



**SOUTH CAROLINA  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
LAW PROJECT**

**SRS WATCH**



**Alliance for  
Nuclear  
Accountability**

**nuclear watch** new mexico  
*Watchdog of the Nuclear Weapons Complex*



**Tri-Valley CAREs**

**Union of  
Concerned Scientists**

**South Carolina Environmental Law Project  
Savannah River Site Watch  
Nuclear Watch New Mexico  
Tri-Valley CAREs  
Union of Concerned Scientists**

**Plaintiffs Tour the Savannah River Site’s Plutonium “Pit” Bomb Core Plant,  
Most Expensive Building in U.S. History is Key to New Nuclear Arms Race**

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Contact: Tom Clements, Director, SRS Watch, 803-240-7268, [tomclements329\[at\]srswatch.org](mailto:tomclements329[at]srswatch.org);

Jay Coghlan, Nuclear Watch NM, 505-989-7342, cell: 505.470.3154, [jay\[at\]nukewatch.org](mailto:jay[at]nukewatch.org)

Shelby Cohen, Comms Manager, SC Env. Law Project, 864.414.7726, [shelby\[at\]scelp.org](mailto:shelby[at]scelp.org)

**Columbia, SC** - On April 21, plaintiffs Savannah River Site Watch, Nuclear Watch New Mexico and Tri-Valley CAREs toured the plutonium “pit” bomb core production plant at the National Nuclear Security Administration’s (NNSA’s) Savannah River Site (SRS) near Aiken, South Carolina. They were accompanied by their attorney from the South Carolina Environmental Law Project and a science consultant from the Union of Concerned Scientists.

Plutonium pits are the core components of all U.S. nuclear weapons. The NNSA is seeking to expand production to at least 30 plutonium pits per year at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) in New Mexico and at least 50 pits per year at SRS, which has never previously produced pits. NNSA pushed forward with the project without required public review, in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Plaintiffs sued in federal court in Columbia, SC and won, requiring the NNSA to complete a nationwide programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS), with public hearings to be held this May (listed below). The court-approved settlement agreement also required an inspection of the Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility by plaintiffs to ensure that no production begins before the completion of the final PEIS and simultaneous Record of Decision, which NNSA now says is expected in early 2027. NNSA officials also informed plaintiffs that 90% design and “rebaselined” costs will not be completed until September 2026, which means that once again Congress will be appropriating taxpayers’ money without knowing full costs.

The SRS pit plant will be the most expensive buildings ever built in the USA, with a current NNSA estimate of up to \$30 billion even before all total costs are known (includes at least \$5 billion in sunk costs for SRS’ failed MOX Fuel Fabrication Facility being “repurposed” to pit

production). The agency's [recent budget request for FY 2027](#) (pp 17-19) reveals an 87% jump in combined pit production funding for LANL and SRS, averaging \$5 billion for each of the next six years.

Despite the staggering costs, the independent Government Accountability Office (GAO) has repeatedly [found](#) that NNSA has no credible cost estimates. In fact, the NNSA and its parent Department of Energy (DOE) have been on the GAO's [High Risk List](#) for project mismanagement and waste of taxpayers' dollars since 1991. In August 2025 the DOE Deputy Secretary ordered a "[special assessment](#)" of the troubled program completed by mid-December. Despite repeated Freedom of Information Act and congressional requests, DOE has yet to publicly release it. Finally, NNSA's [FY 2025 Performance Evaluation Report for SRS](#) specifically notes that the managing contractor underperformed in project execution of the Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility, likely adding yet more delays and costs.

NNSA released the Draft Pit Production PEIS on April 10, 2026. It declares that:

“NNSA missions are conducted fully consistent with current treaty obligations. The SSMP [Stockpile Stewardship and Management Plan] is fully consistent with and supports the U.S. commitment to the NPT [NonProliferation Treaty].” (Volume I, p. 1-5)

Article VI of the U.S. constitution enshrines international treaties as the “supreme Law of the Land.” The 1970 NonProliferation Treaty required the nuclear weapons powers to “to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament...” After more than a half-century that has never even begun. The next NPT Review Conference, held every five years, is scheduled to begin April 27 at the United Nations. It is widely expected to fail for the third time over fifteen years to make any progress whatsoever toward nuclear disarmament. To the contrary, expanded plutonium pit production is key to the U.S.' \$2 trillion “modernization” program to keep nuclear weapons forever.

The draft PEIS also declares:

“Over time, the materials that make up the pit change in ways that reduce the pit's functionality... Building the manufacturing capacity to produce at least 80 ppy [pits per year] before the end of the decade is essential to maintaining a reliable nuclear deterrence. Many of the aging pits will have to be replaced with new ones in the coming years to maintain a safe and reliable nuclear stockpile and deterrence.”  
(Volume I, p. 1-3.)

NNSA completely omits that in 2006 independent experts [concluded](#) that plutonium pits have reliable lifetimes of at least 85 to 100 years, with no stated expiration date (the average age of pits is now around 43 years). Despite congressional directives, NNSA has yet to release a fully updated pit life study since then. In fact, no future pit production is scheduled to maintain the safety and reliability of the existing stockpile. Instead it is all for new-design nuclear weapons that could prompt a return to testing.

Tom Clements, SRS Watch Director, commented:

“NNSA's Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement fails to explain why the manufacturing of up to 205 pits per year is considered. That many pits will fuel a massive

build-up that makes a mockery of so-called “deterrence” in favor of nuclear war fighting. For SRS, pit production will mean the dumping of low-level radioactive wastes in unlined trenches without sufficient analysis, which is unacceptable.”

Tanvi Kardile, Tri-Valley CAREs’ Nuclear Policy Program Director and President of the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability, added:

“This PEIS process, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, gives the public the power to be engaged in democratic decision-making processes and voice their concerns on nuclear weapons projects – ones that historically have been cloaked in secrecy. This particular public comment period is crucial. Because of the current administration’s dismantling of NEPA regulations, this could be the last nuclear weapons project that the public has the opportunity to adequately scrutinize.”

Dylan Spaulding, a physicist with the Union of Concerned Scientists, observed:

"The scope and pace of pit production are frequently justified due to concerns about plutonium aging, but pits in the existing stockpile should not require replacement for decades. Newly produced pits are to furnish new types of weapons, not to maintain the ones we have. Plutonium aging is simply not a credible motivation for a rushed pit production program at this time.”

Jay Coghlan, Director of Nuclear Watch New Mexico, commented:

“It’s ironic that plutonium pit production’s exorbitant costs could lower national security instead of enhancing it. New untested designs could lower confidence in the existing, tested stockpile. Or these new-designs could prompt the U.S. to return to testing, after which other nuclear weapons powers would surely follow. It’s time to end the cover up of the NNSA’s deeply troubled pit production program and to expose everything from its runaway costs to its role in a new nuclear arms race that endangers us all.”

In closing, Attorney Ben Cunningham, commented:

“South Carolina Environmental Law Project lawyers fought for years in federal court to win this programmatic environmental impact statement – a significant victory for public participation and transparency. Now, South Carolinians have a voice in this legally required environmental and public safety review that the federal agency must take into account before deciding whether our state is used to produce nuclear weapon components along with their inevitable radioactive wastes. If you care about the future of our land, water and safety, please submit your comments on the programmatic environmental impact statement before the July 16 deadline.”

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The Draft PEIS was released by NNSA on April 10, 2026 with a 90-day public comment period. Comments can be submitted by email to [PitPEIS@nnsa.doe.gov](mailto:PitPEIS@nnsa.doe.gov) until July 16. Please include the document number “DOE/EIS-0573” in the subject line. For more please see <https://www.energy.gov/nepa/articles/doeeis-0573-draft-environmental-impact-statement-april-2026>

## **Five required public hearings:**

All hearings with the exception of the Washington, DC, hearing are scheduled for 5:00-5:30pm Open House Poster Session, 5:30-8:00pm Formal Public Hearing, in their respective time zones.

**North Augusta, South Carolina:** Tuesday, May 5, 2026, North Augusta Community Center, 495 Brookside Dr, North Augusta, SC 29841, Virtual: <https://bit.ly/PitPEIS5May>, Meeting ID: 267 103 716 263 892, Passcode: Wb2RJ9zA, Join by Phone: 571-429-4592, Phone conference ID: 297 381 326#

**Kansas City, Missouri:** Thursday, May 7, 2026, Hillcrest Community Center, Community Room, 10401 Hillcrest Road, Kansas City, MO 64134, No virtual meeting option.

**Livermore, California:** Tuesday, May 12, 2026, Garré Vineyard & Winery, Santa Rosa Room, 7986 Tesla Road, Livermore, CA 9455, no virtual meeting option.

**Santa Fe, New Mexico:** Thursday, May 14, 2026, Santa Fe Farmers Market Institute, 1607 Paseo de Peralta, Santa Fe, NM 87501, Virtual: <https://bit.ly/PitPEIS14May>, Meeting ID: 278 752 885 654 34, Passcode: W9Bt96vN, Join by Phone: 719-283-1404, Phone conference ID: 311 183 140#

**Washington, DC:** Wednesday, May 20, 2026, 2:00-2:30pm Open House Poster Session, 2:30-5:00pm Formal Public Hearing, Eastern Standard Time, Southwest Library, Large Meeting Room, 900 Wesley Pl, SW, Washington, DC 20024, no virtual meeting option.

To help better inform the public, plaintiffs and UCS have kicked off a Pit Production PEIS website: <https://pitpeis.com/> Please stay tuned for dates for how-to-comment workshops. Suggested comments for submittal to NNSA will be available.

The Plant Vogtle commercial nuclear power plant just across the river from the Savannah River Site is also expected to have a final cost of around \$30 billion. The next most expensive building in the U.S. is the recently built SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, CA at \$6 billion. The new World Trade Center cost around \$4.5 billion in today's dollars.

**About the nonprofit organizations:** The South Carolina Environmental Law Project has used its legal expertise to protect land, water and communities across South Carolina since 1987. Savannah River Site Watch, based in Columbia, SC, works for the public interest by monitoring activities at the Savannah River Site. Nuclear Watch New Mexico, based in Santa Fe, watchdogs plutonium pit production at both the Los Alamos Lab and SRS. Tri-Valley CAREs, based in Livermore, CA, watchdogs the nuclear weapons complex and its Livermore Lab. The national Union of Concerned Scientists combines technical analysis and effective advocacy to create innovative, practical solutions for a healthy, safe, and sustainable future.