

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2729

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 22, 2009

Received; read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural
Resources

AN ACT

To authorize the designation of National Environmental Research Parks by the Secretary of Energy, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) The National Environmental Research
4 Parks are unique outdoor laboratories that provide
5 opportunities for environmental studies on protected
6 lands around Department of Energy facilities.

7 (2) In 1972, the Atomic Energy Commission
8 established its first official environmental research
9 park at the Savannah River site in South Carolina.

10 (3) In 1976, the Department of Energy defined
11 the mission for the research parks in accordance
12 with the recommendations of the multiagency review
13 team for environmental research activities at the Sa-
14 vannah River site.

15 (4) The mission of the research parks is to—

16 (A) conduct research and education activi-
17 ties to assess and document environmental ef-
18 fects associated with energy and weapons use;

19 (B) explore methods for eliminating or
20 minimizing adverse effects of energy develop-
21 ment and nuclear materials on the environment;

22 (C) train people in ecological and environ-
23 mental sciences; and

24 (D) educate the public.

25 (5) The National Environmental Research
26 Parks are located within six major ecological regions

1 of the United States, covering more than half of the
2 Nation.

3 (6) The parks are especially valuable research
4 sites because within their borders they provide se-
5 cure settings for scientists to conduct long-term re-
6 search on a broad range of subjects including—

7 (A) plant succession;

8 (B) biomass production;

9 (C) population ecology;

10 (D) radioecology;

11 (E) ecological restoration; and

12 (F) thermal effects on freshwater eco-
13 systems.

14 (7) The parks maintain several long-term data
15 sets that are available nowhere else in the United
16 States or in the world on amphibian populations,
17 bird populations, and soil moisture and plant water
18 stress. These data sets are uniquely valuable for the
19 detection of long-term shifts in climate.

20 (8) The maintenance of these parks by the De-
21 partment of Energy is consistent with statutory obli-
22 gations to promote sound environmental stewardship
23 of Federal lands and to safeguard sites containing
24 cultural and archeological resources.

1 (9) Public education and outreach activities car-
2 ried out on these sites provide unique learning op-
3 portunities, promote a stronger connection between
4 these Federal facilities and the surrounding commu-
5 nities, and enhance public confidence that the De-
6 partment of Energy is fulfilling its environmental
7 stewardship responsibilities.

8 **SEC. 2. NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH PARKS.**

9 (a) DESIGNATION.—The Secretary of Energy shall
10 designate the six National Environmental Research Parks
11 located on Department of Energy sites as protected out-
12 door research reserves for the purposes of conducting
13 long-term environmental research on the impacts of
14 human activities on the natural environment. The six Na-
15 tional Environmental Research Parks shall include—

16 (1) the Savannah River National Environ-
17 mental Research Park;

18 (2) the Idaho National Environmental Research
19 Park;

20 (3) the Los Alamos National Environmental
21 Research Park;

22 (4) the Fermi Lab National Environmental Re-
23 search Park;

24 (5) the Oak Ridge National Environmental Re-
25 search Park; and

1 (6) the Nevada National Environmental Re-
2 search Park.

3 (b) PURPOSES.—Each site shall support—

4 (1) environmental research and monitoring ac-
5 tivities to characterize and monitor present and fu-
6 ture site conditions, and serve as control areas for
7 comparison with environmental impacts of Depart-
8 ment of Energy land management, energy tech-
9 nology development, remediation, and other site ac-
10 tivities outside the National Environmental Research
11 Park areas. Areas of research and monitoring on the
12 sites may include—

13 (A) ecology of the site and the region;

14 (B) population biology and ecology;

15 (C) radioecology;

16 (D) effects of climate variability and
17 change on ecosystems;

18 (E) ecosystem science;

19 (F) pollution fate and transport research;

20 (G) surface and groundwater modeling;

21 and

22 (H) environmental impacts of development
23 and use of energy generation technologies, in-
24 cluding renewable energy technologies; and

1 (2) public education and outreach activities con-
2 sistent with subsection (d).

3 (c) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT.—To ensure the inde-
4 pendence of the research, monitoring, public education,
5 and outreach activities conducted on each site, the Sec-
6 retary shall enter into a cooperative agreement with a uni-
7 versity, community college, or consortium of institutions
8 of higher education with expertise in ecology and environ-
9 mental science of the region in which the National Envi-
10 ronmental Research Park is located.

11 (d) ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND OUT-
12 REACH.—Each site shall support an outreach program to
13 inform the public of the diverse ecological activities con-
14 ducted at the park and to educate students at various lev-
15 els in environmental science. Program activities may in-
16 clude—

17 (1) on-site and in-classroom education pro-
18 grams for elementary and secondary students;

19 (2) presentations to school, civic, and profes-
20 sional groups;

21 (3) exhibits at local and regional events;

22 (4) development of educational projects and
23 materials for students at all levels;

24 (5) undergraduate and community college in-
25 ternships and graduate research opportunities; and

1 (6) regularly scheduled public tours.

2 (e) COORDINATION.—The Secretary of Energy shall
3 designate a National Environmental Research Park Coor-
4 dinator within the Department of Energy Office of
5 Science. The Coordinator shall—

6 (1) coordinate research activities among the
7 National Environmental Research Parks as appro-
8 priate;

9 (2) ensure that information on best practices
10 for research, education, and outreach activities is
11 shared among the sites; and

12 (3) serve as liaison to other Federal agencies to
13 facilitate collaborative work at the Parks.

14 (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
15 are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of En-
16 ergy, acting through the Director of the Office of Science,
17 for carrying out this section \$30,000,000, including
18 \$5,000,000 for each National Environmental Research
19 Park, for each of the fiscal years 2010 through 2014.

20 **SEC. 3. SAVINGS.**

21 Nothing in this Act shall be construed to limit the
22 activities that the Federal Government may carry out or
23 authorize on a site on which a National Environmental
24 Research Park is located.

1 **SEC. 4. SUMMER INSTITUTES PROGRAM.**

2 The National Environmental Research Parks may be
3 utilized to provide educational opportunities through the
4 Summer Institutes program authorized in section 3185 of
5 the Department of Energy Science Education Enhance-
6 ment Act (42 U.S.C. 7381n).

Passed the House of Representatives July 21, 2009.

Attest: LORRAINE C. MILLER,
Clerk.