

Subj: AFORR confab on Three Bend area - Thursday, May 4, 10am
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Hello, all!

Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR) is looking forward to this **Thursday, May 4th**, and our meeting regarding land use issues related to the **Three Bend Scenic and Wildlife Management Area** on the Department of Energy (DOE) Oak Ridge Reservation. Thanks to all of you who replied to our invitation. A list of expected participants is provided below; if you have not responded yet, it's not too late to reply in order to add your name or identify an alternate.

We will meet in the **Oak Ridge Civic Center, 1401 Oak Ridge Tpke., Oak Ridge, rooms A & B**. Coffee will be available beginning at **9:30 am**, followed by discussions from **10 am to noon**. Professional facilitator **Kathy Turpin** will help us keep the discussions focused.

Some additional background information is provided below. Please phone me (865-483-3068 - home; or 865-574-7396 - work) if you have questions you wish to discuss.

Hoping to see you Thursday morning...

Ellen Smith, Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation, vice-president

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Background:

The Three Bend Area is a 3000-acre tract with 20 miles of shoreline on the Clinch River (Melton Lake Reservoir). The three "bends" are called Solway, Freels, and Gallaher Bends. In June 1999 the Secretary of Energy (Bill Richardson) announced that this area would henceforth be dedicated to conservation and wildlife management. The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency manages the area under a 5-year agreement with DOE; there is no written commitment to longer-term preservation, but DOE signed a new 5-year agreement in January 2006.

Local developers continue to seek portions of the tract for development; most recently their focus is on a desire to establish a lakefront residential development on Solway Bend. The DOE Oak Ridge Office has stated publicly that proposals for the area will be considered if and only if they come with broad support from the community. As a result, AFORR, TWRA, and other agencies and organizations with an interest in maintaining the area for conservation, education, recreation, environmental research, and related uses have been approached recently with offers to negotiate a "compromise" to allow development of Solway Bend.

AFORR believes that, rather than "negotiating" separately with prospective developers, the various different agencies and organizations should gather to share information (including information about ongoing activities and proposed initiatives that would be inconsistent with residential development at Solway Bend) and discuss strategies for achieving the best possible outcomes for the area. Broad categories of potential outcomes might include (for example) (1) maintaining the entire area for conservation, research and public use or (2) allowing development on Solway Bend in exchange for permanent preservation of Freels and Gallaher Bends.

Individuals and organizations invited into participate in this meeting were selected for a variety of reasons

including management responsibilities for the Three Bend area or associated resources; expertise regarding the Three Bend area and its values and potential uses; political insights; and expertise on legal arrangements for conservation protection of land.

Ecology

The Three Bends contain a diverse mixture of field, woodland and shoreline. Wildlife ecologists say this rare mixture makes wonderful habitat for songbirds, waterfowl and upland game such as deer, turkey, and small game birds. As a result, this area has great potential for outdoor recreation activities such as hunting and birdwatching.

Since 2001 TWRA has been conducting long-term projects to make the excellent wildlife habitat on the Three Bends even better. TWRA has sprayed nonnative fescue grass on Freels and Solway Bends with herbicide, bush-hogged parts of the area and conducted prescribed burns to control undesirable vegetation and reseeded some of the land with native grasses and crops. Areas around barns, structures and roads have been cleared for safety and conservation purposes.

Current Uses

The University of Tennessee uses the area for wildlife classes and ecological research activities. UT faculty have appreciated being able to bring students to such a high-quality area located close to the UT campus. ORNL continues to conduct K-12 educational activities, including a summer camp, at the historic Freels cabin. Other public use is still limited, but the area is open for hunting during the controlled hunts on the Oak Ridge Reservation, and the Gallaher Bend Greenway is open for public walking and bicycling at all other times. Most of the dilapidated buildings were recently demolished, which should allow for increased public access. However, access control on Solway Bend helps to protect the City of Oak Ridge's water supply intake.

The University of Tennessee and ORNL have been exploring the possibility of establishing an education and research field station (a permanent facility to support biological and environmental education and research, to include laboratories, offices, and short-term living quarters) in the area. Proximity to UT is an attractive feature. Discussions have also occurred about other concepts, including locating a center for research, education, and practice in the rehabilitation of Tennessee wildlife at the Three Bend site in association with the proposed field station. A science camp, where youth from around the country could be exposed to nature study and Oak Ridge science, also is being discussed as a possible activity at the Three Bend area. A field station, wildlife center, and/or science camp could coexist with, and even support, continued wildlife management efforts.

Issues

- Local development interests have been pressing DOE, state agencies, AFORR and other conservation groups to support a proposal to convert Solway Bend into a high-priced lakefront residential subdivision, with some project revenues to be dedicated to the support of the American Museum of Science and Energy.
- While TWRA manages the Three Bends area under a 5-year agreement with DOE, there is no written commitment to longer-term preservation or a permanent conservation agreement.
- After final cleanup decisions are issued for the ORR under the Superfund law, under a legal process called natural resources damage assessment (NRDA) DOE will need to compensate natural resource trustees for the long-term loss of resources caused by the contamination that will be left in place in Oak Ridge. Compensation can be monetary or nonmonetary. DOE has already dedicated 3,000 acres to conservation in the Black Oak Ridge Conservation Area in order to compensate for its NRDA obligations under the first final cleanup agreement (for contamination of the Clinch River and Watts Bar Reservoir). Other lands that could also be dedicated to conservation or public use may have substantial future financial value to DOE, giving DOE a possible incentive to keep lands such as the Three Bend area in their current ambiguous status until cleanup decisions are finalized.
- The DOE Oak Ridge Office has stated publicly that proposals for the area will be considered if they come with broad support from the community.
- The Oak Ridge City Council has listed "Three Bends Property Disposition" as one of the priority issues on its federal agenda for 2006, with the stated objective "Avoid long-term lease and placement of parcel into permanent easement." City Council hopes to convene a stakeholders meeting "to work out suitable compromise."

List of confirmed meeting participants:

Tuesday, May 02, 2006 America Online: jobdrehab

AFORR executive board members

Dave McKinney, TWRA

Scott Davis, The Nature Conservancy

Mike Butler, Tennessee Wildlife Federation

Reggie Reeves, TDEC Natural Heritage

John Owsley, TDEC DOE Oversight

Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning (Sandra Goss and/or Jimmy Groton)

Gary Jacobs, ORNL

Pat Parr, ORNL

Wolf Naegeli, Foundation for Global Sustainability

Don Barger, National Parks and Conservation Association

Steve Alexander, US Fish & Wildlife Service

Frank Hensley, representing Tennessee Parks & Greenways Foundation