WINTER 2008

PRESERVE HIGHLIGHTS

Fernald Preserve

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March 5
Community Meeting
6:30 p.m.

Ross Fire House
2565 Cincinnati Brookville Road
Ross, Ohio 45014

10995 Hamilton-Cleves Hwy.
Harrison, Ohio 45030
(513) 648-6000
fernald@LM.doe.gov

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 and we are on schedule to open to the public in June 2008.

Plant Profile

The Fernald Preserve was once covered in a vast expanse of forest that stretched from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean to the tall grass prairies of the plains. Today, several hardwood forest types can be found in southwest Ohio, including beech-maple forests and oak-hickory forests. Each of these forests includes several oak trees as representative species. At the Fernald Preserve, 12 different species of oaks have been identified or planted as part of the forest restoration efforts. Several large specimens of burr oak, chinquapin oak, and shingle oak can be found in the wooded areas. For those individuals that once worked on site, the most recognizable hardwood trees are the five red oaks that were planted in front of the former Administration Building. These trees were kept as part of the restoration efforts and serve as one of the few visual reference points to the location of buildings that once stood on the former Production Area site.

Did you know...

A relatively large number of raptor species have been sighted at the Fernald Preserve, including a bald eagle, the most recent addition to Fernald's raptor list. First seen in mid-December, the eagle has been sighted on a number of occasions on the Preserve property.

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 Fernald Preserve's Visitors Center, which is now under construction, is an excellent example of how the U.S. Department of Energy is emphasizing protective real and personal property reuse. The Visitors Center was planned and is being constructed in a manner that will allow the building to achieve certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. The Council sponsors the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system, which is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high-performance green buildings. Achieving LEED certification provides independent third-party verification that a building project is environmentally responsible and a healthy place to work and visit. To achieve LEED certification, a building project must satisfy a number of prerequisites and earn points in six different categories, which include Sustainable Sites, Water Efficiency, Energy and Atmosphere, Materials and Resources, Indoor Environmental Quality, and Innovation in Design.

Advantages to LEED-certified buildings included, lower operating and maintenance costs, a high degree of energy and water efficiency, and a healthy and safe working environment. LEED-certified buildings also demonstrate the organizational core values of the company that own and occupy them.

Fun Fact

Native or indigenous plants evolve naturally in an ecosystem. They are vigorous, hardy, and best suited to survive in their environment. These plants need little watering or protection and are resistant to most pests and diseases. Humans have introduced many alien plant species into North America that compete with native plants. Restoration efforts at Fernald have focused on planting additional native plants and eradicating alien plant species.

Nature Nook

Canada goose *Branta canadensis*

During the last century, habitat loss and over-hunting nearly caused the extinction of the Canada goose. Reintroduction efforts over the past 40 years have allowed these geese to make a remarkable comeback. Unfortunately, today these once migratory birds are destroying restored areas, creating a terrible mess with their waste, and becoming aggressive toward people.

Prairie grasses and wetland plants planted in and around open water at the Fernald Preserve have created an ideal habit for these geese. In an effort to stop the geese from eating these young plants and establishing a permanent home at the Fernald Preserve, a goose-hazing program has been initiated. Dog handlers with border collies trained to chase only Canada geese have been visiting the site several times a week. The number of visits by the dog handlers will increase through the winter to discourage the geese from building nests on the site during the spring nesting season.

Individual Effort

Karen Voisard – Environmental Monitoring Lead

When Karen Voisard was growing up in St. Marys, Ohio (current population: 8,342), all she wanted to do was get out. That's why she went to Ohio State University, the biggest university in the state (current enrollment: 60,347). It was during her junior year in college that she first traveled west of the Mississippi—a geology-class trip to central Utah. This experience solidified her ties to the Midwest, even though the region is geologically less spectacular than the west.

That's part of why Karen took a job at Fernald, where she has worked for 15 years. For 11 of those years, she has been in charge of coordinating sampling activities at the site. "$4.4 billion was spent on the cleanup of the Fernald site," says Karen, "If you've spent that much money on a project, you need to make sure it was well spent." Karen's sampling helps to confirm that the cleanup "stuck." One of the many Legacy Management (LM) activities at the site is the cleaning of the groundwater in the Great Miami Aquifer, which was contaminated during plant operations, and sampling is an integral part of this restoration work.

Karen's years at Fernald have given her a great ability to seize on people's strengths and assemble the appropriate team to get the job done. Karen's hands-on knowledge of sampling requirements is another of her strengths. She looks forward to getting out into the field with her team and helping them collect samples. Recently, she was out at 5:00 a.m. in a downpour, taking 5-year surface water samples. "If I can't do something that I've asked them to do, then I don't feel comfortable asking them to do it," says Karen. "I came to the Fernald site not expecting a lot of opportunities," she says, "But you look back on all your experiences, and they do turn you into a well-rounded person." Most recently, Karen was named eastern sampling lead. Perhaps it's fitting that the woman who didn't travel west of the Mississippi until she was in her twenties now manages the sampling activities at all LM sites east of the Mississippi.

Visitors Center

Hard hats required!
The conversion from warehouse to Visitors Center has begun. The warehouse and surrounding area is now a construction zone. Project personnel from the S.M. Stoller Corporation, prime contractor to the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management, approved subcontractor plans to start the transformation. Interior demolition and the installation of water and electric have been completed. In the very near future the solstice wall will be finished. This wall will cut through the building and align with the sun as it rises above the on-site disposal facility on the summer solstice and sets in the west on the winter solstice.

The solstice line will be a recurring theme that visitors will recognize in the exhibit area, community multipurpose room, and the administrative areas of the building. The center is on schedule to open this June.

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

Community Relations

Although there have not been many tours during the winter months, recent visitors have included educators, families, and high school students working on a media project.

As construction continues on the Visitors Center, we are spending this time looking ahead by developing programs, finalizing policies, and preparing for the opening of the site and the Visitors Center this summer.

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.