preferred alternative is removal of contaminated soil from the X-001 Outfall Drainage Ditch OU. The removal of contaminated soil will mitigate the potential for future exposure to the soil. This alternative will also defer the decision on the final disposition of the soil until the T-Area Record of Decision is issued, which will allow for greater public participation in this decision.

DOE released this document for a 30-day public comment period beginning May 28, 2004. The preferred alternative may be modified or changed based on public comments. Following the public comment period, an Action Memorandum will be prepared and transmitted to the US Environmental Protection Agency and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control by DOE-SR.

This EE/CA, completed under CERCLA is available for public

review from May 28, 2004 to June 27, 2004, at the following locations:

DOE Public Reading Room at the Gregg-Graniteville Library at the University of South Carolina (USC)-Aiken campus in Aiken, SC; Thomas Cooper Library Government Documents Department at USC in Columbia, SC; Reese Library at Augusta State University in Augusta, GA; and Asa H. Gordon Library at Savannah State University in Savannah, GA.

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EA being considered on new borrow pit at SRS

The Department of Energy (DOE) is reviewing the need to prepare an environmental assessment (EA) to analyze potential consequences associated with the proposed construction, operation, and eventual closure of a new borrow pit at the Savannah River Site (SRS), located near Aiken, South Carolina. The purpose of this proposed facility, known as the Burma Road II Borrow Pit, would be to provide SRS with a new source of structural fill material for site projects. The existing SRS borrow pits are either nearly depleted, already obligated to ongoing environmental restoration projects, or would not provide fill with the proper specifications. In addition, the anticipated need for a future volume and quality of fill for planned SRS projects could not be economically met by offsite sources. The proposed 80-acre borrow pit has an estimated 3.8 million cubic yards of suitable structural fill, which would meet site needs past the year 2020.

If DOE determines a need to prepare an EA, a notification will be sent to the States of South Carolina and Georgia. If you wish to request a copy of the predecisional draft EA when it becomes available, please contact:

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SRS CAB Focus Group Instrumental in Final Decision on CIF

January 14, 2004 marked the completion of a four-year SRS Citizens Advisory Board Focus Group study regarding DOE's decision to shut down the Consolidated Incinerator Facility and plans for alternative treatment of legacy PUREX waste. At that meeting the group predicted that all of the legacy aqueous Plutonium-Uranium Recovery Extraction (PUREX) will be disposed of in 2004, as non-hazardous waste through the Effluent Treatment Facility (ETF), and in fact the aqueous stream treatment was completed. The organic PUREX fraction will be treated by 2007 (approximately twelve years ahead of schedule). While CIF re-start is not cost effective, SRS is well on its way to implementing a less costly treatment alternative for legacy PUREX using a solidification process.

The Focus Group touted the contributions of the Department of Energy (DOE), the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) and the interest of the citizenry, in the resolve of the focus group. Without their cooperation and the hard work of DOE-SR and SCDHEC, the expeditious disposal of the legacy PUREX waste would not have happened.

In 2000, the CIF processed over 3,000 gallons of PUREX solvent, and would have exceeded DOE's goal of 5,000 gallons by the end of that same year had CIF remained operational. Due to reduced waste streams and funding constraints, DOE put the brakes on

CIF in order to fund other more necessary operations. Consequently, DOE had to look at alternative treatment options and after negotiations with the SCDHEC decided to suspend the CIF operation pending identification of a more efficient process. The question then became how to get rid of the PUREX.

As a result of the Focus Group, the CAB and local citizens working together with the site and its regulators, the treatment and disposition of both legacy PUREX and some current stocks of PUREX was accelerated beyond their expectations. The Focus Group provided review and suggestions to DOE-SR, WSRC, SCDHEC as to a reasonable path forward which would develop alternatives to the CIF, yet keep CIF as a backup for legacy PUREX disposition. The CAB pushed both the site and the regulators to reach agreements. The CAB adopted an impressive seven recommendations proposed by the Focus Group, yet another endorsement of how effective public participation can assist DOE in resolving difficult issues.

The Focus Group believes that SRS is well on the way to completing the development and testing of the solidification process for the legacy PUREX, and anticipates that all PUREX will be disposed of on schedule. Although the Focus Group has concluded its charter, the SRS CAB Waste Management Committee has asked for periodic updates and will continue to track the sites progress.

CAB makes Recommendations

The SRS Citizens Advisory Board met in Savannah, Georgia on May 24-25 and passed the following recommendations:

Recommendation 189- Performance Management Plan (PMP) 2004 In an effort to strengthen the PMP process the SRS CAB recommended that SRS develop a section on accountability in the PMP and discuss how key assumptions will be periodically revalidated. The CAB also asked DOE-HQ to work aggressively with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to ensure the licensing of Yucca Mountain to meet the PMP objectives and requested that DOE-HQ prioritize waste acceptance for SRS vitrified high level waste and spent fuel. In addition, the Board asked DOE-HQ to provide a schedule and implementation plan for the SRS shipments.

Recommendation 190-Risk Based End State Vision Document

The SRS CAB endorsed the RBES process and offered nine recommendations in an effort to strengthen the process. The Board expects a progress report on or before September 27, 2004. Some of the key concerns identified in this recommendation include:

- SRS provide additional information about the risks, both human health and environment, associated with the end states proposed and clearly articulate the plan and approach to the public.
- Regarding future land use, DOE-SR and DOE-HQ pursue Congressional Authorization to provide perpetual federal ownership and responsibility for SRS's fixed boundaries.
- SRS continue to develop "area" risk assessment methodology

and protocols protective of human health and the environment.

Recommendation 191- Modified Salt Waste Disposition Strategy The SRS CAB is deeply concerned about potential delays in implementing the modified salt waste disposition strategy; their long term effect on completion of HLW cleanup by 2019; and their short term effect on availability of the skilled work force specific to these projects. The board recommends that SRS identify the impacts on costs and schedules of delaying Salt Waste Processing Facility design activities and present the findings to the SRS CAB. The Board also requested that SRS implement as much of the modified salt waste disposition strategy as the FY 04 budget will allow. They also asked DOE-HQ to provide funds necessary for SRS in order to begin to implement the modified salt waste disposition strategy.

Recommendation 192- Prioritizing Deactivation and Decommissioning Activities

The SRS CAB recommended that DOE-HQ and DOE-SR should closely review its D&D prioritization policy/strategy, emphasizing that the D&D focus should be on risk mitigation and reduction and not merely on reducing the site "footprint" via D&D of selected, still viable structures. The Board asked that DOE-SR provide additional details on its D&D prioritization activities. Specifically, life cycle costs for continued housing of evicted staff and those for D&D of the buildings (730-M and 742-A) should be provided along with projected life cycle cost savings from elimination of the structures. Capital costs for replacement of these buildings is also requested.

Current NEPA Actions Affecting SRS

- ***Disposition of Scrap Metals Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) (DOE/EIS-0327)***

This PEIS will evaluate alternatives for disposition of DOE scrap metals that may have been in radiological areas. The disposition options to be analyzed include continuation of the suspension on unrestricted release of metals for recycling and disposal. The notice of intent (NOI) for this PEIS was issued on July 12, 2001. A public scoping meeting was held on July 31, 2001, in North Augusta, South Carolina. The draft PEIS is scheduled to be issued in August 2004, the final PEIS is scheduled for November 2004, and the record of decision (ROD) scheduled for January 2005.

- ***Supplemental PEIS on Stockpile Stewardship and Management for a Modern Pit Facility (DOE/EIS-0236-S2)***

This PEIS will evaluate alternative sites (Los Alamos National Laboratory, Nevada Test Site, Pantex Plant, Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, and Savannah River Site) for a Modern Pit Facility, to provide the capability to manufacture plutonium pits for the United States nuclear weapons stockpile. This PEIS will be followed by a site-specific EIS to address the impacts of construction and operation of the Modern Pit Facility at the selected site. The NOI for this PEIS was issued on September 23, 2002. A local public scoping meeting was held on October 29, 2002, in North Augusta, SC. Information regarding the draft PEIS can be found at 68 FR 33487, June 4, 2003. The draft PEIS may be viewed electronically at www.mpfeis.com. The final supplemental PEIS will be delayed due to Congressional concerns about timing and scope of project.

- ***West Valley Demonstration Project (WVDP) Waste Management EIS (DOE/EIS-0337)***

DOE's proposed action (and preferred alternative) is to ship radioactive wastes that are either currently in storage on the WVDP site, or that will be generated from WVDP operations over the next ten years, to offsite disposal locations, and to continue managing its onsite waste storage tanks. The potential environmental consequences of the proposed action are evaluated in the final EIS, including impacts to workers and the public from waste transportation and waste management. The final EIS also analyzes an alternative under which certain wastes would be shipped to interim offsite storage locations including SRS prior to disposal. The preferred alternative does not involve SRS. The final PEIS was issued in January 2004 and may be

viewed electronically at <http://tis.eh.doe.gov/nepa/eis/eis0337/index.html>. The ROD is scheduled to be issued in June 2004.

- ***Construction and Operation of a Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility at SRS (NUREG-1767)***

DOE has contracted with Duke Cogema Stone & Webster to design, construct, and operate a proposed Mixed Oxide (MOX) Fuel Fabrication Facility that would convert depleted uranium and weapons-grade plutonium into MOX fuel. The proposed MOX facility would be located on the DOE's SRS in South Carolina. Use of the proposed facility to produce MOX fuel would be part of the DOE's surplus plutonium disposition program. The purpose of the DOE program is to ensure the plutonium produced for nuclear weapons and declared excess to national security is converted to proliferation-resistant forms. The draft EIS can be viewed electronically at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/nuregs/staff/sr1767>. The comment period for the draft EIS is closed. Due to project scope changes, the final EIS, the final Safety Evaluation Report and the ROD schedules are now uncertain.

- ***Natural Resources Management Activities at SRS (DOE/EA-0826)***

DOE prepared an environmental assessment (EA) in 1993 to analyze the potential environmental impacts of continued management of SRS natural resources. Based on the analyses in the EA, DOE determined the proposed action was not a major Federal action significantly affecting the human environment within the meaning of National Environmental Policy Act, and issued a finding of no significant impact (FONSI). In 2000, DOE issued a revised FONSI that determined implementation of a revised *Red-Cockaded Woodpecker Management Plan* would have impacts no greater than those described in the 1993 EA. DOE now proposes a second revised FONSI which will address minor differences between the 1991 *Natural Resources Management Plan* (NRMP) and the next issue of this plan. The NEPA review is on hold until the next version of the NRMP is finalized.

- ***Burma Road II Borrow Pit EA***

DOE is reviewing the need to prepare an EA to analyze the potential consequences of the proposed construction, operation, and eventual closure of the Burma Road II Borrow Pit, and its alternatives. (see article page 1)

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