



# U.S. Department of Energy

## Categorical Exclusion Determination Form

**Proposed Action Title:** Construction and Operation of the Talon Research and Development Facility at Oak Ridge National Laboratory

**Program or Field Office:** Office of Science - ORNL

**Location(s) (City/County/State):** Oak Ridge, Tennessee

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**Proposed Action Description:**

The DOE proposes to construct and operate a new research and development facility in Melton Valley at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL). The Talon Facility will be funded and operated in support of the DOE Science and Technology Mission and located near the intersection of Ramsey Drive and Melton Valley Access Road, southeast of the ORNL Main Campus and approximately one-half mile northeast of the High Flux Isotope Reactor Campus. The Talon facility has a planned building footprint of 15,800 SF and an overall total programmed area of 21,200 SF. The area of potential effects consists of approximately 4.9 acres of undeveloped greenfield (pre-WWII farmland grown back to forest), with 2.9 acres proposed for development. Research and development activities will meet the criteria of small and pilot scale as defined in the DOE NEPA Implementing Procedures. The facility design, construction, and operation will incorporate appropriate safety controls to handle chemical and radiological materials. All hazardous materials will be managed and disposed of in accordance with ORNL work controls and applicable regulations.

Site selection and characterization (sensitive ecological and cultural resources survey, geotechnical survey) was conducted for development of the preferred location near existing facilities and all regulatory consultations and permitting have been completed prior to development of the site, including but not limited to consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Tennessee Division of Storm Water Pollution Control (TN-SWPC), and the Tennessee State Historic Preservation Office (TN-SHPO). A CERCLA Screening Investigation, which included historical research of potential legacy contamination and subsequent soil sampling and laboratory analysis at 5 locations within the project footprint and two bias samples at storm water runoff locations, concluded: "The TALON sample results from this CERCLA screening activity for Melton Valley contaminants of concern indicate that there are no identifiable risks based on industrial use criteria."

This new facility will be constructed within a natural area contiguous to Ramsey Road and Melton Valley Access Road and connected to nearby utilities along Ramsey Road (water, fiber optic, sewer, and electricity). Major upgrades or alteration of existing infrastructure will not be required, and operation of the facility will utilize existing logistical support organizations and staff, including but not limited to delivery, maintenance, utilities, and waste management services.

Appropriate storm water pollution control methods (erosion prevention and sediment controls) will be installed and inspected prior to beginning construction activities and maintained in an effective state until final stabilization of the site. Water spray will be utilized to control airborne dust emissions if needed, and stormwater runoff will be monitored and regulated to prevent uncontrolled non-storm water discharges to storm drains and/or waters of the state. If legacy contamination is discovered during site preparation this will be contained and remediated in consultation with DOE and appropriate regulatory authorities under a separate project before construction of any building(s). Construction activities and subsequent operation of the site will be conducted in accordance with all applicable permits and other regulatory requirements. Although a wetland is present within the area of potential effects, the project design has avoided disturbance to this wetland in consultation with the Tennessee Division of Water Resources. Identified in the Notice of Intent for construction activities, the wetland was accounted for in the Tennessee Department of Environmental & Conservation's (TDEC) review of the project construction stormwater permitting effort and is located outside of the Talon disturbance boundary. TDEC concurred with DOE plans and issued a Notice of Coverage on 11/26/2025 and no additional consultation with any regulatory body about the wetland is required.

A cultural resources survey and evaluation of the proposed area of disturbance have been completed. This assessment included a walkover survey, a comprehensive records search, and a written analysis summarizing any known or suspected archaeological features. Consultation with the Tennessee State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) confirmed that a Phase I archaeological survey was required. That survey was conducted on February 18, 2026, and identified no archaeological sites or previously recorded sites within the Area of Potential Effects (APE). Because no archaeological resources will be impacted by the proposed construction activities, no additional archaeological investigations are recommended. The results of the survey were submitted to the Tennessee SHPO for concurrence and were approved on February 20, 2026. Consequently, the project has been determined to have no adverse effect and may proceed as planned. Should the footprint of ground-disturbing activities enlarge, or any significant cultural resources (such as human remains) be encountered during construction, a stop work will be issued immediately and ORNL CRM SME will be notified for further actions.

No known extraordinary circumstances would be associated with these actions that might affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposed action. These actions would not be connected with other reasonably foreseeable DOE actions with potentially significant impacts or related to other proposed actions with cumulatively significant impacts; they would meet the conditions that are integral elements of the classes of actions which may be categorically excluded from further NEPA documentation. Should the action not meet the conditions for CX consideration, a separate NEPA document would be prepared.

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**Categorical Exclusion(s) Applied:**

B1.15 - Support buildings

B3.6 - Small-scale research and development, laboratory operations, and pilot projects

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For the complete DOE National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures regarding categorical exclusions, including the full text of each categorical exclusion, see Chapter 5 of the U.S. Department of Energy National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Procedures, established June 30, 2025.

Procedural Requirements in Chapter 5.4 *Applying one or more categorical exclusions to a proposal*: (See full text in the DOE NEPA Implementing Procedures)

The proposal fits within a class of actions that is listed in Appendix B or C to DOE NEPA Implementing Procedures. To fit within the classes of actions listed in Appendix B: Categorical Exclusions Applicable to Specific Agency Actions or Appendix C: Categorical Exclusions Adopted Pursuant to Section 109 (42 U.S.C. 4336c), a proposal must be one that would not:

(1) threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders.

(2) require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators), but the proposal may include categorically excluded waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment actions or facilities;

(3) disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA-excluded petroleum and natural gas products that preexist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases;

(4) have the potential to cause significant impacts (Chapter 3.2 Evaluating Significance, at (c), “*context of the affected environment*”) on environmentally sensitive resources, including, but not limited to, those listed in paragraph B. *Conditions that are Integral Elements of the Classes of Actions in Appendix B*, at subparagraph (4) of the DOE NEPA Implementing Procedures, Appendix B;

(5) involve genetically engineered organisms, synthetic biology, governmentally designated noxious weeds, or invasive species, unless the proposed activity would be contained or confined in a manner designed and operated to prevent unauthorized release into the environment and conducted in accordance with applicable requirements, such as those listed in paragraph B (5) of the DOE NEPA Implementing Procedures, Appendix B.

The proposal is not connected to other reasonably foreseeable DOE actions.

There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposal that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal (Chapter 5.4 (c) (3)).

This proposal is not connected to other actions with potentially significant impacts, is not related to other proposed DOE actions or reasonably foreseeable DOE actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts (Chapter 8.0 Definitions, at “*Connected Action*”) and this categorical exclusion determination was prepared and approved in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4331, et seq.) and the DOE NEPA Implementing Procedures (published June 30, 2025).

The above description accurately describes the proposed action, which reflects the requirements of the CX cited above. Therefore, I recommend that the proposed action be categorically excluded from further NEPA review and documentation.

**ORNL DOE Site Office:** Socorro Guy

**Date Determined:**

As DOE Counsel, I have reviewed the proposed action description and above-cited CX at the request of the NEPA Compliance Officer and concur that the proposed action fits within the specified class(es) of action, and the other regulatory requirements set forth above are met.

**DOE Counsel (if requested):** Michelle McKown

**Date Determined:**

Based on my review of the proposed action, as NEPA Compliance Officer (as authorized under DOE Policy 451.1, I have determined that the proposed action fits within the specified class(es) of action, the other regulatory requirements set forth above are met, and the proposed action is hereby categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

**NEPA Compliance Officer:** Jayashree Jayaraj

**Date Determined:**