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**MEETING SCHEDULED TO ADDRESS PILOT PROGRAM
FOR NRC OVERSIGHT AT DOE SAVANNAH RIVER PLANT**

The U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the U.S. Department of Energy have scheduled a joint public meeting on Thursday, June 25, in Aiken, South Carolina to outline a pilot program under which the NRC will provide simulated oversight at the Savannah River Site's Receiving Basin for offsite fuel. The meeting is open to the public and will begin at 6:30 p.m. (EDT) at the City of Aiken Conference Center, located in the City Municipal Building at 215 The Alley, in Aiken.

Major issues to be discussed include the overall pilot program, a draft SRS work plan, and both generic and site specific issues affecting NRC oversight of DOE facilities.

Savannah River is one of several sites which receive and manage spent fuel from defense and research reactor programs. In 1964, the Receiving Basin for Offsite Fuels, a water-filled spent fuel storage basin, received the first of approximately 1,600 casks of spent fuel from domestic and foreign research reactors. Fuel assemblies are stored in racks or baskets standing on the bottom of the basins.

The pilot program is authorized by a Memorandum of Understanding signed in November, 1997 by NRC Chairman Shirley Ann Jackson and Energy Secretary Frederico F. Peña. The memorandum also authorizes pilot programs for simulated NRC oversight at several other DOE facilities and is considered to be an important step in assessing the desirability of NRC safety regulations at certain DOE sites.

Full NRC regulation over certain DOE operations would require legislation and funding by Congress.

The pilot program is the result of a recommendation in December of 1995 by an advisory committee that DOE nuclear-related facilities be regulated by an external agency. A DOE working group later recommended that the NRC be the external regulator. During the pilot phase, which runs through late 1998, the program will use "simulated regulation," as defined in the MOU, to test regulatory concepts at DOE facilities by evaluating them against standards established by the NRC and focus on areas of the greatest safety significance.

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EDITORS: A joint NRC/DOE web site has been established for the public to access information on the pilot program at: <http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/NMSS/doepilot.html>