

Nuclear Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
December 15, 2025

Opening

The meeting was called to order at 1:03 p.m. on December 15th by Chair Rick Lee.

Attendance

Present

Rick Lee, Chair
Laura Basta
Dr. Travis Knight
Jim Little
Dr. Brian Powell
Rodney Whitley

Virtual

Dr. Musa Danjaji

Absent

Representative Sylleste Davis
Dr. Todd Knight

Apologies: Dr. Carolyn Hudson
Senator Tom Young (State Senate 2026 Caucus Planning Meeting)

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the March 31st meeting were approved.

New Business

In his presentation *Energy Generation Infrastructure Challenges*, Dr. David Gattie, Associate Professor of Engineering at the University of Georgia, examined the condition of the U.S. power generation fleet, growing competition from other world powers, the expansion of non-thermal energy sources, and how these factors collectively shape the future of American industrial power.

Edwin DeShong, Manager of the Department of Energy's Savannah River Operations Office, introduced the new Director of Savannah River National Laboratory, Dr. Johney Green. Dr. Green discussed current projects and the role of the Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative (AMC) as an "open, outside-the-fence collaboration space" that will support external partnerships and innovation.

Mr. DeShong also provided operational updates on the nuclear materials program, progress across several facilities, and ongoing collaboration with the Department of Environmental Services to support environmental restoration efforts related to site operations.

Michael Mikolanis, National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) Field Office Manager, with assistance from Jeff Hynds, Infrastructure Integration Manager for the Department of Energy's NNSA mission at the Savannah River Site, provided an overview of the NNSA Artificial Intelligence Data Center Initiative, including the NNSA Request for Proposal (RFP), the January 2025 Executive Order promoting U.S. leadership in artificial intelligence, the Department of Energy's subsequent Request for Information (RFI) supporting rapid development of data centers and power generation projects, electric power availability, and potential sites and selection criteria for AI data centers. The Savannah River Site has been identified as one of four candidate locations to host a data center and energy project and has identified 10 potential areas on site where the project could be located.

Dr. Jeff Griffin, President and CEO of Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS), reviewed progress on the SRS Dilute and Dispose Mission, construction of the Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility (SRPPF), and operational updates on Tritium, H Canyon, and L Area.

The site is ahead of schedule in completed plutonium downblends and shipments to WIPP (Waste Isolation Pilot Plant). The potential impact of the May 2025 Executive Order shifting surplus plutonium disposition toward advanced nuclear fuel production remains unclear. SRPPF construction continues, with 90% of design expected

to be complete in 2026. The High-Fidelity Training and Operations Center received CD-2/3 approval and will support non-nuclear workforce training for future pit production.

Tritium operations completed a record 13 extractions in FY25 and exceeded DOD support goals. H Canyon and L Area continue receiving, storing, processing, and disposing of spent nuclear fuel.

Robbie Bennett, President and CEO of the Savannah River Site Community Reuse Organization (SRSCRO), provided an overview of SRSCRO's mission and initiatives. SRSCRO is a private, nonprofit organization focused on diversifying the economy and creating jobs in the five-county region surrounding the Savannah River Site in South Carolina and Georgia. Bennett highlighted workforce and education programs, including the Nuclear Workforce Initiative and the Workforce Opportunities in Regional Careers (WORC) program, which support development of a skilled nuclear workforce through partnerships with universities, national laboratories, technical colleges, and industry. Educational outreach efforts such as STEM Career Connections and Nuclear Science Week help build a workforce pipeline from middle school through college. Bennett also noted opportunities for nuclear growth in the region and announced that SRSCRO will host the ECA New Nuclear Forum in Augusta, Georgia, April 21–24, 2026.

Tom Burns, President and Program Manager of Savannah River Mission Completion (SRMC), opened his presentation with notable achievements and provided updates on liquid waste outages, return on investment related to milestones, safety, schedule and cost performance, budget alignment, and recent accomplishments. Liquid Waste Outage objectives include facility improvements, equipment reliability, and corrective and preventive maintenance. Facility improvements include extending Cross Flow Filters (CFF), adding 512-S lag storage for Salt Waste Processing Facility (SWPF) strip effluent (SE) solution, and SE-to-Slurry Mix Evaporator (SME) modifications to the Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF). These upgrades have enhanced performance, increased efficiency, optimized systems, and improved reliability.

Equipment upgrades include DWPF Main Process Crane (MPC) upgrades, centrifugal contactor replacements, and vibration monitoring. MPC upgrades improve operator visibility, communications, control interfaces, and overall reliability and maintainability. Centrifugal contactor replacements enable more proactive system optimization, improved reliability, and reduced downtime.

Corrective and preventive maintenance remain critical to safety, environmental protection, and mission success, with SRMC continuing to monitor, repair, and upgrade site equipment. Repairs to transfer pumps in Room 136B of the Salt Waste Processing Facility (SWPF) were successfully completed using robotics, extended tools, and innovative shielding techniques.

The Savannah River Site (SRS) is ahead of schedule on the Waste Removal and Tank Closure Task Order Plan, achieving Preliminary Cease Waste Removal (PCWR) on seven tanks in the water table since the start of the contract.

Additional safety initiatives include the introduction of SlateSafety armbands for workers and implementation of WeatherSentry.

Examples were presented demonstrating time and cost savings and improved efficiency as a return on investment. Project scope, schedule, and cost remain closely aligned; earlier budgets underestimated requirements, though funding aligned with needs by 2025. Funding for 2026 remains to be determined.

The presentation concluded with an update indicating the site remains on track for mission completion.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 4:04 p.m. by Chair Rick Lee.

The next general meeting will be held in April 2026.