



Many Voices Working for the Community

Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

October 21, 2008

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Students Get Inside Look at DOE's Cleanup Program

The Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board (ORSSAB) and the Department of Energy took almost 100 students and their teachers from Oak Ridge High School on a tour of a portion of DOE's Oak Ridge Reservation on October 16.



Tim Myrick of the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board points out a tour stop to Claire Campbell (left), fellow board member Maggie Owen, and Miranda Clower (right). Claire and Miranda are student representatives to the board.

The tour was led by ORSSAB member Tim Myrick and Dave Adler, DOE's Environmental Management Program liaison to ORSSAB. The board is a federally chartered citizens' advisory group that provides advice and recommendations to the DOE environmental cleanup program. Myrick volunteers one day a week at Oak Ridge High School assisting in the environmental science classes. "This was a great opportunity for the kids to see in person what we discuss in class about cleaning up contaminated areas of the reservation."

The ORSSAB participants also included board member Maggie Owen and the board's current student representatives, Claire Campbell of Oak Ridge High School and Miranda Clower of Roane County High School.

ORSSAB has a long history of working with Oak Ridge High School students. On a number of occasions Myrick and other board members have visited advanced placement science classes to discuss what DOE is doing to clean up the reservation. "We even provide them with case studies of cleanup projects and give them the same options that were considered by DOE," said Myrick. "The students study the alternatives and pick what they think was actually done. It gives them a flavor of what actually happens in the decision-making process."

ORSSAB's interaction with students goes back to 1999 when it appointed its first student to the board. In 2000 it decided to have two student representatives. One is always from Oak Ridge High School while the other is chosen from area high schools on a rotating basis. The students are mentored during their one-year term by members of the board.

In 2002 the board worked with science students from Oak Ridge and Roane County high schools

to develop summaries of the two-volume “Oak Ridge Reservation Stakeholders Report,” which describe the need and basic elements for a stewardship program for contaminated areas on the Oak Ridge Reservation. The summaries were provided to area middle and high schools and later combined to form “A Student Summary of the Stakeholders Report on Stewardship.”

In 2005 the board launched its Student Education Resource Kit to provide high school educators materials on the background, science, history, and cleanup of contaminated areas on the Oak Ridge Reservation. The kit contains lesson plans, videos, a fictional case study based on actual cleanup operations, and other materials. Kit files are available on the ORSSAB website at www.oakridge.doe.gov/em/ssab/stewardship-kit/kit.htm.

Sponsoring the tour was a logical next step to get the kids out of the classroom and on site to see what they have been learning about.

The two bus loads of students stopped first at East Tennessee Technology Park to see work being done to demolish a number of outdated facilities, including the massive K-25 Building. They also viewed a number of ponds on the site that will be remediated of contamination, primarily from PCBs.

The next stop was at the waste disposal site near Y-12 known as the Environmental Management Waste Management Facility. Much of the debris from work at East Tennessee Technology Park goes there for disposal. The tour took a quick side trip to visit nearby Bear Creek Burial Grounds, which is due for cleanup in the next few years.

The group had lunch at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory cafeteria and then visited the environmental sciences complex that includes the aquatics laboratory where research is being done related to the cleanup of the ponds at East Tennessee Technology Park. They also visited the BioEnergy Science Center. “The kids got to see some of the new generation of energy research such as the conversion of switchgrass to biofuel,” said Myrick.

The tour concluded with a visit to Melton Valley where a massive, 6-year remediation project was completed in September 2006.

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