



*Many Voices Working for the Community*

# Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board

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March 14, 2008

Mr. Steve McCracken  
Assistant Manager for Environmental Management  
DOE-Oak Ridge Office  
P.O. Box 2001, EM-90  
Oak Ridge, TN 37831

Dear Mr. McCracken:

## **Recommendation 165: Recommendation on Conducting Future Verifications of Cleanup**

At our March 12 meeting, the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board approved the enclosed recommendation.

The successes of independent verification of cleanup on the Oak Ridge Reservation, the David Witherspoon Site in Knoxville, and at many other sites around the country confirm our belief that substantiation of remediation efforts is a worthwhile investment in establishing and maintaining public trust in the work done by DOE Environmental Management. Our enclosed recommendation encourages DOE to employ independent verification regularly.

Thank you for considering our recommendation, and we look forward to receiving your written response by June 12, 2008.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lance J. Mezga".

Lance J. Mezga, Chair

Enclosure

cc/enc:

Dave Adler, DOE-ORO  
Mike Farmer, Roane County Mayor  
Doug Frost, DOE-HQ  
Pat Halsey, DOE-ORO  
Connie Jones, EPA Region 4

Rex Lynch, Anderson County Mayor  
James O'Connor, Oak Ridge City Manager  
Melissa Nielson, DOE-HQ  
John Owsley, TDEC



## **Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board Recommendation 165: Recommendation on Conducting Future Verifications of Cleanup**

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### **Background**

For 40 years from 1945 to 1985, the gaseous diffusion plant at Oak Ridge, Tenn., commonly known as K-25, enriched uranium for use in atomic weapons and nuclear power plants. After plant operations were shut down, the Department of Energy (DOE) began a major clean up effort to rid the site of hazardous waste and contamination as a result of four decades of work at the site. Remediation of the site includes demolition of many buildings as well as the decontamination and decommissioning (D&D) of others.

The long-term goal for the site, now known as East Tennessee Technology Park (ETTP) or the Heritage Center, is to redevelop it as a private industrial park. Uncontaminated facilities and buildings that have undergone D&D are offered to the Community Reuse Organization of East Tennessee (CROET). CROET, in turn, leases these properties to private industry. Buildings that are unused or not transferred to CROET are being demolished.

The success of the reindustrialization of ETTP hinges on the attractiveness of the site to private enterprise. Whether the site is suitable for development will be determined on a variety of factors, not the least of which is worker safety. Site workers and the companies that employ them must be certain that the area is a safe environment in which to work and that there is no danger to workers through residual contamination or other exposures to hazardous wastes.

### **Discussion**

Recognizing the need to reassure prospective businesses and industries of the safety of a remediated site, the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board (ORSSAB) in March 2006 issued a recommendation to DOE asking that it engage the services of an independent contractor to conduct a survey of remediation work done at the site verifying that cleanup standards had been met by the primary remediation contractor Bechtel Jacobs, Co.

The goals of independent verification (IV) include:

- independent evaluation of final site conditions and validation of the cleanup contractor's final status survey procedures, results, and documentation
- increased probability of complete remediation and documentation.

Benefits of IV:

- it directly supports DOE's strategic objective to build public trust and confidence in DOE's management of nuclear work force health issues and environmental cleanup activities. IV greatly enhances public credibility since it's an unbiased look at the D&D process
- it provides consistency among the multitude of decommissioning projects that may be taking place at a site, and
- it helps ensure that D&D plans and reports are technically sound.

In its recommendation ORSSAB noted that IV on the Oak Ridge Reservation was not without precedent. IV was employed to validate cleanup of East Fork Poplar Creek in the early 1990s and the so-called Three

Building D&D Project (Buildings K-31 and K-33) at ETTP in 2005, as well as current offsite verification at the David Witherspoon site in Knoxville, Tenn.

DOE agreed with ORSSAB that IV was valuable to the reindustrialization efforts at ETTP, and it contracted the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education in 2006 to conduct IV at ETTP.

As a result of the successes of previous and current IV efforts, not only at ETTP, the David Witherspoon Site, and East Fork Poplar Creek, but also at other cleanup sites around the country, ORSSAB sees merit in making IV a regular part of the remediation efforts for work that remains to be done on the Oak Ridge Reservation.

**Recommendation**

The ORSSAB commends DOE on its policy of obtaining independent verification of DOE Environmental Management-related activities. Such actions greatly increase the public's trust that DOE is living up to its promise to clean up the environment and make it safe for future generations. We ask that DOE continue to seek additional opportunities to implement independent verification of its clean-up activities.