



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Government Decision to Abandon Yucca Mountain Negatively Impacts Central Savannah River Area**

AIKEN, SC – The Federal Government’s failure to complete construction of its only option for long-term nuclear waste storage at Yucca Mountain in the Nevada desert will result in the Savannah River Site becoming the permanent home to tons of high-level nuclear waste, a local community group says.

The SRS Community Reuse Organization calls the Administration’s decision to abandon Yucca Mountain after more than two decades of development is “a front burner community challenge” that can affect the region’s image, create new long-term safety concerns, slow the deployment of nuclear power plants and impact our ability to attract industry and create new jobs.”

The SRSCRO today announced it is undertaking a comprehensive regional education campaign aimed at developing community consensus regarding a path forward in responding to the Federal decision to halt work on Yucca Mountain. Over the next few months, the group will make presentations to elected bodies, economic development groups, nuclear advocacy organizations, civic clubs and others with an interest in energy and community development.

The group is also calling for local representation on a special Blue Ribbon Panel being established by the Department of Energy to review options for long-term nuclear waste storage.

“The government’s about face on this critical issue leaves state and local leaders with more questions than answers,” David Jameson, SRSCRO Vice Chair and Co-Chair of its Yucca Mountain Task Force, said. “The Federal government has broken faith with communities across the nation. We must come to terms with our own lingering – perhaps permanent -- role as caretaker for the Nation’s highly radioactive waste.”

Jameson said the SRSCRO has prepared a 27-page White Paper designed to serve as a catalyst for public dialog concerning the implications of the Obama Administration’s decision to halt work on Yucca Mountain as the nation’s permanent nuclear waste repository. The White Paper is available for review on the SRSCRO web site, [www.srscro.org](http://www.srscro.org).

“As a regional voice for issues related to the Savannah River Site, the SRS Community Reuse Organization is raising awareness of this important topic among community leaders,” Jameson said. “We want to serve as a catalyst for dialog designed to protect the region’s long-term interests.”

Task Force Co-Chair Sue Parr said those responsible for public safety, job creation, image enhancement and citizen confidence must now lead in a new reality.

“The SRS Community Reuse Organization wants to assist the communities in the region in reaching consensus in addressing with the Federal government the impacts on our region resulting from the absence of a promised permanent nuclear waste repository,” Parr said.

“The ideas expressed and the questions raised in our paper are intended for information and education,” Parr said. “We want to provide a platform for public discussion and encourage interested citizens and groups to work together to arrive at a community consensus and a strategy for communicating our common position to key decision makers.”

The absence of a centralized permanent repository presents a national challenge that extends beyond the boundaries of the Savannah River Site. High-level nuclear waste from the U. S. nuclear weapons complex currently resides at 16 sites in 13 states and totals 7,000 metric tons. There are also some 63,000 metric tons of used

commercial nuclear fuel stored in 41 states that has also been designated for Yucca Mountain.

Two distinct types of waste products are intended for storage in the permanent repository -- spent nuclear fuel and high-level defense waste. Spent nuclear fuel is used fuel from a reactor that is no longer efficient in creating electricity, because its fission process has slowed. Until a permanent disposal repository for spent nuclear fuel is built, nuclear power plant operators must safely store this fuel at their reactor sites.

One alternative for dealing with spent nuclear fuel is reprocessing. Reprocessing extracts isotopes from spent fuel that can be used again as reactor fuel. Although this would extend the life of our nuclear fuel resources and help create a greater degree of energy independence, commercial reprocessing is currently not practiced in the United States, although it has been allowed in the past.

Significant quantities of high-level radioactive waste are produced by the defense reprocessing programs at Department of Energy (DOE) facilities, such as Savannah River, Hanford in Washington State and by commercial reprocessing operations at West Valley, New York. These wastes, which are generally managed by DOE, are not regulated by NRC. However they must be included in any high-level radioactive waste disposal plans, along with all high-level waste from spent reactor fuel.

Because of their highly radioactive fission products, high-level waste and spent fuel must be handled and stored with care. Since the only way radioactive waste finally becomes harmless is through decay, which for high-level wastes can take hundreds of thousands of years, the wastes must be stored and finally disposed of in a way that provides adequate protection of the public for a very long time.

The Savannah River Site Community Reuse Organization(SRSCRO) is a non-profit regional group focused on job creation in a five-county region of Georgia and South Carolina, including Aiken, Allendale and Barnwell counties in South Carolina and Richmond and Columbia counties in Georgia.

The group's mission is to facilitate economic development opportunities associated with Savannah River Site technology, capabilities and missions and to serve as an informed, unified community voice for the two-state region.

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