

Events Sponsored by AFORR: 1999-2016

April 17, 1999: The AFORR Forum was held on the Future of the Oak Ridge Reservation

Forum Moderator: **David Coffey**, former state legislator

Panel participants presented a range of stakeholder perspectives on the future of the Oak Ridge Reservation:

Bo McDaniel, Oak Ridge City Manager
Virginia Dale, ORNL Environmental Sciences Division research staff
Joe Lenhard, Community Reuse Organization of East Tennessee (CROET)
Billy Minser, representing recreational interests (including hunting)
Frank Harris, Tennessee Nature Conservancy board member
Steve Grady, Oak Ridge Industrial Development Board
Mick Wiest, representing cultural resource interests

Following the panel presentations, there was discussion between panel members and the audience.

Cosponsored by:

- Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning (TCWP)
- Oak Ridge League of Women Voters
- Knoxville League of Women Voters
- Tennessee Conservation League (TCL)
- Save Our Cumberland Mountains (SOCM)
- Foundation for Global Sustainability
- Lockheed Martin Energy Systems

July 26, 1999: The AFORR meeting featured a program on "Education and Recreation on the Oak Ridge Reservation: Present Opportunities, Future Possibilities."

April 11, 2000: AFORR held a public meeting to discuss DOE's draft Environmental Assessment on the proposed leasing of Parcel ED-3.

June 13, 2000: AFORR's meeting featured a review of the past year's events and activities, presentations by Drs. Dev Joslin and Larry Pounds on breeding birds of the Oak Ridge Reservation and invasive exotic plant species, and discussion of possible future objectives and activities. It is summarized below. Nearly 50 people attended, including Linda Ponce from the Oak Ridge office of Congressman Zach Wamp as Wamp's Democratic opponent in the fall election, Will Callaway.

Birds, Plants, and Plans

The beautiful flute-like call of the wood thrush, the unmistakable gobble of the male wild turkey. Lovely clandestine wild orchids, threatened by incursions of invasive plants such as Japanese grass, privet, and kudzu. These and many others were the animals and plants heard about by those attending the annual meeting of Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR).

Joslin's well-documented message was that the ORR provides habitat for numerous bird species, many of which are in decline regionally or nationally, including several that are not otherwise common in the area. For example, of the almost 200 bird species found on the ORR (more than on any other single tract in East Tennessee), 28 species are considered "of conservation concern" by international organizations. Fourteen of those migratory songbird species of concern are among the 40 most common birds on the ORR. Familiar examples include wood thrush, scarlet tanager, bobwhite quail, and yellow-billed cuckoo, plus 17 species of warblers. In contrast, the bird species most frequently found in surveys in nearby Knox County are common and widespread urban/suburban/agricultural species such as European starling, common grackle, and American crow.

The ORR's abundance and diversity of bird species, Joslin noted, is largely a result of the large areas of unfragmented forest and other specialized habitats present. These large forest expanses provide protection from predators (including house cats), from nest parasitizing cowbirds, and from aggressive non-native birds that compete for nest sites.

Surprisingly to many, perhaps, Joslin said that early successional "old field" habitats, created in part by devastations of pine stands by the southern pine beetle, are uncommon in the region and provide habitat for some declining bird species, such as prairie warbler and yellow-breasted chat.

Dr. Larry Pounds focussed on the problems of exotic (non-native) invasive plant species on the ORR and in the surrounding region. Pounds noted that these invasive species occur far less frequently on the ORR than in surrounding areas, largely due to the relatively unfragmented, undeveloped nature of the ORR. Nonetheless, incursions of privet, kudzu, Nepal grass, and non-native honeysuckle are important in designing management strategies to conserve native plants for research, education, and recreation. Accordingly, there are many opportunities on the ORR for further research and for management actions concerning invasion by non-native plants and conservation of native plants, communities, and habitats.

In the business portion of the meeting, Ellen Smith reviewed AFORR's activities and events over the past year. Highlights included participating in a forum on the future of the ORR; holding a public meeting on the proposed ED-3 lease; making comments on the future of the Boeing property; attending meetings with public officials; and writing letters relating to the future of the ORR.

Following the presentations by Joslin and Pounds, a lively discussion ensued regarding future goals and actions. Strategic initiatives proposed and discussed were as follows:

- Support initiatives to promote economic growth and vitality without developing more ORR land;
- Conduct activities to inform the community about the value of the ORR;
- Support initiatives to compensate local governments for adverse impacts, direct costs, and lost potential revenues caused by DOE and its predecessors.

The AFORR Executive Board proposed (for discussion) three ideas on future AFORR initiatives, as follows:

- No more land transfers from the ORR unless they are consistent with a comprehensive land-use **plan that DOE agrees to develop through an open public process.**
- Permanent federal status and protection for the ORR and other DOE National Environmental Research Park sites -- under DOE management, thus allowing continued manipulative research and providing sites for future federal missions.

- [alternative] - Permanent federal protection for the ORR and other DOE National Environmental Research Park sites -- under the management of an agency with an explicit natural resource mission.

Following a spirited discussion, including commentary from Callaway and Ponce, the meeting closed amidst refreshment and conversation.

October 5, 2000: About 20 to 25 people turned out to hear Tim Myrick (Project Director of the Facilities Revitalization Project for UT-Battelle) describe the ORNL Facilities Revitalization Program. The discussion was lively and lots of good questions were asked.

September 6, 2001: AFORR held its annual business meeting and heard a presentation by Scott Davis, director of the Tennessee Chapter of The Nature Conservancy.

September 29, 2001: Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning celebrated Public Lands Day, toured a natural area led by Larry Pounds, and helped with control of exotic plants invading the area.

Larry Pounds led the interpretive walk, which included a discussion of TVA's new management plan, the ecology of Worthington Cemetery and identification of wildflowers, in particular exotic species. Bring your gardening tools to help with the exotic plant removal.

National Public Lands Day is a yearly event when volunteers come together to improve the country's public lands. It is a public-private partnership involving land management agencies from all levels of government.. Tennessee joined in this annual celebration for the first time in 1998 at Big South Fork.

November 6, 2001: AFORR discussed land-use planning for the Oak Ridge Reservation.

October 2, 2002: AFORR held its annual business meeting. Mike Butler, Director of the Tennessee Conservation League spoke on "Implementation of Conservation on Public and Private Lands."

Mike Butler's Advice on Partnering for Conservation

Mike Butler shared his experiences and insights on practical aspects of conservation. He emphasized the importance of forming partnerships with diverse interests.

The recent purchase of some large tracts near the Royal Blue Wildlife Management Area in Campbell and Scott counties illustrates how public-private partnerships can achieve conservation goals in a time when public funding is dwindling.

Butler explained that the [Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency](#) (TWRA) had "audacious" goals for the area, but during the state's 2002 budget crisis TWRA lacked the resources to buy the land from the International Paper Company. Several conservation groups stepped in to help. The Conservation Fund negotiated with the land owner. Other groups pledged funds, including the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Wild Turkey Federation. Meanwhile, the [Nature Conservancy](#) took the lead in arranging purchase of the Anderson-Tully tract in West Tennessee, allowing the other groups to stay focused on the Campbell County project.

The deal could not be completed without a state contribution, however, and the General Assembly would not approve the creative financing arrangement without support from State Senator Randy McNally. McNally was concerned about constituent opposition to the project and did not lend his support until the Anderson County Commission had weighed in as favoring the deal. [Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning](#) and other local groups in our area rallied Commission support, and thus played a key role in making the complex transaction happen.

Butler noted that none of the organizations could have accomplished this deal by themselves, and that the different organizations pitched in to help without being concerned about who would get credit for the project's completion. Further, because negotiations were confidential, groups had to help without even fully understanding what it was they were helping with.

Butler pointed out that partnering means being willing to compromise: "You may not agree on everything, but work together."

He suggested three other principles for successful partnering in conservation efforts:

1. Don't worry about who will get the credit.
2. Don't fall into the trap of thinking, "My organization was the sole reason this project achieved its objective."
3. Politicians always have to get the credit.

November 11, 2004: Bobby Fulcher of Tennessee's Division of State Parks was speaker at a public meeting, on the topic "People and the Land in Tennessee." Our speaker worked at 35 different state parks since 1976. Currently he is Park Manager for the Cumberland State scenic Trail. His strong interest in cultural conservation in addition to natural resource conservation led him to establish and direct the Tennessee State Parks Folklife Project in 1979. He is host of a weekly program on WDVX-FM and has written and produced 22 nationally distributed record albums, video productions, and radio series on our region's traditional music and culture. He worked with local people, politicians, business leaders and conservation groups to preserve 5000 acres at Pickett State Forest when it appeared certain that a developer would get the land.

January 31, 2006: AFORR recognized DOE's Oak Ridge Office for its stewardship of the ORR, and DOE's Gerald Boyd spoke to the group. The DOE office that Gerald Boyd manages was responsible for tens of thousands of acres of federal government land in Oak Ridge. During the past year, DOE completed the establishment of the Black Oak Ridge Conservation Area (3,000 acres dedicated to conservation under state management), and made progress in other initiatives of interest to AFORR and the community.

AFORR expects to thank Mr. Boyd and his agency for its accomplishments in stewardship of the Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR) lands and resources and hear his comments on the subject of the ORR. Other agenda items include review of the year's activities and accomplishments, and the election of officers.

Gerald Boyd came to Oak Ridge in 2002 as Assistant Manager for Environmental Management in U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Oak Ridge Office (ORO). He was named manager of ORO in January 2003. In that position, he is responsible for DOE's programs in science at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, environmental management, assets utilization, and uranium programs at the Oak Ridge Reservation. ORO also provides support to the Y-12 National Security Complex managed by the National Nuclear Security Administration.

Before coming to Oak Ridge, Boyd served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Science and Technology in the Office of Environmental Management at DOE Headquarters, where he was responsible for managing a national and international program for science and technology development for environmental remediation and waste management. Previously, Boyd was DOE's Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Science and Technology, and the Director of the Emergency Preparedness and the DOE National Transportation Program. He also has served as Deputy Superintendent of the Emergency Management Institute, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and was affiliated with Valdosta State College and the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency.

A native of middle Tennessee, Boyd received a bachelor's degree in biology and chemistry from the University of Mississippi and a master's degree in education and administration from Florida State University. He and his wife, Betty Jo, have two daughters.

August 31, 2006: AFORR heard a presentation by UT faculty member Nate Sanders concerning some of UT's ongoing research activities in the Three Bend area of the Oak Ridge Reservation.

November 3, 2006 — ORO NEPA Workshop

The U.S. Department of Energy's Oak Ridge Operations (ORO) offered to *Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation* to hold a free public workshop on how ORO has been implementing the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

This is ORO's response to AFORR's and citizens' concerns about existing and proposed land transfers of Reservation land.

NEPA is the law that requires federal agencies to carefully assess the potential environmental impacts of their activities and proposed actions. NEPA also provides opportunities for citizens to help in the fact-finding process, comment on the methods and quality of assessments, and voice their opinions on the significance of impacts. Thus, the purpose of NEPA is to assure that the agencies make informed decisions that will avoid or adequately mitigate negative impacts and that their decisions are transparent to the public.

We need smart people to learn about ORO's interpretation of NEPA law and what actions trigger a need for an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

It has been AFORR's view that preparation of a reservation-wide Land Use Plan is a necessity to prepare and position the ORO to take advantage of future opportunities to participate in energy and climate-related research while assuring that the unique public values of the Reservation are not diminished.

Current practices lack a holistic view of the Reservation. Piecemeal decisions have been made without consideration of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future impacts. Habitat fragmentation is one of the most serious and constant threats to the Reservation. Of the 58,575 acres of land that were originally expropriated for the Manhattan Project only about 20,000 acres remain in a relatively undisturbed state.

November 16, 2006, AFORR held its annual meeting and heard the presentation "Protecting Public Land: You Can Make a Difference," by William (Billy) Minser, University of Tennessee Department of Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries.

On Thursday evening November 16, 2006, Billy Minser, instructor and research associate in the University of Tennessee's Department of Forestry, Wildlife, and Fisheries, spoke at AFORR's annual meeting on "Conservation of Public Lands; You Can Make a Difference." Mr. Minser first discussed the many ways in which public land is used, focusing on public land used for recreation.

Next, he identified the great number of agencies and organizations both state and federal that control public land. Many of these entities are obvious to us, for example, the National Park Service; others, may not be as obvious, such as the Department of Defense's control over military installations. Fort Campbell, for example, has the largest native grass prairie east of the Mississippi, some 10,000 to 15,000 acres.

In the most dramatic of his slides, Mr. Minser demonstrated that between now, 2006, and the year 2030, Tennessee's green space will be totally decimated because of increased housing, retail, and commercial demand along with the concomitant building of roads and other infrastructure to support housing and industry. In fact, Tennessee is losing the land equivalent of one county per year to "asphalt and real estate." In the third portion of his talk, and at its heart, Mr. Minser addressed the controversy over TVA's use of public land. The current conflict between those who wish further residential and commercial development of TVA public land and the overwhelming public outcry against such development is a perfect demonstration of the classic struggle of a bureaucracy in conflict. TVA's record of public stewardship of the land is not an enviable one.

TVA has 49 reservoirs that are used like state parks, but TVA is not under any administration or jurisdiction; it monitors itself. Twenty-two million people per year use these reservoirs for recreation, but they are also an important economic boon to the communities around the reservoirs. Originally, TVA took 1.27 million acres of land by eminent domain. Only 293,000 of those acres remain, and only 53% of that remaining acreage is presently approved for public use. About 506,000 acres of the original 1.27 million acres were sold or transferred by TVA. Minser told us that the most interesting and puzzling facet of TVA's "land use policy" is that it has none. However, TVA has recently opened a dialogue with the public, which is its largest, though perhaps not its most influential stakeholder. The public has been responding by phone call, letter, and email as to its desire for future TVA land use. That response is a resounding "No" to TVA's taking of further land by eminent domain, or of selling or trading parcels of land to residential or commercial developers, even when those developers give other parcels, perhaps even larger parcels of land, in its stead. Such trades actually took place in two recent and well publicized cases.

Follow-up news: Two weeks after the meeting, on November 30, 2006, the Tennessee Valley Authority board voted 8 to 1 to adopt a new land policy that has the effect of banning sales of TVA lands to the public. The AFORR Board had written to TVA to endorse the new land policy.

December 9, 2008 — What's So Special About the Oak Ridge Reservation?

Public lecture by Pat Parr, Natural Resources Manager of Oak Ridge National Laboratory, on the occasion of AFORR's annual meeting,

It is not a national secret. But most residents of our area—and even many of those who work on the Reservation—know less about the extraordinary values and treasures of the Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR) than they do about what **was top secret** during the Manhattan Project!

Pat Parr discussed the unique assets and the national and international significance of the Oak Ridge National Environmental Research Park, which still makes up a large part of the ORR. The park is one of only seven National Environmental Research Parks.

2009 was the 20th anniversary of the Oak Ridge National Environmental Research Park's international recognition as a unit of the Southern Appalachian Biosphere Reserve. Its average biodiversity per acre is even higher than that of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, by some accounts.

Pat Parr graduated from Oak Ridge High School. She received her BS in biology from Tennessee Wesleyan College and her MS in ecology from University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Pat is past president of the Association of Southeastern Biologists and of the Tennessee Exotic Pest Plant Council. Currently she chairs the Executive Committee of the Southern Appalachian Man and the Biosphere Cooperative. Pat's daughter Elizabeth is a freshman at East Tennessee State University and her son Bobby is completing law school at Nova Southeastern University in Florida.

January 28, 2010 — Forever Green Tennessee

Public lecture by Kathleen Williams, President and Executive Director of the Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation, on the occasion of AFORR's annual meeting,

Kathleen Williams' presentation highlighted the need to restore the Tennessee Real Estate Transfer Tax which, in the past, has provided funding for acquisition of lands of environmental and scenic importance. In 2003, 2008, and 2009, funds generated by the transfer tax was re-directed to help mitigate State budget shortfalls. Public support is needed to ensure that this conservation funding mechanism is reinstated this year. The transfer tax generates approximately \$20 million per year to help keep Tennessee green and beautiful.

Tourism is the second largest industry in Tennessee, employing 181,000 people and contributing 13.4 billion to our economy and \$1 billion to our local sales tax revenues in 2010. One of the top tourist attractions in Tennessee are our State Parks and it is short-sighted not to reinstate this land acquisition program in order to expand the environmental tourism industry. This fund is needed to save incredible scenic attractions that are at risk, including exceptional tracts at Rocky Fork, Bluffs at Scott's Gulf, Cummins Falls, The Big Trees at Virgin Falls, The Big Trees at Warner Parks, Mississippi River Bluffs, The Fiery Gizzard Trail, Segments of the Cumberland Trail, Short Mountain, and more. This tax represents only 0.07 percent of Tennessee's \$29 billion budget. Shamefully, Tennessee ranks 50th nationwide in environmental spending.

Kathleen Williams has served as President and Executive Director of the Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation since 1997. At the foundation she launched "State Park Connections", a small grants program that has awarded more than 164 small grants totaling \$267,704. Her work through the Foundation has helped preserve over 10,000 acres that conserve beautiful Tennessee natural resources. Under her leadership, the Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation was recognized by the Tennessee Conservation League and the National Wildlife Federation as the 2003 Conservation Organization of the Year and the 1999 Conservation Educator of the Year. In addition, Kathleen received the 2004 Mack S. Prichard Award from the Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club and was named the 1996 Land Conservationist of the year and the 2005 Lifetime Achievement Award from Greenways for Nashville.

Prior to her work at the Foundation, Kathleen was the Director of Tennessee Greenways Program for The Conservation Fund from 1995-1998. In this capacity she initiated greenway projects across the state and developed the Governor's Bicentennial Greenways Program. Kathleen successfully lobbied for the "State and Local Parks and Recreation Partnership Act of 1991", which resulted in more than \$15 million per year for state parks, state forests, city and county parks, wetlands, and cleaner water. Because of this funding bill, over 240,000 acres have been set aside in Tennessee for land conservation.

November 17, 2010 — Conveyance & Dedication of Horizon Center Area 4 to Conservation

On November 17, the Community Reuse Organization of East Tennessee (CROET) formally donated 50 acres of the East Tennessee Technology Park's Horizon Center to the Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation for perpetual conservation. This land provides green space and continues a network of greenway trails in the City of Oak Ridge

"We have worked diligently with many partners to ensure this valuable piece of land is preserved for the people of Oak Ridge, Roane County and Tennessee," said Lawrence Young, president and CEO of CROET. "We are proud to not only have established a one-of-a-kind technology park, but while doing so, to have left a tremendous amount of green space."

The land donation was made possible through the cooperation of the U.S. Department of Energy, the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, the Horizon Center Board of Directors, Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation and the Tennessee Greenways Foundation.

December 7, 2010 — The Role of Environmental and Conservation Planning in Industrial Development

Public panel discussion with **Lawrence Young**, President of CROET, **Dr. David Buehler**, Professor of Wildlife Science in the Department of Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries at the University of Tennessee, **Douglas Colcalsure**, representing Greenways Oak Ridge, and **Ellen Smith**, Vice President of AFORR, on the occasion of AFORR's annual meeting,

The panel discussion focused on the challenges and benefits of searching for more sustainable approaches to development and on the value of the perpetual preservation of the 50-acre land gift from Community Reuse Organization of East Tennessee (CROET).

- Ellen Smith highlighted the benefits of conservation via partnering and shared the history of efforts to preserve this parcel,
- Lawrence Young described the parcel and developers' perspectives on benefits of conservation,
- David Buehler discussed the broad-scale environmental benefits of conservation, and
- Douglas Colcalsure discussed the recreational benefits of preserving this parcel.

Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR) has been working for the past ten years to increase awareness of the importance of the Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR). We encourage and support multiple uses of the reservation that contribute to growth and economic stability, while at the same time respecting its natural and scientific resources.

November 15, 2011 — Opportunities for the National Park Service in East Tennessee
Niki Nicholas was the featured speaker at AFORR's Annual Meeting.

Niki Nicholas became the Superintendent of Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area in Kentucky and Tennessee and Obed Wild and Scenic River in Tennessee this year. Prior to that appointment, Nicholas served as the Chief of Resources Management and Science at Yosemite National Park in California for seven years and Senior Manager for Environmental Impact Reduction Technologies at the Tennessee Valley Authority. Thus, Superintendent Nicholas has both strong knowledge of the resource management and familiarity of the Southeast Region.

Superintendent Nicholas is an ideal person to speak about the proposed Manhattan Project National Historical Park, which is now located in Oak Ridge, Los Alamos, NM, and Hanford, WA. The new historical park would provide an opportunity to interpret and discuss an incredibly important piece of American and world history. It allows contemporary society to better understand the complex and difficult decision to use the bomb. Like the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area and the Obed Wild and Scenic River, the Manhattan Project National Historical Park would provide an opportunity for visitors to experience an important part of America and also stimulate local economies.

Superintendent Nicholas understands the need to preserve natural and cultural resources while allowing for education and enjoyment by park visitors. National Park Service Southeast Regional Director David Vela has said, "she knows and values the importance of working with local communities to create awareness and support."

April 27, 2013 — Bird nature walk — East Tennessee Technology Park (ETTP) Ponds and Vicinity

June 2, 2013 — Reptiles and amphibians inventory — Solway Bend

June 8, 2013 — Wetland plants nature walk — East Tennessee Technology Park (ETTP) Ponds

February 23, 2013 — Winter astronomy, falconry demo, and American woodcock "night walk" — Freels Bend

January 10, 2013 — Joint meeting of Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR) and the Oak Ridge Heritage and Preservation Association (ORHPA). **Larry Kelly**, Manager of DOE's Oak Ridge Office, was the featured speaker. Kelly, who was named manager of the DOE Oak Ridge Office in July 2012, will speak on the topic **Managing resources on the Oak Ridge Reservation in a changing environment**.

April 25, 2013: Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR) and Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning (TCWP) present **Anne Davis**, Managing Attorney, Nashville Office of the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) on **SELC's Work in Tennessee**

November 21, 2013 — Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR) and American Society of Mechanical Engineers (Oak Ridge Section) present **Kent Williams**, retired distinguished ORNL staff member and consultant on nuclear fuel cycle technical and economic issues. The title of his talk was **Will Small Modular Reactors (SMRS) Rejuvenate Nuclear Power?**

February 26, 2016: Presentation by **Ron McConathy** showing his photos; **Bill Johnson** and others also shared their experiences.

March 24, 2016: AFORR Annual Meeting and Election. Presentation on “Overview of Cultural Landscape & History of Three Bends” by Y-12 Historian **D. Ray Smith**. Also there was a round table discussion on “Threats to the Oak Ridge Reservation—What AFORR Can Do, led by Virginia Dale, followed the presentation.