



**Future of Fernald Workshop IV:
Exploring Long-Term Public Access to
Site Records
March 13, 2002**

Participant Workbook

**Sponsored By:
Fernald Citizens Advisory Board
Fernald Living History, Inc.
Fernald Residents for Environmental Safety**

Workshop Overview

At this workshop, the Stewardship Committee of the Fernald Citizens Advisory Committee is seeking answers to two important questions.

- B. What will the community want to know about the Fernald site when the environmental cleanup is complete?
- C. What are the best ways to provide this information for the community over the long term?

This booklet will help you understand some of the issues that must be addressed to answer these questions. Community discussions will explore both questions in breakout sessions as follows.

Breakout Session 1: What Information Will the Community Need during Long-Term Stewardship?

A well-informed public is an important key to successful long-term stewardship. While there is much experience in providing public information in the planning and implementation of remedial actions, few models exist for determining what information should be made available to the public *following completion* of a remedial action program and how to provide the information in an effective way over the long term. Breakout Session 1 will address the kinds of information the community will need in the future in these four topic areas:

- A. *Records of Uranium Production and Environmental Cleanup*
- B. *Records Generated during Long-Term Stewardship*
- C. *Cold War and Environmental Cleanup Artifacts and Photographs*
- D. *Cultural and Natural History Information*

Breakout Session 2: How Will the Public Access Fernald Records and Other Information?

Simply preserving or duplicating information that the community needs is not enough. Members of the public must be able to access this information in a way that is both convenient and comfortable for them and will provide future generations with the ongoing knowledge needed to be good stewards of the Fernald site and its history. Breakout Session 1 will address concerns regarding how the public will access information about Fernald over the long-term in four topic areas:

- A. *What kind of future access to records does the community desire?*
- B. *In what formats and media should the information be presented?*
- C. *How should the public be informed about what information is available?*
- E. *Who should be responsible for long-term public access to Fernald records and other information?*

Workshop Agenda

- 6:00 Displays about Fernald and Site Records
- 6:30 Welcome and Introduction
- 6:40 Background Information
- 7:00 Breakout Session 1—What Information Will the Community Need?
 - A. Production and Cleanup Records
 - B. Long-Term Stewardship Records
 - C. Cold War and Cleanup Artifacts and Photographs
 - D. Cultural and Natural Resources
- 7:45 Breakout Session 2—How will the Public Access Records and Other Information?
 - A. Access
 - B. Media and Format
 - C. Outreach and Education
 - D. Management
- 8:30 Reports from Breakout Sessions
- 9:00 Adjourn

Background on the Fernald Environmental Management Project and the Future of Fernald

For nearly 40 years, until its closure in 1989, the Fernald site produced uranium metals for nuclear weapons; in the process releasing uranium contamination to the soil and water at the property. For the last decade, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), which operates the site, has been working to manage this contamination. Thousands of tons of contaminated materials have been shipped off the site, while materials with lower concentrations of contaminants have been placed in a specially designed on-site disposal facility.

The site is scheduled for closure in 2006, meaning that the site will meet agreed upon cleanup levels for contaminants and that polluted groundwater will be contained, with long-term treatment and monitoring in place. Access to the on-site disposal facility will be restricted and future uses of the site will be limited to environmental, educational, and recreational uses. Nearly eighty percent of the 1050-acre site will be restored to native wetlands, forest, and prairie, and will include public hiking trails. Some areas will be used for the reburial of Native American remains.

Since 1999, area citizens have been engaged in the *Future of Fernald* project to identify specific uses of the property following remediation. One result of this process is that community members have recommended construction of a public education facility at the site, and have identified some criteria for this facility and an associated educational trail network. Details of what this center will include continue to be the focus of the Future of Fernald process. A design charrette is being planned for the summer of 2002 to integrate previous ideas with the results of tonight's workshop to develop a conceptual design of specific elements of the educational center.

Management of the site after closure is known as long-term stewardship. Long-term stewardship at Fernald will consist primarily of monitoring and maintenance of the on-site disposal facility in order to ensure that human health and the environment are protected. While DOE is responsible for these activities, it has not yet been determined how they will be conducted or by whom. Projects to restore the natural environment also will be monitored and maintained and any trails or other public use amenities will be maintained to a safe condition. Again, decisions regarding who will conduct these functions have yet to be made.

**Discussion Questions for Breakout Session 1:
What Information Will the Community Need during Long-Term
Stewardship?**

A. Records of Uranium Production and Environmental Cleanup

According to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), records are materials made or received by a Federal agency to comply with a law or conduct public business. Fifty years of activity at the site has resulted in an enormous volume of records. Currently, there are more than 36,000 boxes of records stored by the site. Many more will be produced as the site approaches closure. While some of these records will be destroyed to comply with NARA schedules, many will be preserved indefinitely. Because such a large number of records will be preserved, it may not be feasible or useful for all records to be accessed in the same manner or to the same degree. Original records will be preserved and accessible according to NARA regulations. Copies of records could be kept on hand at the Fernald site or other local sites if desired.

- For what purposes will the community need access to site records?

- In the future, what will community members need to know about the production of uranium at Fernald and the resulting environmental contamination?

- In the future, what will community members need to know about the decision-making for environmental cleanup, and how the cleanup was conducted?

- What will the community need to know about contaminated materials that remain at the site after cleanup is completed?

- Are there other kinds of information the public will need in the future?

**Discussion Questions for Breakout Session 1:
What Information Will the Community Need during Long-Term
Stewardship?**

C. Cold War and Environmental Cleanup Artifacts and Photographs

In addition to documents, other items can help tell the story of what happened at Fernald. Staff have identified and photographed nearly 100 items, including the original time clock and several models of site facilities. It is likely that cultural artifacts from the Cold War era at Fernald, such as worker newsletters, can be found throughout the community.

There are also nearly 100,000 photographic negatives, prints, digital images, films, and videotapes that document the site's history, uranium production, and environmental cleanup. In addition, the Fernald Living History Project has videotaped one hundred interviews with retired employees and other community members, capturing the site's history through their words and memories.

- What does the community need to know about the Cold War history and legacy at Fernald?

- What kinds of artifacts, photographs, and films should be on display at the site?

- For what purposes would the community use these kinds of artifacts and photographs?

Discussion Questions for Breakout Session 1: What Information Will the Community Need during Long-Term Stewardship?

D. Cultural and Natural History Information

The cultural significance of this site extends well beyond the Cold War and its environmental legacy. Archaeological investigations at the site have yielded nearly 1,000 Native American artifacts such as tools and pottery fragments. Building on this rich past, the site will be used for the reinterment of some Native American remains that have been displaced from original burial sites at other locations.

The site will also provide an opportunity to learn about the natural environment of Southwest Ohio. As part of a Natural Resources Damages settlement, the DOE agreed to restore approximately 800 acres of the site to native forests, wetlands, and prairie. The resulting system of natural communities will provide an excellent opportunity to learn about and enjoy the region's plants, animals, and other environmental heritage.

- What will the community want to know about the Native American past at the site?

- What will the community need to know about the reinterment of Native American remains at the site?

- Are there other periods of history at the site about which the community will want information?

- What will the community want to know about the plants, animals, and other natural features that can be found in the restored areas of the site?

Discussion Questions for Breakout Session 2: How Will the Public Access Fernald Records and Other Information?

B. In what formats and media should the information be presented?

Much of the information regarding the Fernald site currently exists as lengthy, technical documents. While these documents are appropriate for some uses, they may not be the best format for communicating information to the community. The same kinds of information that appear in these detailed reports could also be captured in easy-to-read summaries or represented in graphs, maps, or other illustrations.

Likewise, the same information can be presented through different media. Due to the limitations of electronic storage, most records will be stored as paper. Documents, however, could also be converted to electronic formats or film and distributed through computer disks and the Internet. Photographs and video also could be converted to computerized formats. Photographs and digital images of artifacts could allow community members to explore objects that may be too large or fragile to handle.

- What kinds of information are best suited to technical reports, easy-to-read summaries, maps, and other graphics?

- What media—e.g., computers, video, or paper—should be used to access records and other information?

- Are there some formats or media that create obstacles to public access?

- Are there real-life examples that should be used as models for communicating information about Fernald?

Discussion Questions for Breakout Session 2: How Will the Public Access Fernald Records and Other Information?

C. How should the public be informed about what information is available?

Convenient and high quality information is of little value if people do not know that it exists or how they can obtain access to it. Communities surrounding Fernald will grow in the future, and new community members may not be familiar with the site's history. Likewise, future generations will be unaware of Fernald, unless there is a mechanism to pass along knowledge about the site and the information that is available.

- How do people currently get information about Fernald and other aspects of the community?
- In the years and decades that will follow the completion of the Fernald cleanup, how can public awareness of the site be assured?
- How could new residents be made aware of the site, its history, and the information that is available?
- What institutions should provide information about Fernald in the future—churches, schools and universities, government agencies, real estate professionals, public utilities, or others?

Discussion Questions for Breakout Session 2: How Will the Public Access Fernald Records and Other Information?

D. Who should be responsible for long-term public access to Fernald records and other information?

While DOE will maintain ownership of the Fernald site in perpetuity, this federal agency may not be the best institution to ensure public access to information for the long term. Although ownership of records and artifacts can be transferred outside the agency, it is more likely that original site records will be housed in a Federal Records Center or National Archive. However, copies of the records could be managed by a many kinds of institutions, including universities, nonprofit organizations, local governments, state agencies, federal agencies and historical societies. Community members have already recommended the construction of a public education facility at the site, but a manager for that facility has not been determined.

- What organizations or institutions will be most likely to maintain a presence in the Fernald region in future decades and centuries?
- What organizations would be most effective and reliable in providing useful information to the public?
- Who should fund the ongoing management and updating of public information?
- If an education facility is constructed at the site, who should manage it?