

**Comments on the Administration Plan for the Manhattan Project National Historical Park – sent August 28, 2015**

**From Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR)**

**August 25, 2016 <highlights added Dec 4, 2018>**

Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR) is extremely pleased that the Manhattan Project National Historical Park is moving forward. We recognize that the Park Service is now focused on preparing a report by December 2015 that would address administration of the aspects of the Historical Park mentioned in the establishing legislation. As per that establishing legislation, the Historical Park will include “facilities and areas ... as determined by the Secretary [of Interior] in consultation with the Secretary of Energy.” Eligible areas for Oak Ridge include facilities, land, or interest in lands that are "determined by the Secretary [of Interior] to be suitable and appropriate for inclusion in the historical Park." This language does not occur for the other sites, and AFORR believes it is imperative that the Oak Ridge site include areas that have strong cultural landscape values.

AFORR supports conservation of other elements of the Oak Ridge Reservation that represent the cultural landscape of the Manhattan Project and the history of scientific investigation that grew out of the early days of research and development in Oak Ridge. These cultural landscape features include the Three Bends Scenic and Wildlife Management Refuge Area, the Walker Branch Watershed, and various churches and cemeteries located in the Wheat Community and other places throughout the Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR). The Three Bends Scenic and Wildlife Management Refuge Area was established in 1999 by former Energy Secretary Bill Richardson to conserve natural and cultural resources on the ORR and is a unique area remaining in Oak Ridge under federal ownership that represents the rural landscape that existed prior to development of the Oak Ridge facilities in the early 1940s. The Walker Branch watershed represents the important scientific research that grew out of the Manhattan Project and has been the source of classic ecological and hydrological research that originated at Oak Ridge National Laboratory. The churches and cemeteries located on the ORR represent an important part of the heritage of the people who lived, worked, and died in the area before the Manhattan Project. And there are other natural features of the ORR that merit inclusion as features of the cultural landscape because they contain truly unique ecological or cultural resources (such as the Old Growth Forest).

Together these areas make up key elements of cultural landscape of the ORR and represent some of the original conditions present at the time the government assumed ownership of the area for the Manhattan Project and the scientific achievements that grew out of that legacy. We believe that the cultural landscape is important to preserve so that future generations can gain a full understanding of the importance of the Manhattan Project and the vast influence that project had on an array of scientific disciplines and the lives of the people in the local community and the world.

Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR) is especially interested in cultural landscapes that can add additional ways to reach out to the underserved populations. We see a prime example of such cultural landscapes being the Three Bend Scenic and Wildlife Management Refuge Area. **The agreement establishing this area in 1999 makes it clear that this area is retained under DOE ownership and**

managed by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA). We would anticipate that such an arrangement would continue if the Three Bends was mentioned as part of the Manhattan Project National Historic Park. The mention of Three Bends in the December 2015 Historical Park planning document would add

- Accessible cultural landscape features (it is not “behind the fence”)
- Examples of movement of people off the land during the Manhattan Project
- Experience of living on the land during the war years (provided by the Freels Bend cabin, the City’s oldest structure and Oak Ridge's only remaining residence that was built in the 19th century – building began in 1810). You can hear the accounts of Louise Freels at <http://www.y12.doe.gov/about/history/oral-histories/louis-freels>
- Radiation experiments performed on animals including the first kidney transplant ever performed (on a cow). (see links below)
- Unique ecological values that have remained well-preserved under DOE's tenure
- Recreation: swimming, boating, hiking, biking and birding

Therefore, we would appreciate your considering mention of the Three Bends Area in the December 2015 report.

AFORR appreciates the work of the Park Service on the Historical Park. Please let me know if we can be of any assistance in regard to the Historical Park.