

# Bethel Valley Watershed

## Is it safe? \_\_\_\_\_

The Bethel Valley watershed contains the Oak Ridge National Laboratory. Most of the Bethel Valley watershed area is not accessible to the public. This restriction is directed toward national security concerns more than unintentional exposure of hazardous materials to the public.

## Are there use limitations for this area? \_\_\_\_\_

- The general public is not allowed to travel Bethel Valley Road into the Oak Ridge National Laboratory without badges or pre-approval from DOE. East and West Bethel Valley roads have guard stations to control access.
- In the fall, forested portions of the watershed, adjacent to Highway 95, are opened for deer and turkey hunts. After the hunt, all kills are checked for radiation prior to release.
- All controls required for this area are performed under the direction of DOE.

## Background: \_\_\_\_\_

Activities performed at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) since the early 1940s have contributed to the contamination of Bethel Valley's soils, surface water, and groundwater. Due to the extensive nature of the research, including isotope production and nuclear reactor construction and testing, there have been releases of hazardous substances over the years.

The age of the facilities at ORNL, many of which date back to the Manhattan Project, increases the potential for additional releases. The Environmental Management program maintains the inactive facilities to prevent structural collapse, infrastructure system failures, and/or environmental releases until the facilities can be demolished safely. The removal of these older facilities is necessary to address portions of soil and groundwater contamination.

## How was the problem addressed? \_\_\_\_\_

The DOE, Environmental Protection Agency, and State of



Tennessee conducted investigations and evaluated options for remediating impacts to the environment and human health. The approved Interim Record of Decision (ROD) contains the end use remediation goals for Bethel Valley.

The ROD addresses the buildings and facilities designated for demolition, buried waste, inactive liquid low-level waste, process tanks and pipelines, contaminated soils and sediments, and monitoring wells. One of the most significant actions was an engineering study to find soluble contamination sources that contribute to the contamination of surface and ground waters.

Once the remediation activities required by the Bethel Valley ROD are completed, CERCLA required long term land use controls will be implemented for the area. Until then, DOE's programmatic controls ensure the safety of the site workers and research visitors. The CERCLA land use controls will be detailed and approved in the Bethel Valley Remedial Action Report before implementation. Once implemented, the status and effectiveness of the CERCLA controls are reported annually to the public in the Remediation Effectiveness Report. A future final ROD for Bethel Valley is scheduled by EM to address the remaining ecological and groundwater issues.

## More Information is available: \_\_\_\_\_

- *Record of Decision for Interim Actions in Bethel Valley, Oak Ridge Tennessee*
- *Engineering Study Work Plan for Groundwater Actions in Bethel Valley, Oak Ridge, Tennessee*
- Administrative Record – a listing of all available documents and correspondence in reaching this decision is available at the DOE Information Center in Oak Ridge.