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## Preserving the History of the Savannah River Site

AIKEN, S.C., Nov. 16, 2020 – For the Department of Energy (DOE) and its management and operations contractor Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS), preserving history at the Savannah River Site (SRS) is not only an important mission but a federal mandate.

“What happened here during the Cold War is of crucial historical importance and the passing of time is our enemy,” said Andy Albenesius, SRNS Site Services Program Manager. “It was post-World War II and patriotism was at an all-time high during the construction and early operation of the Savannah River Plant (SRP), as it was known then. No one can place a value on the work performed by the SRP employees who rapidly, and at great sacrifice, did their part to create our nation’s nuclear deterrent, countering the threat the Soviet Union presented.”

Today, two programs at the Savannah River Site assist DOE with the preservation of its patriotic history: The Savannah River Archaeological Research Program (SRARP) and the Cold War Historic Preservation Program. Each program partners with the SRS Museum located in Aiken, S.C.

As part of a cooperative agreement with the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of South Carolina, SRAP handles the Site’s compliance related to archaeological resources. It serves as the primary organization investigating archaeological research associated with the Savannah River Valley’s cultural development. Their results assist DOE in the management of more than 1,300 known archaeological sites at SRS.

Originating in 1997, the Cold War Historic Preservation Program (CWHPP) assists DOE-Savannah River in



*Melissa Hanson, Curator for the Savannah River Site Curation Facility, adds another artifact to the vast collection of items carefully stored to preserve Cold War history at SRS.*

managing the documentation and preservation of the Site's Cold War era history and in preparation for the Site's 50th anniversary, which began a multi-year history project narrating SRS's technical history.

The program developed a comprehensive inventory and historic description for Savannah River's Cold War facilities, in 2004, surveying approximately 750 buildings and structures constructed between 1950-1989. At the close of that effort, 227 properties were recognized as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The CWHPP works to identify artifacts and historic properties while promoting awareness of the Site's historical significance through tours, historic photography, presentations, interpretive signage, films and exhibits for the SRS workforce, as well as surrounding communities.

"This informal policy of preservation education has led to artifact donations and queries from fieldworkers asking, "Is this item historic?" This practice was particularly evident during the decommissioning of Site buildings. Site personnel would recognize the potential for historic significance related to a discovered artifact and bring it to our attention," said Albenesius.

The Curation Facility maintains a significant collection of Cold War artifacts in a large warehouse-like structure at SRS.

"The National Historic Preservation Act is the primary reason our program is here," said Melissa Hanson, Curator for the SRS Curation Facility and New South Associates employee. "The act encourages federal agencies to survey and identify historic places to ensure that history is being collected should there be changes made to a structure, such as the demolition of a building or damage due to flood or fire. There are about 6,000 artifacts, such as documents, photos, building signs, equipment, tools and even a test reactor console, altogether an incredibly wide variety of items."

*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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