



Savannah River Site Watch

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Congressional Funding Keeps Bungled MOX Project at Shut-Down Funding Level, Accepts Defense Committee Language for Conditions to Terminate MOX, Pursue Alternative and Remove Plutonium from S. Carolina

Columbia, SC – The budget deal revealed by Congress keeps the troubled plutonium fuel (MOX) project at the Savannah River Site on life support and, in a significant new move, embraces a path forward to terminate the project.

The budget agreement, as expected, funds the construction of the Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility (MFFF) project in Fiscal Year 2018 at \$335,000,000, barely enough to keep work limping along.

In a key step forward to halting the MOX project, the agreement embraces the National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2018 (NDAA), which laid out a method by which the Secretary of Energy could terminate the MOX project.

“The budget agreements makes it clear that things in Congress are slowly aligning in a step-by-step manner to terminate the mismanaged MOX project,” said Tom Clements, director Savannah River Site Watch. “The funding committees in Congress have taken a big step toward MOX termination by accepting language from the defense authorization committees on how MOX will be terminated. Given this funding agreement, it’s only a matter of time before the bungled MOX project at SRS is terminated and the massive waste of taxpayer money is halted,” added Clements.

The language of the Consolidated Appropriations Act states that the Secretary of Energy shall not be subject to the requirement that the appropriated funds be used only for MOX construction if a cheaper alternative exist for plutonium disposal. The NDAA requirement is for a lifecycle cost report on the non-MOX alternative to be delivered to Congress and that “the alternative option would be less than approximately half of the estimated remaining lifecycle cost of the mixed-oxide fuel program.”

At a House Energy & Water Subcommittee hearing on March 15, Chairman Mike Simpson commented on the option to dispose of plutonium as waste and said that "If you can do it for 50% less I'm going to go for it."

On March 20, Ms. Lisa Gordon-Hagerty, recently approved administrator of DOE's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), testified to the House Energy & Water Subcommittee that a plan to terminate MOX is being developed, that the MOX plant construction is "nowhere near 50% complete" and that \$5.4 billion has been spent on the MOX plant. Her position to terminate MOX aligns with that of Secretary of Energy Perry and the White House/Office of Management and Budget.

Concerning the controversial issue of removing plutonium from SRS, the agreement states that "not less than \$10,000,000 shall be to support activities to expedite the removal of plutonium from the State of South Carolina. Not later than July 1, 2018, the NNSA shall provide to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress a plan for removing plutonium from South Carolina."

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Notes:

Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2232 pages:

<http://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20180319/BILLS-115SAHR1625-RCP115-66.pdf>

See page 454 on MOX.

Division D, Energy & Water funding for FY 2018

<http://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20180319/DIV%20D%20EW%20SOM%20FY18-OMNI.OCR.pdf>

See pages 84, 89 and 100 pdf for MOX and plutonium language.

National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2018

<https://www.congress.gov/115/crpt/hrpt404/CRPT-115hrpt404.pdf>

See page 624 for requirements of the Secretary of Energy to "waive" MOX construction.