Advocate

A publication of the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board – a federally appointed citizens panel providing independent recommendations and advice to DOE's Environmental Management Program

Advisory Boards Meet at Hanford Site for EM Updates

Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board (ORSSAB) officers joined other Environmental Management Site-Specific Advisory Board (EM SSAB) leadership, and U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) staff at the annual EM SSAB Spring Chairs' Meeting April 28 - 30 in Pasco, Wash.

Each spring and fall, officers from SSABs across the country join to meet with DOE officials to discuss the latest happenings around the EM complex. This year's Spring Chairs' Meeting was hosted by the Hanford Citizens Advisory Board (CAB).

DOE Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Joel Bradburne was on hand to discuss progress across the EM Complex, recent EM accomplishments, and EM's role in the "Nuclear Renaissance." He said opportunities today are driven by artificial intelligence (AI), which requires large amounts of power to function.

"The need for power has changed the whole conversation, and with the power requirements comes the Nuclear Renaissance, essentially as a mandate to supply the power for the future," said Bradburne.

He said the work in EM is not just cleanup, it's revitalization and part of that involves capitalizing on the skillsets and the missions of the past. Part of that includes looking at opportunities to reprocess used nuclear fuel, which still contains materials with potential uses in applications ranging from space missions to curing diseases.

EM SSAB leadership from sites throughout the EM complex toured the Hanford site in Washington state April 28 as part of the group's Spring Chairs Meeting.

He cited the work being done in Oak Ridge as an example.

"You talk about the nexus of the Nuclear Renaissance," said Bradburne. "I think there is about $10 billion worth of investment in the nuclear industry there, and they have a [uranium]-233 project where they're going in and putting that in a safe and stable disposition path. As part of that, they're also separating isotopes [for cancer research]."

The meeting also featured presentations and discussions with DOE leadership on such topics as the EM budget, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Reuse and Recycle Community of Practice, an overview of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), an overview of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB), and information about small, non-SSAB sites.

*(See **Chairs** on page 8*

Issue 98 • July 2026

IN THIS ISSUE

Reservation Update

Crews have completed early site preparation and field characterization to support the next phases of cleanup at White Wing Scrap Yard.

Crews Transforming Old Scrapyard for Future Industry

OREM and contractor United Cleanup Oak Ridge (UCOR) have begun major field work to address an old scrapyard, a project that will remove risks and allow future industrial reuse on the land.

The site, called White Wing Scrap Yard, is adjacent to an announced multibillion-dollar uranium enrichment facility and near the East Tennessee Technology Park (ETTP), where private industry has announced billions of dollars in capital investments that will generate an estimated 2,500 new jobs.

The scrapyard area contains various materials and scrap used from the 1940s through the 1960s. All three sites on the Oak Ridge Reservation used the area, including the former K-25 Site, Y-12 National Security Complex, and Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

Crews have completed early site preparation and field characterization to support the next phases of cleanup at White Wing Scrap Yard.

Field characterization provided crucial data needed before crews could mobilize and begin tree clearing. Work underway paves the way for teams to evaluate and conduct cleanup actions at the site.

So far, UCOR has cleared the majority of the 39 acres, with tree clearing scheduled to be complete this summer.

Following tree felling, focus will shift to clearing debris and hazards so the land can be reused.

-Contributor: Ella Stewart

81 Million Pounds of Debris Cleared at Alpha-2 Footprint

OREM crews have cleared the 2.5-acre footprint of the former Alpha-2 facility at the Y-12 National Security Complex following demolition and removal of 81 million pounds of rubble and debris.

Waste disposal by OREM and cleanup contractor UCOR signifies the final chapter of this Manhattan Project-era building demolition project, moving this area of Y-12 closer to reuse for national security missions.

The Alpha-2 demolition project yielded 81 million pounds of debris and rubble.

Teardown for Alpha-2 began in 2024 and was completed earlier this year, clearing 2.5 acres of land for reuse.

The Alpha-2 demolition project yielded 81 million pounds of debris and rubble.

Clearing the debris generated by razing the 325,000-square-foot former uranium enrichment building required nearly 3,500 truckloads. Crews wrapped up the demolition six months ahead of schedule.

The next project phase involved reducing the size of 800,000 pounds of lead removed from the building and packaging it for specialized shipments offsite, which began in June.

The scale and success of the project earned accolades.

The Association of Union Constructors recently recognized the Alpha-2 cleanup with its Project of the Year Award. Recipients are normally large-scale construction efforts, but the value of the Oak Ridge project's environmental restoration and opportunities created by it led to the top honor.

-Contributor: Ryan Getsi

Issue 98 • July 2026

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First-Year Goal Exceeded for Legacy Oxide Waste Processing

OREM and contractor UCOR have achieved the first-year goal for processing oxide waste at the Transuranic Waste Processing Center (TWPC) months ahead of schedule, progressing toward the removal of this legacy material from the Oak Ridge Reservation.

Typical transuranic waste, such as equipment, tools or protective materials, contains low levels of radioactive contamination. However, the oxide waste has bulk quantities of finely divided radioactive particles or powders.

Some of this material is more than 50 years old. It was generated at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) during radiochemical and isotope development operations. Once those activities concluded, the waste was placed in secure storage containers, where it remained until now.

Oak Ridge Office of Environmental Management crews use gloveboxes to vent canisters of legacy oxide waste generated from previous research and development activities at Oak Ridge National Laboratory. A glovebox is a sealed, stainless steel containment enclosure equipped with glove ports and windows, designed to protect personnel from radiological and chemical hazards when handling radioactive materials.

This marks the first time workers have processed this form of waste at TWPC, requiring facility modifications, procedure updates and readiness assessments. Teams began evaluating approaches to eliminate the material from long term storage in 2018.

UCOR received authorization to begin processing oxide waste in August, and OREM set a first-year goal to process 6.4 cubic meters. The waste consists of fine particles, prompting workers to ensure proper ventilation and packaging to prevent airborne dispersal.

OREM and UCOR will continue processing approximately 31 cubic meters of this material before shipping it to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico for final disposal.

-Contributor: Ella Stewart

OREM crews use gloveboxes to vent canisters of legacy oxide waste generated from previous research and development activities at ORNL.

Recent Recommendations

An aerial view of the Environmental Management Disposal Facility project footprint. Crews installed a 1.3 million-square-foot geomembrane layer that simulates the effect of lined disposal cells on groundwater elevations, creating an impermeable barrier over the site. The turf, much like grass, slows the flow of stormwater, providing improved stormwater controls. The final layer, sand infill, weighs down the turf and prevents damage from strong winds.

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 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 cleanup 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.

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.

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. 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. 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. 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. 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

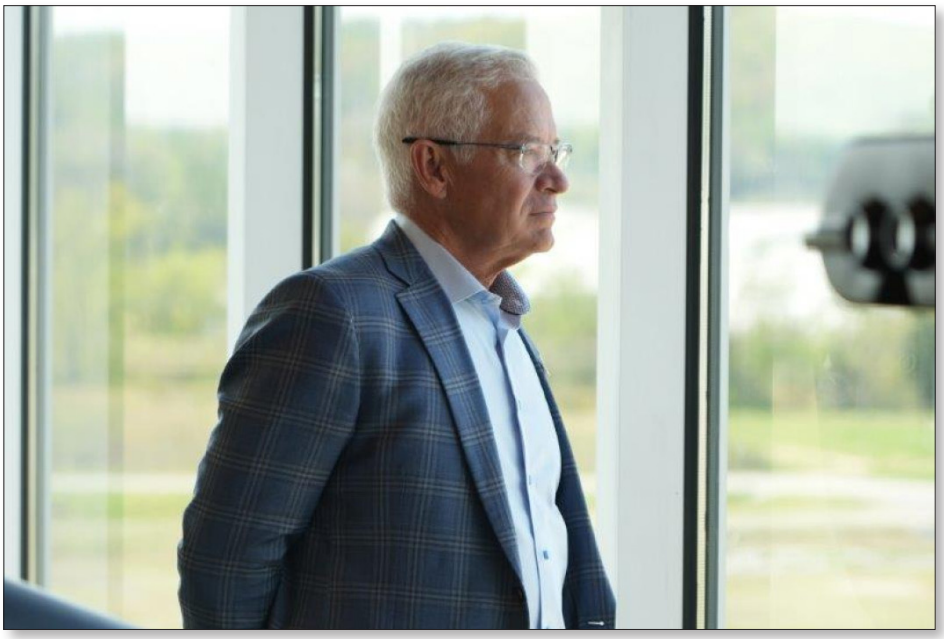
ORSSAB continues to support onsite disposal of OREM CERCLA wastes that meet the onsite waste acceptance criteria. Board members wish to provide the following recommendations:

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.

(See Recommendation on page 7)

Walsh Views Full Scope of EM's Impact at Oak Ridge



Assistant Secretary of Environmental Management Tim Walsh stands stories above the K-25 building's 44-acre footprint from the observation deck in the K-25 Interpretive Center. K-25 was the largest ibuilding n the world when it was constructed, and it was one of five former uranium enrichment buildings demolished at the site.

In his first trip to Oak Ridge this April, Assistant Secretary for EM Tim Walsh witnessed firsthand the reach and impact of the DOE cleanup mission, including how progress generates opportunities for DOE programs and the community.

Walsh and his team toured all major cleanup projects underway at Oak Ridge and met with state and local officials, business leaders and stakeholders to discuss partnerships and developments on the horizon.

"Oak Ridge stands out as one of EM and DOE's exemplary sites. From advancing our national security and nuclear deterrence to driving America's nuclear renaissance and positioning the U.S. to lead the AI race, Oak Ridge remains central to EM and DOE's mission of making America both energy dominant and prosperous," Walsh said. "As we continue ongoing nuclear remediation and revitalization efforts, Oak Ridge serves as a roadmap for EM's future."

At Y-12, OREM and contractor UCOR showed open footprints in the dense campus where recent demolitions removed legacy facilities. Crews have cleared away 20 acres of former Manhattan Project-era research and enrichment buildings to remove hazards and provide space for new facilities to advance national security missions.

Crews were removing the final portions of debris from the Alpha-2 demolition project, while other teams prepared for the next major demolition of a former uranium enrichment facility at Beta-1, slated to begin later this year.

Stops at ORNL showcased how cleanup is transforming the central campus area, making way for modernization by removing old, contaminated infrastructure and eliminating inventories of nuclear material.

Walsh toured the world's oldest operating nuclear facility, currently a storehouse for the nation's inventory of uranium-233. OREM and contractor Isotek are processing and disposing of the material to eliminate risks and strike ongoing costs to taxpayers required to keep the material safe and secure.

Another facet of that project involves an innovative partnership with nuclear innovation company TerraPower to extract rare medical isotopes from the uranium-233 to power next-generation cancer treatment research.

OREM's cleanup has also created space for new industry.

The team traveled to ETTP, where they saw EM's largest completed cleanup effort to date.

Walsh stood stories above the 44-acre footprint of the former K-25 building, now the main attraction of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park site. The building was the largest in the world when it was constructed, and among the 500 buildings crews demolished there.

Workers finished soil remediation at ETTP in 2024, opening the door for major redevelopment. Today, it is home to more than 20 businesses that

Join Us for an OREM Program Overview

6 p.m. Wednesday, August 12
1 Science.gov Way and
Virtually via Zoom

Members and OREM will discuss projects and topics to cover in the next fiscal year.

Questions? Want to attend virtually? Contact us at 865-241-4584 or orssab@orem.doe.gov

U.S. Department of Energy Office of Environmental Management (EM) officials and Kairos Power employees stand in front of the company's construction site for the Hermes 1 demonstration reactor. The project is located on the footprint of the former K-33 uranium enrichment facility that EM cleared for economic reuse.

have announced billions of dollars in investments that will create thousands of new jobs in the nuclear sector.

Kairos Power, one of the first major nuclear companies to announce locating at ETTP, provided a tour of the construction of its new demonstration reactor. The company is progressing quickly on its $100 million development on the footprint of a former uranium enrichment building.

OREM has transferred more than 2,500 acres to the community for economic reuse, and much of that land is targeted for redevelopment by nuclear companies that support numerous stages in the fuel cycle, from enrichment to recycling.

Walsh and his team met with state and local officials to hear input that can result in EM accelerating cleanup, boosting opportunities and strengthening partnerships with private industry.

-Contributor: Ben Williams

Recommendation

(Continued from page 5)

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.

Advocate
Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board
July 2026

Chairs

(Continued from page 1)

Discussions on the Reuse and Recycle Community of Practice, a collaboration among program offices and sites to reduce costs by facilitating the reuse and recycling of excess materials and equipment across the DOE complex, generated additional interest and led to members drafting a joint recommendation on the topic during the meeting.

ORSSAB members later approved the recommendation during the full board meeting held May 13.

The multi-day event also included a tour of the Hanford site on April 28. The first stop was the Manhattan Project National Historic Park, home to the B-Reactor National Historic Landmark. The day continued with a driving tour around the 560-square-mile site, including the vitrification plant that is treating radioactive waste from underground storage tanks by combining it with glass forming materials, decommissioned and cocooned former nuclear reactors, the 107-acre Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility, and the HAMMER Federal Training Center.

The next EM SSAB Chairs' Meeting will be held virtually on November 10.

EM SSAB Chairs' Recommendation on Reuse & Recycle Community of Practice

During the April 29, 2026, Spring Chairs meeting, the Environmental Site-Specific Advisory Board (EM SSAB) received a presentation about the U.S. Department of Energy Environmental Management's (DOE-EM) Reuse and Recycle Community of Practice (RR CoP). The RR CoP endeavors to collaborate between interested program offices and sites to reduce costs by facilitating the reuse and recycling of excess materials and equipment across the DOE complex.

Each DOE-EM site has its own unique mission, timeline, and budget. These sites may overlook collaboration when immediate material needs arise. The RR CoP aims to bridge this gap by providing a way for the sites to prioritize reuse and recycling among themselves.

The EM SSAB Chairs understand that the RR CoP was informally chartered in 2023 and is relatively new. It is encouraging to see how DOE-EM Office of Infrastructure and D&D is integrating current site activities to ensure the reuse of federal assets across the DOE complex. This effort may ultimately reduce expenses to procure equipment and materials. The EM SSAB Chairs commend DOE-EM's efforts to save taxpayer dollars through the integration of RR CoP.

The EM SSAB Chairs support the RR CoP initiative and recommend that DOE-EM continue to foster the integration of this practice across the complex by increasing the number of sites in-volved with the goal of improving communication and awareness.

Who We Are

The EM SSAB is the DOE-EM's most effective vehicle for fostering two-way communication between DOE-EM and the communities it serves. The EM program is the world's largest environmental cleanup program, and the EM SSAB is its only citizen advisory board. For more than 30 years, the volunteer citizens of the EM SSAB have partnered with EM officials at both the local and national levels to ensure that the public has a meaningful voice in cleanup decisions.

Public participation is required/recommended as part of a number of environmental regulations. It is also good business practice, resulting in better decisions that often result in improved cleanup. Over the past three decades, EM SSAB members have volunteered over 50,000 hours of their time and submitted to EM officials over 1,800 recommendations, of which 84% have been fully or partially implemented, resulting in improved cleanup decisions.

The EM SSAB comprises approximately 160 people from communities in Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee and Washington. The Board is cumulatively representative of a stakeholder population totaling millions of people who are affected by generator sites, transportation routes and disposal sites. As we move forward, the EM SSAB welcomes the opportunity to highlight the value of this unique volunteer board and discuss its priorities during the months and years ahead.

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

Meetings are 6 p.m. at 1 Science.gov Way, Oak Ridge & virtually via Zoom. Email orssab@orem.doe.gov to attend virtually.

Board: August 12, 2026
EM & Stewardship Committee: October 21, 2026

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ABBREVIATIONS

CERCLA — Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, also known as Superfund
DOE — Department of Energy
EM — Environmental Management
EMWMF — Environmental Management Waste Management Facility
ETTP — East Tennessee Technology Park
OREM — Oak Ridge Environmental Management
ORNL — Oak Ridge National Laboratory
ORR — Oak Ridge Reservation
ORSSAB — Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board
TDEC — Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation
UCOR — United Cleanup Oak Ridge
Y-12 — Y-12 National Security Complex