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**FERNALD 1994 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT FACT SHEET (HANDOUT
FROM 10/18/94 COMMUNITY MEETING)**

10/01/94

DOE-FN PUBLIC
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FACT SHEET


FERNALD

Environmental Management Project

1994 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

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1994 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

1994 Community Assessment

The Department of Energy (DOE) conducted a comprehensive community assessment in May 1994 to improve its understanding of community concerns, needs and interests. A community assessment is a series of interviews with members of the public who are impacted, or potentially impacted, by activities at the Fernald site.

The assessment involved 50 face-to-face interviews with community leaders, including business owners, government officials, educators, local media, representatives of the Fernald Citizens Task Force, members of the Fernald Residents for Environmental Safety and Health, and others. To reach a broader cross-section of the public, the assessment also included 365 telephone interviews with residents within a 20-mile radius of the Fernald site.

By conducting the community assessment, DOE can monitor any changes in public interests, needs and concerns as the Fernald facility begins to transition from the remedial investigation/feasibility study phase to the remedial design and remedial action cleanup phase.

Employee Communications Audit

In addition to the community assessment, DOE commissioned a separate internal communications audit with Fernald employees. The assessment was conducted by the University of Cincinnati in July 1994. The purpose of the audit was to monitor employees' information needs and concerns and assess Fernald's organizational culture.

Feedback from both the community assessment and communications audit will be used to benchmark Fernald's effectiveness in delivering messages to employees and the community and to develop new or better approaches for informing and involving all stakeholders, including employees.

Community Concerns and Issues

Community concerns and issues raised during the 1994 community assessment can be linked to four core issues:

- *Providing truthful information about the Fernald site and site activities*
- *Involving stakeholders in the decision-making process throughout the cleanup process*
- *Public health and safety and environmental impacts*
- *Desire for site cleanup without wasting taxpayers' money*

Providing Timely, Truthful Information about the Fernald Site

Perhaps the most *positive* change from past community assessments is public recognition of Fernald management's openness and cooperation.

The 1994 community assessment indicates most community leaders are satisfied with the frequency, quantity and quality of information, but there is still an apparent need to present information in a more understandable form. More than half of the community leaders say their understanding of Fernald issues has changed due to information they have received. Most community leaders have established direct, personal contacts with Fernald organizations and are satisfied with them. Community leaders indicate information from Fernald is useful and say they are encouraged by recent efforts to reach and involve the public. But, many noted that the public must be *interested* and *willing* to be informed. The community leaders seem well-informed, and their evaluations of Fernald organizations' performance are positive.

Findings suggest general public respondents in the 5- and 20-mile areas are not as informed and are less positive about Fernald, in general, than community leaders. General public respondents almost exclusively rely on mass media for information about Fernald, unlike community leaders, who primarily receive their information directly from Fernald sources.

Community leaders' ratings of Fernald management's efforts to inform the public are higher than those of the general public. One-third of general public respondents do not know who to contact for Fernald-related concerns, so many say they would contact elected officials.

Involving Stakeholders in Fernald's Decision-Making Process

Half of the community leaders indicate they are receiving enough information to be involved in the decision-making process. Of the 50 percent who said they *are not* receiving sufficient information, some feel they can make no impact in the decision-making process and some simply do not envision themselves in the decision-making process.

Assessment findings indicate individuals living or working closer to the Fernald facility are more likely to participate in public involvement activities than people living or working farther from the facility. Most community leaders say they are satisfied with their current level of involvement and do not want to be more involved.

Findings indicate individuals farther from the Fernald facility prefer to be *informed* rather than actually *involved*. Evidence supporting this finding includes: wishes of several general public respondents to be added to Fernald's community mailing list and their lower level of participation in Fernald-sponsored activities, such as public meetings.

Among community leaders, the most positive aspect of the Fernald facility is improvement in public involvement. In comparison, general public respondents closest to the facility mention jobs and other economic benefits, and those farther from the facility either do not know or cannot say what is positive about the Fernald facility.

Public Health and Safety and Environmental Impacts

Comparing the 1994 community assessment with past assessments, another notable area is competition between concerns. While still significant, health and safety issues now seem to be competing with the public's desire for timely, cost-effective cleanup. As community leaders and general public respondents identified their specific concerns about Fernald, several common themes developed.

Most community leaders report no personal or family health problems which they attribute to Fernald. Community leaders who attribute personal or family health problems to Fernald cite cases of cancer, skin disorders, emotional distress and other health problems. In the 5-mile area, 16 percent of

Top 3 Community Concerns, Ranked in Order of Importance

Respondent Group	First-ranked Concern	Second-ranked Concern	Third-ranked Concern
Community Leaders	Groundwater and surface water contamination (20%)	Future use of the Fernald facility (16%)	Public and worker safety and health (14%) <i>and</i> Budget and Costs (14%)
General Public Respondents (5-mile area)	Public and worker safety and health (12%) <i>and</i> Fernald site cleanup progress (12%)	Environmental, economic and mental impacts of Fernald facility operations on the community (10%)	Public involvement, Public Information and Communication (7%)
General Public Respondents (20-mile area)	Public and worker safety and health (12%)	Fernald site cleanup progress (8%)	Groundwater and surface water contamination (6%)

general public respondents attribute health problems to Fernald, compared to 7 percent in the 20-mile area. However, most community leaders say they know other people, outside their own families, who attribute health problems to Fernald site activities.

Almost half of the community leaders believe their property, or family members' property or quality of life, have been negatively impacted by the Fernald facility. A few community leaders mention groundwater contamination as an example of how Fernald has negatively impacted local property values, as well as some residents' quality and cost of living. In comparison, 19 percent of general public respondents in the 5-mile area believe their property, or a family members' property, has been impacted by the Fernald site, compared to 8 percent in the 20-mile area.

Fernald Site Cleanup Schedule and Cost

Community leaders ranked concerns about public and worker safety and health equally with concerns over budget and costs. Some of the community leaders indicate concerns regarding the ultimate and expensive cost of cleanup, and some are concerned about availability of funds to complete the cleanup.

Fernald site cleanup progress is the sixth-ranked top concern among community leaders, but was tied for first among general public respondents in the 5-mile radius and second-ranked in the 20-mile area.

Among the community leaders, opinions regarding cleanup progress are mixed. Forty-two percent believe cleanup progress is slow, but 30 percent

perceive cleanup is progressing. Some believe cleanup has been stalled or delayed or that the paper work required during cleanup is burdensome. (General public respondents were not asked to respond to this question.)

Most community leaders believe cleanup is Fernald management's *current* top priority. However, less than half of all general public respondents and employees believe management is *currently* focusing on cleanup. Most community leaders and nearly half of all general public respondents and employees agree cleanup *should be* Fernald management's priority.

Publics' Preference on Key Decisions at Fernald

Several questions about the future of the Fernald site were included in the community assessment and internal communications audit to provide information on public preferences to the Fernald Citizens Task Force. Formed in 1993, the task force will develop recommendations about cleanup solutions and future courses of action at Fernald.

Cleanup Levels Most community leaders and Fernald employees do not believe the Fernald site should be cleaned to a "pristine" condition. Conversely, more than half of all general public respondents believe the site should be cleaned to pristine levels, even if achieving that cleanup level would require spending more taxpayer money than needed to meet cleanup levels mandated by government regulations.

Waste Disposal The most common preference for disposal of Fernald waste among community leaders, general public respondents in the 5- and 20-mile radius and employees is to dispose of waste in arid western states at existing government facilities, if possible. Eighteen percent of community leaders, 23 percent of employees, and approximately 4 percent of general public respondents (5- and 20-mile) acknowledged that some waste should be, or would have to be, stored on site.

Future Use Regarding the future use of the Fernald facility, most community leaders and employees would like the Fernald facility to return to a natural setting, such as a wildlife/nature preserve. Of the general public respondents in the 5- and 20-mile radius of the Fernald facility, one-third offered no specific suggestions on what should be done with the Fernald facility once cleanup is completed.

Fernald Facility Future Use Options Receiving the Most Comments

Respondent Group	Option Receiving the Highest Number of Related Comments	Option Receiving Second Highest Number of Related Comments	Option Receiving Third Highest Number of Related Comments
Community Leaders	Nature/Wildlife Preserve or Park (30% responses)	No Opinion/Undecided/Non-specific (22% responses)	Technology Center/Museum (16% responses)
General Public Respondents (5-mile area)	No Opinion/Undecided/Non-specific (32% responses)	Open Space (15% responses)	Nature/Wildlife Preserve or Park (9% responses)
General Public Respondents (20-mile area)	No Opinion/Undecided/Non-specific (34% responses)	Open Space (22% responses)	Nature/Wildlife Preserve or Park (14% responses)
Employees	Nature/Wildlife Preserve or Park (29% responses)	Isolate and Secure the Waste the Facility (21% responses)	Industrial Use (14% responses)

Revision of Fernald's Community Relations Plan

Feedback from the community assessment is an integral part of community relations planning at Fernald. Data from the assessment has been used to revise Fernald's *Community Relations Plan*, a regulatory required document that identifies ways in which the DOE will involve the public in decisions at the Fernald site. The ultimate objective of the *Community Relations Plan* is to bring public interests and project interests into alignment, thereby ensuring that project decisions reflect community concerns and values. The plan outlines continuing public participation throughout all phases of environmental restoration of the Fernald site.

When approved by the EPA, a copy of the *Community Relations Plan* will be placed in the Administrative Record, located at the Public Environmental Information Center, 19845 Hamilton-Cleves Highway, Harrison, Ohio, 513-738-0614 or 0615.

If you would like to learn more about public involvement opportunities, or would like to be placed on the Fernald site Community Relations Mailing list, please contact:

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