



# Vision for Natural Assets of Oak Ridge

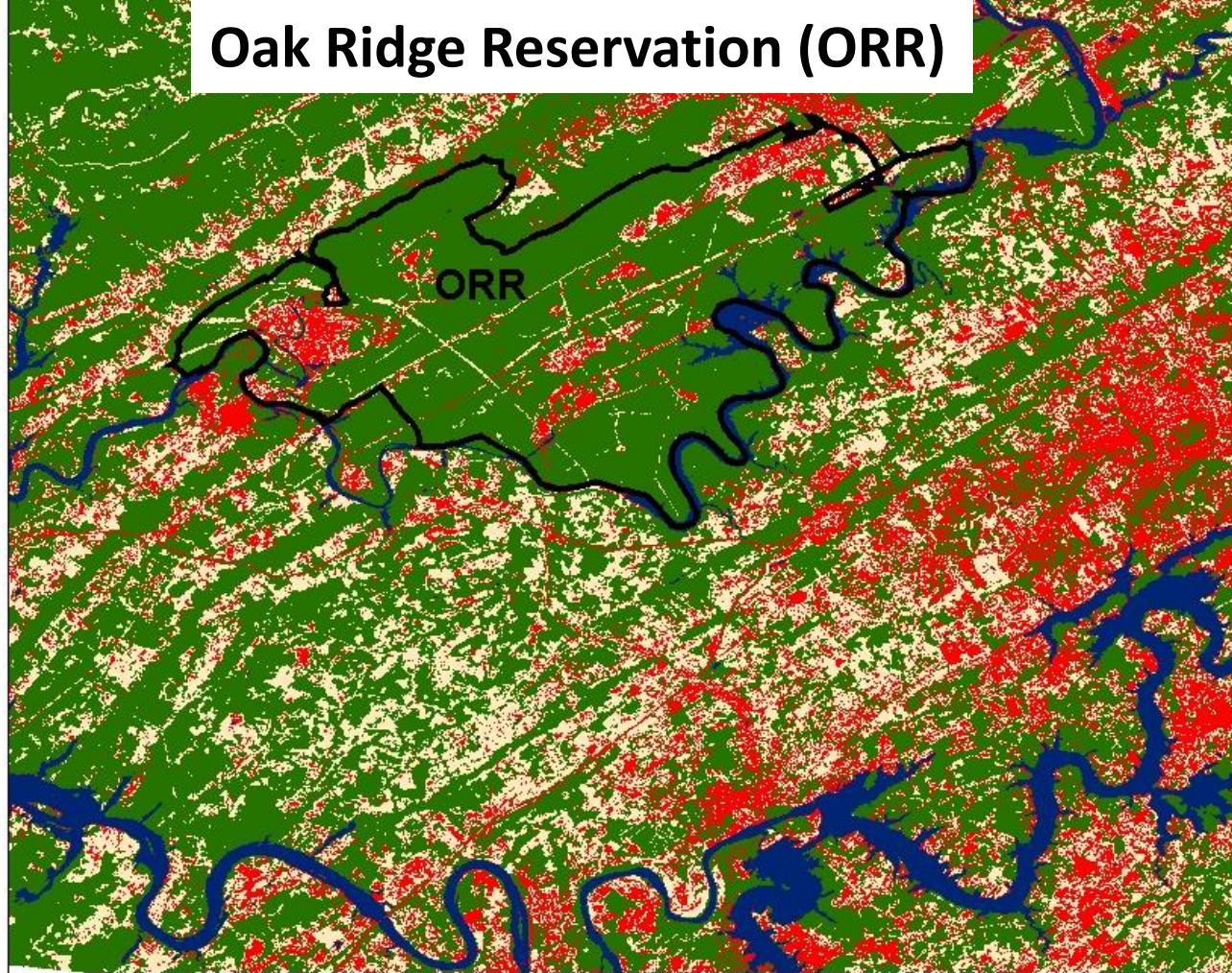
Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR)

Tennessee Citizens of Wilderness Planning (TCWP)

Virginia Dale, President of AFORR & life member of TCWP

August 2020

# Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR)



## Land Cover

(from Landsat TM image dated July 3rd 2006)

### Class Names

-  Water
-  Forest Land
-  Agricultural Land
-  Urban Land



0 1.5 3 6 9 Kilometers



Oka Ridge Reservation has over 1,100 vascular plant species, which rivals the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in vascular plant species diversity.

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park lists 1,650 vascular plant species & is the most biologically diverse of all National Parks in contiguous US.

# History of the Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR)

- **Established in 1942-43 as part of the Manhattan Project**
- **Originally > 60,000 acres acquired by eminent domain by US Army Corps of Engineers**
- **Selective disposals of land: 1949 to the present**
  - **Most was land in or adjacent to residential, commercial, & industrial areas of OR**
  - **Disposals were compatible with program requirements of the US Department of Energy (DOE)**

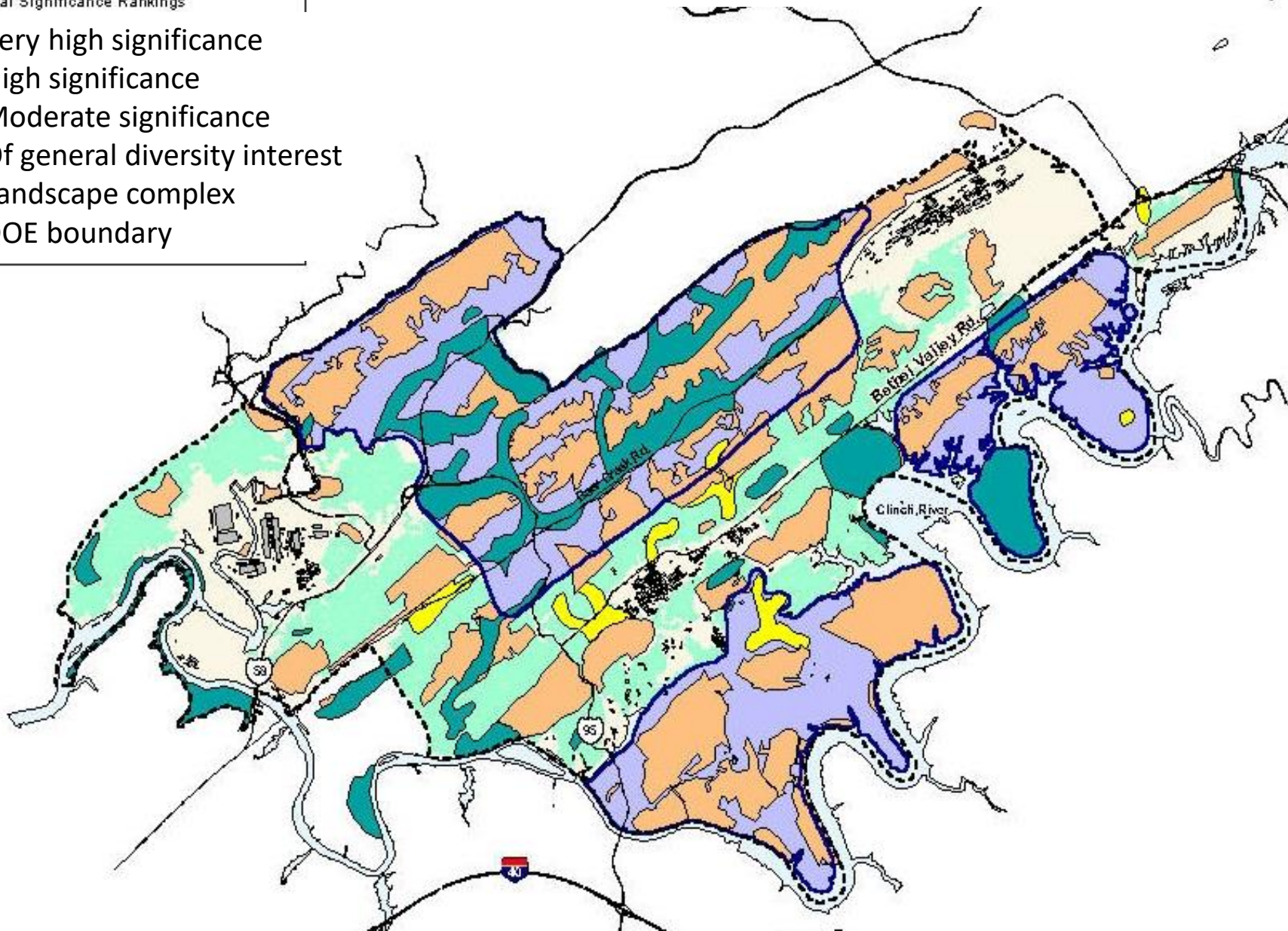
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  - Disposals were compatible with program requirements of the US Department of Energy (DOE)
- **Now the ORR is 33,508 acres owned & managed by the DOE**
- **Management of the ORR recognizes multiple uses of land:**
  - Environmental research
  - Technological operations
  - Unique biological areas, rare & endangered species, archeological sites, antiquities, & ~30 cemeteries need to be protected
  - Human and environmental health & safety must be maintained

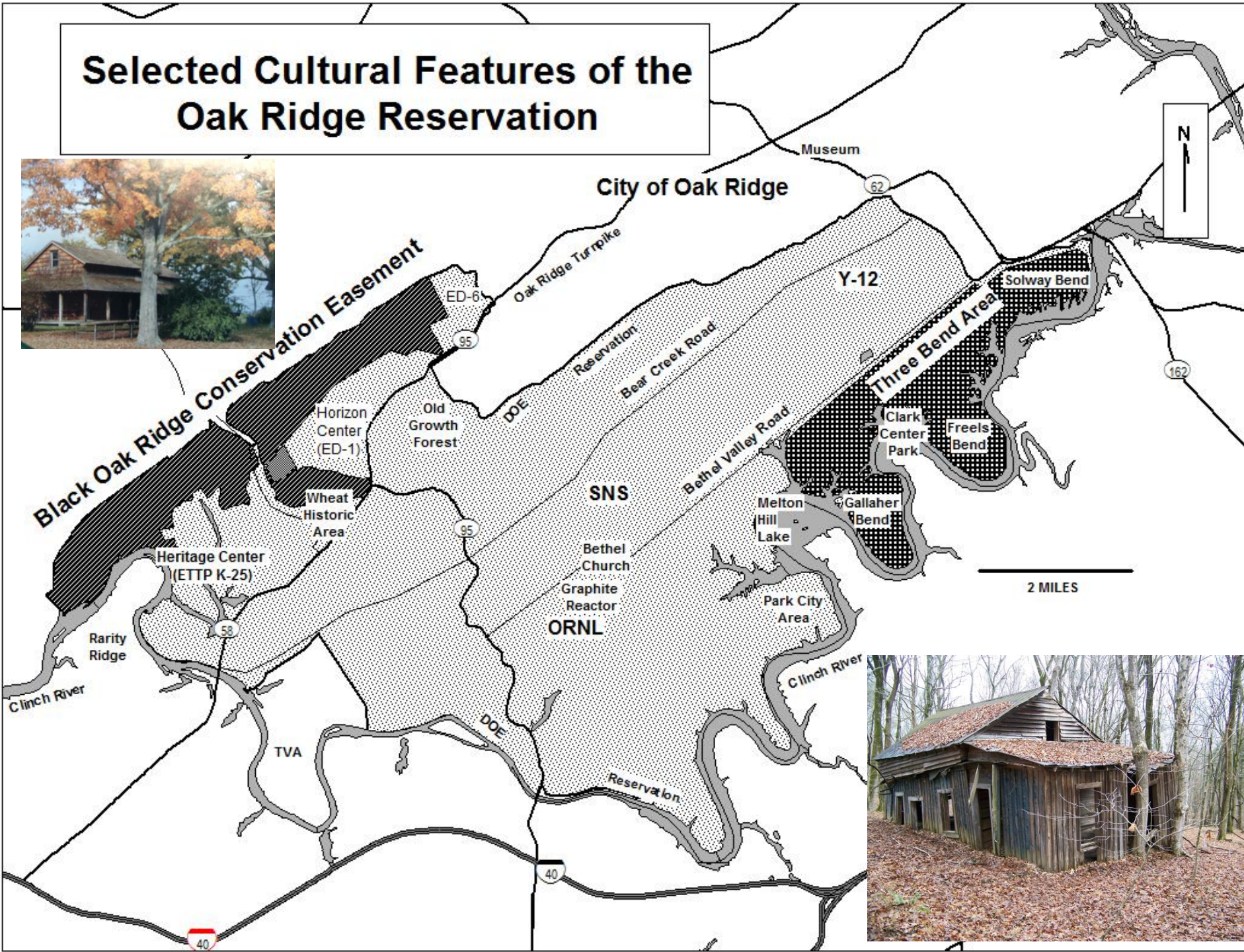
# The Nature Conservancy identified biologically sensitive areas on the ORR

The Nature Conservancy  
Biological Significance Rankings

- Very high significance
- High significance
- Moderate significance
- Of general diversity interest
- Landscape complex
- DOE boundary



# Selected Cultural Features of the Oak Ridge Reservation





June 24, 1999

## DOE gives 3,000 acres for refuge; city fathers not pleased

By Frank Munger  
News-Sentinel Oak Ridge bureau

OAK RIDGE - On a very warm day in East Tennessee, U.S. Energy Secretary Bill Richardson warmed the hearts of environmentalists.

Richardson signed documents Wednesday creating a wildlife refuge on 3,000 picturesque acres on the government's Oak Ridge reservation. The property includes about 20 miles of shoreline along Melton Hill Lake.

"I just think it's important to give back," Richardson said at the outdoor ceremony near historic Freels Bend Cabin. He said Oak Ridge workers delivered on important missions during the Cold War and deserved something in return.

Most of the Department of Energy's assistance to the local community has been on economic development, but there needs to be a balance, Richardson said.

"We're returning the green to the region in more ways than one," he said.

"It takes an ... environment that can answer to people's human lives. They need places to fish and hunt, to swim and breathe good, warm air. They need areas where they recreate their spirits after a week of hard work. The Oak Ridge reserve can be such a place."

The initial agreement is for five years, but Richardson said the intent is for the refuge to be permanent.

Please see LAND, page A6



Margaret Bentley/News-Sentinel staff

U.S. Energy Secretary Bill Richardson holds up Bradley Hensley, 9, and says, "This land's for you, kid," during the announcement of a conservation area. Bradley was part of a science camp at Oak Ridge National Laboratory and had given Richardson a T-shirt with other campers. At left is Leah Dever, who will become the Department of Energy's Oak Ridge manager in July.

**"The proclamation signed today will help balance recent land use initiatives to foster economic development in the Oak Ridge area with better protection for unique habitat and wildlife," said Secretary Richardson.**



## • **Three Bend Scenic & Wildlife Management Refuge Area**

- Important habitat & home for threatened, endangered, & rare species
  - Animals: bald eagles, ospreys, migrant songbirds & new snail species (Tennessee cavesnail) found in 2020
  - State listed rare plants: Canada Lily and Tall Larkspur.
- A combination of open fields, hedgerows, woodlots, wetlands, & water that is rare in the region.
- Recognized special habitats:
  - Chestnut Oak-Tuliptree-White Oak Hickory Forests
  - White Oak-Northern Red Oak-Hickory Forests
  - Oak-Hickory-Ash Limestone Woodlands
  - Limestone Sinkholes
  - Limestone Barrens
- The historic Freels Cabin, built in the 1820s is one of the earliest settlements in the area.



## • **The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA), in consultation with DOE & the Oak Ridge community, have a cooperative agreement**

- Serves as a natural resource management plan for Three Bends
- Establishes guidelines for managing the area to preserve & enhance its natural attributes.

# Three Bends Scenic and Wildlife Management Area

An aerial satellite-style map of a wooded area. A green line traces a path through the forest. Four red arrows point from text labels to specific locations along this path. The labels are: Clark Center Park (pointing to a clearing on the left), Solway Bend (pointing to a sharp curve on the right), Freels Bend (pointing to a curve on the right), and Gallaher Bend (pointing to a curve at the bottom). The text 'Google with' is visible in the bottom left corner.

Clark Center Park

Solway Bend

Freels Bend

Gallaher Bend

# Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR)

- Locally-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 1999
- Supports preservation of natural resources on the Oak Ridge Reservation Research Park—for the long-term benefit of
  - DOE
  - Local community
  - National and international interests.
- Focuses on values for
  - Science and Technology
  - Conservation
  - Economy and Jobs
  - Public Health and Safety
  - Education
  - Recreation
  - Historical Significance





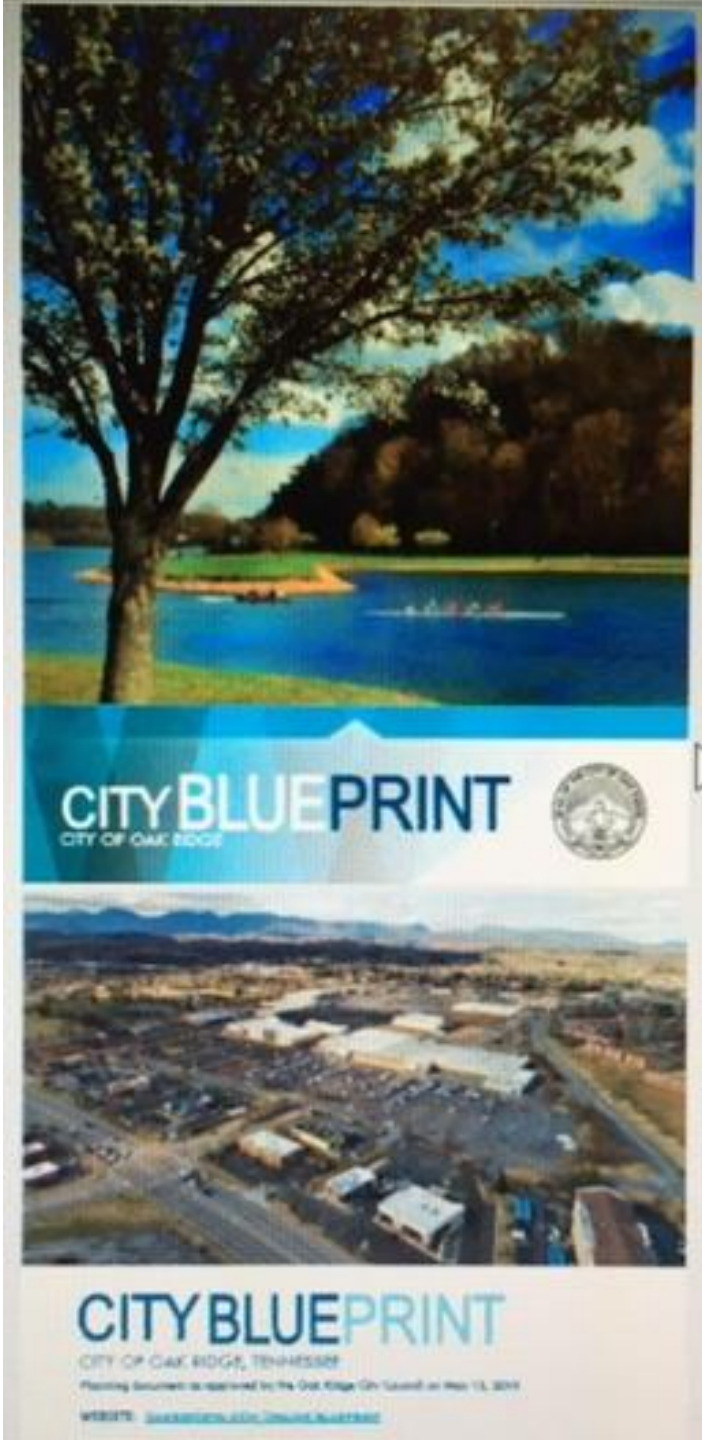
# Tennessee Citizens FOR Wilderness Planning

Taking Care of Wild Places

- Formed in 1966 to save the Obed & protect the Great Smoky Mountains National Park
- Mission – to achieve & perpetuate protection of natural lands & waters.
- Many successes in protecting Tennessee's land & waters & in establishing legislation



CityBluePrint found that Oak Ridgers place the highest value on preserving natural resources such as this greenway



# Legacy Parks Foundation developed Oak Ridge Natural Assets Plan



# AFORR & TCWP developed a Vision for Natural Assets of Oak Ridge

**PREMISE: Oak Ridge is indeed a “Secret City” & an unusually vibrant small town.**

- Hosts a world-class science facility (and Tennessee’s single largest employer)
- Features many amenities ranging from an excellent school system to a community symphony and an active performance theater.
- Enjoys benefits of numerous community events, festivals, concerts, & several museums
- Now has the Manhattan Project National Historic Park.
- Wealth of natural opportunities supports our best secret - that we truly are an “Outdoor City.”



# Extensive opportunities occur within city boundaries



- Birding
- Boating
- Biking
- Fishing
- Hiking
- Hunting
- Paddling
- Rowing
- Swimming
- Water skiing



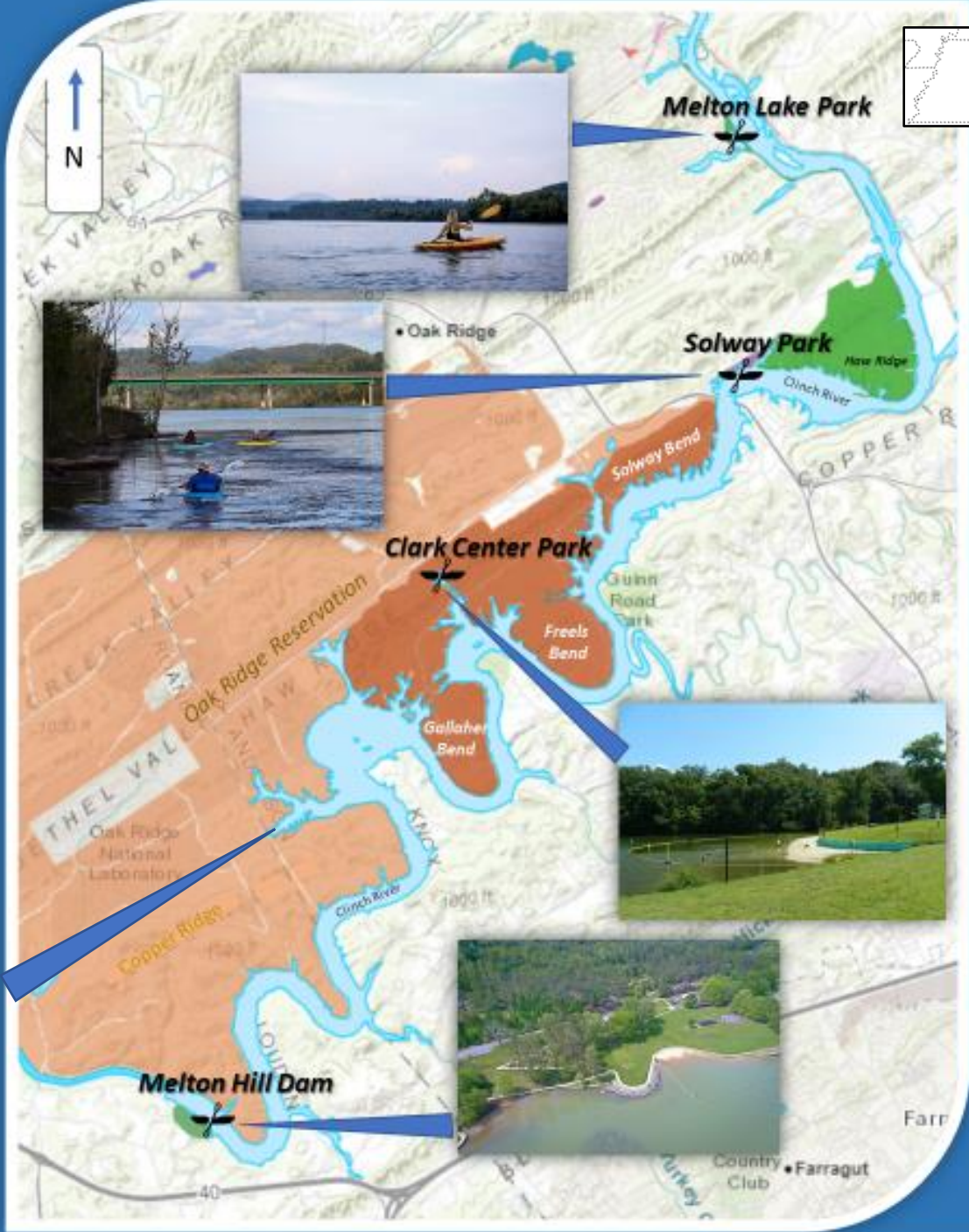
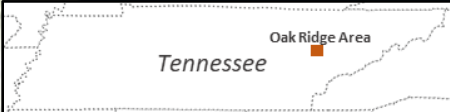


# Oak Ridge City Blueway

- Runs from Melton Lake Park to Melton Hill Dam
- Adventure paddling on 26+ miles of the Clinch River
- Connect the Oak Ridge marina area, Haw Ridge, Solway Park, Clark Center Park, & TVA's Melton Hill Dam
- Clark Center Park is a key access point
  - At the inlet between Freels Bend & Gallaher Bend
  - Popular lakefront site for boating, fishing, picnicking, swimming, etc.
- Conserving and protecting the natural landscapes that maintain the good water quality, shoreline scenery, & wildlife habitat.



# Oak Ridge Blue Way Concept



Slalom water skiing course

# Key elements of OR Blueway

## 1. Renaissance of Clark Center Park

- Public destination park
- Singular focus on the waterfront and its other natural surroundings
- Removal of the ballfields and other infrastructure
- Retaining boating and fishing opportunities
- Making further enhancements, such as addition of kayak and canoe rental and shuttle concessions.

## 2. Permanent protection of the Three Bend Area



AFORR & TCWP are eager to work with government agencies at all levels, recreational retailers, & other organizations to make our Blueway vision a reality.



## Where we are now

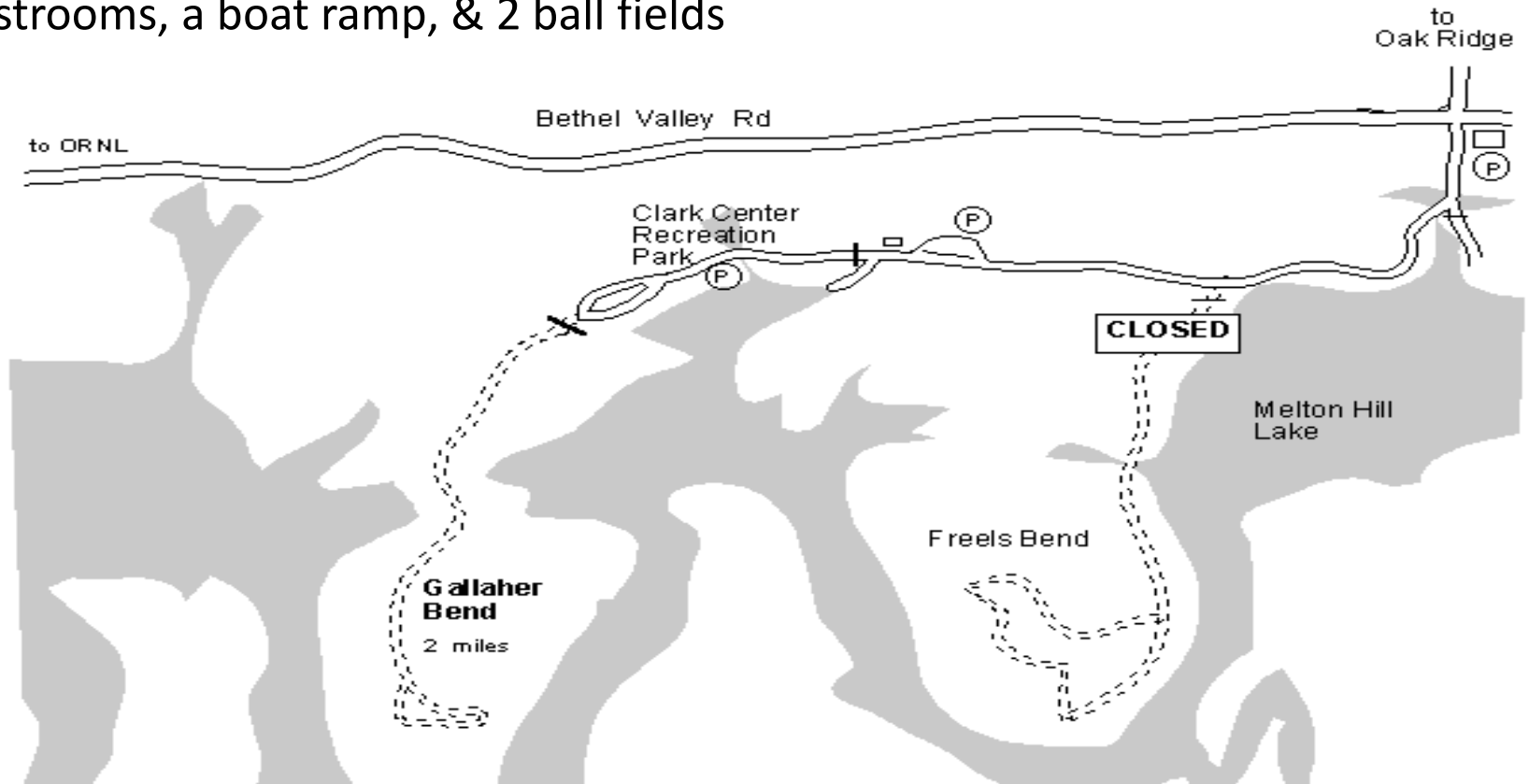
- Vision statement will soon be published in the Oak Rider
- Vision has been shared with many public officials:
  - City of OR
  - Manhattan Historic Nat'l Park
  - State officials (TDEC, TWRA)
  - County officials (Anderson, Roane, Knox)
- Endorsement letters are forthcoming from
  - Sierra Club
  - The Nature Conservancy of TN
  - OR Greenways
  - Legacy Parks



*Cormorant rookery near mouth of Walker Branch*

# Clark Center Park

- 80-acre parcel
- Provides access to the Gallaher Bend Greenway
- Under consideration by DOE for possible transfer from federal ownership.
- Includes a swimming area along Melton Hill Lake, two picnic areas, a playground, restrooms, a boat ramp, & 2 ball fields



## What you can do:

- **Let friends and public officials know you are interested in supporting development of the Oak Ridge Blueway.**
  - **Write letters to the editor**
  - **Join AFORR and/or TCWP**
- **Help AFORR & TCWP overcome the challenges of implementing these plans by**
  - **Convincing public officials of the value of transitioning Clark Center Park from DOE to the public**
  - **Supporting the permanent protection of the Three Bend Area**
  - **Encouraging recreational retailers and other organizations to make the Oak Ridge Blueway vision a reality.**



# Extra Slides

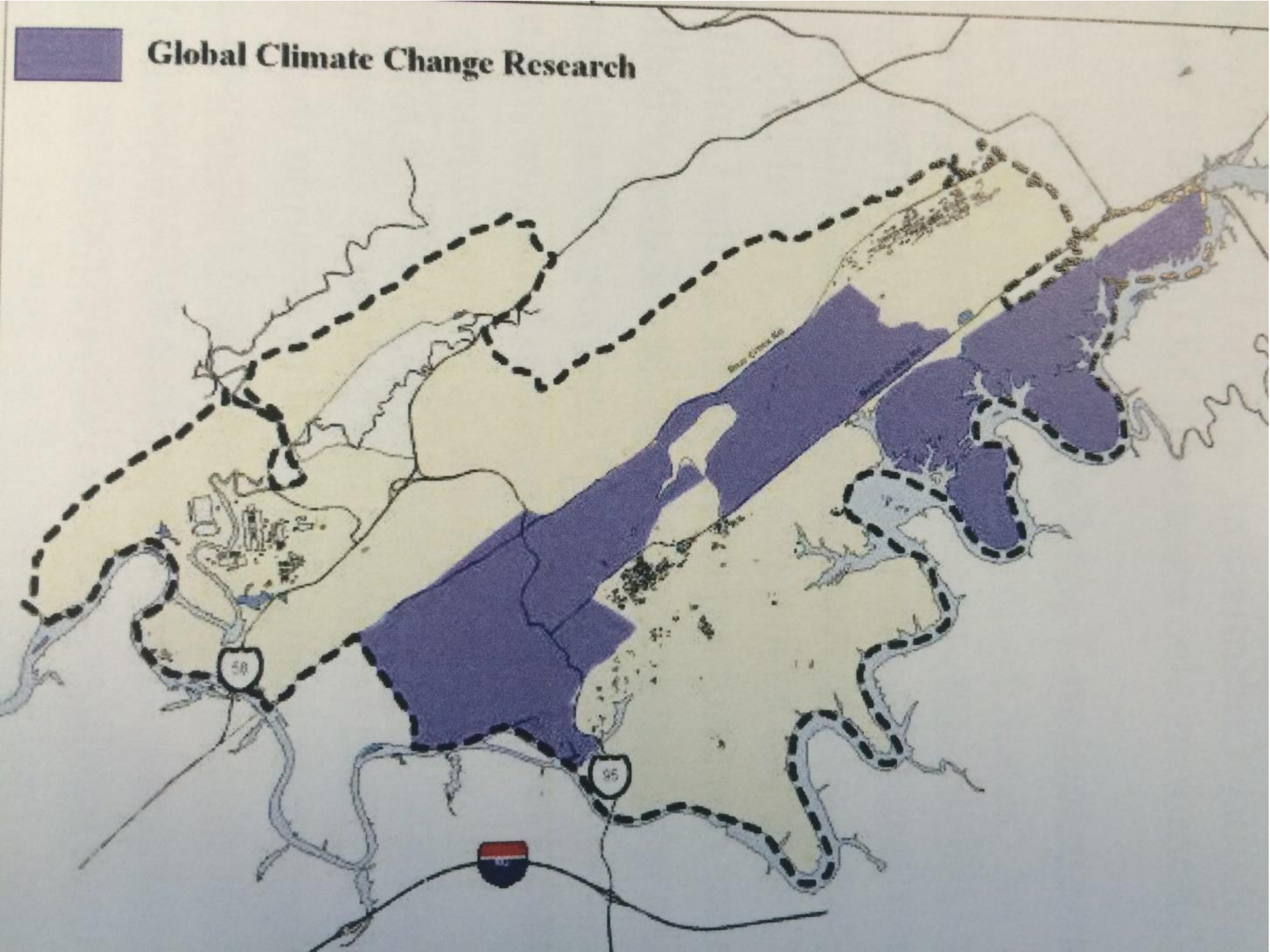
# **Oak Ridge Reservation – *A Carbon Perspective***

- ~25,000 metric tons of C/y**
- = 9 million gal/y gasoline  
(2720 g C/gal)**
- = 12,000 auto-years of  
gasoline  
(750 gal/y/vehicle)**
- = \$250,000 at \$10 t/C**





# Global Climate Change Research





10/14/20



# Solway Bend



© 2015 Google

Google earth

1992

Imagery Date: 10/16/2014 35°58'49.93" N 84°12'37.23" W elev 850 ft eye alt 12545 ft

# Freels Bend



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Image U.S. Geological Survey

Google earth

1992

Imagery Date: 10/16/2014 35°57'26.43" N 84°13'46.07" W elev 941 ft eye alt 12545 ft

# Gallaher Bend



© 2015 Google  
Image USDA Farm Service Agency  
Image U.S. Geological Survey

Google earth

1992

Imagery Date: 10/16/2014 35°56'34.97" N 84°15'02.53" W elev 806 ft eye alt 15747 ft