

Energy & Water Appropriations Committee Testimony

Rep. Joe Wilson (SC-02)

May 3, 2021 at 12:45pm

Chairwoman Marcy Kaptur and Ranking Member Mike Simpson:

Thank you for your leadership on the committee. I am here today representing the Second District of South Carolina, the home of the Savannah River Site and the New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam.

The Savannah River Site was constructed during the early 1950s to support our national defense programs during the Cold War. The site maintains that responsibility 70 years later through its national lab, NNSA missions, and environmental clean-up.

I ask the committee to consider the following for the Site:

1. \$30,000,000 for the Tritium Finishing Facility - The Site is home to the Savannah River Tritium Enterprise, which prepares the nation's only tritium supply for our national defense. This new facility will replace an aged facility constructed in the 1950s that currently faces age-related problems and maintenance costs that could jeopardize tritium production operations necessary to maintain the U.S. nuclear deterrent.
2. \$495,000,000 for the Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility and \$200,000,000 for Savannah River Plutonium Operations - As part of a two-site solution to plutonium pit production, this facility will provide the capability of producing no fewer than 80 plutonium pits per year by 2030. With pits in our nuclear inventory aging, our nation

cannot afford to reach a point where we question whether or not our nuclear weapons work.

3. \$115,000,000 for Surplus Plutonium Disposition project – This project at the Site will safely dispose of 24 metric tons of surplus plutonium through the dilute and dispose process. This project requires the installation of three new gloveboxes, ventilation, fire protection and other support equipment to expand the existing capability.
4. \$11,549,000 for Savannah River Site Community and Regulatory Support - This request secures Payment in Lieu of Taxes funding for Aiken, Barnwell, and Allendale counties of which the Site is located. This funding requests matches what has been appropriated in previous years and payments go to support the local school districts, emergency services, and county operations.
5. \$543,784,000 for Savannah River Risk Management Operations - This request will allow critical missions, like H-Canyon, at the SRS to proceed uninterrupted and continue processing of spent nuclear fuel. These funds will also maintain operations aligned with the Liquid Waste Life Cycle Program, cover necessary replacements to aged equipment, and provide critical infrastructure improvements.
6. \$1,046,000,000 for Savannah River Radioactive Liquid Tank Waste Stabilization and Disposition - This request includes continuation of hot operations of the Salt Waste Processing Facility (SWPF), the Defense Waste Processing Facility, as well as continued construction of saltstone disposal units to accommodate for the increased amount of waste being processed through SWPF.
7. \$80,000,000 for the Savannah River National Laboratory RAD Facilities - The Savannah River National Laboratory (SRNL) operates a suite of radiological facilities that provide

critical technical and operations support to the EM and NNSA missions. Effective June 2021, the lab will become a separate Management and Operations (M&O) contract. To cover the high costs of operating and maintaining radiological facilities the lab overhead rate would increase significantly, making the laboratory uncompetitive for the numerous non-radiological programs at the laboratory. By creating a control point for the lab, it should prevent this problem and allow SRNL to safely operate the RAD facilities.

In addition to the Savannah River Site, my district also borders the New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam. The future of the New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam is currently in question as the US Army Corps of Engineers had previously chosen a design which would have torn down the New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam and irreversibly lowered water levels in a manner in North Augusta, South Carolina, with Augusta, Georgia, that would negatively impact recreation, economic development, and industries up and down the Savannah River. After a judge ruled that the plan selected did not meet the statutory requirements, stakeholders are working towards finding a resolution. It is critical that any future appropriations legislation reinforce Congress' interest in maintaining current water levels upstream of the New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam, while encouraging the Army Corps of Engineers to work with the local communities. Specifically, any resolution must ensure that existing water levels are maintained, as required in section 1319 of the WIIN Act of 2016.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these requests.