

Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation

May 4, 2006

Congressman Wamp
Washington, D.C.

Honorable Mr. Wamp:

On March 8, 2006, three members of the Board of Directors of the Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR) met with Gina Broome of your Oak Ridge office to discuss issues related to Reservation management. We appreciated the preparations she had made for the meeting and the heartfelt interest she showed in the topics discussed. You and your office have always supported meaningful discussion on items of environmental importance in the Oak Ridge area, and we hope you will engage personally in the upcoming community debates on the Reservation land use.

The main issue discussed with Gina was the concerns AFORR has over the long-term protection of the Three Bends (Solway, Freels and Gallaher) area of the Reservation. Although the previous Energy Secretary Richardson personally came to Oak Ridge in 1999 and set aside those bends for permanent environmental protection, the Department of Energy (DOE) has never followed through with making that protection actually be permanent. At present, only five year management agreements with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency have been executed, with the most recent one (January 2006-2010) just signed.

The commercial/residential development community in Oak Ridge has recently approached DOE with a desire to revisit the environmental protection designation for the Three Bends area, particularly for development of lake-front homes on Solway Bend. Obviously, this concept is of great concern to us, both from an environmental protection viewpoint, as well as a loss of critical ecosystems for environmental research. As we explained to Gina, there are several new initiatives for environmental research by Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the University of Tennessee being strongly considered for the Three Bends area, and we feel that those uses are consistent with Secretary Richardson's vision--permanent protection and public use--for this valuable resource, which should be the highest priority for its land use

We are convening a meeting on May 4 of the primary environmental groups (including the State of Tennessee) to bring these groups up to date on the status of the community discussions surrounding the Three Bends area. Once we have held that meeting, we will return to your office to brief you and your staff on the feedback from these important environmental stakeholders.

Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation

Page 2

In closing, we would like to stress the three primary issues we have associated with the Three Bends area: (1) the DOE commitment for environmental protection of the area should be honored, (2) ongoing and new environmental research initiatives should be viewed as the highest and best programmatic use for these areas, and (3) any change in the current environmental protection status of the Three Bends must be agreed to by the environmental community, with permanent protection of the area as the ultimate goal. We appreciate your consideration of our position on this important matter and look forward to continued interactions with you and your staff on this topic.

Sincerely,

Ellen Smith
Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation

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