



RECOMMENDATION #2002-02

COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT MASTER PLAN FOR PUBLIC USE ON THE FERNALD ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PROJECT

March 16, 2002
3 pages

Presented to: Gary Stegner, U.S. DOE, Fernald Site Office

Source of Recommendation:

- Full Board
- Stewardship Committee

Type of Recommendation:

- Initial
- Follow-on to Recommendation

Response Requested by: June 1, 2002, ongoing coordination also desired

The FCAB reviewed the master plan and held detailed discussions at its March 14, 2002 Stewardship Committee and March 16, 2002 full board meetings. Overall, the FCAB found that the draft Master Plan reflects previous input and discussions regarding the use of the Fernald site. However, there are a number of issues that require clarification and further elaboration. These are discussed below.

- The master plan is not clearly written or well organized. As it is no longer a NEPA document, we suggest the master plan be dramatically streamlined to clearly identify the components of the proposed action, placing the other alternatives in an appendix if needed. If this document is to truly serve as a Master Plan, it should be organized as such to clearly lay out all of the needed activities along with the details known to date and identify how the remaining details will be determined. A one page summary of public access decisions and appropriate timelines and tables of how those decisions will be implemented would greatly assist the reader and provide a better road map as the site moves toward closure.
- It is important to recognize the increased importance of this and similar documents in light of the acceleration of site activities toward a 2006 closure. In that light, we recommend that this report better recognize the critical need to integrate natural resource restoration and planning for future public use with remediation activities. The master plan must include a detailed timeline of key activities for the planning and implementation of the proposed restoration and public use actions showing how those will be integrated into remediation.
- The master plan defers discussion of the proposed Multi-Use Education Facility because too many questions remain unanswered. However, the document should outline next steps, DOE's participation, and a rough timeline for addressing these questions. Time is running out for adequate planning and funding of this facility as DOE's 2004 budget is already under development. A specific plan for this is needed in the very near future. Identification of how, when, by whom, and with what public input this plan will be developed must be included in the master plan.

- There is an ongoing concern about the successful implementation of healthy ecosystems on site, in particular prairies and wetlands. It is clear that DOE will only be able to complete the early stages of this work prior to site closure, while successful implementation of the public uses on site require that these ecosystems thrive. DOE needs to more clearly identify its responsibility, the procedures for bringing this about, and the criteria that will be used to judge success. It is time that we identify the final site stewards and begin to integrate them into the planning and implementation of these many important activities. Specific plans for both the successful implementation of ecosystems and the identification of stewards need to be developed in the very near future. Identification of how, when, by whom, and with what public input this plan will be developed must be included in the master plan.
- The master plan does not address the final disposition of the Cold War Garden. Plans must be made to safely remove and store the garden while remediation is completed and then install it in a permanent location on site. Identification of how, when, by whom, and with what public input this plan will be developed must be included in the master plan.
- The master plan indicates that no more than twenty interpretive stations are proposed for the trails. The master plan should provide some guidance for how the content and design of these interpretive stations will be developed. The public should be involved in these decisions. Because there is no interpretive plan at this time, it is likely too early to determine the number of interpretive stations that are necessary or feasible. Without specific justification, we suggest that this number be dropped from the master plan. A specific plan for determining the number and type of signs will need to be developed prior to the end of remediation. Identification of how, when, by whom, and with what public input this plan will be developed must be included in the master plan.
- The master plan suggests that a perimeter fence will enclose the entire property. This is an idea that has not been addressed previously with the public. More detail is needed regarding the nature of this fencing and how it will fit in with the overall future use of the site (height, appearance, material, etc...). Detailed discussion and public involvement will be necessary for this activity.
- The document refers to trails as "hiking and walking" and this creates some confusion. All trails are ultimately for the same historical and educational purposes and are not meant to encourage hiking. We suggest dropping that "hiking" distinction.
- The master plan does not address fishing on the Fernald site. We do not believe that fishing is conducive to the non-recreational and educational future use of the site. We wish to see the final site configuration discourage the lengthy stays, picnicking, digging for worms, wading, off-trail hiking, and on-site staffing requirements that fishing would entail. At the same time, we recognize that preventing all fishing may be difficult and request that studies and monitoring be conducted to ensure that any fish caught in Fernald waters will be safe to consume. A specific plan for this will need to be developed prior to the end of remediation. Identification of how, when, by whom, and with what public input this plan will be developed must be included in the master plan.
- The master plan would prohibit hunting or trapping of any kind, except for wildlife management or research purposes. When hunting or trapping will occur for management or research purposes, information should be available for the public regarding the nature and extent of these activities. A specific plan for this will need to be developed prior to the end

of remediation. Identification of how, when, by whom, and with what public input this plan will be developed must be included in the master plan.

- In addition to the specific plans we identify above, it is clear that the majority of specific and important decisions regarding future use and access to the site will be determined within design documents. The Master Plan must identify each of these documents and provide a detailed timeline of their development and plans for public comment. Public input into those documents will be the most critical component of planning for the future use and long term stewardship of the Fernald site.

In addition to the above comments, the FCAB endorses the specific recommendations made by Ohio EPA in their March 14, 2002 letter of comment. The FCAB appreciates the opportunity to review this master plan and looks forward to continuing to work closely with DOE in planning and implementing all aspects of future use and long term stewardship at Fernald.