

# ORR COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN FOCUS GROUP MEETING NOTES

**December 14, 2001**

A working meeting of the Focus Group was held at the Oak Ridge Central Services Complex on Woodbury Lane at 10:00 am until 3:00 December 14, 2001.

## **Attendees**

The following members of the Focus Group were in attendance: Steve Alexander, Paul Boyer, Ray Evans, Parker Hardy, Dev Joslin, Lorene Sigal, David Mosby, Scott Davis, Ralph Lillard, Marty Marina, Dave McKinney, Bill Pardue, Lloyd Stokes, Joe Valentino, Marshall Whisnant, Beth Phillips (Tony Grande alternate), Lawrence Young, and Eric Rauch (replaced Steve Griffith). Pete Craven was unable to attend.

Members of the Facilitation Team in attendance were Leah Dever, Barry Lawson, Pat Parr, Marianne Heiskell, Wayne Tolbert and Mike Deacon. Approximately 11 to 12 members of the public attended all or part of the meeting.

## **Old Action Items**

- Focus Group members please inform Facilitation Team if you want a copy of any of the TVA EAsCno requests at this time.
- Focus Group provide to Facilitation Team hard copy or means of accessing important information known to and/or used by the Focus Group to illustrate key points.
- Address Focus Group meetings for 2002 - Barry Lawson solicited written input and a 2002 meeting schedule was developed.

## **New Action Items**

- Facilitation Team address ways of getting more input from Focus Group on analysis approach.

## **Welcome/Introductions**

Eric Rauch (TVA) who has replaced Steve Griffith on the Focus Group was introduced. The proposed meeting agenda was briefly discussed, agreed upon, and followed.

## **Notes from Previous Meeting**

The meeting notes from the November 9 Focus Group meeting were briefly discussed. The notes had been transmitted to the Focus Group members prior to December 14. Additional copies were provided as needed to both the Focus Group and members of the public who wanted a copy.

## **Announcements**

Pat Parr discussed information Marianne Heiskell and she obtained from meetings with various DOE Programs at ORO. She discussed some changes to the Apink area@ on the initial map and provided an updated version showing the changes.

Wayne Tolbert discussed the December 12 Open House, specifically reporting on the 10 written comments received to date.

Mike Deacon discussed the EA for the proposed DOE conveyance of the AMSE, Parcel G, and Parcel 279.01 to the City of Oak Ridge.

### **Presentations/Discussion of Main Topics**

Marty Marina coordinated presentations designed to illustrate some key environmental values and concepts. The presentations were intended to conform to the request made by the entire Focus Group that economic and environmental values be explained.

#### Steve Alexander

Steve Alexander, a Focus Group member and representative of the USFWS from the Cookeville office, presented a regional overview of the general status and threats to various ecosystems in the southeastern United States. He showed some aerial photos of the ORR and surrounding area emphasizing the differences in vegetative cover on and off the ORR. He pointed out that 11% of southern lands are in government ownership. He discussed the threats posed to forest species from chips mills, replacement of hardwood and mixed hardwood forests with pine monocultures (which are more susceptible to diseases and insect outbreaks). He discussed the southern pine beetle problem. He recommended more recent aerial photography be obtained if possible. He was especially concerned with habitat fragmentation and the ability of certain species to prosper or even survive as large tracts of habitat are broken into smaller and smaller pieces. He pointed out that the former Boeing property contains a cedar barrens community. There was a comment about several thousand (26,000 acres of the ORR) that had already been transferred from DOE ownership. Ray Evans pointed out that since 1959 the acreages transferred from DOE were very small. Steve indicated that the ORR contained the largest contiguous block of Ridge and Valley Province land in the southeastern United States.

#### Scott Davis

Scott Davis, also Focus Group member and representative of the Nature Conservancy indicated that the state of Tennessee has the richest (highest biodiversity) of any inland state in the nation. He stated that this makes the state a very special place and the ORR, being a very rich/biodiverse area of the state, likewise makes it a very special place. He mentioned that the ORR contained 10 aquatic and 8 terrestrial animal species, 4 plants, and cedar barrens of special importance.

Scott also discussed the status of neotropical birds (songbirds), noting that most species are in decline and some 60% of the breeding bird species in North America are migratory. Many of these species require interior forest habitat. Breeding bird decline by state shows that Tennessee and Missouri are highest (at 21-26%).

#### David Buehler

David Buehler is a professor in the UT School of Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries. He is a noted ornithologist. He spoke on his and other avian research and in particular the importance of ORR as an area of high avian diversity. He noted that the ORR has a great deal of professional expertise and interest and that the ORR has large blocks of differing upland communities. He noted that major threats to many species are habitat fragmentation and contamination.

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Dr. Buehler presented a habitat model addressing the adverse effects of Aedge@ for interior bird species. He noted that for wooded habitat patches, a 200-meter area from the woods edge back into the woods is a Asink@ in which interior forest bird species are effectively excluded due to increased predation and nest parasitism.

He noted that the ORR is used as an outdoor classroom (Freels Bend has 75 species of birds his students identified in a 2-hour walkover). Thus the ORR is very valuable research and teaching resource.

In response to a question about what could be developed without harm, he noted that any development in large forested tracts (such as the SNS near ORNL) permanently removes habitat of interior forest species. Areas that are already developed or cut up by roads, right-of-ways, etc. into small pieces would not have the same impact as developing large forested tracts.

He also indicated that the ORR was a big component of the Valley and Ridge Province (as compared to the Smoky Mountains and Cumberland Plateau, which are different habitats).

### Dev Joslin

Dev Joslin, a Focus Group member, spoke about the importance of birds and bird watching. He stated that there are over 70 million bird watchers in the United States (1 in 3 adults). Over 100,000 AWatchable Wildlife@ license plates are sold in Tennessee yearly resulting in \$2M in revenue to TWRA.

Dev spoke about the Partners in Flight Program, its membership and duties. He noted from data collected by this organization that 29 bird species have experienced a 30% decline over the past 30 years; the ORR has 28 of the 29 species and about half of these are common on the ORR. He spoke about bird surveys done on the ORR, how they were conducted, some of the routes used for surveying and some results along some of the routes.

### Jim Evans

Jim Evans of TWRA discussed hunting on the ORR. The first known deer/vehicle collision occurred on the ORR in October 1969 and was an unusual event. Now deer/vehicle collisions are very common but are less than the peak (273) in 1985. He noted that the ORR public hunts are very popular with between 5,000 and 7,000 hunt days/year and 300 to 400 deer killed per year.

Also wild turkeys were introduced in 1986 and the ORR is now a source of turkeys for several sites in east Tennessee. He noted the importance of bird walks at Freels Bend, the potential for small game hunting and waterfowl hunting, and the use of relatively undisturbed/undeveloped coves near Freels Bend as a use area by boaters.

### David McKinney

David McKinney, a Focus Group member and also an employee of TWRA, discussed the economic importance of hunting and fishing in Tennessee (\$1.1 billion in direct expenditures with a 1.6 economic multiplier for indirect expenditures). He noted that the state was losing 100,000 acres of farmland/forest per year; thus, the value of undeveloped public land is increasing.

Geoff Call

Geoff Call from Arnold Engineering Development Center discussed an ecosystem management approach implemented by the Air Force at AEDC. The AEDC has about 39,000 acres with about 6,000 leased to the Tennessee Army National Guard for training purposes. He noted the three-fold emphasis of the ecosystem management approach includes protection, restoration, and forest production. He indicated that the approach is goal driven, operates at multiple spatial and temporal scales, recognizes human communities, and encourages political partnerships. He discussed the core team and its functions. There was a question from a member of the public about sustainability plans and whether Tennessee had them.

Steve Jenkins

Steve Jenkins presented information about economic needs/values not fully explained last month. He discussed the City of Oak Ridge economic conditions. He cited several problems the city faces, including a high property tax, a declining DOE employment (down from 23,000 in 1990 to 12,000 in 2001 with projections of a 9,000 person work force by 2004). Sales tax trends are down and housing starts are flat.

He cited an absolute decline in DOE payments to the city and noted that the lease arrangement on Horizon Center property is a problem (negates collection of city property taxes). He also stated that while Rarity Ridge (former Boeing property) is a major development, it would take several years to accomplish.

He noted that jobs and public relations were the two largest problems. Specifically, he noted that 80% of the people who work in Oak Ridge don't live here. In response to a question about other land (outside the ORR) available for expansion he stated the opportunities were very limited. He also pointed out that the Oak Ridge housing stock has some 6000 homes that are over 50 years old. He acknowledged that the health industry generated revenue for the city.

**Future Planning Activities**

The Focus Group meeting dates were identified based on written input provided to the Facilitation team. They are:

- January 11, 2002
- February 6, 2002
- March 15, 2002
- April 9, 2002 (tentative)
- May 3, 2002
- June 14, 2002

**Technical Analysis Update**

Wayne Tolbert of SAIC discussed an analytical approach in which a full development and a full conservation scenario would be examined. Initial results will be made available to the Focus Group, with the hope/expectation that the Focus Group would generate additional scenarios as well as provide feedback on the two scenarios so they can be refined. Thus, scenario development and analysis will be iterative. A Focus Group member wanted to be sure that the values of the Focus Group were addressed. The Facilitation Team will attempt to find ways to gather additional input.

### **Comments from the Public**

Near the end of the meeting, Bob Peele observed that development is restricted by land availability. Oak Ridge has some history of development and we should use these data to help predict the future. A Focus Group member, following this logic, suggested that the EAs completed for DOE ORR land transfers in the past could be used as guides - each EA made a projection of job creation and we now have actual experience to compare these projections against. Another member of the public mentioned the Center for Wetland Protection and its websites (<http://www.cwp.org> and <http://www.stormwatercenter.net>) She also mentioned other resources such as Mary Bragan at EPA Region 4 for regional landscape planning and the Wilderness Society book, *Mountain Treasures at Risk*.

### **Future Meetings**

- Next Focus Group Meeting - January 11, 2002
- Public meeting - January 30, 2002