

Values of Advocates For the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR)

Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR) encourages and supports the preservation of natural resources of the current Reservation, as well as the development of uses that will be of greatest benefit to all those affected by its use. The Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR) is an important resource for scientific research and technology development, education, and the local and regional economies. Surrounding the major research and technology facilities are more than 20,000 acres of land that provide natural security for federal activities, buffer local communities from potential safety risks, and provide a haven for many species of plants and animals, some of which are threatened or endangered. In addition, the Reservation provides recreational opportunities for citizens of Oak Ridge and surrounding communities. We support the continued preservation of the Oak Ridge Reservation for its current multiple uses listed below.

- **Science and Technology:** The US Department of Energy (DOE) designated the Oak Ridge National Environmental Research Park in 1980 as one of seven such research parks nationwide. Its objective was to provide protected lands for research and education, particularly to demonstrate the compatibility of energy technology development and a quality environment. The 20,000-acre Oak Ridge Research Park 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. The Reservation also provides a land reserve for possible future research. Without this land reserve, the ORR would not have been a candidate site for new facilities such as the planned Spallation Neutron Source. Research opportunities related to the ORR, and international recognition as a Biosphere Reserve, attract researchers from all over the world to Oak Ridge. They have helped establish Oak Ridge National Laboratory as an international leader in research on global climate change, contaminant behavior in the environment, and other aspects of the relationship of both energy and nuclear weapons production with the environment.

- **Conservation:** When the federal government obtained land in east Tennessee and elsewhere for the development of nuclear weapons technology, its acquisitions included large buffer areas for security. Protected from

fragmentation and disturbance over the ensuing decades, these areas evolved into ecological sanctuaries of remarkable size and diversity that contain species and ecological communities now absent or uncommon in surrounding areas. The Oak Ridge Reservation is the largest tract of relatively unfragmented native forest habitat remaining in the Southern Ridge and Valley of East Tennessee and contains more species of breeding birds than any other single tract of land in Tennessee. 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. The Research Park contains seven registered State Natural Areas and has been recognized as an International Biosphere Reserve. The size of the land resource has shrunk considerably in recent years, so that only about 20,000 acres of the original 58,575 acres of the ORR remain in a relatively undisturbed state. Any further reduction in the size of the Reservation, even from the edges, could have serious consequences for the viability of many of these species that require large unfragmented tracts of forested land.

- **Local Economy:** The regional and local community receive benefits from the economic value of the environmental research conducted on the ORR and from the funding of new and existing facilities here to serve newly identified national needs within the mission of DOE. Reducing the ORR in size would greatly reduce the ability for Oak Ridge to attract large, job-generating federal research projects relating to DOE's and other federal missions.

- **Public Health and Safety:** Public health and safety are protected both by environmental laws and regulations and by the buffer zones that the ORR land provides. The local community understands and accepts the risk associated with the DOE facilities as long as the sites are effectively separated from the community.

- **Education:** The Oak Ridge Research Park serves as a training ground for future researchers and students from kindergarten to graduate school, as well as faculty and community members. Research Park educational programs have reached more than 85,000 pre-college students and teachers during the past five years. In addition, the National Environmental Research Park, as a result of its designation as a User Facility for Oak Ridge National Laboratory, has attracted more than 700

students and researchers from colleges, universities, industries, and other state and federal government agencies over the past five years.

- **Recreation:** The ORR has current significant value and tremendous additional potential for recreation for the region and the community. Currently, the Reservation provides recreational opportunities ranging from the state-managed deer and wild turkey hunts to greenways open to the public for hiking, bicycling, and viewing wildlife, wildflowers, and natural scenery. The undisturbed lands along Melton Hill Lake provide an ideal setting for boating and fishing. Scenic roads through the Reservation are available for car tours and for cycling. Photographers and artists frequently capture the natural beauty of the area. The DOE also supports guided nature walks and bird watching trips and Clark Center Recreation Park, which is widely used for picnics, softball, volleyball, and other recreational activities.

- **Historical Significance:** The Oak Ridge Reservation has significant archeological, historical, and cultural richness. Prehistoric sites, pre-World War II homes, churches, and cemeteries, and wartime facilities link our past and future. Of special interest are the sites and structures that supported the historic Manhattan Project and activities during the Cold War era. The physical setting and remote location were factors in the site's being selected for the Manhattan Project -- the forested ridge-and-valley landscape offered both secrecy and safety for the nearby residents.

More information

Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation will strive to increase awareness of the importance of the ORR by educating the public, officials at all levels of government, and members of the business community as to the multiple values described above. The Oak Ridge Reservation is an integral part of the Oak Ridge community, the region, and the nation. We enthusiastically 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 and historical and cultural values. We recognize that there are disagreements as to the most important values of the Reservation, but we seek to foster communication to gain support for commonly held values. In particular, we will work to promote the success of the industrial reuse program, while

simultaneously looking for ways to protect the multiple values of the Reservation through cooperative relationships with DOE and the local economic development interests.