1. PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has prepared this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in accordance with the *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969* (NEPA) [42 United States Code (U.S.C.) Section 4321] to examine the environmental impacts associated with five alternatives for the treatment and storage of transuranic (TRU) and alpha low-level waste at Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), Oak Ridge, Tennessee. An important part of the NEPA process was the solicitation of public comments on a Draft EIS and consideration of those comments in the preparation of the Final EIS. DOE distributed copies of the Draft EIS to those who were known to have an interest in the Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR) in addition to those who asked for a copy.

DOE issued the Draft EIS in February 2000 for review and comment by the State of Tennessee, Native American tribes, local governments, other federal agencies, and the general public. The formal public comment period lasted 45 days, ending April 17, 2000. DOE considered all comments received to evaluate the accuracy and adequacy of the Draft EIS and gave equal weight to written comments and to oral comments provided at the public hearing.

Chapter 3 of this volume contains copies of all comments received on the Draft EIS. All comments, whether received by letter, electronic mail, orally during the public hearing, or by other means, have been reproduced on the left side of the pages in Chapter 3 of this volume. Individual comments are marked with a sidebar to the right of the corresponding text and given a unique alphanumeric comment identifier. Responses to the comment can be identified by the alphanumeric identifier.

1.2 PUBLIC HEARING FORMAT

On March 21, 2000, a public hearing was held in the Oak Ridge Mall at 6:30 p.m. Oral comments made during the public hearing were recorded by a court reporter, and a transcript of the hearing was made. The public hearing held on the Draft EIS was conducted using an informal format. This format allowed for a two-way interaction between DOE and the public. A brief summary of the Draft EIS using viewgraphs was provided by DOE to help direct and clarify discussions and comments. Every commentor was given time to formally present comments. Cards were also handed out so that the public could provide written comments at the hearing or mail them later.

Organization of this comment response document is as follows:

- *Chapter 1*—Describes the public comment process, the Comment Response Document (CRD), and the changes made in the EIS.
- *Chapter 2*—Presents a summary of the comments received on the Draft EIS.
- *Chapter 3*—Presents the copies of the original comments received from the public during the public comment period. Responses to these comments are provided alongside to the extent feasible.

Due to the relatively small number of comments, comments are addressed individually.

1.3 CHANGES TO THE DRAFT EIS

DOE revised the Draft EIS in response to the comments received. The text was changed to provide additional information, correct inaccuracies, make editorial corrections, and clarify technical discussions. In addition, DOE updated information due to events or decisions made in other documents since publication of the Draft EIS in February 2000.

New analyses were added to Chapter 4 that address on-site handling and transportation of solid waste. Also, new analyses were added that address impacts after the loss of institutional control which, for analyses purposes, is assumed to occur after 100 years. Changes to the Draft EIS made in the Final EIS are indicated by a vertical bar in the margin.

1.4 NEXT STEPS

The EIS Record of Decision (ROD), which DOE will publish no sooner than 30 days after the U.S. EPA issues the Notice of Availability of the Final EIS, will explain all factors, including environmental impacts, that DOE considered in reaching its decision. Generally, DOE considers environmental impacts of the various alternatives, regulations and other legal drivers, cost, implementability and other factors in reaching a decision.