

SRS Heritage Foundation

NEWSLETTER

October 2011

SRS ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE CELEBRATED

The Celebration of 60 Years of Environmental Science at SRS on August 19th and 20th was very successful. The SRS Heritage Foundation sponsored events that highlighted the early pioneering work at SRS and the continuing studies that have made the Site the first National Environmental Research Park and the most thoroughly-studied site in the US.

We began the Celebration on August 19th with a reception for past and present environmental scientists and researchers from the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory and the Savannah River National Laboratory. About 30 people attended the Friday event at the University of Georgia Conference Center.

The Celebration featured a symposium at the University of South Carolina Aiken Etherredge Center from 9:am to 3:pm on Saturday. Dr Tom Hallman, Chancellor of USCA, and Walt Joseph of the Heritage Foundation began by welcoming the 105 audience members present at 9:am. They were followed by Dr David Moody, Manager of Department of Energy-Savannah River Site, with a talk about Enterprise SRS, the new strategic plan for the Site. Subsequent speakers were:

- Dr Dave Coleman, University of Georgia—"Early History of Ecology on the SRS"
- Dr Whit Gibbons, Savannah River Ecology Laboratory—"The History of SREL: The Past Four Decades"
- Dr Jack Corey, Savannah River National Laboratory—"DuPont's Environmental Program at SRS, 1951-89"
- Dr Brian Looney, Savannah River National Laboratory—"SRNL, Present and Future"
- Dr Chuck Hunter, Savannah River National Laboratory—"Atmospheric Technology Programs at SRNL"
- Dr John Blake, US Forest Service—"US Forest Service History at SRS, Past, Present & Future"

The Power Point presentations were profusely illustrated and were enthusiastically appreciated by the audience.

Exhibits and live animals were displayed at the USCA Ruth Patrick Science Education Center between 11:am and 2:pm on Saturday. Approximately 200 people, including many children enjoyed interacting with the reptiles and raptors at RPSEC.

Financial assistance for the Celebration was provided by Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, Savannah River Remediation, CNTA and the University of South Carolina Aiken.

A videotaped record of the Celebration and several video interviews will be used by the Foundation to continue publicizing environmental science in coming years.

See the photos on Page 2 & 8 

60 Year SRS Environmental Science Symposium— Etherredge Center

Preserving & Interpreting Savannah River Site History



Dr. Brian Looney, SRNL gives his presentation on the “Present & Future” of the Savannah River National Laboratory



Dr. Whit Gibbons giving his presentation on “The History of SREL: The Past Four Decades”

SRS AT SIXTY

By Art Osborne

The announcement, on November 28, 1950, that the Atomic Energy Commission and DuPont had decided to place a huge atomic production facility in the Savannah River Valley stirred talk, planning and action. The Augusta Committee of 100 for Growth, in conjunction with The Augusta Chronicle, had completed a contest in June 1950 to name the general area. C. C. McCullum of Wrens won with the name “Central Savannah River Area”. Thus the term CSRA was coined. Men like Barnwell County State Senator Edward Brown and Augusta’s Chamber of Commerce Secretary Lester Moody involved a young Aiken attorney, Strom Thurmond, in the quest for development of CSRA. These men and others worked tirelessly to have The Clarks Hill dam and power project brought here and later the very secret Harry S. Truman “Bomb Plant”. Savannah River Plant was the official name given to the project. The “game was on” and the next several years brought unparalleled growth, opportunity and change.

The new site’s boundaries included four towns (Ellenton, Jackson, Snelling and Dunbarton) as well as smaller communities like Meyers Mill, Leigh, and Union Branch. The exact boundaries were not set on the day of the announcement. The residents of Jackson and Snelling breathed a sigh of relief when in January, 1951 it was announced that some of the site’s production facilities would be relocated to exclude these two towns from the site. This was made possible when DuPont engineers moved the production areas a little farther south. They had determined that the 6 mile exclusion distance from a production facility to the gen-

eral public as well as the 2.5 mile potential attack damage distance between production facilities could be maintained with the towns outside the boundary. Ellenton and Dunbarton would have to remain inside the boundaries to ensure unfettered access to the river, facilitate construction and help control the expected development of land adjacent to the site.

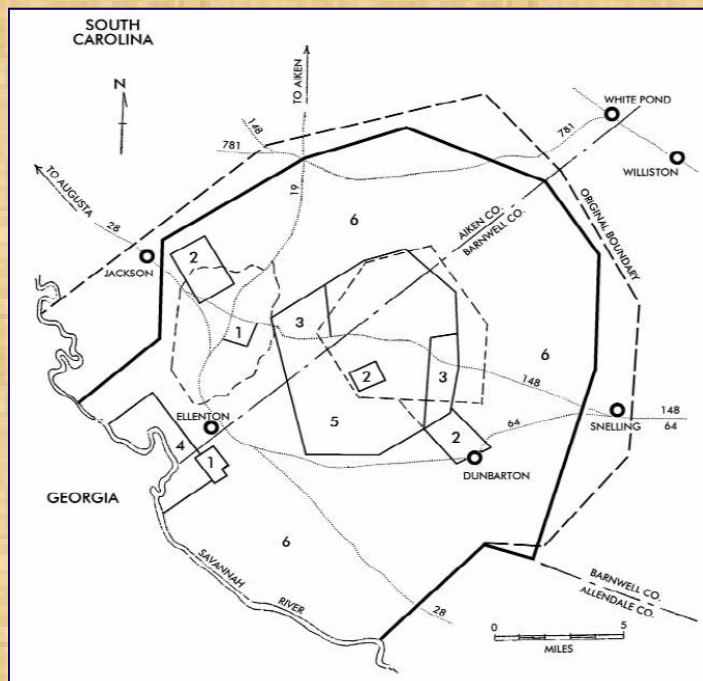
Thousands of new residents flocked to the area. Accountants, scientists, engineers, construction personnel, businessmen and others either looking for a new opportunities or being transferred arrived daily. One especially energetic house mover, Ralph South, packed up his business and left Colorado on the day of the announcement heading for Aiken. The area to be evacuated included: 287 residences, 51 commercial buildings, 3 schools, 8 churches, 2 railroad stations, 2 saw-

mills, 4 city or fraternal halls and 1 box factory. In December the U.S. Corps of Engineers (COE) arrived and relocation and displacement of some 1500 families began in earnest. When the last land acquisition was completed in 1954, it had cost about \$19,000,000. Land prices paid ranged from \$25 to \$250 per acre and the largest payout was \$1,280,965 for the Leigh Banana Crate Company and associated factory.

Preparations included not only the relocation of the living but also arrangements

for the dead. An inventory of the site revealed 161 cemeteries; 126 of these were relocated. In all a total of 5,984 graves were relocated off site with the approval of next of kin. Special visitation arrangements were made with families for the graves remaining within the site’s outer boundaries. The COE contracted with private companies to handle the removal and re-interment with great care and consideration to minimize the emotional impact. Final removals were completed in February 1954.

Continued on Page 4



The Core of Engineers began evacuating the town of Ellenton on April 23, 1951. By the end of June the evacuation was complete. Tons of building materials were arriving in the now-empty town daily. Backyards and town businesses were transformed into giant construction lay-down areas. The Savannah River Plant was being born. The construction schedule was carefully planned and extremely demanding. Specific items had to be completed on schedule as one activity or operation depended on the other being ready.



Dunbarton Grammar School above
Left is the Dunbarton Train Depot
Below, aerial photo of Dunbarton.





Foundation Takes Part In Community Functions

THANKS TO OUR SRS HERITAGE FOUNDATION SPONSORS 2011

We are particularly pleased that several organizations have such faith in our future that they have made substantial financial contributions to our programs.

Among these supporters are:

Corporate Sponsor

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions

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*A special thank you to the
individual
members for their continued
support of the Foundation*

**JOIN THE
SRS HERITAGE
FOUNDATION
TODAY!!
WE NEED
YOUR SUPPORT!**

The Heritage Foundation is continuing to participate in local community functions. The Foundation shared a booth with CNTA at Aiken's Makin' September 9th and 10th. Space for the two exhibits was provided by Shaw AREVA MOX.



The Foundation also partnered in the Atomic City Festival in New Ellenton October 8th. Mr. and Mrs. Gene Williams came by the Foundation exhibit and were excited to find a photograph of their house being moved from SRS in the early 1950's. The Foundation contributed to the



Preserving Savannah River Site History and Heritage

Festival by arranging for several exhibits from SRS. SRS exhibits included snakes, turtles and a possum from the Savannah River Ecology Lab; The DOE Emergency Response Vehicle; Smokey the Bear from the US Forest Service; Carolina Dogs from SREL; and the hydrogen-powered truck from the Hydrogen Laboratory.



Carolina Dogs from SREL

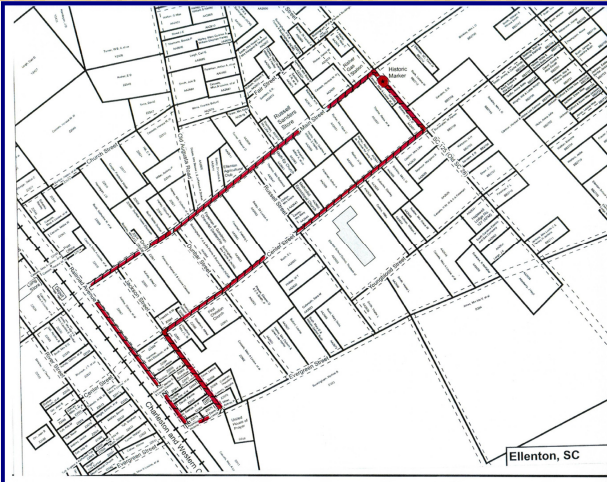


Smokey the Bear with alligator at Atomic City Festival

SRS Heritage Exhibit inside New Ellenton City Hall

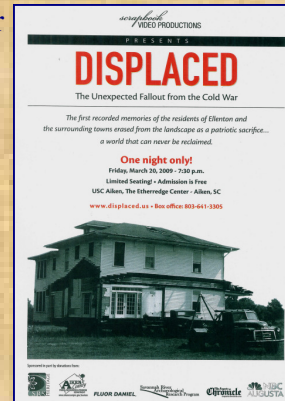


Foundation Receives Grants



The Heritage Foundation was notified in July that it had received two Accommodation Tax Grants from Aiken County. The larger grant of \$15,000 will be used to complete the design of exhibits for the proposed Ellenton Heritage Trail. The study will use historical material collected by the Savannah River Archaeological Research Project and the Ellenton Trail Committee of the Foundation to develop themes, narratives and signage for the Trail that will be educational and enjoyable for visitors.

The second grant of \$5,000 will allow us to begin collecting video interviews of people associated with the early days of SRS. These videos of employees and people who lived near the Site in the early 1950's will be archived and used in a video that was requested by teachers who worked with the Foundation on the video "Displaced". See note on these interviews on page 9 of this Newsletter.



R and P Areas Closed

The Department of Energy held a ceremony marking the closure of R and P Reactor Areas on September 22, 2011. The two earliest production reactors at SRS were taken critical in 1953 and 1954 and were shut down in 1964 and 1988, respectively, after contributing significantly to winning the Cold War. Funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act facilitated remediation of contaminated locations around the reactors. The stacks and gantry cranes were removed from the reactor buildings and the buildings were sealed and capped with approximately 254,000 cubic yards of grout. The two buildings were sealed to prevent human or animal access to above-grade portions.

The two reactor areas are now environmentally safe and are the first reactors in the DOE complex to reach their final end state. Participants in the closure ceremony expressed pride in a job well done combined with sadness at the end of these magnificent machines.

An era has ended.



R Reactor closed September 22nd, 2011

Environmental Science at SRS Celebration Photos at Ruth Patrick Science Education Center

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Video Interviews in Progress

John Brecht and Byron Williams have begun video recording interviews with former SRS employees and people who lived near the Site in the early 1950's. These interviews will continue for the next several months. If any of our readers have suggestions about potential interviewees, we would appreciate your input.

Get in touch with the Foundation office at PO Box 2226, Aiken, SC, 29802 or phone at 803-226-0116 or email at srsheritagefoundation@gmail.com with your suggestions.

Byron Williams and John Brecht interviews
Mim Woodring in North Augusta



Preserving & Interpreting Savannah River Site History

Contact Information:

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www.srsheritage.org
Or email: srsheritagefoundation@gmail.com Phone: 803-226-0116

SRS HERITAGE FOUNDATION
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I would like to become a member of the SRS Heritage Foundation at the following level. (Please Check One)

Benefactor	\$120.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Patron	\$ 60.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sustaining	\$ 25.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student	\$ 15.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Small Donor	\$ 500.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corporate Member	\$1,000.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
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I would like to help in the following ways: Membership Fundraising Public Other

This membership is valid through December 2011

Name	_____
Address	_____
City, Zip Code	_____
Phone	_____
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Fax #	_____

Any check, made out to the SRS Heritage Foundation, Inc. is welcome. Contributions to the Foundation are tax exempt. Please Contact (803) 226-0116

Printed on the SRS Heritage Foundation, Inc. P.O. Box 2226 Aiken, SC 29802 Phone: 803-226-0116 or 803-836-1100 Email: SRSHeritageFoundation@aiken.org or info@srsheritage.org

Go to the website to get a full-size application....join now!

Members who have not signed up for 2011.. will be dropped from the membership list very soon!