

# News from the Savannah River Site

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Mobility Impaired Hunters and Wounded Warriors Aim for Success during Annual Deer Hunt at SRS

*SRNS managed hunt provides an opportunity of a lifetime for physically impaired sportsmen*

AIKEN, S.C., Nov. 18, 2016 – Thirty-nine physically disabled hunters recently participated in the 16th annual deer hunt for the mobility impaired and seventh annual Wounded Warriors deer hunt held at the Department of Energy's (DOE) Savannah River Site (SRS).

Congressman Joe Wilson addressed the hunters and volunteers during the event. "I appreciate the sponsorship by SRNS. Overall, this event is a fun and meaningful way to serve our wounded warriors," Congressman Wilson said. "I'm so grateful to be here, as both a member of Congress and as a fellow veteran. I sincerely believe that freedom isn't free. I want to extend my thanks to the courageous men and women here today for their service to our great country."

During the multi-hunt event, mobility impaired hunters and wounded veterans were able to pursue the opportunity of a lifetime at no charge. Nearly all of the hunters participating in this hunt continue to live with a serious physical impairment.



Hunters and volunteers gather during the Savannah River Site (SRS) Mobility Impaired and Wounded Warriors Deer Hunt at the Savannah River Ecology Lab Conference Center in Windsor, S.C., near SRS.

“I previously served in the military, so I understand the culture and their commitment and devotion to duty,” said Joe Solesby, SRNS Deer Hunt Program Manager. “This event is a way we can convey how much we appreciate what veterans have done to protect our freedom. For me, it’s rewarding to see the look on the hunters’ faces at the end of the day. They’ve been out in nature and have so much joy, even if they don’t take anything.”

Last year, 13 deer and two hogs were harvested; however, this year only one deer was harvested. Hunt participants at SRS are escorted by a volunteer who ensures their safety and provides assistance as needed. “The volunteer escorts put a great deal of effort into preparing the deer stands and assisting the hunters,” added Solesby. “This isn’t like hunting on public land because, for example, if you need help getting to your deer stand, we can make accommodations.”

Ron Voegeli from Beaufort, S.C., was among the participants at the hunt. Voegeli, who is a disabled veteran from the Vietnam War, has attended the hunts for the past three years.

“I look forward to the camaraderie,” said Voegeli. “It’s a good feeling because everybody forgets about all the pain and everything you’ve dealt with. You can just get away from it. I think what SRS does here is one of the best things they could do for veterans. For many of them, this might be the only chance they have to hunt all year.”

“I’ve travelled to different parts of the country for similar deer hunts, but this is by far my favorite hunt. My favorite part is seeing all of the other veterans because they can relate to what I’ve been through,” said Sean Falcon, a veteran of the U.S. Army and a Jackson, S.C., resident who participated in the hunt.

SRS offers over 150,000 acres of pristine, government-owned forest to be hunted each year, benefiting not only the hunter, but drivers travelling the roadways at the DOE site as well. The hunt helps control the site’s deer and hog population in an effort to reduce the potential for animal-vehicle collisions.

SRS deer hunts are performed as a safety measure. Over the past 20 years, SRS has averaged approximately 100 animal-vehicle collisions per year, and the hunts work towards preventing those collisions from happening. In addition, DOE works hard to ensure a safe and controlled environment for hunters and works with the USDA Forest Service-Savannah River (SR) to develop the best strategy to responsibly manage wildlife and ensure employee safety.

SRNS manages the hunt and provides sponsorship in conjunction with DOE, the USDA Forest Service-SR and the Wheelin’ Sportsman National Wild Turkey Federation.

*Savannah River Nuclear Solutions is a Fluor-led company whose members are Fluor Federal Services, Newport News Nuclear and Honeywell, responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, including the Savannah River National Laboratory, located near Aiken, South Carolina.*

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