

# ADVOCATES FOR THE OAK RIDGE RESERVATION (AFORR)

Mr. Larry Kelly  
Manager, Oak Ridge Operations  
Department of Energy  
200 Administration Road  
Oak Ridge, TN 37830

December 12, 2012

Dear Mr. Kelly,

Given the recent DOE re-organization and associated changes of responsibility among DOE staff in Oak Ridge and at DOE headquarters in Washington, Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR) would like an opportunity to re-introduce ourselves to you and other DOE staff with the objective to explore means to communicate, cooperate, and interact on land-use issues. To that end, we request a meeting with you and your staff in the next few weeks.

Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation is a conservation-minded non-profit (501 c 3) member organization of local citizens actively engaging environmental aspects of Department of Energy land-use decisions. AFORR is affiliated with numerous regional and national environmental organizations, including Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning, The Nature Conservancy, Tennessee Ornithological Society, Alliance For The Cumberlands, Tennessee Parks and Greenway Foundation and the Southern Environmental Law Center.

Our primary goal is to ensure consideration of environmental impacts and long-term optimization of environmental trade-offs in DOE land use decisions. The ORR is a resource of regional, national, and international importance. Our objective is to ensure that its environmental importance is recognized and considered as decisions concerning DOE mission and economic development are formulated. AFORR has a history of working, in a positive way, with DOE on Economic Development (ED) issues, including ED-1 (Horizon Center), ED-3, and ED-6.

AFORR worked with Community Reuse Organization of East Tennessee (CROET) to preserve Area – 4 (part of Horizon Center/ED-1) and the North Boundary Trail. We facilitated the transfer of that parcel by CROET to the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency via Tennessee Parks and Greenway Foundation. AFORR was active on the Oak Ridge Land Use Planning Focus Group through 2002 which led to the DOE Land Use Technical Report dated September 2002. This was the land use plan leading to establishment of the 2,900 acre Black Oak Ridge Conservation Easement (BORCE). Other interactions have included the wood-fueled steam generation system at ORNL and the 3 Bend Area. We regularly include DOE and contractor staff as presenters at our information meetings, including a presentation by Mr. Gerald Boyd at our Annual Meeting in January 2006.

There are several topics we would like to discuss.

First, we are interested to learn what options DOE is considering in the Environmental Assessment for Proposed Changes to Parcel ED-1 Land Uses, Utility Infrastructure, and Natural Area Management Responsibility in the East Fork Natural Area at the Horizon Center, announced in DOE's *Public Involvement News*. AFORR believes there are significant opportunities for mutually beneficial outcomes in the manner in which the interface between industry and environment are managed at ED-1.

Second, several miles of roads/greenway within the BORCE (and other Greenways) have been overtopped with coarse gravel in a manner that left them undesirable for walkers and practically un-useable by bicycle riders. The agreement between the DOE and the State of Tennessee established BORCE to increase recreational opportunities to partially mitigate Watts Bar Lake degradation/losses from DOE activities. This road maintenance resulted in the opposite.

Third, there are pending plans by the Oak Ridge Industrial Development Board to construct an above-ground power line on DOE property from Blair Road to the Horizon Center along East Fork Poplar Creek Road/Greenway. We understand and support the need for additional electrical infrastructure at Horizon Center. We believe that other reasonable options exist for provision of that infrastructure. The planning documentation for this project included a Floodplain Assessment and Floodplain Statement of Findings in which the only alternatives that were considered were action as proposed or no action. There are reasonable alternatives that, if further evaluated, result in significantly reduced negative impact to the greenway, adjacent riparian & natural areas, forest canopy and wetlands. For instance, all other electrical infrastructure for the Horizon Center is installed below-ground, an installation method that would result in less impact to adjacent recreational resources. If above-ground installation is required, other less intrusive routes along Blair Road and State Route 58 are available for consideration. It is our position that relatively small cost savings associated with the proposed plan are not justified when compared with the long term aesthetic and natural impacts to adjacent recreational and environmental resources.

We look forward to the meeting with you soon as well as to your presentation to AFORR and the community on the evening of January 10. We will send you details about the time and location of the January 10 public meeting when they are finalized. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

*Virginia H. Dale*

Dr. Virginia Dale  
President AFORR  
865-405-2025  
[Vdale212@comcast.net](mailto:Vdale212@comcast.net)

CC: Michael T. Koentop