



Many Voices Working for the Community

Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board

NEWS RELEASE

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ORSSAB Experience Has Been Rewarding for Member David Martin

After a long career as an electrical engineer, David Martin could be described now as a ‘retired gentleman farmer.’ Martin is a member of the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board, a federally chartered citizens’ panel that provides advice and recommendations to the Department of Energy’s Oak Ridge Environmental Management program, which is responsible for cleaning up portions of the department’s Oak Ridge Reservation that have been contaminated with radioactive or hazardous materials as a result of nuclear weapons development and nuclear energy research.

He and wife Nancy live in Harriman near their 160-acre farm. The farm has been in his family since the 1820s. “This is a legacy farm. It has been handed down through the generations since it was first acquired from the federal government in 1824,” he says. Martin inherited the farm from his mother. “Interestingly enough it’s been kept in the family often through the daughters. The sons would move away and one of the daughters would, with her husband, stay and buy out the others. This is the way it was for four generations before me.”



David Martin stands on a hill that overlooks a large part of his 160-acre farm in Roane County. The farm has been in his family since the 1820s.

These days he operates it as a cattle farm with a mixed herd of 30-40 head, plus he sells a small amount of forest products. “This is grass country,” he says. “The land does not row crop well because it is highly erodible. The old joke is if you want to dig a ditch just drag a chain where you want and you’ll have your ditch in a few weeks. I’m working now to close out the last of the old eroded ditches on the place.”

Originally from Rome, Ga., Martin studied electrical engineering at the University of Tennessee. That’s where he met Nancy, who was studying education. They have two children, Nora and Andrew.

When the Martins graduated in the early 1970s, they both found jobs in Cartersville, Ga. David went to work for Georgia Power Co. and over the years held a number of positions in engineering, operations, and maintenance at the Bowen Generating Station. “In 1995 they offered me an opportunity to retire. I took it and went out on my own. I did contract engineering in the electric power industry in and outside U.S. until 2010. Although I still keep a couple of clients I farm pretty much full time.”

When the Martins returned to Tennessee in 2002 their first thought was to live on Watts Bar Lake, but a family friend from Oak Ridge questioned that plan because of contamination in White Oak Creek and the Lower Watts Bar Reservoir. “I’d never heard of that so I started reading about some of the problems on the Oak Ridge Reservation,” said Martin. “I started reading articles about the reclamation work on the

reservation. Living so close felt I needed to know more about what was going on. When I saw an ad for

board membership I decided to apply and I'm glad I did." He's been a board member since 2007.

"So many of my initial concerns have been addressed in a positive way like White Oak Creek; it's well under control. I'm not overly concerned about the sediments in the Clinch River and Watts Bar Lake. At Oak Ridge National Lab, though, we have some problems, particularly with the uranium-233 stored at Building 3019. It's holding that whole research facility hostage until we can get it taken care of. And because of the amount of money needed to dispose of that material it could negatively affect the cleanup of other areas of the reservation."

Regarding his experience on the board Martin said it's been rewarding for him. "I'm glad we've increased our board membership limit to 22 because in the next eight to 10 years there will be so much going on and it's critical that we have enough people to cover it. I think board members should take every opportunity to get out on the reservation. Every time we've been able to go out and see what's going on we've been able to come back and contribute in a positive way toward cleanup."

As a board member Martin currently serves as the vice-chair of the Environmental Management Committee and on the Public Outreach Committee. He's also been vice-chair of the Stewardship Committee and looks forward to serving on the Board Finance & Process Committee before leaving the board.

The Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board meets the second Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at the DOE Information Center in Oak Ridge. For information visit the board's website at www.oakridge.doe.gov/em/ssab.

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