

New Report Reveals Problems Face Restart of Canceled V.C. Summer Nuclear Reactor Construction Project in South Carolina

Challenges Confronting Restart Project, Outlined in New Report, Must be Reviewed; Electricity Customers are Paying 5.22% of Bill for V.C. Summer Debacle

COLUMBIA, SC, UNITED STATES, August 20, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The proposal to restart the failed nuclear reactor construction project in South Carolina faces a host of unexamined challenges, according to [a just-released report](#). The report outlines major stumbling blocks to the revival of the nation's most shocking failure of a nuclear reactor construction project in the United States in the 21st century.

The V.C. Summer project involved the botched attempt by now-defunct South Carolina Electric & Gas (SCE&G) to

construct two large Westinghouse AP1000 nuclear reactors 2 - units 2 & 3 - 25 miles north of Columbia, South Carolina. Over \$10 billion was wasted on the project and its abrupt termination was one of the most impactful and costly nuclear construction-project collapses in U.S. history, which was the death knell for the so-called "nuclear renaissance."

The report - presenting 14 unanalyzed challenges to the restart idea, was prepared by the Columbia-based public-interest, non-profit group Savannah River Site Watch - is titled "Economic, Technical and Regulatory Challenges Confound Restart of the Terminated V.C. Summer Nuclear Reactor Construction Project in South Carolina." The 24-page report was written by nuclear policy expert Tom Clements, director of SRS Watch, who led interventions before the PSC by the environmental group Friends of The Earth beginning in 2008 through the bankruptcy of SCE&G and its takeover by Dominion Energy South Carolina in January 2019.



Canceled Westinghouse AP1000 reactors at VC Summer site. \$10 billion was wasted on construction and customers are set to pay until 2039. Photo credit: ©High Flyer 2020

“The public, ignored during the V.C. Summer construction project, now deserve a voice in raising key challenges concerning rebirth of the project in which they still have financial ownership and that’s for whom this report speaks” said Clements. “We reveal in the report that [Dominion ratepayers are right now paying 5.22% of the bill](#) for the terminated project and are paying, since 2019, an additional \$2.8 billion over 20 years. The restart effort could once again saddle customers with additional massive costs if VCSummer2.0 proceeds.”



Aerial shot of V.C. Summer site north of Columbia, SC, with two terminated Westinghouse AP1000 reactors in foreground and single operating unit in background; photo ©High Flyer 2017

The 5.22% monthly rate hidden in the Dominion monthly bill was revealed in a Freedom of Information Act document provided by the S.C. Office of Regulatory Staff to SRS Watch on August 7, 2025. In January 2019, the S.C. Public Service Commission (PSC) ordered Dominion customers to pay an \$2.8 over the next 20 years for the cost of the bungled project and that payment is now buried in the monthly bill.

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The public in South Carolina deserves a voice in the fate of V.C. Summer restart and that’s for whom this report speaks. Ratepayers must have a role in decisions by Santee Cooper concerning the site.”

*Tom Clements, Director,
Savannah River Site Watch,
report author*

Themes covered in the report:

- Nuclear Advisory Council restart report not a reliable guidepost;
- Nuclear Regulatory Commission license terminated in 2019, hard to relicense;
- Reestablishing NRC certification for equipment will be difficult;
- Environmental permits must be secured anew or renewed;
- Unclear how much equipment remains and if it’s to be

resold for reuse or just scrap;

- Dominion and Santee Cooper not interested in involvement in restart;
- Westinghouse plans for new AP1000s unclear, rhetoric might not be accurate;
- Cost, schedule of new Westinghouse AP1000s unclear; Last-of-a-Kind (LOAK) reactor?
- Ratepayers in South Carolina could be put on the hook again;
- S.C. Public Service Commission & Dominion ratepayers will be involved, not sidelined;

- Federal rhetoric supporting nuclear power won't carry the day;
- Reactor restart fails to secure funds or protection from South Carolina legislature;
- Highly radioactive spent fuel at new units a challenge;
- When will the community near V.C. Summer be consulted?

According to Clements, numerous show stoppers exist to project restart. It's quite telling that the earlier project owners, Dominion Energy, which owned 55% of the project and owns the V.C. Summer site where a single operating reactor is now located, and the South Carolina Public Service

Authority (aka Santee Cooper), originally owning 45% of the project, have no interest in pursuing project restart. Likewise, Westinghouse, which is inexplicably advocating 10 new AP1000 reactors in the U.S., has fallen silent on the restart issue.



Partially finished plutonium fuel (MOX) plant at the Savannah River Site, terminated in 2017, which DOE's NNSA has proposed to convert into the controversial Plutonium Bomb Plant (PBP), at a current cost estimate of \$18-\$25 billion. Photo ©High Flyer 2020.

"No amount of promotion by Senator Lindsey Graham, Governor Henry McMaster or Secretary of Energy Chris Wright can overcome a host of economic, technical and political challenges facing the project. I urge politicians to take a pause regarding the restart idea and review the challenges to it," said Clements.

Major components such as the AP1000 reactor vessels and steam generators have been sitting exposed to the weather and degrading in the environment for over 8 years.

Santee Cooper, which took control of the equipment in 2018, has floated the idea to sell off equipment sitting at the site or to actually revive the construction project with the aim to finish one or both of the reactors and has issued a "request for proposals" concerning the fate of V.C. Summer equipment.

After the project's approval in January 2009 by the PSC, it quickly descended into a calamitous series of cost overruns, schedule delays, design and construction problems, nine rate hikes for customers and false testimony to regulatory bodies about the project's schedule. Two SCE&G officials and two Westinghouse officials were eventually convicted of felonies after the abrupt termination of the project in 2017.

On January 22, 2025, Santee Cooper issued a "request for proposals" "seeking proposals to acquire and complete, or propose alternatives, for two partially constructed generating units at

the V.C. Summer Nuclear Station in Jenkinsville, S.C.” On May 6, 2025, Santee Cooper said it has received responses to the RFP but has not revealed details. Short of restart, aging equipment at the site could be sold off.

The well-researched “restart challenges” report is being released now as Santee Cooper is in the midst of reviewing any restart or equipment-sales proposals that were submitted.

“We aim to stimulate a much more informed dialogue about problems facing V.C. Summer project restart and encourage politicians, the media and bidding entities to consider the challenges we have outlined and respond to them,” said Clements.

Failure of the Summer project came on the heels of the failure in 2017 of the plutonium fuel (MOX) project at DOE's Savannah River Site, near Aiken, SC, on which \$5 billion was wasted. DOE's National Nuclear Security Administration has proposed converting the facility to production of new plutonium "pits" for new nuclear warheads.

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