

TESTIMONY OF
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY - SAVANNAH RIVER OPERATIONS OFFICE
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATIONS AND OVERSIGHT
AND
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Good Morning. Chairman Miller, Chairman Lampson, and Subcommittee Members. In May 2006, I was appointed the Assistant Manager for Closure Project at the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Savannah River Operations Office (SR). In that capacity, I oversee contractors, Federal programs and activities associated with the cleanup of radiological and chemical contaminants in buildings and the environment resulting from more than 40 years of nuclear materials production at the Savannah River Site (SRS). Programmatic oversight of the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory (SREL) became my responsibility in February 2007 following an organizational realignment at DOE-SR. Primarily, it is in this capacity that I am here today to share my knowledge and address my role relative to the Department's funding decisions for SREL.

Prior to assuming oversight responsibility for the laboratory, I would like to add that I, along with other DOE-SR line organization managers, participated in discussions and evaluations of SREL Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 research activities during the Fall 2006. As you have heard Mr. Allison previously state, based on planning assumptions in early 2006 for future SREL work, DOE-SR was planning to fund SREL at \$4 million in Fiscal Year 2007. As part of that planning base, available funding to support SREL research activities in FY2007 was evaluated by each of the DOE-SR line organizations, including my program area.

Upon acquiring oversight of the laboratory, I had several meetings and discussions with SREL leadership regarding implementation of the 2006 Cooperative Agreement, as revised to incorporate the terms of the 2005 agreement with the University of Georgia. During this time, I consistently re-stated the terms and conditions upheld in the mutual agreement: \$1 million guaranteed DOE funding in Fiscal Year 2007 for infrastructure; no DOE funding commitment for Fiscal Year 2008 and beyond; and task-by-task evaluation by DOE based on need, merit, and funding availability. Additionally, SREL was strongly encouraged to seek alternative funding sources.

In January 2007, DOE-SR received direction from the Office of Environmental Management (EM) at DOE-Headquarters (DOE-HQ) to work jointly to determine a path forward for funding support of any additional tasks at SREL in Fiscal Year 2007. SREL initially proposed 35 tasks, which were later revised to 27, for task-by-task funding consideration. EM-HQ stated its intent to conduct a peer review for scientific merit of these tasks, and DOE-SR was directed to conduct a “relevancy” review to determine if the proposed tasks met SRS needs and priorities.

In concert with the terms of the Cooperative Agreement, SREL-proposed tasks were reviewed by DOE-SR line organizations based on need. This is a typical process whereby DOE-SR determines if a proposed task or project meets a need, directly supports SRS priorities, and is fundamental to accomplishing critical work scope. In February 2007, EM-HQ emphasized the “critical DOE need” test in conducting the task-by-task review. The DOE-SR review identified six of the 27 SREL-proposed tasks as meeting a critical SRS need. In March 2007, DOE-SR communicated the results of the review to EM-HQ.

In April 2007, I met with EM-HQ to go over the results of the DOE-SR review. Based on its programmatic review, EM-HQ also determined that most of the SREL-proposed projects did not meet the mission critical cleanup needs at the Savannah River Site. EM-HQ recommended that funding from EM be awarded at \$1,805,000, which included the

guaranteed support for infrastructure. As directed, in May 2007, DOE-SR informed SREL of the EM funding level.

I am aware that there has been a lot of discussion on the meaning of mission critical as it applies to DOE's review of SREL's proposed tasks. I would like to re-emphasize that the review conducted by DOE-SR line organizations was based on need, which is synonymous with "priority" and "mission critical" when determining if a proposed task or project is a "must do". As a career public servant, I am very cognizant of the difficult, but necessary, task of balancing the work and available dollars to get the required job done.

This is the extent of my knowledge and short-term role relative to the Department's funding decisions for SREL. In summary, I would simply re-emphasize that prior to the signing of the Cooperative Agreement in December 2006, a good faith effort was made by DOE-SR line organizations, of which I was a part, to evaluate support of SREL research activities given the planning assumptions in earlier 2006. Since the mutual agreement was formalized, I believe that DOE has respectfully and consistently met its commitments under the current terms and conditions of the Cooperative Agreement with the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory. Thank you.