Department of Energy

Oak Ridge Operations Office
P.O. Box 2001
Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37831—

October 21, 1999

Mr. Reginald G. Reeves, Director
Division of Natural Heritage
State of Tennessee
Department of Environment and Conservation
401 Church Street
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0443

Dear Mr. Reeves:

REQUEST FOR INPUT FOR THE Y-12 SITE-WIDE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (SWEIS)

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is preparing a Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement (SWEIS) for the Y-12 plant at the Oak Ridge Reservation, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The proposed action is considering an Upgrade Alternative, an Upgrade/New Construction Alternative, and a New Construction Alternative. A project-specific analysis for a proposed new Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) Materials Facility is being prepared as an appendix to the Y-12 SWEIS. Two alternative locations are being analyzed for the facility, both within the Y-12 plant site boundary.

Proposed activities under the Upgrade Alternative would consist of upgrades, additions, or modifications to existing Y-12 plant processes, facilities, and infrastructure. The New Construction Alternative would satisfy the Y-12 plant long-term capability and capacity needs through the construction of new facilities. The new facilities would generally be located within the confines of the current Y-12 plant boundaries. The Upgrade/New Construction Alternative would include a combination of upgrades to existing facilities and processes and newly constructed facilities to meet Y-12 currently assigned and future missions.

The Y-12 plant consists of industrial type structures on previously disturbed land with limited habitat favorable for animal and plant species. The only federally listed plant or animal that has been identified from the facility is a gray bat (*Myotis grisescens*) found dead in an empty display case in a building at Y-12 in 1996. The origin of the display case and the bat's cause of death has not been determined. Subsequent surveys have not identified the presence of gray bats on the Oak Ridge Reservation.

The Y-12 SWEIS study area (approximately 3,638 acres) includes upper Bear Creek and its tributaries. Recent Oak Ridge National Laboratory surveys of Bear Creek tributaries have identified a number of State-listed plants including *Collinsonia verticillata* (Whorled horse-balm), *Lilium canadense* (Canada lily), *Panax quinquifolius* (Ginseng), and *Plantantera flava*