

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

SUITE 2320 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6301

(202) 225-6375

TTY: (202) 226-4410

<http://science.house.gov>

May 16, 2007

Secretary Samuel Bodman  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Bodman,

It has come to the attention of the Subcommittees that the Department intends to end its support for the work of the Savannah River Ecology Lab at the end of May, 2007. We are concerned about the implications this move will have on the research done by this institution.

Savannah River Ecology Lab has a half-century of accomplishment and has long enjoyed the support of the Department. The lab plays an indispensable role in tracking the environmental conditions around the Savannah River site and providing unbiased information to the public and the government about conditions there. One benefit of this long-term research has been the steady accumulation of detailed field records that can inform our understanding of issues beyond the immediate impact of the Savannah River site, including insights into the possible consequences of climate change on the complex ecology of the region.

We are unsure why and how the decision was made to terminate the Department's support for this facility. It is particularly difficult to understand in light of the Department beginning the on-site treatment and processing of 33.8 million gallons of salt-waste. The work of SREL would provide important insights for the local community and state and Federal officials into the environmental consequences of the processing of that salt-waste, a legacy of plutonium production at the Savannah River site, as well as storage of the resulting cementitious waste.

We ask that you continue to provide support to the lab until the Subcommittees can thoroughly review the Department's actions in this case. As a first step in a review of those actions, we request that you provide Committee staff with a briefing no later than May 25, 2007. Further we ask that you provide the Subcommittees with all records (as defined in the attachment), generated or received, since August 1, 2006 relating to the Savannah River Ecology Lab. Please provide two copies of these records, no later than May 30, 2007.

Secretary Bodman  
Page 2  
May 16, 2007

We also ask that you respond by letter with your intentions regarding continued support for the lab until the Subcommittees can complete a review of the Department's proposed action. Please provide that letter no later than Tuesday, May 23, 2007. Contact Dr. Dan Pearson or Dr. Jean Fruci of the Majority staff (202-225-6375) to arrange for the delivery of materials and the briefing.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



BRAD MILLER  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight



NICK LAMPSON  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Energy and Environment

Cc:

The Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight

The Honorable Bob Inglis  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Energy and Environment

The Honorable Bart Gordon  
Chairman  
Committee on Science and Technology

The Honorable Ralph Hall  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Science and Technology

The Honorable John Barrow

## ATTACHMENT

1. The term "records" is to be construed in the broadest sense and shall mean any written or graphic material, however produced or reproduced, of any kind or description, consisting of the original and any non-identical copy (whether different from the original because of notes made on or attached to such copy or otherwise) and drafts and both sides thereof, whether printed or recorded electronically or magnetically or stored in any type of data bank, including, but not limited to, the following: correspondence, memoranda, records, summaries of personal conversations or interviews, minutes or records of meetings or conferences, opinions or reports of consultants, projections, statistical statements, drafts, contracts, agreements, purchase orders, invoices, confirmations, telegraphs, telexes, agendas, books, notes, pamphlets, periodicals, reports, studies, evaluations, opinions, logs, diaries, desk calendars, appointment books, tape recordings, video recordings, e-mails, voice mails, computer tapes, or other computer stored matter, magnetic tapes, microfilm, microfiche, punch cards, all other records kept by electronic, photographic, or mechanical means, charts, photographs, notebooks, drawings, plans, inter-office communications, intra-office and intra-departmental communications, transcripts, checks and canceled checks, bank statements, ledgers, books, records or statements of accounts, and papers and things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated.
2. The terms "relating," "relate," or "regarding" as to any given subject means anything that constitutes, contains, embodies, identifies, deals with, or is in any manner whatsoever pertinent to that subject, including but not limited to records concerning the preparation of other records.