Background on Clark Center Park (CCP)

Clark Center Park (CCP: https://aforr.info/clark-center-park/) is a 40 acre recreation area owned by the US Department of Energy (DOE) and managed by their Office of Science. DOE is interested in donating CCP with the restriction that it be used for public recreation. The Park has picnic tables, a boat launch, handicapped fishing access, bathrooms, and a swimming area and is the gateway to the Gallaher Bend Greenway (which is not part of the park). The Park offers opportunities for birding, boating, biking, fishing, hiking, paddling, picnicking, star gazing, swimming, and wildlife viewing. The Park adjoins Pellissippi Blueway on Melton Hill Lake and is a key access point for that State-recognized blueway.



Clark Center Park is a hidden gem. One recent example of its value was a youth fishing tournament held there in February for the group Beast of the East, which is part of the Tennessee Bass Federation (TBF). More than 100 people came from middle and east Tennessee and launched 33 boats on Melton Hill Lake in pursuit of elusive bass. To his delight, a 14-year-old from Overton County caught a 50 pounder. The group enjoyed their visit so much that they voted to return for a tournament next year.

Striped bass at Melton Hill Lake



In the spring of 2026, TN Lt Gov McNally and Rep Scarbrough filed amendments to the budget legislation for appropriation of CCP to become a state park and set aside $10M. That amendment has been approved[1].

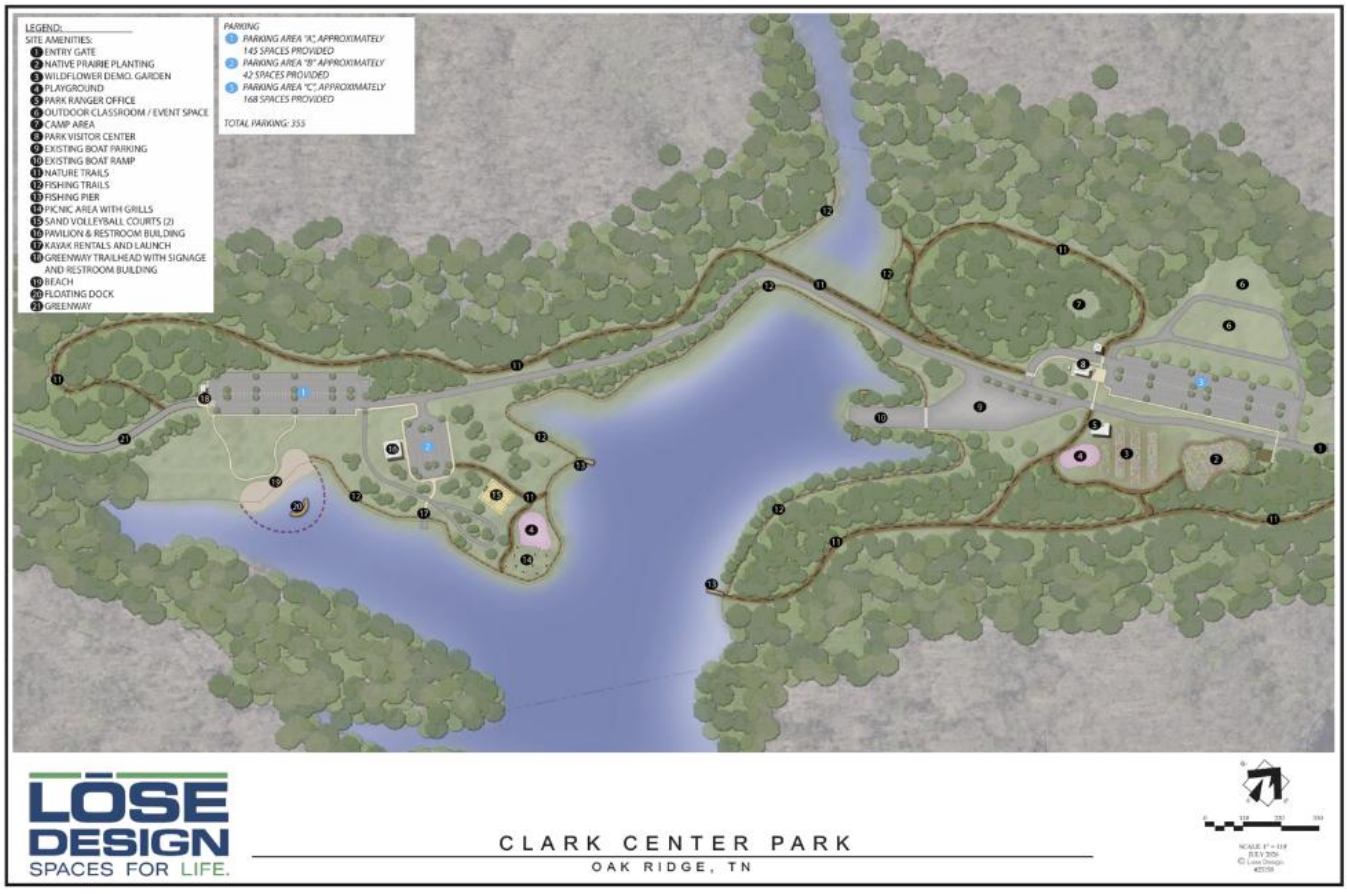
[1] Amendment language approved by the Tennessee legislature and governor:
Item 46. In addition to any other funds appropriated by the provisions of this act, there is appropriated $10,000,000 (nonrecurring) to the Department of Environment and Conservation for the establishment of a new state park at the former Clark Center Park - 30 - 011112 property in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. The appropriation in this item is subject to the Clark Center Park property being transferred to the State of Tennessee from the U.S. Department of Energy and a local match of $6,250,000 being provided by Anderson County prior to June 30, 2031. The Commissioner of Environment and Conservation shall report in writing to the Commissioner of Finance and Administration when such property is transferred and when the matching funds are raised, with a copy provided to the Chairs of the Finance, Ways and Means Committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Any unexpended funds shall not revert to the general fund and must be carried forward in a reserve to be expended for purposes of this item; provided, that if the transfer and local match is not established prior to June 30, 2031, then such funds shall revert to the general fund on June 30, 2031.

However, establishment of the new state park requires two steps that must be competed on or before June 30, 2031:

(1) $6.25 M must be raised by Anderson County
(2) the land must be transferred to the state.

In the spring of 2026, Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR) engaged with the East Tennessee Community Design Center to craft a conceptual design for the future of the Park. Lose Design - Spaces For Life developed the draft conceptual design below that provides ideas about ways to improve the Park and decrease operating funds. This concept is based on ideas discussed during a charette attended by representatives from

- Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA)
- City of Oak Ridge Recreation Department
- Greenways Oak Ridge
- National Park Service
- Oak Ridge National Laboratory Communications and Community Engagement Directorate
- Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR)
- Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning (TCWP)



The **Clark Center Conservation Cèilidh** occurred on October 24 at Clark Center Park. This public event provided an opportunity to comment on the conceptual design and ideas for Clark Center Park becoming a state park. We appreciate the supportive comments made by Lt. Governor Randy McNally at the event. Also, we thank River Run Outfitters for offering free use of their kayaks on the Pellissippi Blueway, which runs along Melton Hill Lake. Both kids and adults enjoyed the activities offered by GREBE (Graduate Students in Ecology, Behavior, and Evolution) from the University of Tennessee.

Lt. Gov Randy McNally answering questions



All are welcome to click on this QR code to access the survey about the concept of Clark Center Park becoming a Tennessee state park.