

October 19, 2006

Geoffrey H. Fettus, Senior Project Attorney
Natural Resources Defense Council
1200 New York Avenue, Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20005

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO NRDC LETTER RE: LEACHING AT SRS SALTSTONE
FACILITY

Dear Mr. Fettus,

I am responding to your letter of September 18, 2006, in which you forwarded an anonymous letter received by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). The anonymous letter alleges that the vaults of the saltstone disposal facility at the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Savannah River Site (SRS) are cracking and that radioactivity is leaching out and running into the ground. You indicated that you forwarded this anonymous letter to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) because of the NRC's monitoring authority under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 (NDAA). You ask that we review the matters raised in the anonymous letter and provide a public record of our analysis and findings.

I noted that you provided a copy of the anonymous letter to the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) of the State of South Carolina. DHEC has regulatory authority over the waste already disposed of in the vaults at the saltstone facility, including the waste that is the subject of the anonymous letter. I have contacted DHEC and it is my understanding that DHEC plans to follow up on the statements made in the letter concerning the saltstone disposal facility.

Although the NRC will have monitoring authority over waste that is determined to be non-high-level waste under the NDAA and is disposed of in the saltstone disposal facility, the waste already disposed of in that facility is not the type of waste that is addressed in the NDAA; therefore, the NRC does not have monitoring authority over the waste already present at the saltstone disposal facility. Thus, currently the NRC is not in a position to review the matters

raised in the anonymous letter. Once DOE has commenced disposal operations for waste determined to be non-high-level waste under the NDAA, NRC will monitor DOE's disposal actions to assess whether they are in compliance with the performance objectives of 10 CFR 61, Subpart C, in accordance with the NDAA. Please contact me at 301-415-5228 if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Anna H. Bradford
Senior Project Manager
Environmental and Performance
Assessment Directorate
Office of Federal and State Materials
and Environmental Management Programs

cc: Shelly Sherritt,
South Carolina Department of Health
and Environmental Control

G. Fettus

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Anna H. Bradford
Senior Project Manager
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cc: Shelly Sherritt,
South Carolina Department of Health
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