



Savannah River Site Watch

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<http://www.srswatch.org/>

Inaugural News Release

For Immediate Release

April 3, 2014

Public Interest Group Formed to Monitor, Engage DOE Activities at the Savannah River Site; Savannah River Site Watch (SRS Watch) to Monitor New Reactors, Nuclear Waste Issues in SE

Columbia, S.C.-- In response to the need for increased monitoring of the nuclear projects carried out by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) at the Savannah River Site (SRS), a new public-interest watchdog group is being launched today.

Savannah River Site Watch (SRS Watch) - <http://www.srswatch.org/> - has been formed to focus on a challenging array of nuclear projects now underway at SRS, the sprawling 310-square mile complex located near Aiken, South Carolina. While actively engaging in the decision-making process and adopting formal positions concerning site activities, SRS Watch will closely monitor such programs as cleanup of high-level nuclear waste, receipt of nuclear materials from overseas without proper environmental review, operation of the aging H-Canyon reprocessing plant and the mismanaged plutonium fuel (MOX) program. SRS Watch will also follow congressional deliberations concerning funding of DOE proposals.

SRS Watch will keep an eye on other nuclear issues in the region as well, including construction of the new AP1000 reactors in South Carolina (SCE&G's V.C. Summer site) and Georgia (Southern Company's Vogtle site), spent fuel storage and reprocessing, small modular reactors, and Nuclear Regulatory Commission activities related to these issues.

"Given the host of environmental problems and proliferation threats associated with the Savannah River Site, we felt it was time to increase public interest monitoring efforts by creating a new oversight organization," said Frances Close, President of SRS Watch. "We will follow and participate in all decision-making processes related to SRS cleanup programs as well as DOE's National Nuclear Security Administration's projects at SRS, including the MOX program. We will advocate for essential cleanup programs and challenge DOE and NNSA on projects that are unnecessary, ill-conceived, and a waste of tax dollars." The work of SRS Watch will be similar to the work of the Energy Research Foundation, a group established by Ms. Close in 1980, which acted as a watchdog over SRS activities for fifteen years.

Noted Columbia-based activist Tom Clements, who has almost 40 years of experience monitoring SRS and other nuclear activities, will be the Director of SRS Watch. "As it is the Department of Energy's nature to operate outside public scrutiny, our job will be to highlight to SRS programs that warrant public attention and involvement," said Clements. "A major first initiative will be to highlight the

problem-plagued MOX program at SRS and possible lessons to be learned, while advocating for plutonium disposition methods that reduce environmental risks to South Carolina and reduce costs to taxpayers.”

“As cleanup is of paramount importance at SRS, we will support adequate funding for that mission and question proposals by SRS management and contractors that could result in the accumulation of more nuclear material at the site,” Clements added. “We will aggressively use the Freedom of Information Act and demand timely responses to requests that are all too often ignored currently.”

As part of the announcement of SRS Watch, the group’s website - <http://www.srswatch.org> - is going public today. The website will feature blogs on SRS and other nuclear issues, hard-to-find documents, photos of nuclear activities, and new releases on current issues. Audio and video of DOE and Nuclear Regulatory Commission meetings, and other events of interest, will be posted in the future.

In order to magnify the work on DOE, NNSA and SRS issues, SRS Watch will seek formal association with the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability (<http://www.ananuclear.org/>) a network of over 30 local, regional and national groups representing the concerns of communities in the shadow of the U.S. nuclear weapons complex facilities and radioactive waste dumps.

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