

Overview of Presentation to the Blue Ribbon Commission

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As I have worked on Savannah River Site (SRS) issues with public interest organizations for over 30 years, my presentation will address concerns about high-level waste issues at SRS - past, current and future - from a public interest and environmental perspective.

Given SRS and the nearby Barnwell low-level waste facility, there is concern that South Carolina and the Central Savannah Region Area, which includes parts of Georgia, have been bearing an undue share of the nation's nuclear waste. Plans to address the 36 million gallons of high-level waste at SRS are still being developed and present the greatest risk to the area's environment, according to DOE, and must remain the focus of SRS work over the next decades. Based on the SRS area's experience with reprocessing, defense and civil, on-site storage of spent fuel without reprocessing is currently the best option for cost, environmental and political reasons.

As we look to the future, the environmental and public interest community in GA and SC will be supportive of work at SRS that does not bring in more nuclear waste for handling, processing or disposal. Thus, there is concern about special interest groups pushing "interim" commercial spent fuel storage, reprocessing and associated reactors which might use materials separated via reprocessing. Various entities have pursued or expressed interest in reprocessing for SRS but have never materialized due to policy, cost and waste management reasons.

My presentation will briefly review:

- SRS reprocessing for military purposes and current high-level waste challenges;
- How much SRS HLW, mostly vitrified canisters, was really destined for Yucca Mountain?
- History of interest in commercial reprocessing at the Allied General Nuclear Services facility (aka Barnwell) adjacent to SRS and which never operated;
- Paper in 1995 by Westinghouse on use of F- & H-Canyons for commercial reprocessing;
- Failed expressions of interest by entities under the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership for reprocessing in the SRS area: 1) EnergySolutions, for the AGNS (Barnwell) site, 2) Savannah River National Laboratory & the Economic Development Partnership of Aiken and Edgefield Counties for SRS itself;
 - Secret discussion of use of the plutonium fuel (MOX) plant for fast reactor fuel;
- Presentation by Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, prime SRS contractor, for SMR's as part of "potential alternative to Yucca Mountain," in an ill-defined and unfunded "energy park";
- Status of SRS reprocessing facilities, focus on H-Canyon and its possible closure, with continued wet or dry storage of irradiated research reactor fuel being examined;
- Lack of legislative support in South Carolina for reprocessing;
- Impact of upcoming cuts to DOE's Environmental Management and Nuclear Energy budgets and that concern about jobs at SRS is an issue but out of the scope of the BRC's work.