SPRING 2008

PRESERVE HIGHLIGHTS

Fernald Preserve

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August 20

First On-Site Community Meeting

6:30 p.m.

Fernald Preserve Visitors Center
7400 Willey Road
Harrison, Ohio 45030

Spotlight

The Fernald Preserve, which is located on 1,050 acres in northwest Hamilton County, was established following the cleanup and ecological restoration of the former Fernald uranium foundry.

The $14 million ecological restoration incorporated native plants and grasses that were identified in an 1819 land survey. The current landscape features 400 acres of woodlots, 327 acres of prairie, 140 acres of open water and wetlands, and 33 acres of savanna. A diverse array of wildlife is already well established at the preserve.

Plant Profile

The Fernald Preserve Visitors Center will highlight a diverse mix of plants and grasses surrounding the building. The plants have been placed for aesthetic reasons and to provide food and cover for a wide range of birds and insects. The area near the parking lot has been planted with a number of native trees, shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers, too. The use of native landscaping at the Visitors Center may help to gain Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification. Native plants are low maintenance, provide excellent wildlife habitat, and look great!

Wastewater from the Visitors Center will be treated in a biowetland system that depends on plants to host the bacteria that break down the waste. The plants also help to filter and cleanse the water. Blue flag iris, dark green bulrush, common arrowhead, and prairie cord grass will be seen in this biowetland, as well as other wetlands throughout the preserve.

Did you know...

Baltimore orioles have arrived at the Fernald Preserve this spring to begin nesting. The bird's brilliant orange and black plumage makes it instantly recognizable, and their nest is a true engineering marvel. The gourd-shaped nest is woven from animal hair, plant fiber, and any synthetic fibers, and it is hung by its rim from thin tree branches.

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Legacy Management Goals

Goal 1
Protect human health and the environment through effective and efficient long-term surveillance and maintenance.

Goal 2
Preserve, protect, and make accessible legacy records and information.

Goal 3
Support an effective and efficient work force structured to accomplish Departmental missions and assure contractor worker pension and medical benefits.

Goal 4
Manage legacy land and assets, emphasizing protective real and personal property reuse and disposition.

Goal 5
Improve program effectiveness through sound management.

Legacy Management's Mission: To manage the Department's post-closure responsibilities and ensure the future protection of human health and the environment. Legacy Management has control and custody for legacy land, structures, and facilities and is responsible for maintaining them at levels consistent with Departmental long-term plans.

Meeting the Mission

Goal 4: The completion of the Fernald Preserve Visitors Center illustrates how the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Legacy Management is effectively managing the Fernald property and its assets. The Visitors Center, which will be completed in August of this year, has been designed in cooperation with the University of Cincinnati's College of Design, Art, Architecture, and Planning. Through a series of exhibits, the Visitors Center will detail the diverse history of Fernald from the time Native Americans inhabited the site, to the arrival of settlers and farmers, to the uranium production years, to the eventual environmental cleanup and the legacy management period that continues today. Consistent with its new role as a nature preserve, the Visitors Center will also house information on the Fernald Preserve's natural attractions.

The Visitors Center has been planned and constructed in a manner that will allow it to achieve certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. The Council sponsors the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design rating system, which is the nationally recognized benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high-performance "green" buildings.

Fun Fact

Often viewed as a nuisance, the common American crow maintains strong family ties through much of its life. American crows do not breed until they are at least 2 years old, and most do not breed until their fourth year or later. Crows typically stay with their parents and help them raise young in the following years. Families often include up to 15 individuals and contain young from five different generations.

Nature Nook

American Toad *Bufo americanus*

Legacy Management is responsible for managing the site's resources in a manner that will allow the restored land to achieve its full potential as both wildlife habitat and recreational space. Beginning this summer, visitors to the Fernald Preserve will have access to a system of trails for viewing the site's flora and fauna. During this period of trail development, individuals and groups can request escorted tours to view additional areas of the site. Strategically placed observation areas will also add to the wildlife-viewing experience.

We want to stress that we are always open to suggestions on how to improve the Fernald Preserve and to make it a more enjoyable place to visit, so please feel free to let us know your ideas. Please remember that the preserve is a land in transition and that you'll be sharing your visit with workers continuing our ecological-restoration and aquifer-cleanup efforts. You can assist us in this transformation by driving only on paved roads and not walking off the trails.

Individual Effort

Steve Wentzel -
Safety and Health Lead

When Steve Wentzel came to Fernald in 1972, uranium was still being produced on site, and remediation was years away. He calls the changes he's seen "tremendous." "I think if we had been talking five years ago, saying we'd be at this stage right now, I think there would have been a lot of doubting Thomases," he says.

One thing that has been constant since Steve's first day at Fernald is the U.S. Department of Energy's commitment to safety. "There's a very high degree of interest in making sure people don't get hurt on the job," he says. That's why Steve's job is so important. As the eastern region health and safety lead, he makes sure fieldwork proceeds as safely as possible at Fernald and at other sites. "When you're out in the field, you're coaching," he says. "If you see someone and something's wrong, you point out how they can improve, and if you see someone doing something right, you say they're doing a good job."

It's working with those people that Steve most enjoys about his job. "It's always been about the people out here," he says. "If you talk to anyone out here, they'll say the same thing." Of course, it's also the people who make his job challenging. "There are these little devils who want to run around and do things their way," he jokes. "It's human nature."

Steve keeps working to make sure safety stays on his co-workers' minds. He sees safety as a relationship between the contractor and the subcontractors, and both parties have to understand what is expected of them and how they can fulfill those expectations. "It's always easier to talk it through at the beginning rather than to try to talk it through afterward," says Steve. "It's important that those safety expectations are set up front."

Visitors Center

Warm weather has arrived, and construction activity is at its peak at the Fernald Preserve Visitors Center, with completion now planned for late summer. The framing of the interior walls, including dry-walling, is now complete, and the walls are painted. Fabrication of the displays in the exhibit area is also in progress.

To reduce the amount of energy required for temperature regulation, we are installing a geothermal heating and cooling system, which takes advantage of the constant temperature of the Earth (between 50 and 60 degrees Fahrenheit). The geothermal system has a heat pump, which transfers heat from a nearby lake to the building in the winter and from the building to the lake in the summer.

PRESERVE HIGHLIGHTS

Fernald Preserve

As a community asset, the Fernald Preserve will foster wildlife habitat and provide educational opportunities through environmental stewardship.

Community Relations

As spring comes to the Fernald Preserve, recent tour groups have included families, schools, and Scout groups. For the third consecutive year, students from nearby Harrison High School participated in the Ohio Vernal Pool Partnership, a statewide program initiated to encourage conservation through education, partnership, science, and the discovery of the natural world. The students collect information about three water areas in the north sector of the site, and the information is entered in a statewide database.

The Fernald Preserve maintains an active public outreach program with schools, conservation organizations, community groups, and others. If you or your organization would like to learn more about the Fernald Preserve or tour the site, please contact Sue Walpole at (513) 648-4026.

Think Green

E-mail fernald@LM.doe.gov if you would like to receive this quarterly newsletter electronically.