FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
PROPOSED CONVEYANCE
OF THE
AMERICAN MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND ENERGY
AND ASSOCIATED PROPERTY,
PARCEL G, AND PARCEL 279.01

AGENCY: U.S. Department of Energy

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) (DOE/EA-1415) for the proposed conveyance of the American Museum of Science and Energy (AMSE) and associated property, Parcel G, and Parcel 279.01 to the American Museum of Science and Energy Foundation, the city of Oak Ridge in Tennessee, or other managing entity. The need for DOE action arose from the elimination on October 1, 2000, of approximately $1.2 million in federal funds that, in the past, have been available to operate the museum. The proposed action provides a plan for the long-term financial stability of the AMSE to preserve the museum as an asset to the city of Oak Ridge and the surrounding region. The conveyance is also intended to help offset the long-term cost of operating the museum. The purpose of the proposed action is also to convey excess DOE-Oak Ridge Office real property for economic development to help offset potential economic losses resulting from DOE downsizing, facility closeouts, and work force restructuring. DOE also recognizes that transferring excess land and facilities for local economic development purposes can benefit the federal government by reducing or eliminating DOE's landlord costs.

Based on the results of the analysis reported in the EA, DOE has determined that the proposed action is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. Therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not necessary, and DOE is issuing this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

PUBLIC AVAILABILITY: The EA and FONSI may be reviewed at and copies of the documents obtained from:

U.S. Department of Energy
Information Center
475 Oak Ridge Turnpike
Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37830
Phone: (865) 241-4780

FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE NEPA PROCESS: For further information on the NEPA process, contact:

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DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION: DOE proposes to convey the AMSE and associated property, Parcel G, and Parcel 279.01 to the American Museum of Science and Energy Foundation, city of Oak Ridge, or other managing entity. The managing entity would oversee the operation of the AMSE and would develop Parcel G, Parcel 279.01, and the property associated with the AMSE for a variety of uses. Upon completion of the conveyance, the managing entity would also take a leadership role in a development campaign designed to establish an endowment for the museum.

The process for transferring real property at defense nuclear facilities for economic development is described in a DOE-issued interim final rule, "Transfer of Real Property at Defense Nuclear Facilities for Economic Development" (10 *Code of Federal Regulations* 770). The rule became effective on February 29, 2000 (65 *Federal Register* 10685).

Because specific uses of Parcel G, Parcel 279.01, and the property associated with the AMSE would not be known prior to the conveyance, DOE has developed reasonably foreseeable scenarios and uses to bound the impacts analysis. Scenarios identify potential tenants, utilities and infrastructure, areas to be excluded from development, and a range of emissions, effluents, and wastes that could result from commercial and industrial activities. Parcel G may be developed for small-scale offices, light industrial use, or retail businesses. Because of the small size of Parcel 279.01 (0.662 acre), it could be suitable for a small office or retail business. The open property located in front of the AMSE, along South Illinois Avenue, may be suitable for retail businesses or offices.

ALTERNATIVES: In addition to the proposed action, impacts were also evaluated for the no action alternative. If no action were taken, UT-Battelle, BWXT Y-12, and Bechtel Jacobs Company would continue to fund the operation of the museum. It is anticipated that these contractors would not be able to continue this type of funding on a long-term basis, and, at some time in the future, the museum could be forced to close or limit hours of operation. Parcel G and Parcel 279.01 would remain DOE property. However, because these two parcels have been determined by DOE to be excess, at some time in the future DOE could choose to dispose of them through the appropriate regulatory processes.

DOE dismissed from further analysis an alternative for the conveyance of the three parcels to the General Services Administration for disposition. Because the AMSE is considered to be such a valuable asset to the city of Oak Ridge and the surrounding region, and because AMSE's future is a fundamental component of the city's desire to expand tourism and protect the community's historical legacy, this alternative was dismissed from detailed consideration.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS: The EA assessed direct and indirect impacts of the proposed action on the following resources: land and facility use, air quality, geology and soils, water resources, floodplains and wetlands, ecological resources, cultural resources, socioeconomics, infrastructure and support services, and noise. Cumulative impacts on land use, air quality, socioeconomics, transportation, and biodiversity were also assessed.

Under the proposed action, the present land use of each parcel would change over time as development occurs. Buildings and other structures would be constructed to support various light industrial and/or commercial uses and any development would be compatible with city of Oak Ridge zoning requirements. The greatest amount of development would most likely be at Parcel G. For bounding purposes it was assumed that an approximately 50,000- to 100,000-ft^2 facility would be built along with supporting infrastructure and utilities for a small processing or manufacturing business. A portion of the parcel could also be developed for a small office park. Potential development on the AMSE property was assumed to be for a mix of commercial businesses. The open area in back of the museum could be developed for various commercial uses such as expansion of the city's municipal complex, additions to the museum facility, or professional offices. This area could also remain as an open space.

Because of the small size of Parcel 279.01, development would most likely be for a small retail business or office building. This parcel could also be used by the adjoining office supply business for expansion.

Potential air quality impacts would be minor and consist primarily of short-term, sporadic, and localized emissions of particulates resulting from soil disturbance and vehicle traffic during development activities. Operational emissions of criteria pollutants would be below threshold levels defining "major sources" and would not exceed National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

Through the use of best management practices and with the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures, potential adverse environmental impacts to soils, water resources, and ecological resources would be minor. Potential impacts to soils include soil disturbance and topsoil loss. Surface waters could be impacted by soil erosion, runoff, sedimentation, and potential fuel or waste spills. A restriction in the deed would ensure that there would be no use of groundwater resources. Impacts to ecological resources include direct disturbance of habitat and wildlife including direct injury and mortality of some individual organisms. No threatened and/or endangered species are known to be present within any areas proposed for development, and streams and wetlands would be avoided to the extent practical. Actions within these areas, if necessary, would be undertaken via permitted/regulated processes, as appropriate.

Under the proposed action, no adverse impacts would occur to any cultural resources. It has been determined that no archaeological resources are present on any of the parcels proposed for conveyance. The AMSE does not meet the National Register Criteria for Evaluation and, thus, is not yet considered to be an historic property. The Tennessee Historical Commission concurs with DOE's determination that the proposed project would not adversely affect any property eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. It is DOE's intention to maintain ownership of certain historic and scientific artifacts and archives currently on display or stored at the museum. Prior to the conveyance, DOE would conduct an inventory of the items contained within the museum and make a determination on which items have cultural/historical significance and require protection under the National Historic Preservation Act.

Socioeconomic impacts are expected to be minimal. Based on the small number of jobs created, no impact on population size is anticipated. Likewise, no high and adverse health and environmental impacts would occur that could have a disproportionate effect on low-income and minority populations. The main impact of the proposed action is likely to be its effect on city of Oak Ridge finances. Positive impacts include additional tax revenue generated; although because of the small amount of land involved, the additional tax revenue is also likely to be small. Potential negative impacts include the loss of 21 jobs and associated income if fundraising efforts are unsuccessful and the Museum is forced to close.

New development at each of the parcels would not be large enough to have more than minor transportation impacts including traffic and accidents. Access to Parcel G from Bethel Valley Road would require changes to the current traffic light settings at the intersection of Bethel Valley Road and Scarboro Road. Impacts on utilities would also be minimal. New developments could connect to existing city systems already present at each parcel or immediately adjacent and construction of new utility infrastructure would generally be limited. Development activities would produce noise levels above background levels within relatively short distances but these would be intermittent and temporary. Operation of any new developments would likely generate some minor noise in addition to the background levels already present. No sensitive noise receptors are located in the immediate vicinity of any of the three parcels.

Cumulative impacts would occur from increased development and growth under the proposed action. However, because of the small amount of land involved, the cumulative contribution of impacts

that the conveyance and subsequent development of the three parcels makes on land use, air quality, socioeconomics, transportation, and biodiversity is minor.

DETERMINATION: Based on the findings of this, and after careful consideration of all public and agency comments, DOE has determined that the proposed conveyance of the AMSE and associated property, Parcel G, and Parcel 279.01 to the city of Oak Ridge does not constitute a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the context of NEPA. Therefore, preparation of an EIS is not required.

Issued at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, this 26 day of March 2007.

Gerald G. Boyd, Manager
U.S. Department of Energy
Oak Ridge Office