

Advocates For the Oak Ridge Reservation

136 West Revere Circle, Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37830

www.aforr.org

NEWSLETTER – November 2010

The conservation dedication of Horizon Center Area 4 will mark a happy conclusion to more than 8 years of effort by AFORR to secure conservation protection for this parcel.

In 2002, after the Department of Energy announced its intention to deed the developable parts (426 acres) of Parcel ED-1 (the Horizon Center) to CROET, AFORR became concerned that future development of one of those parts -- Area 4 -- would be environmentally destructive. This development tract at the far west end of ED-1 had no road or infrastructure access and was separated from the rest of the Horizon Center by East Fork Poplar Creek and adjacent riparian land that was to be excluded from development. The access plan for the area would convert the DOE patrol road that forms the west end of the North Boundary Greenway trail into a highway, thus eliminating the greenway and separating the floodplain riparian area along East Fork Poplar Creek in the Horizon Center from the large tract of undisturbed land on McKinney Ridge (now part of the 3,000-acre Black Oak Ridge Conservation Easement). By separating these areas, development of Area 4 and the road access would diminish the ecological value of both the riparian area and the Black Oak Ridge Conservation Easement, and it would slice through a high-quality ecological habitat that includes nesting grounds for the Cerulean Warbler and other songbird species that are widely recognized as being "of conservation concern."

DOE's Finding of No Significant Impact for the land transfer, issued in April 2003, acknowledged the impact, saying: "Construction activities associated with Development Area 4 could result in adverse impacts to rare bird species, such as the Cerulean Warbler, Wood Thrush, Kentucky Warbler, and Prothonotary Warbler." However, DOE concluded that the impact was not significant, saying the habitat loss and forest fragmentation "should not have a major adverse impact on the species."

Construction of road and utility access to Area 4 also did not seem to make sense economically. Access to this one industrial parcel would require more than a mile of new road, crossing Bear Creek three times --thus requiring three new bridges. DOE encouraged AFORR to talk with CROET about the possibility of "trading" Area 4 for some other DOE tract. We saw an opportunity for a "win-win" solution in which an ecologically valuable tract would be conserved and CROET would gain land that had more value for near-term economic development.

AFORR's then-president, Dev Joslin, met with CROET President Lawrence Young on several occasions in 2003 and 2004, discussing (and touring) three different possible land swaps suggested by Mr. Young. None of the potential swaps were acceptable to all stakeholders.

Now, six years after those discussions ended, it is wonderful to know that CROET is dedicating Area 4 to the Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation for permanent conservation. This is truly a "win-win" arrangement -- one with lots of winners. CROET wins through avoiding the excessively high cost of developing this tract -- and through the knowledge that the CROET organization is doing the right thing for the community with this action. The current and future occupants of the Horizon Center win through the benefits of proximity to a high-value natural area that will complement the amenities the center expects to offer to its business tenants and their workers. Users of the North Boundary Greenway win through continued access to this popular recreational trail, and songbirds and other wildlife win through the protection of habitat and habitat interconnections. This is truly an occasion for celebration.

ADVOCATES FOR THE OAK RIDGE RESERVATION

ANNUAL MEETING

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2010

7:00 PM

Midtown Community Center (Wildcat Den)

102 Robertsville Road, Oak Ridge, TN.

LAWRENCE YOUNG, President of CROET, will participate in a panel discussion of the role of environmental/conservation planning in industrial development.

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We encourage all members and the general public to attend and participate in the discussions.

Light refreshments will be served after the meeting.