



Savannah River Site Watch

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<http://www.srswatch.org/>

Update on SRS & MOX Funding for FY 2017

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Congress Cuts MOX Funding for Fiscal Year 2017, Keeps Project on a Shut-down Track while Funding Alternative Plutonium Disposal Method (Dilute and Dispose) at Savannah River Site

Congress Requires DOE to Present “Long-Term Vision for Sustainment” of SRS, by June 30, 2017

Columbia, SC – The U.S. Congress has passed the funding bill for the U.S. Department of Energy and other agencies for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2017 and it includes significant language related to the future of DOE’s Savannah River Site.

The “Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017” includes a small cut to construction of the Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication facility (MFFF) at SRS, to \$335 million, an amount \$5 million below the request for FY 2017. This level of funding is just enough to keep the project on life support, according to Savannah River Site Watch, and confirms that MOX boosters failed to secure a rumored increase in funding for the project.

Recognizing the unclear future of SRS and lack of focused missions, the funding legislation also requires DOE to “to provide to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress not later than June 30, 2017, a briefing on its long-term vision for sustainment of the site.”

The cut in funding in MOX plant construction, though small, is a surprise, according to Tom Clements, director of Savannah River Site Watch. “The cut in MOX construction funding affirms that Congress continues to doubt the viability of the project the mismanaged project and has thus wisely decided to keep it on a shutdown track,” according to Clements. “The level of funding appropriated for MOX will keep the project barely alive for the remainder of the year but is a clear indication that its fate hangs in the balance and it could be officially terminated in the future.”

In parallel with the cut to the MOX project, Congress has allotted \$15 million for development of an alternative method of plutonium disposal, via “dilute and dispose,” whereby plutonium is mixed with a secret, inert ingredient (called “stardust”) for disposal as waste in DOE’s Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in New Mexico. The downblending of 6 metric tons of non-MOXable plutonium is now under way the K-Area at SRS.

The spending language also calls on DOE to present a plan for the future of SRS. “As it is unclear exactly what the future role of SRS will be, we welcome the development of a long-term vision for the site that is based on missions that do not further add to the nuclear waste burden already at the site,” according to Clements. “Recently, a scheme known as ‘Enterprise SRS’ was touted by the former SRS site manager but that unrealistic plan was quietly withdrawn in 2016 and use of the ‘Enterprise SRS’ logo was halted and nothing has taken its place. Though the work of Savannah River National Lab is now being pushed in a big way the effort to import a host of exotic nuclear waste forms has met with public resistance and is not something the site can stake its future on.”

“We encourage development of plans that do not rely on the continuation of the MOX boondoggle or the import and processing of nuclear waste and plutonium, which now, unacceptably, have no exit path out of the site,” added Clements.

Language pertaining to SRS in **“DIVISION D-ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2017”**:

Material Disposition.-The agreement provides \$143,833,000 for Material Disposition, of which \$1,000,000 is for the Uranium Lease and Takeback Program. The NNSA may use up to \$15,000,000 to advance planning, to resolve regulatory and other issues, and to complete conceptual design activities for the dilute and dispose alternative to the Mixed Oxide (MOX) Fuel Fabrication Facility. . (page 39 in “Division D” – linked below)

Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility project, Savannah River.-The agreement provides \$335,000,000 for the MOX Fuel Fabrication Facility project. Funds shall be available only for construction and for project support activities. . (page 39 in “Division D” – linked below)

Savannah River Site.-The agreement provides \$1,233,429,000 for the Savannah River Site. Within funds for Site Risk Management, the agreement includes \$3,000,000 to support the disposition of spent fuel from the High Flux Isotope Reactor. The unique facilities at the Savannah River Site provide vital capabilities to our national security programs. The Department is directed to provide to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress not later than June 30, 2017, a briefing on its long-term vision for sustainment of the site. (page 39 in “Division D” – linked below)

Notes:

Summary of **“FY 2017 Omnibus Summary – Energy and Water Appropriations”** – linked here in “highest” on House appropriations website
(<http://appropriations.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=394859>)

https://appropriations.house.gov/uploadedfiles/05.01.17_fy_2017_omnibus_-_energy_and_water_-_summary.pdf

“\$1.9 billion for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation – \$38 million below the fiscal year 2016 enacted level. This includes \$335 million in funding to help fulfill the international commitment by the U.S. to operate a Mixed Oxide (MOX) Fuel Fabrication Facility to dispose of surplus plutonium.”

Details of MOX and other funding linked at: <https://rules.house.gov/bill/115/hr-244>

**“DIVISION D-ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES
APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2017”** – on DOE and MOX funding:

<https://rules.house.gov/sites/republicans.rules.house.gov/files/115/OMNI/DIVISION%20D%20-%20E%26W%20SOM%20FY17OCR.pdf>