

Nuclear Advisory Council  
Meeting Minutes  
April 13, 2026

**Opening**

The meeting was called to order at 12:59pm on April 13<sup>th</sup> by Chair Rick Lee.

**Attendance**

**Present**

Rick Lee, Chair  
Laura Basta  
Dr. Musa Danjaji  
Representative Sylleste Davis  
Dr. Travis Knight  
Jim Little  
Dr. Brian Powell  
Rodney Whitley  
Dr. Todd Wright  
Senator Tom Young

**Apologies:** Dr. Carolyn Hudson

**New Business**

**The U.S. Department of Energy RFI Response**

Cristina Long Paredes, Executive Director of SC NEXUS, thanked the members of the Governor's Nuclear Advisory Council and others who contributed to South Carolina's response to the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campus Request for Information (RFI). The response was submitted on March 21, 2026, with a public announcement regarding states selected for further discussions anticipated by the end of April.

Ms. Paredes provided an overview of the state's RFI response, highlighting South Carolina's existing nuclear assets and capabilities, including transportation corridors, the Port of Charleston, research and development capabilities, the technical college system, university partnerships, the Savannah River Site (SRS), Savannah River National Laboratory (SRNL), and the state's existing nuclear power generation facilities.

The response addressed the 17 initiatives identified by DOE and emphasized South Carolina's ability to support an integrated nuclear lifecycle. Particular emphasis was placed on the state's workforce development capabilities and strong nuclear industry workforce concentration, as well as its strengths in nuclear safety, environmental stewardship, secure transportation networks, supply chain resilience, and cybersecurity.

Three key pillars were identified to demonstrate South Carolina's potential role in an integrated Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campus:

- Innovate the backend fuel cycle
- Lead secure nuclear reactors and systems
- Deliver national security-aligned infrastructure

These pillars build upon South Carolina's existing capabilities and assets and are intended to support an integrated nuclear lifecycle ecosystem.

Potential outcomes associated with development of the campus include increased nuclear power generation, approximately \$60 billion in private-sector investment, an estimated 40,000 construction-related workforce needs, approximately 15,000 direct on-site jobs at full maturity, and growth across targeted industry sectors.

Ms. Paredes noted that the proposed campus would be focused in the Aiken/Barnwell area, leveraging the capabilities and infrastructure of the Savannah River Site. The presentation also illustrated how the three pillars align with DOE's identified initiatives, South Carolina's existing asset base, and potential campus locations.

Target campus accomplishments were presented as aligning with key milestones in the development of South Carolina's broader nuclear ecosystem.

### **Update from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission**

Commissioner David Wright of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), assisted by Billy Gleaves, Lead Licensing Project Manager with the NRC, provided an overview of the NRC's role in supporting the nation's evolving nuclear energy landscape. Commissioner Wright noted that the views expressed during his presentation were his own and did not necessarily represent the views of the other NRC Commissioners or the Commission as a whole.

Commissioner Wright described nuclear energy as an increasingly important component of the nation's energy strategy and emphasized the NRC's responsibility to protect public health and safety and advance the nation's common defense and security while enabling the safe and secure use of civilian nuclear energy technologies and radioactive materials.

He emphasized the importance of a robust yet efficient regulatory framework that provides the nuclear industry with stability, predictability, and clear expectations. He noted that the NRC has undertaken efforts to modernize its regulatory framework while maintaining safety as its primary focus, including implementation of provisions of the ADVANCE Act and Executive Order 14300 intended to streamline licensing, establish clear review timelines, reduce regulatory barriers, and support the deployment of advanced nuclear technologies.

Commissioner Wright highlighted ongoing NRC efforts to adapt its regulatory framework to support advanced fuels, particularly high-assay low-enriched uranium (HALEU). The NRC is engaged with multiple potential applicants preparing for licensing applications for fuel-cycle facilities and is coordinating with the U.S. Department of Energy to facilitate HALEU production. The NRC is also reviewing internal processes and updating guidance to improve licensing predictability and accommodate evolving fuel designs and enrichment levels.

The NRC is also working to support the safe and timely transportation, recycling, and disposal of nuclear materials. Commissioner Wright noted recent NRC actions related to uranium mine remediation and strengthened oversight of radioactive material transportation and disposal.

Regarding nuclear reactor deployment, Commissioner Wright highlighted progress in licensing small modular reactors (SMRs), including NuScale's standard design approval, and noted the benefits of standardization in reducing costs and improving efficiency. He also discussed opportunities to increase nuclear generation through power uprates, license renewals, restarting or completing previously halted projects, and construction of both large-scale and smaller advanced reactors.

Commissioner Wright provided an overview of the anticipated NRC licensing workload, noting that several applications are currently under review, numerous additional potential applicants are engaged in early discussions with the NRC, and many others are known to be considering future projects. He emphasized that a significant increase in nuclear deployment would create substantial demands on the NRC's resources.

In closing, Commissioner Wright identified funding, workforce capacity, and supply-chain availability as significant challenges to the pace of nuclear deployment, rather than the NRC review process itself. He expressed confidence that the NRC workforce will continue to support the anticipated growth in nuclear activity while maintaining the agency's commitment to safety.

### **Orano USA – Reprocessing Business Operations**

Armand Laferrère, General Secretary of Orano, provided an overview of Orano's role in the nuclear fuel cycle and its activities in France and the United States. He described Orano as a global leader in nuclear fuel recycling and noted that the company operates across the nuclear fuel cycle, including uranium mining, conversion and enrichment, spent fuel management and reprocessing, nuclear material transportation, and fuel recycling.

Mr. Laferrère discussed France's established nuclear fuel recycling program, in which spent fuel is reprocessed at Orano's La Hague facility and recovered uranium and plutonium are used to produce mixed oxide (MOX) fuel. He highlighted the benefits of recycling, including reduced demand for newly mined materials, reduced waste volumes and storage requirements, and reduced waste toxicity.

Mr. Laferrère provided an update on Orano's U.S. activities, including its longstanding presence in the United States, nuclear material storage and transportation products, and plans to expand its U.S. manufacturing capabilities. He also discussed Orano's development of medical isotopes and its planned enrichment project in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, which was selected by the U.S. Department of Energy.

The presentation included discussion of opportunities to expand nuclear fuel recycling in the United States. Mr. Laferrère noted that broader deployment will require consideration of varying reactor and fuel designs, associated technology development and costs, utility incentives, public acceptance, and the existing legal and regulatory framework.

Mr. Laferrère also highlighted Orano's new cask technology for the transportation and storage of spent nuclear fuel and expressed the company's interest in expanding its U.S. manufacturing capabilities and supporting the continued development of the U.S. nuclear industry. He emphasized opportunities for continued cooperation between the United States and France in advancing nuclear energy and fuel-cycle capabilities.

### **U.S. Navy Reactor Programs in Charleston**

Captain Reed Koepp, Deputy Commander, Joint Base Charleston, provided an overview of the installation's missions and activities in support of national security. He highlighted four lines of effort aligned with the National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy: deterring China in the Indo-Pacific, defending the homeland, sharing the burden with allies, and strengthening the defense industrial base.

Under the effort to deter China in the Indo-Pacific, Captain Koepp highlighted Palmetto Reach, a strategy exercise demonstrating the capability to rapidly deploy C-17 Globemaster aircraft and personnel to austere locations.

Regarding defense of the homeland, Captain Koepp discussed installation defense and the economic impact of South Carolina's military installations. The state's eight military installations have a combined economic impact of more than \$30 billion, with Joint Base Charleston accounting for approximately \$11 billion. He noted that these figures are currently being reassessed.

Under burden sharing with allies, Captain Koepp discussed Joint Base Charleston's role in allied training, including flight certification training with Australia and the United Kingdom in support of the AUKUS partnership. Training with Australian and United Kingdom naval personnel has been ongoing since 2024. Regarding efforts to strengthen the defense industrial base, Captain Koepp highlighted Joint Base Charleston's shared infrastructure and proximity to Charleston International Airport, Boeing's production facilities, the Port of Charleston, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Naval Weapons Station, and the Naval Nuclear Power Training Unit. He noted that ongoing infrastructure improvements and industrial expansion in the Charleston area are contributing to the growth of the regional defense industrial base.

Captain Koepp noted that Joint Base Charleston supports 74 mission partners across the military services. He highlighted the missions of Air Mobility Command, the Naval Information Warfare Center Atlantic, Munitions Command and associated transportation operations, and the Navy's nuclear power training organizations. Joint Base Charleston occupies four primary areas—the Air Base, North Auxiliary Airfield, Short Stay Outdoor Recreation Area, and Naval Weapons Station—and supports more than 130,000 active-duty personnel, reservists, retirees, and dependents throughout the Lowcountry.

Captain Koepp then provided an overview of the Naval Nuclear Power Training Command (NNPTC). He noted that the U.S. Navy operates approximately 97 nuclear reactors aboard its nuclear-powered fleet. The Naval Nuclear Power Propulsion Training Program has trained nearly 160,000 nuclear propulsion plant operators, including both officers and enlisted personnel.

NNPTC provides technical, academic, and hands-on nuclear power training. The NNPTC campus supports approximately 3,600 sailors at any given time. Following technical training and Nuclear Power School, sailors receive hands-on training at the Nuclear Power Training Unit (NPTU) Charleston or the training facility in upstate New York. NPTU Charleston provides continuous, hands-on reactor training designed to prepare sailors to operate and qualify on specific reactor systems.

Captain Koepp also discussed the use of moored training ships, simulators, and other training resources to supplement hands-on instruction. He emphasized the importance of providing sailors with an understanding of the principles behind reactor operations in addition to technical knowledge.

Finally, Captain Koepp discussed the Navy's efforts to expand simulation-based training. He noted that construction is beginning on a new training facility at the Naval Weapons Station in Charleston that will include advanced propulsion plant team trainers modeled on Virginia-class submarine systems. The facility is expected to expand training capabilities, allow for more comprehensive full-power simulations, improve training efficiency, and reduce the need for rotating shifts among instructors.

### **South Carolina State University Update**

Dr. Bryan Riley, Director of the Center for Engineering and Environmental Services (CEES), presented on behalf of South Carolina State University (SCSU). Dr. Riley provided an update on the University's use of funding provided through Proviso 11.24 – Battle Alliance at Savannah River National Laboratory (SRNL), which requires the funding to support collaborative research and workforce development programs.

Dr. Riley reported that during the summer of 2025, SCSU provided funding for 15 students to participate in research projects with universities, national laboratories, and industry partners. Funding supported student stipends, travel, housing, conference and training expenses, and research supplies and equipment. SCSU also operates a Bridge Program for incoming STEM students, providing academic and campus orientation prior to the start of the academic year.

The University's Summer Science Institute provides middle and high school teachers from surrounding counties with a week-long, on-campus program focused on enhancing STEM teaching strategies. CEES also provides need-based STEM scholarships, currently supporting 51 students across multiple disciplines. Students receiving scholarships are expected to maintain academic performance and participate in service projects.

Dr. Riley discussed SCSU's outreach efforts to encourage students to pursue STEM careers and highlighted the University's research productivity. SCSU has published seven peer-reviewed papers, with an additional nine papers under review. The University is also supporting faculty in developing courses and pursuing external funding, with seven grant proposals submitted and additional proposals under development.

SCSU continues to collaborate with the University of South Carolina and Clemson University. In winter 2025, 40 SCSU students participated in an event at the University of South Carolina that included mock interviews and engagement with students in similar fields of study. SCSU students also participated in University Day at Clemson University, providing an opportunity to present their research and learn about potential career opportunities.

Dr. Riley highlighted the Energy Exploration (E2) Center, a hardware and software suite developed with project funding. The E2 Center includes a 12-module NuScale small modular reactor (SMR) control room simulator designed to provide students with hands-on experience in reactor operations and decision-making scenarios. The University is pursuing upgrades to maintain the simulator's technological capabilities.

Dr. Riley also discussed growth in SCSU's cybersecurity program. Enrollment increased approximately 30 percent between fall 2022 and fall 2023. The University launched a Master of Science in Cybersecurity in spring 2026 and anticipates continued enrollment growth. Additional faculty have been hired, and the University continues to seek qualified faculty. Plans include expanding laboratory capabilities and incorporating additional technology, including drones and specialized software, into cybersecurity education.

Dr. Riley noted that SCSU has achieved the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education's R2 designation. He explained that the designation is based in part on the number of doctoral degrees awarded and the level of research funding. SCSU exceeded the doctoral degree criterion by five degrees and exceeded the required research funding level by \$2.7 million. The R2 designation is held by approximately 7 percent of universities nationwide, including 13 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). SCSU is currently the only university in South Carolina with the designation.

Dr. Riley concluded by emphasizing SCSU's continued efforts to strengthen its research, workforce development, and educational programs and to build a lasting impact for its students, the state, and its stakeholders.

### **Santee Cooper Progress Update**

Mike Finissi, Chief Operating Officer and Deputy CEO of Santee Cooper, provided an update on the potential completion of V.C. Summer Units 2 and 3 in Fairfield County.

Mr. Finissi provided background on the project, noting that discussions regarding the future role of nuclear energy began in 2023. By late 2024, there was increased interest in zero-hydrocarbon energy, clean energy, and nuclear power. A developer with construction expertise and financial resources to support the development phase subsequently expressed significant interest in completing the project. In 2025, Santee Cooper issued a request for bids to identify a developer. Fourteen companies expressed interest in completing V.C. Summer Units 2 and 3, which were subsequently narrowed to three potential developers. The selection process considered four primary criteria: benefits to South Carolina and Santee Cooper; impact on customers; financial capability; and the qualifications and experience of the project team. Santee Cooper ultimately reached a settlement with Brookfield Asset Management, which was selected as the developer based on these criteria.

### **Current Project Activities**

Mr. Finissi reported that Santee Cooper has finalized a site access agreement, which involved significant commercial negotiations. The project is currently in Phase I, which includes reviewing existing on-site assets, evaluating licensing requirements and processes, assessing equipment remediation needs, and preparing the existing administrative building to accommodate project personnel. Construction trailers are also being updated. Approximately 2,600 boxes of construction documentation from 2017 are being reviewed and scanned as part of the project assessment. Approximately 30 Westinghouse employees are currently working on site.

Mr. Finissi also noted that a Feasibility Committee was established in January 2025 to evaluate project scope and costs. Costs incurred during 2025 were invoiced to Brookfield, and Santee Cooper will continue to submit project-related invoices to Brookfield on a monthly basis. He emphasized that these costs will be charged to the project and will not be passed on to Santee Cooper customers.

During the fourth quarter of 2025, Westinghouse, the original equipment manufacturer (OEM), conducted a comprehensive review of the site to identify any deficiencies or missing components that could affect project completion. No significant issues were identified.

### **Next Steps and Project Development**

Mr. Finissi stated that the next phase of development will include selection of a project manager (PM) and an Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) contractor. The anticipated project structure includes a development company (DevCo) and a special purpose vehicle (SPV) to serve as the financial entity for the project, followed by the PM, Westinghouse as the OEM, and an EPC contractor responsible for construction. Brookfield is expected to submit service agreements for the PM and EPC contractor. Establishing these agreements will allow the project team to develop milestones necessary to reach a Final Investment Decision (FID) and establish the project's scope, cost, and schedule. Project documentation will then be assembled and milestones for Phase II evaluated.

Mr. Finissi stated that Santee Cooper currently estimates 18–24 months to reach FID, with approximately \$150–\$200 million in development costs anticipated during that period. He noted that the project is expected to require significantly more direct and indirect labor than a combined-cycle natural gas plant, with labor requirements estimated at approximately five to ten times those of a comparable natural gas facility.

Additional areas requiring attention include project risk, the licensing approach, workforce development, and preparation for plant operations. Mr. Finissi noted that an existing simulator will need to be upgraded to accurately replicate the operation of an actual nuclear power plant. Five operating shifts will need to be fully staffed and prepared for startup and testing, with each shift capable of providing self-relief. Based on previous experience, preparing the operating workforce could require approximately 18 months.

Mr. Finissi concluded that, with the appropriate project structure and planning, the necessary resources can be assembled to support continued development and advancement of the project.

### **Department of Environmental Services Update**

Myra Reece, Director of the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (DES), accompanied by Deputy Director Henry Porter, provided an overview of DES's role in supporting South Carolina's nuclear future. Director Reece noted that government restructuring and passage of the Energy Security Act have positioned DES to support the state's growing energy and nuclear industries.

Director Reece highlighted the importance of DES's specialized workforce of approximately 1,200 employees, many of whom support nuclear-related activities. DES responsibilities include nuclear emergency preparedness and response; the Savannah River Site Environmental Surveillance and Oversight Program (SRS ESOP); regulation of radiological, hazardous, and mixed waste; radiation health protection; and permitting related to wastewater and surface and groundwater withdrawals.

Director Reece discussed the update to the State Water Plan, noting that the plan had not been updated since 2004. Following an Executive Order directing DES to complete the update within 12 months, DES worked with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources to complete the effort. She noted that the update was particularly timely given the state's population and economic growth and increasing energy and water demands. The updated Water Plan is scheduled to take effect in May 2026.

Director Reece described the restructuring of DES as an opportunity to evaluate agency processes and identify areas for improvement, beginning with permit reform. She noted that DES is pursuing opportunities for greater efficiency at both the state and federal levels.

Director Reece also discussed her participation on the steering committee supporting South Carolina's response to the U.S. Department of Energy's Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campus Request for Information. She emphasized the importance of permitting certainty and strong working relationships with federal partners, including the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), Department of Energy (DOE), and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). She also noted the importance of ensuring DES staff remain trained on emerging technologies.

Director Reece provided an overview of permitting reforms implemented under the Energy Security Act, which requires state agencies to expedite reviews of critical energy infrastructure projects. For energy infrastructure projects, DES seeks to issue permit decisions within six months of receiving a complete application, or according to an alternative timeline mutually agreed upon with the applicant. A pre-application meeting is required to identify potential issues and delays before an application is submitted. Director Reece noted that this process has helped DES identify opportunities for additional streamlining and interagency coordination. She further discussed the Office of Permit Central, which provides coordination among agencies and entities involved in the permitting process and incorporates compliance assistance early in the process to help prevent future compliance issues. DES also includes community engagement representatives in the process and anticipates identifying a representative with expertise in the nuclear sector to participate in the Office of Permit Central.

Director Reece reported that, since July 2025, DES has issued 99 percent of permits for energy projects within six months of receiving the application. She also highlighted DES's Environmental Economic Summits, a statewide series of events focused on identifying existing infrastructure and brownfield redevelopment opportunities to support economic and energy development.

### **Westinghouse Columbia Fuel Fabrication Facility**

Roy Stutts, Senior Director of the Columbia Fuel Fabrication Facility (CFFF), accompanied by Elise Malek, Project Director for LEU+ Manufacturing, New Product Introduction, and Expansion, provided an update on current operations and the planned LEU+ expansion.

### **Current Fuel Manufacturing Activities**

Mr. Stutts provided an overview of current operations and highlighted Westinghouse's continued efforts in environmental risk reduction. Westinghouse is conducting a site-wide Feasibility Study to address legacy environmental impacts and maintains a strong partnership with the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (DES), including reporting and escalating issues as appropriate. The company is also partnering with Clemson University on treatability studies and evaluating potential remediation methodologies through pilot projects. In addition, Westinghouse maintains an underground piping inspection program and is proactively planning improvements to its wastewater treatment system in consideration of Low-Enriched Uranium Plus (LEU+) and other future activities. The Community Engagement Board continues to meet regularly to support communication with the surrounding community.

Mr. Stutts revisited Westinghouse's Advanced DOPed Pellet Technology (ADOPT) fuel technology, which uses chromia and alumina additives to produce a denser fuel pellet. ADOPT fuel provides greater thermal stability, improved oxidation resistance, improved pellet-cladding interaction margins, and reduced fission gas release. The technology increases fuel utilization and can enable pressurized water reactors (PWRs) to transition to 24-month operating cycles. ADOPT fuel has been manufactured in Europe for nearly 20 years and is currently produced at five Westinghouse facilities in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Sweden. Over the past two years, two-thirds of a reactor's fuel regions have been manufactured and supplied to Turkey Point Unit 4 in Florida, with the third region scheduled for delivery in fall 2026. Turkey Point is evaluating a transition of at least two reactors to 24-month cycles. Mr. Stutts noted that ADOPT fuel provides enhanced safety margins, improved economics, increased fuel utilization, and serves as an enabler for LEU+.

Mr. Stutts noted that the Columbia facility is Westinghouse's primary U.S. grid manufacturing location. Grids provide the structural framework that holds the fuel rods together and represent a core manufacturing capability at the facility. Westinghouse has made significant investments in grid manufacturing safety and quality and has seen sustained improvements. An additional laser welder will be added to support current demand and future LEU+ production.

Mr. Stutts summarized current CFFF operations as focused on safe, transparent, and compliant operations; environmental progress; advanced fuel capabilities; and the facility's strategic value to the nuclear fuel supply chain.

### **LEU+ Expansion**

Ms. Malek provided the update on the LEU+ expansion, noting that LEU+ is an important bridge to support new nuclear plant deployment while also enabling power uprates and 24-month operating cycles for PWRs. To meet anticipated customer demand, Westinghouse is expanding its LEU+ manufacturing capability, which will require construction of a new building.

The expansion will operate under the facility's existing license, with an updated environmental report.

Westinghouse does not anticipate increased emissions from the LEU+ technology, which includes a transition from wet to dry conversion, and expects to remain within the environmental limits of the existing license. The expansion also incorporates technologies intended to improve safety, sustainability, and risk management, including eliminating underground piping where possible, reducing roof penetrations that could create potential release pathways, and using technologies that minimize direct workforce contact with nuclear fuel products.

Ms. Malek noted that recent regulatory changes have helped advance the permitting process and improve predictability. Westinghouse has maintained regular discussions with regulators, including the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), regarding inspections, staffing requirements, and project hold points in an effort to identify and address potential issues early.

As part of project de-risking, Westinghouse identified a jurisdictional ditch located within the planned construction area. The issue required a Nationwide Permit 27 and relocation of the ditch away from the facility, followed by restoration of the swale. Work began in November 2025 and was nearing completion. During the fourth quarter of 2025, approximately 33 acres of trees were removed, with work scheduled to avoid impacts to bat and turtle migration seasons. Westinghouse is also removing abandoned utilities and remaining items associated with the former agricultural use of the property.

Ms. Malek concluded by noting that Westinghouse is evaluating potential construction partners and moving toward final project reviews in preparation for a Final Investment Decision (FID) targeted for the second quarter of 2026.

### **Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned at 4:53pm by Chair Rick Lee.

The next general meeting will be held in October 2026.