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For Immediate Release

Savannah River Site Walking Tours Revisit Former Town of Ellenton

Explore the town that once was

AIKEN, S.C. (May 1, 2024) – The Savannah River Site (SRS), part of the Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear complex, is celebrating the history of the Site's creation by offering walking tours of what was once Ellenton, South Carolina, a town that was displaced during the Cold War for construction of the Site.

For nearly 75 years, SRS has been a part of the Central Savannah River Area, the name for the areas in Georgia and South Carolina that are close to the Savannah River and Augusta, Georgia. To preserve the Site's rich history, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS), the managing and operating contractor at SRS, is now offering public walking tours of the area that once included Ellenton.



George (Buddy) Wingard, with the Savannah River Archeological Research Program, explains the local history of Ellenton, South Carolina, to tour participants.

News from the Savannah River Site

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“In collaboration with the Savannah River Archeological Research Program, we are excited to pilot two walking tours of Ellenton,” said SRS Cold War Historic Preservation Program Manager Susie Ferrara. “The first tour completely sold out and guests really enjoyed learning the history and seeing, first-hand, the old streets and building foundations of the former residences and businesses.”

The University of South Carolina's Savannah River Archaeological Research Program manages all archaeological and historic resources for DOE at SRS.

“The SRS Heritage Foundation hosted the inaugural tour of the Ellenton Trail prior to the coronavirus pandemic but stopped the visits following the outbreak of the virus,” continued Ferrara. “With the feedback we received from our historic public tour surveys, our guests made it very clear they wanted to see more of the former community, so we listened.”

In 1880, Ellenton, South Carolina, was officially incorporated as a town. It later became populated by farmers from nearby communities and benefited from local railroad and train stations. On November 28, 1950, the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, known today as DOE, and the E. I. du Pont de Nemours Company announced that the ‘Savannah River Plant’ would be built on land in Aiken, Barnwell and Allendale counties in South Carolina.

The DOE facility has a long track record for being one of the safest sites in the complex and one of the safest major industrial sites in the world. Dedicated to maintaining the highest possible safety and security standards, SRS is a key DOE industrial complex responsible for environmental stewardship, environmental cleanup, nuclear waste management and disposition of nuclear materials.



A tour informational board on the route of a walking tour displaying the history of Ellenton, South Carolina.

“Both the SRS Cold War Historic Preservation and the Savannah River Archeological Research Programs are committed to preserving the decades of culture, artifacts, accomplishments and history associated with the Savannah River Plant being built and operated in South Carolina,” said Andy Horcher, Senior Natural Resources Program Manager for the U.S. Department of Energy’s Savannah River Operations Office. “SRS is committed to its people, missions and the future, but also recognizes the sacrifices made so we can exist. Our ongoing missions couldn’t have happened without the patriotism, bravery and dedication of those that came before.”

There are 12 remaining SRS Public tours and one Ellenton walking tour in 2024. Visitors can gain an understanding about DOE facilities, missions and workforce that changed the face of counties near SRS and helped the United States during the Cold War. Tour guests also will learn about current and future EM and National Nuclear Security Administration missions at SRS.

To sign up for a tour, visit <https://www.srs.gov/general/tour/index.htm> and click the registration button. For further assistance, call (803) 952-8994.

Each public tour can accommodate up to 34 people. Each historic tour has a limit of 50. All are filled on a first come, first served basis. Participants must be 18 years of age or older, U.S. citizens and must register individually for a tour. Registration for each tour will close two weeks before the date of the tour, so be sure to register early.

2024 SRS Public and Historic Tour Dates

January: Thursday, Jan. 18
February: Thursdays, Feb. 1 and 15
March: <i>Historic Tours</i> – Tuesday, 12 and 19 Thursday, 14 and 21 <i>Ellenton Walking Tours-</i> Thursday, 28
April: Thursdays, April 4 and 18
May: Thursdays, May 9 and 23
June: Thursdays, June 6 and 20
July: Thursdays, July 11 and 25
August: No Tours
September: Thursdays, Sept. 12 and 26
October: <i>Historic Tours</i> – Tuesday, 8 and 15 Thursdays, 10 and 17 <i>Ellenton Walking Tours-</i> Thursday, 31
November: Thursday, Nov. 7
December: Thursday, Dec. 5

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor and HII partnership company, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, located near Aiken, South Carolina.

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