

AFORR Strives for Strategic Stewardship

Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR)¹ was established in 1999 by concerned citizens to encourage the appropriate stewardship of the Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR). In the 1940s the federal government used eminent domain to acquire 58,575 acres of land for Manhattan Project activities. Much of this land is occupied by Department of Energy (DOE) facilities and the Oak Ridge community, but about 20,000 acres are in a natural state, having been largely protected from fragmentation and disturbance over the ensuing decades. There is continual pressure to convert ORR land to private development. AFORR seeks to maintain this public land, which is mostly forested, as a resource of value to the region, the nation, and the world.

Values of the ORR include:

- **Conservation:** The ORR supports remarkable biodiversity, including species and ecological communities absent or uncommon in surrounding areas. The ORR is home to 26 state-listed threatened and endangered plants, 20 federally and state-listed animal species, with appropriate habitat for additional listed wildlife species. It contains seven registered State Natural Areas and has been recognized as an International Biosphere Reserve.
- **Historical Significance:** The ORR includes prehistoric sites, pre-World War II homes, churches, cemeteries, and wartime facilities that link the past and future. Sites and structures that supported the war effort are now a highlight of the [Manhattan Project National Historic Park](#).²
- **Science and Technology:** The ORR provides exceptional opportunities for research because of its established large-scale facilities, a security buffer that protects research, long-term records of environmental conditions, and partnerships with universities and industry.³ These attributes have helped establish Oak Ridge National Laboratory as a world leader in research on global climate change, contaminant behavior in the environment, and clean energy production and use.
- **Local Economy:** The local area and region benefit from environmental research activity on the ORR and from the availability of land to site new DOE facilities.

¹ www.aforr.info.

² <https://www.nps.gov/mapr/oakridge.htm>

³ Dale, V.H. and P.D. Parr. 1997. Preserving DOE's research parks. *Issues in Science and Technology*. XIV(2): 73-77.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43311760?refreqid=excelsior%3Ade25edf2a732116a0d05a2e03593f5a9&seq=1>

- **Public Health and Safety:** ORR land serves as a buffer provides security for federal activities and helps to assure the safety of the public.
- **Education:** The Oak Ridge Research Park is a training ground for future researchers and students from kindergarten to graduate school, as well as teachers and interested citizens.
- **Recreation:** Public access to the ORR is limited, but recreational opportunities exist through state-managed deer and wild turkey hunts, periodic guided nature walks, and greenways open to the public for hiking, bicycling, and viewing nature. ORR lands on the shore of Melton Hill Lake enhance its value as a setting for boating, swimming, fishing, photography, and wildlife viewing.

AFORR seeks to foster appropriate stewardship of the ORR by encouraging DOE to follow environmentally sound management practices, disseminating information about the ORR, and increasing awareness of its value; promoting increased access and use for research, education, and recreation; and encouraging public participation in decisions about the future of the ORR.

AFORR is organized as a consortium that includes organizational members as well as individual members. As such, it works with the Harvey Broome chapter of the Sierra Club, Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning (TCWP), the Tennessee chapter of The Nature Conservancy, and several other local and state organizations to promote good stewardship of the ORR.