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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Aiken Elementary “STEPS Up” at SRS

*Environmental discoveries intrigue students*

AIKEN, S.C. – (April 29, 2016) – More than 100 fourth graders from Aiken Elementary School recently became environmental scientists for a day at the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site (SRS). Equipped with special tools to gather and study aquatic creatures, examine earthbound creepy crawlers and understand nature’s use of water, these young investigators participated in the Science and Technology Enrichment Program (STEP) at SRS during a recent field trip.

Managed by Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS), STEP provides K-12 teachers and students with interactive science, mathematics and technology opportunities through real-world, issues-oriented investigations that focus on responsible environmental stewardship. This program is offered to teachers and students throughout the Central Savannah River Area.

“The partnership that SRNS has with educators, like those through the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center (RPSEC), cannot be matched. Teachers jump at the chance for their students to take a trip here because of the unbeatable, hands-on lessons presented by interesting and knowledgeable RPSEC instructors,” said Kim Parrish, Fourth Grade Teacher, Aiken Elementary School. “Students’ curious spirits are truly intrigued as they spend



*Fourth grade students from Aiken Elementary recently participated in the Savannah River Site Science and Technology Enrichment Program. During one hands-on activity, students studied the tiny aquatic creatures found in local ponds. Samantha Moore (from left), Danielle Romano, J.P. Windham, Aiken Elementary Teacher Kim Parrish, Naliah Brown and David King discuss the importance of protecting our often fragile environment.*

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time ‘powering-down’ and exploring the great outdoors. The trip was well-worth every second!”

STEP lessons are designed in accordance with state and national standards to reinforce and enhance the classroom teacher’s mathematics and science curricula. Classes are taught primarily in outdoor settings at the Silver Bluff Audubon Center in Jackson, S.C., or at the Savannah River Site. Thinking skills and environmental decision making are an integral part of each lesson, which typically are 2-3 hours in length.

“The kids love insects, animals and a chance to get their hands dirty, especially the younger students,” said Kim Mitchell, who is the SRNS coordinator for the program. “It’s rewarding to see that look on their face when they discover something new or observe something fascinating during hands-on activities.”

Before studying the environment at SRS, students are given a safety briefing and detailed instructions about the day’s events. Lessons involve a variety of “real” math and science activities that are developed to be interesting and fun.

Aiken Elementary student Naliah Brown explained that through this experience she now understands the importance of our planet’s water cycle. “And, I learned that we need to protect things in nature like bugs and animals and keep our water safe too, not to harm it,” said Brown.

After lunch and a short discussion to summarize the day’s lessons, the students returned to their school to anticipate their next visit.

The program is a cooperative effort by DOE-Savannah River, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, Ruth Patrick Science Education Center, National Audubon Society and the U.S. Forest Service.

DOE provides a variety of science and literacy outreach programs at the Savannah River Site. The primary goals of these outreach programs are to enhance interest in science, mathematics, engineering and technology and to support improvements in education in the Central Savannah River Area by using the unique resources available at SRS.

*Savannah River Nuclear Solutions is a Fluor-led company whose members are Fluor Federal Services, Newport News Nuclear and Honeywell, responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, including the Savannah River National Laboratory, located near Aiken, South Carolina.*

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