

## FOREWORD

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The Federal action under review is the continued construction and proposed operation of new tanks for high-level radioactive waste at the Savannah River Plant (SRP) near Aiken, South Carolina. The construction of these tanks, which has been substantially completed, was authorized in the FY-1976, 1977, and 1978 Congressional budgets. The Federal District Court for the District of Columbia (Natural Resources Defense Council [NRDC] v. Administrator, ERDA/DOE), directed that this supplemental environmental impact statement (EIS) be prepared to address the design and safety alternatives of the waste storage tanks in FY-1976 and -1977 projects at the Savannah River Plant.\* Specifically, the court ordered on September 29, 1979, that:

"ORDERED, the defendants (Secretary, Department of Energy, et al.) will prepare with diligence and with all reasonable speed and file with the Court by no later than April 15, 1980, adequate final supplemental environmental impact statements to ERDA-1537, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Waste Management Operations, Savannah River Plant, Aiken, South Carolina, and ERDA-1538, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Waste Management Operations, Hanford Reservation, Richland, Washington, discussing the safety and design alternatives for the Fiscal Years 1976 and 1977 double-shell radioactive waste storage tanks at Hanford and Savannah River.

"FURTHER ORDERED, that the environmental impact statements shall discuss in detail at least those design and safety feature alternatives identified at note 19, page 13 of the Court of Appeals slip opinion, including the reasonably foreseeable environmental effects of these alternatives, their effect on the durability of the tanks or the ease of waste retrieval from such tanks, and the effect, if any, of these design and safety feature alternatives on the choices of a technology for long-term radioactive waste storage and final disposal, and on the timing of such choices."

This statement goes slightly beyond that court requirement in that four additional tanks authorized in a FY-1978 project are also included in the SRP EIS.

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\* A similar EIS has been prepared for the Hanford Site.

The base document, ERDA-1537, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Waste Management Operations, Savannah River Plant, September 1977, gives information on the current SRP waste management operations. This supplemental EIS summarizes, but does not repeat, the information given in ERDA-1537. The format of this supplemental EIS is changed somewhat from that of ERDA-1537 in accordance with recent Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (40 CFR 1500-1508).

Two earlier environmental impact statements were issued to cover construction at SRP of specific additional waste handling and storage facilities. These statements are Future High-Level Waste Facilities, SRP, WASH-1528 in December 1972, and Additional High-Level Waste Facilities, SRP, WASH-1530 in August 1974. Originally each of these projects was expected to include both waste tanks and evaporator, but because of increased costs, they were revised to include three and four waste tanks, respectively, with no evaporators. The environmental impact of the new tanks under construction will be of the same nature and order as those for the previous tanks.

C | In the final EIS, significant changes from the draft EIS are indicated by a vertical line in the left margin of the page. Minor editorial and typographical corrections are not identified. If the change is the result of an error (typing error, etc.) in the draft EIS, it is identified with the letter "E." If the change is made to clarify or expand on the draft statement, it is identified with the letter "C." As an example, if this sentence were added to clarify a section, it would be identified with a vertical line and the letter "C" as shown to the left.

C | Four comment letters were received; see Appendix G for DOE responses.