

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

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**Plaintiffs Demand Release of Critical Documents and Extension of
Public Comment Period on Expanded Plutonium Bomb Core Production**

Georgetown, SC — Today the South Carolina Environmental Law Project (SCELP) notified the Department of Energy’s semi-autonomous nuclear weapons agency, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), that it must publicly release three critical documents. At issue is the fact that NNSA is withholding important information from American taxpayers during a public comment period for a Pit Production Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS).¹ The public comment period ends this July 16 (ironically the 81st anniversary of the Trinity Test of the first plutonium pit).

Plutonium “pits” are the radioactive fissile cores or “triggers” of nuclear weapons. None of NNSA’s future pit production is to maintain the safety and reliability of the existing nuclear weapons stockpile. Instead, it is all for new-design nuclear weapons that could prompt the U.S. to return to testing and accelerate the new arms race.

SCELP, representing the nonprofit organizations Savannah River Site Watch, Tri-Valley CAREs and Nuclear Watch New Mexico, sued NNSA to force it to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act. This resulted in a federal judge finding NNSA violated NEPA and the agency ultimately agreeing to complete a Pit Production PEIS. Now it appears that NNSA is cherry-picking information to support its aggressive agenda of expanded plutonium pit production and suppressing negative information that could work against it.

The three documents that SCELP is demanding are:

- 1) A new plutonium pit life study by independent scientists known as the JASONs. NNSA claims that potential aging effects drive the need for the immediate production of new pits, thereby ruling out the alternative of reusing some 15,000 existing pits. In contrast, a 2006 JASON pit life study concluded that most pit types have reliable lives of more than 100 years and those that don’t have relatively easy fixes² (the average pit age is now ~43). We believe that NNSA has been withholding an unclassified summary of the new JASON pit life study since the end of 2025. NNSA has not released it despite requests by Members of Congress and public Freedom of Information Act requests.
- 2) A Department of Energy “Special Study” on NNSA leadership and management of its troubled plutonium pit production program, scheduled for completion in December 2025.³ That Study is expected to be critical of the new pit production plant at the Savannah River Site (SRS) in South Carolina, which will be the most expensive building in US history (\$30 billion-plus). DOE has not released this Special Study despite requests by Members of Congress and public Freedom of Information Act requests.

3) A new “Probabilistic Seismic Hazard Analysis” (PSHA) for the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) that is nearly a decade overdue.⁴ A 2007 LANL seismic analysis prompted badly needed seismic upgrades to the Lab’s plutonium pit production facility. NNSA’s April 2026 draft Pit Production PEIS stated that the new PSHA would be completed in early 2026,⁵ yet it is still not available for public comment.

The South Carolina Environmental Law Project further demanded that NNSA extend the public comment period 30 days from the time that the agency releases these documents. We assert that NNSA would further violate NEPA if it were to not consider and address this information in the current PEIS. Existing case law has established that “An agency’s hard look [under NEPA] should include neither researching in a cursory manner nor sweeping negative evidence under the rug.”⁶

NEPA also requires that the public has access to information directly relevant to the draft PEIS. If the NNSA is deliberately refusing to address these studies and suppressing their release during the public comment period, we believe that conduct is illegal and further violates NEPA. Sadly, this may be the last full public review of NNSA’s massive expansion of its nuclear weapons production complex given the Trump Administration’s active steps to eviscerate the National Environmental Policy Act.

Scott Yundt, Tri-Valley CAREs Executive Director, added, “NNSA repeatedly claims in the draft Pit Production PEIS that its driving purpose and need to build new plutonium pits is because of alleged aging effects. If the new JASON pit life study really supports their position, then NNSA should want to release its unclassified summary. Withholding it only fuels speculation that existing plutonium pits could be reused and NNSA's costly plan for new pits is not only exorbitant and internationally provocative but also totally unnecessary.”

Jay Coghlan, Nuclear Watch NM Executive Director, concluded, “Global nuclear threats are rapidly increasing. There are no arms control treaties for the first time since the 1970s. The recent Review Conference of the 1970 NonProliferation Treaty failed for the third time to make any progress toward nuclear disarmament. In contrast, NNSA plans to produce new plutonium pits for new-design nuclear weapons for the next 50 years. We urge concerned citizens to comments on these vital issues during the Pit Production PEIS process. Moreover, we will fight to get American taxpayers the needed information for informed comments that the government won’t give them.”

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SCELP’s letter of demand to NNSA is available at <https://nukewatch.org/demand-letter-for-pit-peis-critical-documents-and-extension-of-public-comment-period>

Public comment on NNSA’s draft Pit Production PEIS has a current deadline of July 16 and can be emailed to PitPEIS@nnsa.doe.gov (please put document number DOE/EIS-0573 in the subject line). For more, including suggested comments, please see pitpeis.com

This press release is available online at <https://nukewatch.org/plaintiffs-demand-release-of-critical-documents-and-extension-of-public-comment-period-on-expanded-plutonium-bomb-core-production>

The South Carolina Environmental Law Project is a nonprofit public interest law firm. We use our legal expertise to protect land, water and communities across South Carolina. Learn more at www.scelp.org.

Savannah River Site Watch, a non-profit public interest organization in Columbia, South Carolina, monitors nuclear weapons production and clean-up activities at SRS. <https://srswatch.org/>.

*Through comprehensive research, public education and effective citizen action, **Nuclear Watch New Mexico** seeks to promote safety and environmental protection at regional nuclear facilities; mission diversification away from nuclear weapons programs; greater accountability and cleanup in the nationwide nuclear weapons complex; and consistent U.S. leadership toward a world free of nuclear weapons. <https://nukewatch.org/>.*

***Tri-Valley CAREs (Communities Against a Radioactive Environment)** is a 501(C)3 non-profit in Livermore, CA that monitors the activities of Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, one of two locations that develops all US nuclear bombs and warheads. Learn more at www.trivalleycares.org.*

¹ For a link to NNSA's Pit Production PEIS and much information, please see PitPEIS.com

² Pit Life Study, JASON, 2006, <https://nukewatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/pit.pdf>

³ See "Special Study of the National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA's) Leadership and Management of the Plutonium Pit Mission," ordered by DOE Deputy Secretary James Danly on August 11, 2025, <https://nukewatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/DOE-Special-Study-NNSA-Leadership-Mgmt-Plutonium-Pit-Production-Mission-Ltr-11Aug2025.pdf>

⁴ The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board confirmed its completion in its LANL Resident Inspectors Activity Report for Week Ending May 22, 2026, DNFSB, <https://www.dnfsb.gov/sites/default/files/2026-06/Los%20Alamos%20Week%20Ending%20May%202022%202026.pdf>. Concerning its relevance, the DNFSB noted that, "The [LANL] contractor plans to incorporate the results of the new PSHA into site engineering and safety-basis documents" including plutonium pit production facilities.

⁵ Draft Pit Production PEIS, NNSA, April 2026, p. 3-5, <https://www.energy.gov/nepa/articles/doe-eis-0573-draft-environmental-impact-statement-april-2026>

⁶ *Nat'l Audubon Society v. Dep't of Navy*, 422 F.3d 174, 194 (4th Cir. 2005)