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Savannah River Mississippian Research Project

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Savannah River Mississippian Research Project
By Adam King and Keith Stephenson

In July of 1998, we initiated the Savannah River Site Mississippian Research Project (SRS-MRP) with the goal of improving our understanding of the Mississippian period settlement of the Savannah River Site (SRS). The results of the project will serve the dual purposes of advancing Mississippian period research in the area and enhancing the Savannah River Archaeological Research Project's (SRARP) ability to manage Mississippian period sites on the SRS for the Department of Energy.

To date, over 100 Mississippian period sites have been located on the SRS through compliance surveys. Intensive testing and block excavation were conducted at two of these as part of the SRS-MRP. Mapping and limited testing also were conducted at one of the local mound centers that served as the political and social focus of Mississippian populations living on the SRS.

In addition to these field investigations, we used funds received from the Archaeological Research Trust and the Savannah River Archaeological Research Program to obtain radiocarbon dates on materials belonging to the Lawton and Silver Bluff phases of the Central Savannah River Mississippian sequence. Those dates were calculated to be AD 1105 and AD 1295. We are very grateful to the Archaeological Research Trust Board of Trustees for providing these funds.

SRARP OUTREACH
By Mary Inkrot

Last year, SRARP offered two outreach programs to local fourth and fifth graders. Discovering Archaeology brings archaeology into the classroom with a presentation focusing on the lifeways of people who lived long ago in the area. Students learn how the science of archaeology reveals information about the past through hands-on activities. Classroom Dig simulates an archaeological excavation on the classroom floor. Students examine and map artifacts, analyze their discoveries, and use deductive reasoning to learn what the site says about people of the past. Other education programs for students with special needs or younger grade levels are developed upon teacher request. An activity booklet to enhance Classroom Dig is currently under development.

GIS DATA MANAGEMENT
By Chris Gillam

I continue to develop the Savannah River Archaeological Research Program Geographic Information System (SRARP GIS). This year, I worked on integrating the curation database with the site layer and began developing the Savannah River Site-Wide archaeological survey layer. Future developments will include a refinement of the SRARP predictive model and the creation of a user-friendly archaeological export system GIS for the SRARP staff. My research included ongoing studies on Paleoindian migration and the integration of historic map data in the SRARP GIS. My latest research initiative concerns early hunter-gatherers of the Savannah River Valley. Fieldwork on the Early Archaic Taylor component of the Topper site (38AL23) was conducted in coordination with Al Goodyear's 1999 Allendale Paleoindian Expedition.

Chris Gillam working on the Topper site, Allendale County, SC. (SCIAA photo)