

ADVOCATES FOR THE OAK RIDGE RESERVATION

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Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR) Vision for the Three Bend Area of the ORR

Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR) has defined its vision for the long-term use of the Three Bend area on the Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR), consistent with AFORR's overall mission and values. The goals of AFORR are to (1) ensure public participation in land-use decision making for the ORR, (2) promote the protection of unique environmental resources in the Three Bend area, (3) promote low-impact public recreational access, and (4) partner with Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), universities, and state and local community organizations to encourage use of the Three Bends for research and education.

The AFORR vision for the Three Bend area has four primary components: habitat/wildlife protection, science education, environmental research, and public recreation, as summarized below:

Habitat/Wildlife Protection: The Three Bend area is a prime candidate for a wildlife management and rehabilitation center for this part of East Tennessee. The varied habitat types on the Three Bends include some of the last remaining undeveloped, protected riparian zones along the Clinch River, supporting high wildlife diversity and healthy wildlife populations. A wildlife center could earn the Three Bends recognition as one of the best areas in the Southeast for birdwatching and other wildlife viewing, native species reintroduction, and injured wildlife rehabilitation. It might become part of the network of critical feeding stations for migratory birds.

Science Education: AFORR envisions the Three Bends as the future site for an educational center, including a regional science camp similar to the Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama (but set in a forest environment). The educational center could house indoor and outdoor classrooms and be open to University of Tennessee (UT) students and professors, K-12 students and teachers, Elderhostel participants, and professional scientists and students from around the world for learning, teaching, research, and teacher training. This educational center could be tied to the privatization and expansion of the American Museum of Science and Energy in Oak Ridge and provide an economic boost to the local economy similar to the positive impacts seen in Huntsville.

Environmental Research: AFORR supports continuation and expansion of ongoing ORNL and UT environmental research in the Three Bends. The Bends support a unique blend of aquatic, wetland, old-field, and forest habitats in close proximity to one another and with a large enough size to easily allow replication of sites in research applications. AFORR fully supports the developing plans by ORNL and UT to establish a field station in the Three Bend area to support environmental research and science education.

Public Recreation: AFORR supports continued and expanded low-impact public recreational access on the Three Bends including greenways and access for hiking, wildlife viewing, managed hunting, fishing, canoeing, and guided walks to historical places such as Freels Bend cabin.

The vision of Three Bends becoming a world-class center for habitat/wildlife protection, science education, environmental research, and recreation is obtainable only with enthusiastic commitment from all stakeholders. AFORR seeks the assistance of the city, state, DOE, ORNL, UT, and the community in further developing and implementing a unified vision for the Three Bends.

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