

**Revised Finding of No Significant Impact  
for the  
Natural Resource Management Activities  
at the Savannah River Site**

**Agency:** U.S. Department of Energy

**Action:** Revised Finding of No Significant Impact

**Summary:** The Department of Energy (DOE) Savannah River Operations Office (SR) prepared an environmental assessment (EA) (DOE/EA-0826) in 1993 to analyze the potential environmental impacts of continued management of natural resources at the Savannah River Site (SRS) located near Aiken, South Carolina. Based on the analyses in the EA, DOE-SR determined that the proposed action was not a major Federal action significantly affecting the human environment within the meaning of NEPA, and for that reason issued a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) dated July 15, 1993. The proposed action in that EA was based upon the scope defined in the 1991 SRS Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP). The subsequent incorporation of a revised recovery plan for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) at SRS resulted in the issuance of a revised FONSI to DOE/EA-0826, dated April 28, 2000. Now, DOE-SR has prepared a revised SRS NRMP to update the natural resources management goals and objectives at the site and supersede the 1991 NRMP. A review of the proposed management changes defined in this new document has revealed that implementation of the revised SRS NRMP would result in impacts no greater than those described in the 1993 EA. Therefore, the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required, and DOE-SR is issuing a revised FONSI.

**Public Availability:** Copies of the 1993 EA, the 1993 and 2000 FONSI, this revised FONSI, and the 2005 NRMP or further information on the DOE-SR NEPA process are available from:

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**Background:** Since the acquisition of SRS by the Federal Government in the 1950s, the site's natural resources management activities have expanded from the original goal of reforesting abandoned farmland to a far more complex program including wildlife management, wildfire suppression, boundary maintenance, soil stabilization, timber management, secondary road maintenance, and ecological research. Since the late 1980s, natural resources management activities have been carried out under a coordinated SRS natural resources management strategy with an increase in ecological research and development of endangered species management plans. The management of large lake systems like Par Pond and L Lake falls under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act. This Act is the

overriding regulatory compliance driver for management of those sites and the natural resources issues are addressed under the natural resource damage assessment process.

In 1991, the first NRMP was issued by DOE-SR to provide the strategy and assign responsibilities for natural resources management activities on the site. That original site NRMP served as an umbrella document providing policy direction for the operations plans for the various natural resources management and research programs at SRS. The SRS policy, as defined in the NRMP, states that the natural resources of the site will be both protected and utilized under a balanced research and management program that provides benefits to the nation. To that end, the site's natural resources program must support and be consistent with the primary mission of SRS. That document further established an intrasite group of professionals (i.e., the SRS Natural Resources Coordinating Committee) to provide DOE-SR management with expert advice on natural resources issues.

In the late 1990s, the SRS RCW Management Plan was revised. With the success of onsite recovery activities for this species, coupled with new information from throughout the Southeast, a unique opportunity was available to DOE-SR to revise the existing RCW management plan to be better founded and more flexible. The revised plan emphasized ecosystem-level RCW management that was DOE-mission compatible and provided for flexibility in future site development. Implementation of the new SRS RCW Management Plan was addressed in a revised FONSI to DOE/EA-0826 that was issued on April 28, 2000.

Since the 1991 NRMP was implemented, several things have changed. The original management areas (MAs) were redefined to improve SRS's ability to manage the recovery of the RCW, and to provide flexibility to achieve the site's primary missions. The Crackerneck Wildlife Management Area and Ecological Reserve (CWMAER) was expanded, and a separate management plan developed for that area. In addition, natural resources education and research activities at SRS increased, trails were developed, numerous environmental and ecological restoration projects were implemented, and new scientific and technical information was incorporated in natural resources management. A revised NRMP has been drafted to document these changes in management direction, establish a reference document that supports the current SRS natural resources management, and, lastly, provide a basis for formulating future budgets. The draft revised NRMP was made available for review and comment. DOE-SR received comments on the draft revised NRMP, has prepared a comment response document, and made appropriate changes to the revised NRMP.

**Purpose and Need for Agency Action:** DOE-SR needs to take action to implement the revised NRMP at SRS to reflect the recent and planned changes for the site's natural resources management activities. The purpose of the proposed action is to manage the natural resources of SRS to achieve the goals and objectives defined in the revised NRMP.

**Proposed Action:** The proposed action is for DOE-SR to implement the revised NRMP at SRS. The revised NRMP defines the manner in which DOE-SR proposes to manage the natural resources at SRS. The DOE mission at SRS is to serve the nation through safe, secure, cost-effective management of our nuclear weapons stockpile, nuclear materials, and the environment, and to clean up the legacy of the Cold War. The natural resource management

activities defined in the revised NRMP were designed to be consistent with the DOE missions. Under the revised plan, the following principles would be employed to govern the management of site natural resources:

- All work would be done in accordance with Integrated Safety Management Procedures found in DOE Policy 450.4, Safety Management System Policy;
- Environmental stewardship activities would be compatible with future SRS missions;
- SRS would continue to protect and manage SRS natural resources;
- Sustainable resource management would be applied to SRS natural resources;
- Close cooperation would be maintained among organizations when managing and protecting SRS natural resources;
- The results of research, monitoring, and operational findings would be used in the management of SRS natural resources;
- Restoration of native communities and species would continue;
- Employees, customers, stakeholders, State natural resource officials, and regulators would be invited to participate in the natural resource planning process; and
- SRS would maintain the area as a National Environmental Research Park (NERP).

For management purposes, SRS is divided into six MAs based upon existing biological and physical conditions, operations capability, and suitability for mission objectives. These MAs would include: the Industrial Core MA, the RCWMA, the Supplemental RCWMA, the CWMAER, the Savannah River Swamp MA, and the Lower Three Runs Corridor MA. Several program areas were delineated to implement the goals and objectives of the NRMP and assist in planning, management, and budgeting. These program areas are: habitat, population and invasive species, and threatened, endangered and sensitive (TES) species management; forest products harvesting and silviculture management; secondary roads, boundary, and trails management; watershed management; fire management; Research Set-Aside Program; and natural resource, ecological, cultural, and environmental research. The management of these program areas would be compatible with the specific objectives for each MA.

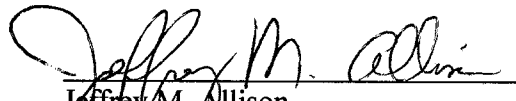
**Alternatives:** In addition to the proposed action, DOE-SR considered the no action alternative, which is the same as the proposed action in the existing EA, FONSI and revised FONSI, in that it would continue present activities.

**Environmental Impacts:** The EA analyzed the potential consequences of the natural resources management activities at SRS to determine if there were any significant environmental impacts. The analysis assessed potential impacts on water resources, floodplains and wetlands, terrestrial resources, air and noise, TES species, cultural resources, socioeconomics, and hazardous materials. The revised NRMP defines the MAs and program areas that would be used to manage the site's natural resources. The differences between the original plan and the revised NRMP are listed according to the following program areas: forest products harvesting and silviculture management - convert stands of nonindigenous species in the Industrial Core MA to indigenous species over the next ten years; secondary roads, boundary, and trails management - identify opportunities to decrease the number of miles of secondary roads, and identify opportunities to improve visual resources; and fire management - increase the use of prescribed fire, and reduce

fuels around the urban and industrial interface. No other changes from the 1991 plan and 2000 revised FONSI were defined in the revised NRMP.

**Determination:** Based on the information and analyses in the original EA (DOE/EA-0826), and after the additional examination of the scope changes and careful consideration of all comments received, DOE-SR has determined that the proposed action of implementing the revised NRMP at SRS is bounded by the EA and does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of NEPA. Therefore, an EIS is not required and DOE-SR is issuing this revised FONSI.

Signed in Aiken, South Carolina, this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of April, 2005.

  
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