

ADVOCATES FOR THE OAK RIDGE RESERVATION

136 West Revere Circle, Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37830

www.discoveret.org/aforr/

June 20, 2006

Mayor David Bradshaw
City of Oak Ridge
P. O. Box 1
Oak Ridge, TN 37831

Dear Mayor Bradshaw:

As you are doubtless already aware, on May 4, 2006, Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR) convened a meeting of representatives of major regional conservation groups and government agencies to discuss the future of the Three Bend Scenic and Wildlife Conservation Area on the ORR. A particular focus of discussion was how to respond to recent informal requests regarding proposals for residential development on the Solway Bend portion of the Three Bend area.

AFORR members found the meeting to be a productive exchange of information and ideas. During the discussions, participants highlighted a diverse range of valuable attributes of the Three Bend Area and the surrounding Reservation, including:

- Environmental sciences research based on the unique, protected environment provided by the ORR results in about \$15 million annually in research funding for Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), with additional funds also brought into The University of Tennessee (UT) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Atmospheric Turbulence and Diffusion Division.
- ORNL looks forward to substantial growth in ORR-based research. No site on the ORR is as suitable as Solway Bend for some large-scale environmental research and education initiatives currently under development by UT and ORNL.
- The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation has identified the entire Three Bend area as one of the important Landscape Areas on the ORR that deserve to become State Natural Areas, and The Nature Conservancy also has recognized the biodiversity and unique habitats there as important areas for protection.
- The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency and Tennessee hunters value the ORR as a hunting resource of exceptional value within East Tennessee.
- The value of the Three Bends in its present, protected, state will only increase over the long-term, as similar resources across the State and Nation are lost to development pressures.

Meeting participants affirmed the importance of (1) maintaining the Three Bend area (including Solway Bend) as public land and (2) conducting and making use of comprehensive planning for the ORR, considering all of the regional, national, and global values the area supports. It is fitting that the land continues to be public, considering its history of having been taken by the government as a national resource. Regarding Solway Bend, AFORR and the other meeting participants concluded that residential development would be incompatible with the highly valued uses and potential uses of this resource.

AFORR and other meeting participants continue to support multiple uses of these valuable lands primarily for conservation, environmental research, education and public recreation. Meeting participants stressed the need to enhance this area's values through proactive management. At the same time, AFORR recognizes that the Oak Ridge community is at a cross-roads in terms of tourism, commercial and housing development needs and that it is vitally important to have a strong, vibrant community adjacent to the ORR

to support and benefit from its resources. Hence, we want to express our willingness to work with the community to enhance the viability and health of the area in any responsible way.

AFORR will continue its efforts to recognize and promote the best use of the ORR as a public resource. We intend to work across the community to advocate for the unique values of the natural resources on the ORR. We are proceeding to further define the values and best management for the Three Bend area and to communicate the value of this area and potential for increased public access in the community. We look forward to continued dialogue with the City of Oak Ridge and welcome the opportunity for meaningful discussions on the future of this valuable resource.

Sincerely,

/signed/

Ellen Smith
Vice President

cc: Jim O'Connor, City Manager