

SREL 2010



Savannah River

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH PARK

Concept

Overview

Biodiversity

Research

Publications

SREL

National Environmental Research Parks

As described in the [National Environmental Research Parks Charter](#):

A National Environmental Research Park (NERP) is an outdoor laboratory where research may be carried out to achieve national environmental goals National Environmental Research Parks are actually field laboratories set aside for ecological research, for study of the environmental impacts of energy developments, and for informing the public of the environmental and land-use options open to them.

NERPs consist of several designated Department of Energy (DOE) facilities and their surrounding security buffers. There are currently seven NERPs: [Idaho](#), [Hanford](#), [Los Alamos](#), [Oak Ridge](#), [Fermilab](#), [Nevada](#), and [Savannah River](#). The Savannah River Site became the first NERP in 1972.

Unlike National Parks, NERPs provide a combination of pristine and impacted areas in which to conduct research. This combination is at the core of the NERP concept. With impacted areas and reference sites in close proximity, and a group of resident scientists, NERPs offer unparalleled opportunities for understanding human impacts on the environment. NERPs also preserve large tracts of natural or semi-natural habitat, benefitting native species and providing ample opportunities for long-term basic ecological research in a protected environment. Closed to the general public for over 50 years, these areas now teem with wildlife and abound with native vegetation, making them important conservation sites in a matrix of increasing human development.

The purpose of the NERPs, as defined by DOE in 1976, are:

1. Conduct research and education activities to assess and document environmental effects associated with energy and weapons use
2. Explore methods for eliminating or minimizing adverse effects of energy development and nuclear materials on the environment
3. Train people in ecological and environmental sciences
4. Educate the public

In 2009 legislation was introduced that reaffirms the unique value of these sites and, if passed, will provide much-needed resources for long-term research and maintenance of long-term and historical datasets. This bill, H.R. 2729, also enhances education and public outreach opportunities on NERPs, establishes a framework for interaction with institutions of higher education, and promotes coordination of research and sharing of resources among the NERPs. H.R. 2729 was passed by the U.S. House of

Coordination of research and sharing of resources among the NERP's. H.R. 2726 was passed by the U. S. House of Representatives on July 21, 2009, and is now awaiting consideration by the U. S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Savannah River Ecology Laboratory