

Manhattan Project National Historical Park – an update
(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on April 1, 2013)

It was exceptionally rewarding recently to see both Senator Lamar Alexander and Congressman Chuck Fleischmann sponsoring bills in the Senate and House of Representatives respectively calling for the passing of legislation that would create the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. These actions will build on the progress made in Congress last year and support the reintroduction of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park Act in the 113th Congress.

Recognition of the Manhattan Project in the national park system is essential to help educate coming generations regarding this historical and pivotal world changing event and the technological advances proceeding from the Nuclear Age it introduced. Oak Ridge played an important role in the Manhattan Project, with close to 60% of the total expenditures having been incurred here. Separating the uranium for Little Boy was just the beginning of Oak Ridge's contribution to technological advances that have benefited the entire world.

With both the Departments of Energy and Interior supporting the creation of the new park, Congress should find a way to capitalize on bipartisan support to create the park with units at Hanford, WA, Los Alamos, NM, and Oak Ridge, TN. Because the park focuses on Manhattan Project properties already owned by the Federal government, no new Federal funds are needed to acquire these properties.

A recently completed survey conducted for *PlanET* by the University of Tennessee found, "Economic and workforce development is one focus area for *PlanET* and continues to be reported by survey respondents as the highest priority for improving the future quality of life in the area." Well, Heritage Tourism, as identified in the report provided by Akins-Crisp, "Creating the Living Story of 'The Secret City'" is an economic development strategy that was recommended to City Council. It works for others, why not us?

Oak Ridge is highly dependent on the Department of Energy and its contractors yet has long sought to diversify the local economy. Heritage tourism associated with this park could be a strong step in this direction and might well benefit East Tennessee regionally. Effective heritage tourism, a huge attraction in other areas of our nation, could even have state level positive impact.

The purpose of a Manhattan Project National Historical Park is to educate the public and interpret what some have called "the single most significant event of the 20th century," the development of the atomic bomb and introduction of the Nuclear Age. Ultimately, this park may well be the leader in the park service as they transition to a more educationally focused entity as directed in the report advocating "rethinking the National Parks for the 21st Century."

The report states, "The National Park System Advisory Board, therefore, recommends that the National Park Service:

- Embrace its mission, as educator, to become a more significant part of America's educational system by providing formal and informal programs for students and learners of all ages inside and outside park boundaries.
- Encourage the study of the American past, developing programs based on current scholarship, linking specific places to the narrative of our history, and encouraging a public exploration and discussion of the American experience."

As the steward of so many of America's important historic places, the National Park Service will preserve and objectively interpret this complex and contentious history. The Manhattan Project will be presented

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in its historic context with multiple first-hand and contemporary perspectives on its role in World War II and its legacy. Visitors will be able to draw their own conclusions about the Manhattan Project and how it has changed the world.

The Department of Energy will continue to own and maintain its historic properties and address any environmental, health and safety issues. Public access will be limited until health, safety and security concerns are fully addressed.

The legislation is supported by a host of stakeholders and interest groups. These include the National Trust for Historic Preservation, National Parks Conservation Association, the Energy Communities Alliance, local historic preservation groups at all three Manhattan Project sites, and others.

The Park has been through serious scrutiny within the U.S. Department of the Interior and enjoys strong support (including financial) from the Department of Energy. With this breadth of support, the Manhattan Project National Historical Park Act bills will help ensure Tennessee's permanent place in the history of the Manhattan Project.

With the youngest veterans of the Manhattan Project approaching the age of 90, it is time to act while some of these veterans are still alive. It would be seen as a strong "thank you" to these most deserving individuals.

I have asked several organizations to send letters of support to our elected officials and surely do appreciate the support I have received. Of course, individuals can also influence support for the bills. So, please take the time to let your representatives know how you feel regarding the Manhattan Project National Historical Park Act.

Here are links to the two bills:

Senate: <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/s507/text>

House of Representatives: <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/hr1208/text>

What is being said at Hanford:

<http://www.thenewstribune.com/2013/03/15/2516179/house-bill-to-include-b-reactor.html>

http://www.nbcnews.com/id/51202446/ns/local_news-tri_cities_wa/t/bill-congress-make-manhattan-project-national-historic-park/

What the Department of Energy says about the park:

<http://energy.gov/management/manhattan-project-national-historical-park>

What the National Parks Conservation Association is saying:

<http://www.npca.org/news/media-center/press-releases/2013/senate-introduces-manhattan.html>

Thank you very much for your role in preserving this important chapter of American and world history

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K-25 footprint and history center



Oak Ridge National Laboratory's Graphite Reactor

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Beta 3 Calutrons



Building 9731