

**Statement of the Honorable J. Gresham Barrett  
Third Congressional District of South Carolina  
U.S. House of Representatives**

**Committee on Science and Technology  
Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight and  
Subcommittee on Energy and Environment  
July 17, 2007**

Chairman Miller and Ranking Member Sensenbrenner, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share my thoughts regarding the Savannah River Ecology Lab with you. I also appreciate the work you are doing to find a practical solution which will allow the lab to continue to operate.

As you are probably aware, the Savannah River Ecology Lab (SREL) is located on the Department of Energy's Savannah River Site (SRS) in South Carolina. The only laboratory of its kind in the Department of Energy's (DOE) complex, the SREL has been operated by the University of Georgia since its 1951 founding by Dr. Eugene P. Odum. At that time, it was tasked and funded by the Atomic Energy Administration, DOE's predecessor, to perform the ecological baseline studies on the Savannah River Site. Over the past fifty-six years, the SREL's mission has evolved to include not only an independent evaluation of the ecological effects of nuclear activities at SRS, but also internationally recognized research, education, and public outreach programs.

I am proud to represent the Third District of South Carolina in which the lab is located, and I have been fortunate to see firsthand the valuable work that the SREL does. As an independent laboratory staffed with university scientists, the SREL provides a thoughtful and unbiased evaluation of the effects of SRS operations on the environment and helps to ensure the safety of the surrounding community. Today, as environmental cleanup becomes an important part of the overall SRS mission, we believe the operation of SREL remains critical and will continue to provide valuable information related to the long-term stewardship issues at the site.

Throughout the lab's existence, SREL has also been highly-touted for its insightful research and education on subjects such as remediation and the effects of environmental contamination, restoring degraded habitats, and environmental stewardship. It is home to award-winning scientists who have authored more than 3,050 scientific journal articles as well as approximately 50 books since its founding, and students from universities across the United States have studied, co-authored peer reviews, and developed their dissertations based on research at SREL. Without a doubt, as interest in nuclear energy continues to increase worldwide, the value of the scientific work being done at the SREL will only grow in importance.

In addition to the essential research being done at the lab, the SREL provides important Environmental Outreach programs to individuals and families of the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA). Each year, the lab creates greater awareness of the diverse ecosystems of the SRS among children and adults across the region by offering

Ecotalks, live plant and animal exhibits, and tours open to the public. Additionally, the SREL outreach programs supply informative materials regarding basic ecology and biology to students and teachers throughout the CSRA and even nationally, greatly enriching students' understanding of the sciences.

As you can see, for over 56 years, the Savannah River Ecology lab has served the SRS, South Carolina, and the Nation through innovative research and outreach. Because of its strong track record, the lab has received strong bipartisan support from both the South Carolina and Georgia delegations in the House of Representatives and the Senate. I continue to be a proponent of the work the lab does and am saddened by the situation it finds itself in today. While there has been much argument as to who is at fault, it is my hope that the Department of Energy, the University of Georgia, SREL, and Congress can work side-by-side to find a solution that will allow the lab to continue to serve our country through its threefold mission of research, education, and outreach. I look forward to any insight this Committee may be able to provide on the matter and again thank you for allowing me to submit my statement.