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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NNSA Contribution to Museum Helps Tell Story of SRS Role in National Security

AIKEN, S.C. (Oct. 20, 2020) – A grant from the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), the government agency responsible for the Nation’s nuclear stockpile, will help the Savannah River Site (SRS) Museum illustrate the crucial role the Site has played since the 1950s in the Nation’s nuclear deterrent.

NNSA is providing \$300,000 for a new permanent exhibit at the SRS Museum, entitled “Tritium: The Past and Future Mission,” that illustrates how the Nation’s need for tritium – the radioactive isotope of hydrogen used in modern nuclear weapons – formed the genesis of the Site, and how the Site’s flexible engineering and design allowed SRS to produce tritium, as well as plutonium and other nuclear materials during the Cold War. The exhibit will trace the Site’s legacy as the Nation’s only provider of tritium for the nuclear deterrent, and how SRS continues to fulfill that role in the 21st century.

“The history of SRS is a significant part of the history of NNSA,” said Jeffrey Allison, Savannah River Field Office Acting Manager. “Tritium, which SRS continues to supply today, along with the other nuclear materials produced during the Cold War, are essential to NNSA’s mission to ensure the United States maintains a safe, secure, and reliable nuclear stockpile.”



Lauren Miller, Director of the SRS Museum (from left), Walt Joseph of the SRS Heritage Foundation and Jeff Allison, NNSA – Savannah River Field Office Acting Manager, commemorate the \$300,000 grant from NNSA to fund the SRS Museum’s upcoming exhibit *Tritium: The Past and Future Mission*.

The Museum's exhibit will feature touch screens, images and artifacts to tell this powerful story in an engaging, interactive fashion. In addition, the NNSA grant will help the Museum to create companion lesson plan modules that meet the academic standards for social studies (fourth and eighth grade) and STEM requirements in South Carolina and Georgia.

On Jan. 31, 1950, President Truman directed the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission to proceed with work on all forms of atomic weapons, including the hydrogen bomb. As a result, new facilities were constructed and operated to develop the new weapons. Implicit in that directive was the construction of a new facility – then called the Savannah River Plant – to produce tritium. The centerpiece of the Nation's nuclear arsenal was to be the H-Bomb. These new bombs required increased supplies of plutonium as well as tritium, which had a half-life of 12 to 13 years, making tritium production a constant priority. SRS would contribute both to the Nation's stockpile. Today, SRS is the Nation's sole facility for extracting, recycling, purifying and reloading tritium, which remains a key element of modern nuclear weapons.

The SRS Museum was founded by the SRS Heritage Foundation, a non-profit corporation organized to interpret and preserve the history of SRS. The SRS Museum became an extension of the Aiken County Historical Museum in 2015 when the SRS Heritage Foundation partnered with Aiken County to obtain the former Dibble Library on Laurens Street in Aiken for the sole purpose of creating a museum for the interpretation and preservation of the history of SRS and its role in the Cold War

Established by Congress in 2000, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) is a semi-autonomous agency within the U.S. Department of Energy responsible for enhancing national security through the military application of nuclear science. The mission of the NNSA Savannah River Field Office (SRFO) is to provide operations, programs, and project oversight and contract administration for NNSA field activities at the Savannah River Site, located near Aiken, South Carolina.

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor-led company with Newport News Nuclear and Honeywell, is 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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