



*Many Voices Working for the Community*

# Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board

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May 18, 2026

Erik Olds  
Manager for Environmental Management  
DOE-Oak Ridge Office  
P.O. Box 4067, EM 90  
Oak Ridge, TN 37831

Dear Mr. Olds:

**Recommendation 260: On the Construction of the Environmental Management Disposal Facility at the U.S. DOE Oak Ridge Reservation**

At our May 13, 2026, meeting the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board approved the enclosed recommendation on the Construction of the Environmental Management Disposal Facility (EMDF) at the U.S. DOE Oak Ridge Reservation.

The recommendation is based on the March 11, 2026, presentation to the board on the Oak Ridge Environmental Management Program, as well as the 10-year Program Plan, EM Strategic Vision document, and the previous four recommendations from the board on this topic.

We ask that DOE consider these recommendations as it continues to build and eventually operate EMDF. There are seven specific points in the recommendation the board would like you to address in your response. We appreciate your consideration of our input and look forward to receiving your response by July 15, 2026.

Sincerely,

Kris Bartholomew, Chair

Enclosures

cc/enc:

Kelly Snyder, EM-2.33  
Kristof Czartoryski, TDEC, Oak Ridge  
Samantha Urquhart-Foster, EPA Region 4  
Melyssa Noe, EM-94  
Abby Hill, EM-94

Wade Creswell, Roane County Executive  
Terry Frank, Anderson County Mayor  
Randy Hemann, Oak Ridge City Manager  
Roger Petrie, EM-94  
Leah Alexander, EM-94



## Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board Recommendation 260: On the Construction of the Environmental Management Disposal Facility at the U.S. DOE Oak Ridge Reservation

### **Background**

Much of the Manhattan Project legacy waste for which the Department of Energy (DOE) Oak Ridge Environmental Management (OREM) program is responsible falls under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) of 1980 (also known as the Superfund Act), which is a federal law regulating the cleanup of designated sites contaminated with hazardous waste.

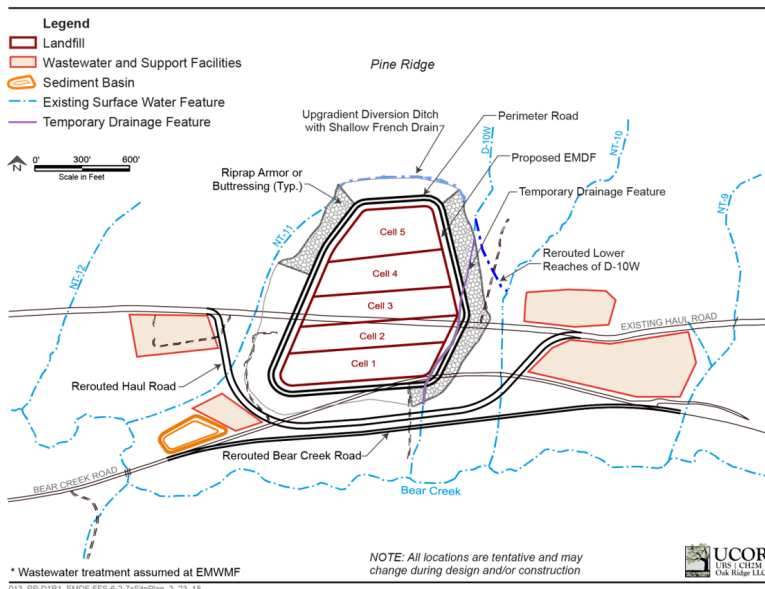
The DOE Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR) is home to three large industrial sites with numerous buildings, burial grounds, soils, and other contaminated assets for which OREM has responsibility. CERCLA wastes from OREM cleanup activities at these sites [the East Tennessee Technology Park (ETTP), Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), and the Y-12 National Security Complex (Y-12)] are in large part disposed of in an existing OREM landfill known as the Environmental Management Waste Management Facility (EMWMF) near Y-12.

EMWMF is a dedicated disposal facility in Bear Creek Valley designed to receive low-level radioactive and mixed wastes generated from CERCLA cleanup. EMWMF has been actively accepting ORR CERCLA waste since 2002, but its capacity is not sufficient to complete ORNL and Y-12 cleanup. The 28-acre site is approximately 86 percent full and is projected to reach capacity at the end of the 2020s or early 2030s.

In December 2010, DOE first announced that additional CERCLA waste disposal capacity on the ORR would be necessary because of the expansion of OREM scope in the years since the construction of EMWMF began. This need for additional capacity was initially primarily due to two factors: (1) the availability of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds that allowed OREM to accelerate clean-up projects within its scope at that time and (2) expansion of the OREM program in recent years to include the removal of outdated facilities at ORNL and Y-12. DOE estimated that additional capacity for approximately 2.2 million cubic yards of waste will be needed to complete ORR cleanup effort as set forth in the current plan.



*Aerial view of DOE waste disposal sites in Bear Creek Valley, including EMDF, left, and EMWMF, center*



*Concept design of the Central Bear Creek Valley Site*

Development of a new disposal area, named the Environmental Management Disposal Facility (EMDF), was proposed by DOE to the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), followed by *Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study for CERCLA Waste Disposal*, in 2012. Discussion continued in following years, culminating in a field study and updated version of the *Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study* for the preferred site in early 2017 (DOE/OR/01-2535&D5). DOE, EPA, and TDEC issued a

Proposed Plan in September 2018 for public input. Several public events were held and comments were accepted. A final Record of Decision (DOE/OR/01-2794&D2/R2) was signed in 2022.

The project includes: early site preparation, groundwater field demonstration study, and balance of construction. In 2024, employees completed early site preparation and completed field work for the groundwater field demonstration. Work for the study involved clearing a 30-acre area of land and installing a geosynthetic cover system to simulate the effect of the lined disposal cells on groundwater. Monitoring was scheduled over two wet seasons and will be completed in 2026. Results thus far have been positive and showed groundwater elevations steadily declining.

**Discussion**

The Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board (ORSSAB) began discussing the need for additional CERCLA waste disposal capacity on the ORR at its December 2010 Environmental Management/Stewardship Committee meeting and has continued to follow developments and correspondence among the three agencies since that time. The board has supported DOE’s plan for a new onsite disposal facility with the following recommendations:

- In June 2011, the board issued Recommendation 200: On the Decision Process for Siting a Second CERCLA Waste Disposal Facility.<sup>1</sup> The recommendation suggested early community and stakeholder involvement in the process of selecting a site. It asked DOE to carefully evaluate and reduce future disposal needs and fully consider lifecycle costs.
- In May 2014, ORSSAB issued Recommendation 223: On Additional Waste Disposal Capacity on the Oak Ridge Reservation.<sup>1</sup> It asked DOE to continue planning for an additional onsite disposal facility that would have sufficient capacity to accept all appropriate future generated waste through cleanup of the ORR. It made general recommendations as to safety and siting, and restated the board’s position on long-term post-closure stewardship.
- In December 2016 ORSSAB issued Recommendation 233: On the Proposed Environmental Management Disposal Facility at the U.S. DOE Oak Ridge Reservation.<sup>1</sup> It asked DOE to ensure a trust fund for long term-stewardship. DOE responded that continuation of the concept of a trust fund for EMDF was contingent upon the state accepting such an agreement. While this was ultimately not the preferred plan, DOE’s response also said it would be responsible for long-term stewardship of the facility in any case.

- In August 2018, ORSSAB issued Recommendation 240: On the Proposed Environmental Management Disposal Facility at the U.S. DOE Oak Ridge Reservation.<sup>1</sup> It asked DOE to aim for a reasonable period of overlap between closure of EMWMF and opening of EMDF to ensure no delay in cleanup. It reiterated the need for community engagement; careful evaluation of the size of the facility to ensure EMDF can accept all waste needed to finish cleanup on the ORR; and the need for a post-closure stewardship plan. It also recommended monitoring of hydrologic conditions at the site prior to completion of the design phase as well as future monitoring.

OREM presented its latest update on waste disposal to the board at its regular meeting on March 11, 2026. The presentation noted that OREM continues to work with regulators at EPA and TDEC on getting EMDF moving forward, and presenters said progress on the planning and design of the main site as well as ongoing water monitoring at the smaller demonstration facility, which should be completed early this year, are proceeding well.

The board heard that an increase in capacity at EMWMF and OREM's focus on reuse and recycling have helped reduce the amount of waste going into the landfill, which are both relevant to previous recommendations. Additionally, work schedules in the next few years will include more deactivation and decontamination, also known as pre-demolition work, which produces less waste that is suitable for EMWMF. These efforts will help ensure the recommended overlap between its closure and EMDF becoming operational.

Members saw the sites in person during a tour on March 19 and heard from employees at EMWMF. OREM guides discussed design improvements being made. As EMWMF has been operating for 24 years, there is significant experience to form best practices that will be used in construction of EMDF. Examples of upgrades to EMDF will include on-site water treatment facilities rather than trucking wastewater and leachate elsewhere for treatment as is done with the current site.

### **Recommendations**

ORSSAB continues to support onsite disposal of OREM CERCLA wastes that meet the onsite waste acceptance criteria. Board members wish to provide the following recommendations:

1. **Funding:** Ensure that funding is secured and prioritized to provide no less than two years overlapping operation of the proposed EMDF and the existing EMWMF given the fact that EMWMF is currently at 86 percent capacity. Whenever possible, DOE should seek efficiencies to accelerate design and construction of EMDF to enable it to open as early as possible.
2. **Community Engagement:** Although communication with stakeholders is part of the CERCLA process, emphasis should be placed on direct and iterative contact with the residential communities that are near the proposed EMDF site. We recommend these meetings include the status of the design, construction efforts, and final timelines for completion of each critical phase. Also, consideration should be given to publicizing dates, times and locations of the meetings to ensure the public is aware they are taking place.
3. **Waste Disposal Capacity:** As the EMDF design is finalized and construction begins, DOE should continue to evaluate and ensure that the facility will have the capacity to complete cleanup of the ORR. Wherever possible, DOE should seek programmatic efficiencies to reduce the volume of materials for onsite disposal.
4. **Contingency Planning:** Current plans presume EMDF will be open in time to provide overlap with closure of EMWMF. However, DOE should continue evolving its contingency plan/scheduling to ensure there will not be a work stoppage in cleanup if EMDF construction is delayed.

5. **Budget for Operation of the Completed Facility:** Funding should be allocated and prioritized for the post-construction phase that includes future monitoring and functioning of the facility for requirements stipulated in the ROD and other relevant documents.
  - a. Ensure monitoring continues during construction and ongoing operation.
6. **Water Treatment:** Since EMDF will have its own water treatment facilities, DOE should strongly consider designing those facilities to include capacity to also treat water from EMWMF. Specifically, piping water directly from EMWMF to EMDF would be ideal. This will be a safer and more cost-effective alternative to the current practice of trucking water to ORNL.
7. **Post-Closure Stewardship:** Develop a plan for the ongoing stewardship and funding mechanism for monitoring and maintenance of the facility once it is closed.

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<sup>1</sup> Documents available at [energy.gov/orssab](http://energy.gov/orssab).