



Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation

January 2022 Newsletter

Agreement Signed to Transfer Land from DOE to TWRA

AFORR is pleased to know that an Agreement in Principle was signed between the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) regarding partnering and land transfer of 3,500 acres in Oak Ridge [see [\(BORCE etc Agreement in Principle DOE TWRA- 12-16 2021.pdf \(aforr.info\)\)](#)]. The partnership is based on TWRA's management of natural resources on the DOE Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR).

This agreement identifies several parcels of land that DOE intends to transfer to the TWRA. The transfer process requires approvals from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) and generally takes up to 36 months to complete. All property transferred must meet regulatory requirements to protect human health and the environment and provides indemnification. DOE and TWRA agree to pursue the transfer of five properties (as described below).

1. The Black Oak Ridge Conservation Easement (BORCE) was established as a conservation easement in 2006 as part of Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) compensation from impacts to the Watts Bar Reservoir, resulting from operations on the ORR. The BORCE includes 2,966 acres and runs along the northern boundary of the East Tennessee Technology Park (ETTP) site and the Horizon Center. The conservation easement continues in perpetuity. DOE granted TWRA a permanent easement to manage the BORCE and provides annual funding to support this management responsibility.

2. The McKinney Ridge parcel, including Blair Quarry, is an approximately 250-acre parcel that lies east of Blair Road. This area is adjacent to the BORCE and its unique geological features provide diverse recreational opportunities. If added to the BORCE, the total contiguous acreage will increase, creating greater opportunities for wildlife habitat management. It is also adjacent to the natural areas of Horizon Center.

3. Clark Center Park is an 80-acre parcel that includes a swimming area along Melton Hill Lake, two picnic areas, a playground, restrooms, a boat ramp, sports fields, and access to the Gallaher Bend Greenway. The DOE has been actively looking for a partner to assume ownership of Clark Center Park because managing a public park is not consistent with DOE's mission. TWRA commits to maintaining the property as an educational and recreational asset for the community.

4. The Powerhouse Area formerly housed a coal-fired electrical powerhouse plant, which supported K-25 site operations. The DOE has finished environmental cleanup of this area and it

is available for public use. The property includes waterfront views along the Clinch River and Poplar Creek and is divided into two parcels. The southern parcel is approximately 100 acres and the northern parcel approximately 150 acres. Public access is already allowed in the southern parcel via walking trails. The northern parcel is best suited for a wildlife management area. TWRA currently manages hunting on both parcels.

5. Wildlife management area (WMA) connectors and corridors provide connectivity between the multiple WMAs described above. These are areas along Poplar Creek that could be suitable for both human and wildlife corridors, as well as bike paths and foot trails. Some of the proposed corridors will be adjacent to the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. The total acreage of the corridors is approximately 40 acres. Environmental cleanup is nearing completion in these areas.

Appreciation of this agreement can be sent to John “Jay” Mullis, OREM Manager (DOE: Jay.Mullis@orem.doe.gov), Johnny Moore, DOE-Science Manager (moorejo@ornl.gov), and Bobby Wilson, TWRA Executive Director (bobby.wilson@tn.gov).

Take action regarding DOE’s Proposed “Environmental Management Disposal Facility” (EMDF)

The Department of Energy (DOE) plans to build a new landfill (EMDF) on a greenfield site on the Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR) for disposal of radioactive and hazardous waste from ongoing cleanup. There are known to be serious problems with the DOE proposal and public voices may still be effective in getting DOE to reconsider its plans, or (more likely) getting the regulatory agencies that have a say in this (U.S. EPA and the Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation) to insist on major changes.

For several years, local government, environmental groups, and the public have been pressing DOE for information about what wastes would be put in the landfill (“waste acceptance criteria”), the DOE analysis of comparative costs and jobs for onsite versus offsite disposal, the environmental regulations that DOE wants to have waived, and how DOE expects to immobilize the mercury waste it intends to put in the landfill, but DOE has not answered. Background information about this situation can be found at <https://aforr.info/hazardous-waste-landfill-emdf/>.

Concerns about the EMDF should be submitted to Jay Mullis (DOE: Jay.Mullis@orem.doe.gov), Colby Morgan (TDEC: Colby.Morgan@tn.gov), Connie Jones (US EPA: jones.constance@epa.gov), and elected officials.

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