



Advocate

A publication of the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board - an independent, nonpartisan, volunteer citizens panel dedicated to providing advice and recommendations to the U.S. Department of Energy Environmental Management Program.

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June 2002

DOE, EPA and State of Tennessee Agree to Accelerated Cleanup of Oak Ridge Reservation

Oak Ridge to Receive Additional \$105 Million in FY 2003 EM Program Budget

Following a series of meetings between the Department of Energy (DOE), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and state of Tennessee officials, Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham announced on May 15 that a Letter of Intent has been signed to accelerate cleanup at the Oak Ridge Reservation. Under the plan, the three parties will work to complete cleanup operations at the reservation by 2016, with high-risk cleanup completed by 2008. DOE is setting aside an additional \$105 million for Oak Ridge under the Cleanup Reform Account.

In a prepared news release, Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham said, "This pact provides the framework necessary to accelerate cleanup, and it is a major step to effectively reduce health risks and expedite the environmental cleanup of the Oak Ridge nuclear sites. The Oak Ridge pact is a framework for all Department sites to follow in moving toward an accelerated cleanup plan because it provides the necessary level of detail and criteria to reach a commitment to faster, safer cleanup."

This is the second agreement reached under DOE's new EM Accelerated Cleanup Pro-

gram, whose goal is to streamline operations by working with states and environmental regulators to expedite reduction of the greatest health and environmental risks at the country's Cold War nuclear weapons production facilities.

The first agreement was reached at the

DOE Hanford site, located in the state of Washington. Under that site's plan, work will be completed 35 to 45 years sooner than the current estimated completion date of 2070. Funding at Hanford during FY 2003 will increase by \$433 million. That amount is more than four times what Oak Ridge received, but Hanford's budget is proportionately larger to begin with. The site's total FY 2003 budget is more than \$2 billion.

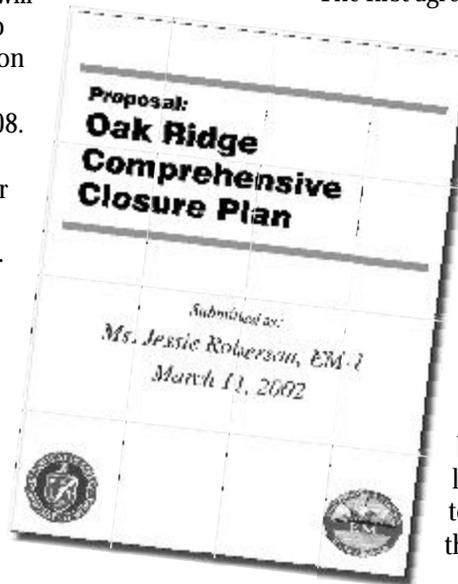
Accelerated cleanup agreements

have also been reached just recently at DOE's sites in Idaho (\$110 million), New Mexico (\$76 million) and Nevada (\$33 million).

A Brief History of the Proposal

To the casual observer, this shift in the way DOE funds environmental cleanup activities would appear to have dropped out of thin air, and in some respects it has. DOE-Oak Ridge

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delivered its accelerated cleanup proposal (the *Oak Ridge Comprehensive Closure Plan*) to DOE Headquarters on March 11, just five weeks after the department released its *Review of the Environmental Management Program*, which launched the accelerated cleanup concept.

In reality, work on changing the way the EM Program does business at its sites around the nation has been on the drawing board since the Bush administration took office. Routine cost overruns and schedule delays in environmental cleanup prompted Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham to order the review of the EM Program and are driving the change.

As incentive for sites to accelerate cleanup work, the department proposed asking Congress for up to \$1.1 billion to fund the Accelerated Cleanup Reform Account. It's from this account that Oak Ridge, Hanford and other DOE sites are hoping to add to their sites' base budgets. The fly in the ointment is that Congress has yet to approve the funds. Even U.S. Rep. Zach Wamp, who is a member of the House Appropriations Committee's Energy and Water Subcommittee, has conceded that pushing the proposed funding will be challenging.

If the money is approved, the benefits could be substantial. By spending more on cleanup now, the nation could save billions in the long run by completing

projects sooner. Storage, security and maintenance costs will be reduced, and threats to the environment and human health will be addressed more quickly.

The *Oak Ridge Comprehensive Closure Plan* is available to the public at the DOE Public Reading Room, 230 Warehouse Road (865-241-4780). It will also be

transferring some waste management responsibilities to Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) and the Y-12 National Security Complex, so the actual cost savings to taxpayers is \$1.3 billion. The breakdown of the \$2.2 billion is as follows:

- \$870 million—East Tennessee Technology Park (ETTP) closure
 - \$85 million—Melton Valley closure
 - \$600 million—transition of Waste Operations facilities
- \$300 million—transition of newly-generated waste scope
- \$350 million—acceleration of balance of reservation cleanup

To really understand the extraordinary improvements in the life cycle cost and schedule for completing the Oak Ridge EM mission, it's worth comparing the Comprehensive Closure Plan with previous cleanup plans. In 1995 DOE produced the Baseline Environmental Management Report, which determined that it would take until the year 2070 at a cost of almost \$38 billion to complete the Oak Ridge EM Program.

In 1999, with Bechtel Jacobs on board as prime EM Program contractor, a life cycle baseline was established that accelerated completion to 2015 and reduced the life cycle cost to \$5.2 billion. By 2002, however, significant work had been added to the EM Program, and out-year budgets had been reduced, such that the endpoint looked more like 2022 at a cost of \$6.2 billion.

The ETTP Closure Proposal

- Demolish facilities to reduce risks and closure costs by \$870 million
- Accelerate closure of the site by 8 years
- Complete remedial actions to ensure protection of workers, the public, and the environment
- Dispose of legacy waste, and remove depleted uranium hexafluoride cylinders
- Focus reindustrialization in a comprehensive plan

Accelerating closure of the 5000-acre ETTP site means completion of all building demolition, removal of all depleted uranium hexafluoride cylinders, completion of soil remediation and completion of a Comprehensive Risk Assessment proving that the final end state is protective of human health and the environment. It further means that no DOE presence exists onsite; DOE has no further cleanup work, and the site has transferred to long-term stewardship.

Deteriorating 50-year-old gaseous diffusion buildings and support structures represent the main threat at ETTP. Unstable structures increase the risk of uncontrolled releases of uranium and other contaminants to Poplar Creek, which feeds into the Clinch River. The hazards posed to decontamination workers grows every day with advancing building deterioration. Coupled with this risk is the high cost of maintaining utilities, security, surveillance inspections and other infrastructure support for which DOE pays millions

available at the new DOE Information Center, 475 Oak Ridge Turnpike, when the facility opens on June 24. The plan and other materials are also available on the internet at <http://www.bechteljacobs.com/doeclean/>.

Big Savings for Oak Ridge Cleanup

According to Gerald Boyd, DOE's Oak Ridge EM Manager, the acceleration of work documented in the *Oak Ridge Comprehensive Closure Plan* will save the EM Program \$2.2 billion. Part of the savings are achieved simply by

With the Comprehensive Closure Plan, the highest risk work is complete by 2008, with all other cleanup complete by 2016, and the life cycle cost is reduced to just under \$4 billion.

While details of the plan are sketchy at this time, the focus is clearly on accelerated closure of ETTP and the Melton Valley burial grounds and on disposition of legacy low-level waste. Lower-risk projects will be pushed out to beyond 2008. General initiatives for accelerating cleanup and reducing risks under the plan include the following:

- Complete decontamination and decommissioning at ETTP
- Complete the activities in the Melton Valley Interim Record of Decision

The Melton Valley Closure Proposal

- Reduce offsite migration of contamination by at least 90%
- Accelerate closure by 9 years
- Reduce closure costs by \$85 million
- Efficiently satisfy regulatory and environmental obligations

The Melton Valley burial grounds at ORNL contain areas with high inventories of radioactive wastes. Approximately 140 acres of unlined waste units (burial grounds, seepage pits, trenches, deep-injected waste grout, etc.) have received over 2 million curies of radioactive waste. Melton Valley contributes 90% of the strontium and 64% of the tritium discharged from DOE property into the Clinch River—a drinking water source and prime recreational area. Interim actions to date have managed this risk, but residential risk levels are currently exceeded immediately downstream of the laboratory.

- Remove spent nuclear fuel from ORNL
- Develop integrated planning and funding requests
- Meet agreements under the Oak Ridge Federal Facility Agreement
- Continue bioremediation of the Y-12 East End Volatile Organic Compound Plume

Regulators and the Community Offer Tentative Support

Regulatory agencies and some public groups have given provisional support to the accelerated cleanup process. The Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board has endorsed the plan (see Recent Recommendations and Comments on page 5), although many board members are unhappy with the lack of meaningful public involvement allowed in preparation of the proposal. In response to these concerns, Gerald Boyd offered at the May 8 Site Specific Advisory Board meeting to develop a public involvement/communications plan for accelerated cleanup activities.

John Owsley, Director of the TDEC DOE Oversight Division, has said publicly that the State of Tennessee has committed to the accelerated cleanup process. He notes, however, that Appendix E of the *Federal Facility Agreement for the Oak Ridge Reservation* is in formal dispute because DOE has missed cleanup milestones. The Comprehensive Closure Plan proposal negotiations will likely accomplish the resolution of this dispute, but if it doesn't, the regulators will pursue dispute resolution.

The Next Steps

With the ink dry on the Letter of Intent, the next step is to write an actual agreement between DOE, EPA and the state, which DOE has committed to developing by mid-June.

Waste Management

- Disposition of legacy waste will be accomplished by 2004, with savings of \$110 million
- EM will transition responsibility for newly generated waste back to Y-12 and ORNL by 2004, with savings of \$150 million
- EM will transition financial responsibility for its facilities at Y-12 and ORNL to the National Nuclear Security Administration and the Office of Science, respectively, by 2004, with savings of \$290 million

Disposing of legacy waste (low-level radioactive waste in storage from Cold War activities) is critical to ETTP closure. Over 20,000 cubic meters of legacy wastes are stored at ETTP, and over 90% of these wastes are stored in outside areas that require extensive (and expensive) surveillance and maintenance to prevent or mitigate deterioration of storage containers.

Under this agreement, DOE will develop a set of specific goals for physical progress. A performance agreement will also be formulated to deal with milestones and other issues. Closure plan activities are expected to begin by October 1, 2002.

More Information Now on the Web

As this newsletter went to press, a performance management plan for implementing the accelerated closures was released to the public for review. This document and a schedule of public involvement activities related to accelerated closure are now available on the internet at www.bechteljacobs.com/doeclean/.

DOE Signals Intent to Keep TSCAI Open Beyond 2003

The February 2002 issue of the *Advocate* reported that DOE was reconsidering its plan to close the Toxic Substances Control Act Incinerator (TSCAI) at the end of September 2003. Now Jessie Hill Roberson, Assistant Secretary of Energy for Environmental Management, has announced that “I am willing to consider supporting operation of TSCAI beyond the currently planned closure date.”

The announcement came in correspondence to the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board (ORSSAB), dated April 8, which was sent in response to a letter the board sent Roberson in January. The ORSSAB letter had asked DOE to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the full life cycle costs and impacts of all alternatives for DOE complex waste currently baselined for incineration.

Roberson’s response, which may be seen in its entirety on the ORSSAB web site (<http://www.oakridge.doe.gov/em/ssab/recommendations/FY2002/responses/5.PDF>), says that the main reason to keep TSCAI open is the lack of commercial-sector alternatives.

“The Environmental Management Program has been looking toward the

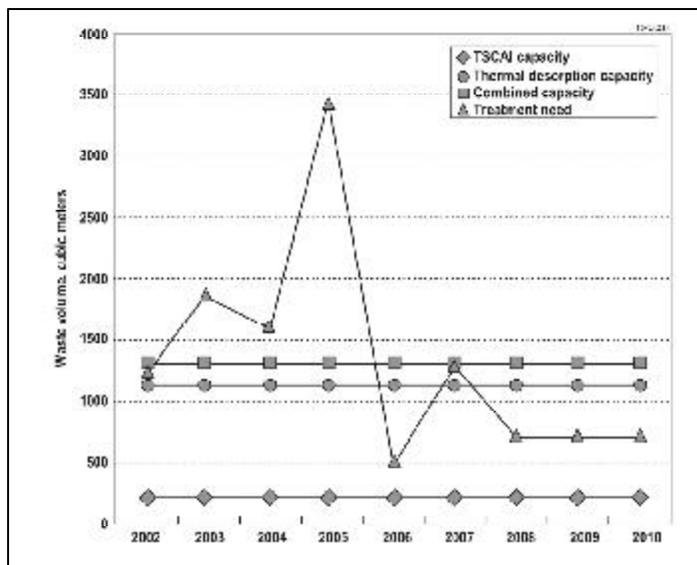
commercial sector to provide a treatment capability to replace the TSCAI,” Roberson writes. “Commercial alternatives have not materialized as anticipated, and so we are presently willing to consider operation of the TSCAI beyond 2003. In the future, should such options present themselves, the cost of operating the TSCAI will be compared to the cost for treatment at an alternative facility.”

Adding fuel to the fire to keep TSCAI open is an anticipated upturn in demand for thermal treatment of DOE wastes. Roberson included a graphic in her response that shows a dramatic rise in treatment need, beginning next year. She states, “As illustrated in Figure 1, the demand far exceeds the currently available treatment capacity. Consequently, any improvement that could be made to the operational capability of the TSCAI

would be beneficial.”

Improving TSCAI capacity is difficult, however. While the incinerator can physically handle much more waste than it now burns, its permits do not allow it to do so. And raising the limits is not something local DOE representatives say they’re ready to try soon.

According to local DOE sources, the figure shows clearly that it’s illogical to close down available treatment capacity when demand is spiking. So at least for now, DOE seems intent on keeping TSCAI open while at the same time searching for additional treatment options for burnable wastes.



DOE, Tennessee and EPA Sign Two Records of Decision

In May, DOE, the State of Tennessee and EPA signed two documents that will prove crucial to cleanup of the DOE’s Oak Ridge Reservation.

The documents are the *Record of Decision for Interim Actions in Bethel Valley* (DOE/OR/01-1862&D4) and the *Record of Decision for Phase I Interim Source Control Actions in the Upper East Fork Poplar Creek Characterization Area* (DOE/OR/01-1951&D3).

The Bethel Valley document spells out DOE’s plans to address inactive units, accessible sources of contamination and contaminated media, to the extent practicable. The scope of work includes buildings designated for decontamination and decommissioning, buried waste, underground liquid low-level waste tanks, accessible contaminated soils, sediments, surface water and some groundwater and unused groundwater monitoring wells.

The Upper East Fork Poplar Creek document spells out the remediation of mercury-contaminated sediment in storm sewers, point groundwater discharges and mercury-contaminated sediments in the Upper East Fork Poplar Creek and in Lake Reality.

Both Records of Decision are intended to meet interim goals and to make substantial progress toward attainment of long-term water quality goals.

Recent Recommendations and Comments

Endorsement of the *Oak Ridge Comprehensive Closure Plan*

In March 2002, DOE-Oak Ridge submitted its Top-to-Bottom Review Comprehensive Closure Plan Proposal to DOE-Headquarters. In May, ORSSAB submitted two recommendations to DOE concerning the proposal. The first was a general endorsement of the plan, and the second was directed specifically at the low-level waste (LLW) aspects. Following is the text of the recommendations.

General Recommendations:

On May 8, 2002, the members of ORSSAB voted to endorse the accelerated cleanup initiatives presented by the DOE-Oak Ridge Environmental Management Program in the Comprehensive Closure Plan.

Given the unconventional protocols that DOE-Headquarters established in the Top-to-Bottom Review for accelerated cleanup and the relatively short time frame given DOE-Oak Ridge to prepare the proposal, we find the document to represent a creditable effort. The proposal effectively utilizes the criteria of risk and/or mortgage reduction to greatly accelerate several key projects at the Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR). Although many details of the initiatives remain to be developed, we expect that DOE-Headquarters will provide the additional money needed to fund these fast-tracked projects as part of the ORR Comprehensive Closure Plan.

Legacy LLW:

At currently proposed funding levels, completion of legacy LLW disposition will not be accomplished until FY 2011. Under the Comprehensive Closure Plan, disposition would be complete by the end of FY 2004 at a total cost savings of \$34 million. These savings would result from efficiencies achieved by disposing of approximately 60% of legacy LLW in the

Environmental Management Waste Management Facility (EMWMF) and through greatly reduced storage costs resulting from accelerated disposition. The remaining 40% of legacy LLW stored on the ORR will be sent to a permitted/licensed offsite disposal location.

One difficulty with the plan is that the waste must receive legal reclassification so that it meets the definition of "CERCLA-generated waste," which according to the EMWMF Record of Decision, is the only waste type that may be accepted at the facility. According to DOE, the agency has developed a legal opinion that supports disposition of some legacy LLW under CERCLA criteria due to an "imminent threat of release of the material into the environment." EPA and the State of Tennessee have tentatively accepted this argument. The legacy LLW identified in this opinion is only that material stored outside buildings prior to September 30, 2000. These wastes include dry active waste, scrap metal, debris, soils, residues and some classified material.

In addition to the projected cost savings of \$34 million, accelerating disposition of legacy LLW by 7 years will reduce the transportation risk that would have been associated with

shipping 60% of the waste to the Nevada Test Site (an estimated 2.6 million truck miles), and it will reduce the risk associated with outdoor storage of the material. And while 60% of legacy LLW will be interred in EMWMF, only 1% of the estimated curies contained in the legacy material will be disposed there; the more heavily radioactive LLW will be shipped offsite. The legacy wastes would amount to less than 2% of the total volume expected at EMWMF over the life cycle baseline, and disposition of the legacy material at EMWMF would amount to a small addition to the overall curie loading at EMWMF.

ORSSAB recommends that DOE pursue reclassification of outdoor-stored legacy LLW waste as "CERCLA-generated waste" for the purpose of disposing this material at EMWMF. ORSSAB supports the proposed disposition of legacy LLW as spelled out in the Comprehensive Closure Plan and with disposing outdoor-stored legacy LLW at EMWMF, assuming the material meets the waste acceptance criteria set for the facility. ORSSAB agrees with DOE that this will result in the most expeditious disposal of the material and that it will result in a considerable cost savings to the public.

Steve Kopp Receives EPA Environmental Award

On April 30, ORSSAB member Steve Kopp receive an Environmental Quality Award from EPA at a ceremony in New York City. The award, which recognizes "outstanding commitment to protecting and enhancing environmental quality in our region, was presented to acknowledge Steve's waste management work with Weskem, LLC. Way to go Steve!



High School Classes Write “Student Friendly” Documents

It’s often said that the best way to learn something is to teach it to others. That’s what two groups of area high school students have done by writing summaries of two reports on long-term stewardship at DOE’s Oak Ridge Reservation.

Students in Nita Ganguli’s advanced placement sciences classes at Oak Ridge High School recently completed a summary of *The Oak Ridge Reservation Stakeholders Report on Stewardship, Volume I*. At Roane County High School, students in Kristin Baksa’s advanced placement sciences class wrote a summary of the companion document, *The Stakeholders Report on Stewardship, Volume II*.

The original reports were written by



Oak Ridge writing team, left to right: Nita Ganguli, Jenna Carignan, Lorien Gilbert, John Trujillo, Elise Watson, Kathleen Padgett, Jasmine Kline, Rebecca Xiques. Not pictured: Jessie Foster, Bonnie McBride.

the Oak Ridge Stewardship Working Group in 1998 and 1999 to foster public understanding of the roles and responsibilities involved in maintaining an active stewardship program for the DOE Oak Ridge Reservation. The Stewardship Working Group was sponsored by the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board (ORSSAB).

ORSSAB asked the classes to write the summaries as a way of educating students about stewardship. Even though the original reports were written by citizens of the community, the documents were still above the heads of many young people. The summaries were written with student-level vocabularies in mind.

Before the students could write the summaries they needed to understand stewardship themselves. As defined in the original reports, stewardship is acceptance of the responsibility and the implementation of activities necessary to maintain long-term protection of human health and the environment from hazards posed by residual radioactive and chemically hazardous materials.

Awareness of stewardship has increased throughout the nation in recent years. As the environmental

cleanup at DOE’s facilities has progressed, it has become apparent that removal of some contaminants will be too risky or costly to undertake. Some hazardous materials will remain in place for many years, and in the case of certain long-lived radioisotopes, virtually forever. Stewardship addresses how people and the environment will be protected from these hazards, by what organizations or entities, and for how long.

Ms. Baksa said that by summarizing the document the students were forced to think about stewardship and to be aware of what’s going on in the community. “I think it created a desire in many of the students to become more involved. We had a couple of students who expressed an interest in participating on the ORSSAB Stewardship Committee next year.”

Ms. Ganguli’s class had a similar “eye-opening” experience writing their document. “Working on the summary made the subject of environmental cleanup less abstract for the students,” she remarked. “It also made them realize that it would be up to them one day to take responsibility for their community and for stewardship of the environment.” Jenna Carignan, who led the Oak Ridge team, was appointed to ORSSAB in May (see page 7).

ORSSAB has been working to increase ties with students since 1999 when the board added its first student representative. Each year since then, the board has seated one student from Oak Ridge High School and another, selected on a rotating basis, from a high school in the surrounding area.

ORSSAB will distribute the summaries to area middle schools and high schools, and they are on the web at www.oakridge.doe.gov/em/ssab or by calling (865) 241-3665.



Roane County writing team, left to right: Katie Monroe, Lloyd McDonald, Erik Seaman, Erica Stanley, James Hall, Kristin Baksa, Alan Knauth, Linda Choate, Jonathan Hagy, Ryan Burton, Chabli Balcom, Darren Langley, Brent Dooley, Ben Herwehe, Jacob Platfoot, Elijah Hixson.

ORSSAB Says Goodbye to Outgoing Members & Students...

May was the last Board meeting for Board members Steve Lewis and Corkie Staley, who had each served a 2-year term on the Board. Also leaving the roster this spring were Scott Vowell, who resigned from the Board in March, and student representatives Ryan Burton and Alix King, whose 1-year terms expired in May.

The Board thanks them all for the many long hours they put into their participation in ORSSAB activities and offers best wishes for continued success in their future endeavors.



Steve Lewis was appointed to the Board in June 2000 and served on the Environmental Restoration Committee. Steve is an environmental

compliance associate for BWXT Y-12 at Oak Ridge National Laboratory and is a trained environmental sampling technician with 12 years experience on the Oak Ridge Reservation.



Corkie Staley was appointed to the Board in June 2000. She served on the Stewardship, Executive and Board Process committees, and she also led the

Stewardship Education Task Team. Corkie is an elementary school teacher in Oak Ridge who holds an M.S. degree in curriculum and instruction. She is the current president of the Oak Ridge Education Association and is a member of the Tennessee Education Association and the National Education Association.



Scott Vowell was appointed to the Board in June 2000 and served on the Environmental Restoration Committee and the Stewardship

Education Task Team. Scott is on the Clinton City Council, and he is a qualified emergency medical and hazardous materials technician who is employed by BWXT Y-12.



Ryan Burton joined ORSSAB in May 2001 and served on the Stewardship Committee. During his tenure on the Board, Ryan was a senior at Roane

County High School, where he

maintained a 3.6 grade point average in course work that included advanced placement calculus, chemistry, and physics—subjects that figure into his plans for a career in either the medical or environmental field.



Alix King joined ORSSAB in May 2001 and served on the Stewardship Committee.

During her tenure on the Board, Alix was a senior at Oak Ridge High School, where her course work included English, world history, physics, and advanced placement statistics. She works part time for SAIC in the Environmental Project Management area and is an avid sports enthusiast.

...and Welcomes Four Fresh Recruits



Amy DeMint is a metallurgical engineer with BWXT Y-12 and has lived in Kingston for the past 18 years. She has B.S. and M.S. degrees in

metallurgical engineering and enjoys horseback riding in state parks.



Maurie Douglas is the ORSSAB student representative from Karns High School for May 2002–May 2003. Her possible career interests

include architectural or environmental engineering, music, or teaching. Maurie has trained for 10 years as a classical pianist and plays the piano for her church.



George Rimel is a steam plant operator-stationary engineer with BWXT Y-12 and a member of the Atomic Trades and Labor Council. George lives in

Campbell County and has worked at the Y-12 Plant for the past 26 years.



Jenna Carignan is the ORSSAB student representative from Oak Ridge High School for May 2002–May 2003. Jenna was involved in summarizing the

Stakeholder Stewardship Report Volume I this year at Oak Ridge High School. Upon graduation, she is interested in pursuing a major in college in environmental law.

DOE Opens Multi-Use Information Center

The supercenter concept that has worked so well for private-sector retailers like Wal-Mart is now being used by DOE to provide “one-stop shopping” for stakeholder involvement activities in Oak Ridge.

The DOE Information Center is set to debut June 24 at 475 Oak Ridge Turnpike with a repository for DOE documents available for public review, space for public meetings, and a conference room for the Site Specific Advisory Board.

Pat Halsey, the DOE Program Manager responsible for the EM Administrative Record, says, “It makes sense from a logistical standpoint because it allows us to concentrate our resources. But the real focus,” she adds, “is on serving the

stakeholders and providing them with a place where they can get information.”

The center solves a long-standing problem for DOE. Formerly,



The new DOE Information Center at 475 Oak Ridge Turnpike (241-4780) will be open 8:00 to 5:00 Monday through Friday.

stakeholders had to go to the DOE Public Reading Room for Freedom of Information Act and NEPA documents and to the Information Resource Center for information

about the DOE Environmental Management Program. Public meetings were scheduled at a variety of venues around town. With the new DOE Information Center, everything is now consolidated in one convenient location.

The center is housed in a formerly vacant, 6800-square-foot building. Members of the public will be greeted in a foyer where they can request documents or work at one of the computer workstations set up for them to access a number of DOE-related web sites. Just inside the foyer is a large meeting space, surrounded by smaller conference rooms and offices. One of the offices will be available to the Site Specific Advisory Board.

“We’re happy to have the new facility,” says advisory board Vice Chair Dave Mosby. “It will make life easier, and it’s nice to have a place to call ‘home.’”

The Advocate is a publication of the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board. To add your name to or remove it from our mailing list, to advise us of a change in address, or for additional copies of the Advocate, write us at the above address, or call the SSAB Support Office at 865-241-3665 or 1-800-382-6938.

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