

continuously in unfiltered or HEPA filtration mode. The system will provide approximately 540,000 cubic feet per minute (cfm) of air to the underground, whereas the current ventilation system provides only 170,000 cfm of air.

Acting CBFO Manager Kirk Lachman said in a press release, "This is a significant improvement for the WIPP facility in support of DOE's national mission of nuclear waste cleanup. I want to thank all those who worked so hard to get us to this point."

■ On August 14, the DOE announced that a panel of experts has been assembled to provide periodic reviews and recommendations on the safety and effectiveness of ground control programs and future mine designs at WIPP. According to the DOE, the panel members bring decades of experience and technical expertise in highly specialized fields, including geological and geotechnical engineering, geophysics, rock mechanics, imaging and sensing technologies, and numerical analysis and modeling.

The panel will make recommendations regarding the improved design of disposal panels (which consist of multiple waste disposal rooms) and drifts (access routes). It will also review plans for maintenance of core areas of the mine, including identification of ground control alternatives and time frames by area. Ground control includes the installation and maintenance of long steel bolts and wire mesh into the roof and walls, as the natural movement of salt closes mined openings.

Members of the panel include Lee Petersen of Itasca Consulting Group; Navid Mojtabai, professor and department chair, mineral engineering, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology; Priscilla Nelson, department head and professor, mining engineering, Colorado School of Mines; Gabriel Walton, assistant professor, geology and geological engineering, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology; John Kemeny, professor and department head of mining and geological engineering, University of Arizona; John Head, senior associate and board member of mineral industry advisory firm Behre Dolbear; and George Sturgis, vice president for project development at Hecla Mining.

ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION

**Recycled iron used to treat groundwater at SRS**

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS), the Department of Energy's cleanup contractor at the Savannah River Site, is using 760 tons of iron filings recycled from the automotive industry to treat groundwater contaminated by solvents in a section of an aquifer beneath the site in South Carolina.

According to an August 19 SRNS press release, the filings, which are ground-up iron parts from automotive engines, will be mixed with a food-grade, starch-like material and injected into 22 wells, each 12 feet apart. The high-pressure injection process creates fractures in the subsurface rock, creating space to be filled by the mixture. Upon completion, a four-inch-thick, water-permeable wall consisting of iron filings will extend approximately 135 feet below the earth's surface. Groundwater will flow through the 264-foot-long, 23,000-square-foot metal wall, which will neutralize the solvents.

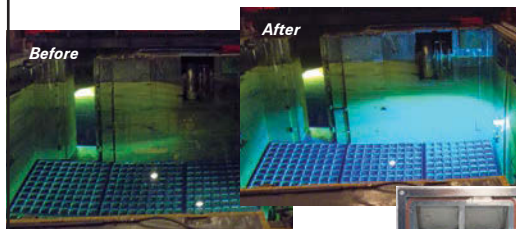
Philip Prater, senior physical scientist

at SRS, said, "The contaminated water cascades down through the filings, significantly increasing the amount of contact with the iron. The interaction with the iron breaks down the structure of the contaminants, [making them] harmless. And this system is designed to work for decades with little maintenance, as it has in other parts of the country."

According to Prater, the remedial technology SRNS is deploying is innovative because it does not involve the use of a trench, and it can be installed at greater depths than permeable reactive barriers built at the site in the past. The technology also allows for precision placement, en-

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