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Federal Facilities Restoration and Reuse Office



Federal Facilities
Environmental
Restoration
Dialogue
Committee

A Federal Agency Collaboration

FFERDC—A Blueprint for Creative Solutions

It has become increasingly important that public stakeholders—citizens like you—take an active role in effectively influencing and overseeing decisions concerned with the cleanup of federal facilities. To foster this collaboration between federal agencies and citizens, in 1993 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established a forum, the Federal Facilities Environmental Restoration Dialogue Committee (FFERDC). FFERDC's mission was to provide a blueprint for all stakeholders—the public, regulators, and regulated agencies—to develop creative solutions to the challenges associated with environmental pollution at federal facilities. The dialogue set a high standard for public participation and serves as a model for all serious environmental dialogues.

The blueprint contained in [the FFERDC] report is the bridge to the future of our cleanup program. Cleanups done efficiently and effectively with the support and backing of affected communities, as recommended by the Committee, are investments that build healthy and safe American communities.

**Tad McCall, Assistant Secretary
U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C.**

Federal facility sites are the bases, installations, plants, field offices, and laboratories owned and operated by the federal government, or operated for the federal government under contract. Agencies that operate these facilities include

- the Department of Defense (DoD);

- the Department of Energy (DOE); and
- the Department of Interior (DOI) units including the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Bureau of Reclamation.

The Committee members, representing diverse interests, released the FFERDC Final Report (also known as the Keystone or “teal” report) in April 1996. The principles and recommendations outlined in this Report reflect the consensus of 50 perspectives of those involved with and affected by federal facilities cleanup decisions. The FFERDC Final Report presents a new approach for making federal facilities cleanup decisions reflect the priorities and concerns of all stakeholders.

As part of the FFERDC dialogue, the Committee released 14 principles it believed should be the basis for making federal facility cleanup decisions and should apply to all persons and institutions involved in the process. These principles serve as a foundation for the Committee's specific recommendations about four key areas: 1) sharing information, 2) ensuring environmental justice, 3) establishing advisory boards, and 4) understanding the federal budget process.

Sharing Information

Stakeholders are people affected by or who otherwise have an interest or “stake” in federal facility cleanup decisions. To improve stakeholder involvement in the federal facility cleanup decisionmaking process, FFERDC suggests linkages should be developed with communities and public stakeholders across the nation to 1) share information about how priorities are being set and decisions are being made at federal facilities, and

2) ensure effective distribution of information to the public regarding cleanup efforts. FFERDC recommends that regulated agencies:

- alert the public to the fact that preliminary documents are draft and may change,
- establish central points of contact for providing information, and
- develop information-sharing policies and procedures.

FFERDC also recommends that each agency share environmental-restoration-related information with interested parties. This information includes related documents; timely information pertinent to environmental restoration decisionmaking; information, interpretations, and proposed direction for advisory groups; and agency policy on information flow.

Ensuring Environmental Justice

FFERDC demonstrates an enduring commitment to the Environmental Justice Executive Order (Executive Order 12898, February 11, 1994). Stakeholders include indigenous peoples, low-income communities, and minorities who have had no opportunity for meaningful participation in the decisionmaking process. Historically, these citizens, as well as local governments have not been involved adequately in the federal facility cleanup decisionmaking and priority-setting process. Today, the overall goal of agencies responsible for conducting and overseeing cleanup at federal facilities is to ensure that cleanup decisions and priorities reflect a broad spectrum of stakeholder input from all affected communities.

This report gives us a road map which, if followed, will ensure that all of the local voices are accounted for by the federal government as it prioritizes and cleans up the most pressing environmental problems at its thousands of sites around the country.
**Mildred McClain, Executive Director
Citizens for Environmental Justice,
Savannah, GA**

The effectiveness of community involvement in the budgeting and priority-setting process is dependent on all stakeholder groups having the capacity to participate meaningfully. Through environmental justice programs, federal agencies help stakeholders increase their capacity for meaningful participation.



Establishing Advisory Boards

Another FFERDC strategy includes establishing citizen advisory boards to strengthen stakeholder participation by actively involving representatives of the local community and others in cleanup decisionmaking at federal facility sites.

DOE Site-Specific Advisory Boards (SSABs) provide policy and technical input on DOE cleanups. SSAB membership includes representatives from:

- local government,
- Indian tribes,
- environmental and civic groups,

- universities, and
- other interested stakeholders.

SSABs provide a forum for experts and concerned stakeholders to discuss specific cleanup activities and submit recommendations to DOE. SSAB recommendations affect strategic decisions impacting future land use, risk management, economic development, and budget reprioritization activities. In addition, Board recommendations achieve cost savings and increase the pace of cleanup.

DoD policy is to establish Restoration Advisory Boards (RABs) at military installations scheduled for realignment or closure, and other DoD installations or Formerly Used Defense Sites throughout the country. RABs promote teamwork by bringing members of the community together with military officials and government regulators to discuss cleanup issues. As a result, RABs successfully increase community understanding of cleanup issues and progress, provide greater opportunities for communities to participate in the cleanup process, and enhance the credibility of installations.

The Department of Defense has participated in the FFERDC since it was established. The Committee's interim report had profound impacts on DoD and led to the establishment of Restoration Advisory Boards at over 300 installations. There is no question that RABs have improved our restoration program and will continue to do so.

**Sherri W. Goodman, Deputy Under Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense, Washington, D.C.**

Understanding the Federal Budget Process

FFERDC establishes budget development processes to ensure that funding shortfalls caused by insufficient appropriations do not severely limit environmental restoration activities at individual sites. The "flexible fair share" approach to the allocation of funding shortfalls provides a method for distributing the available funds in an equitable manner.

FFERDC recommends regular and extensive communication and consultation between affected parties at four distinct points within the process where public involvement is beneficial:

- 1) Initial survey of site-specific requirements for cleanup,
- 2) Submission of the President's budget to Congress,
- 3) Presidential/congressional appropriation and agency funding, and
- 4) Completion of annual funding.

FFERDC at Work

Oak Ridge Reservation

Oak Ridge, Tennessee

Much stakeholder concern exists regarding what shape the land and buildings will be in following cleanup of contaminated sites. The condition of land and buildings following site cleanup is commonly referred to as 'end use.'

In February 1996, the Oak Ridge Reservation End Use Working Group was assembled to provide DOE with locally based recommendations for the end uses of its properties.

Comprised of about 15 to 20 individuals, membership to the working group and its committees was open to stakeholders and the interested public. Group members studied specific site information; toured the site; and examined cost, volumes, and risks associated with alternative end uses at the various contamination sources. The group also agreed to accept public recommendations or to hold a public hearing to discuss why a recommendation was rejected. Finally, the group pared down the glut of information into one-page recommendations to DOE that members could sign in support if they chose.

On June 30, 1998, the group completed its official activities that resulted in the creation of the Final Report of the Oak Ridge Reservation End Use Working Group and the Stakeholder Report on Stewardship. End use recommendations for the Oak Ridge Reservation were primarily determined by its division into five watersheds—areas drained by a common river or stream. The group made valuable recommendations for each of these five areas, as well as for a waste disposal site.

The FFERDC dialogue has set a high standard for public participation and serves as a model for all serious environmental dialogues.

**Melinda Downing, Acting Deputy Director,
Office of Intergovernmental and Public
Accountability, U.S. Department of Energy,
Washington, D.C.**

Badlands Bombing Range

Pine Ridge, South Dakota

The Badlands Bombing Range Restoration Advisory Board is the most complex intergovernmental and community advisory group in the country. Membership in this RAB reflects 8 federal agencies, 11 tribal government organizations, state agencies, diverse community and landowner groups, and the general public. The Badlands Bombing Range RAB helps guide and oversee the cleanup of a 341,726-acre bombing range used during the second World War by the Air Force and the South Dakota National Guard.

Through the RAB process, the Oglala Sioux Tribe, the DoD, EPA, Indian Health Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the state of South Dakota are striving to educate tribal landowners on the results of investigations and restoration options for 341,725-acre FUDS property on the Pine Ridge Reservation. This partnership paved the way for the first memorandum of agreement and cooperative agreement between a tribal nation and DoD.

**Emma Featherman-Sam,
RAB Community Co-Chair,
Former Badlands Bombing Range, SD**

As the first RAB established by DoD in Indian Country, the Badlands Bombing Range RAB initially met in July 1995 and continues to meet quarterly on the Oglala Sioux Tribe's Pine Ridge Reservation. These meetings provide a forum through which tribal and community concerns and issues are heard and addressed during the cleanup. The diversity and broad-based expertise of the member agencies and organizations ensure the best acceptable alternatives for

remediation are selected.

The Badlands Bombing Range RAB is equally directed by four Co-Chairs:

- the Oglala Sioux Tribe,
- the U.S. Air Force,
- the U.S. National Park Service, and
- the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Each Co-Chair organization has direct financial and management responsibilities as well as trust responsibilities for the restoration of these tribal lands.

How Can Interested Citizens Become More Involved?

Each citizen has a stake in the future of federal facilities, and the FFERDC process demonstrates the value of public involvement in the process of making decisions about our environment. Making the right decisions takes teamwork and an investment in the future to effect the changes needed to implement the many recommendations.

Are you interested in getting more involved? The listing of FFERDC Contacts provides further information (including telephone numbers and webpage addresses) on the federal government offices that offer opportunities for concerned members of the community to participate in federal facilities cleanup decisionmaking.

For copies of the FFERDC Final Report, call EPA's Federal Facilities Restoration and Reuse Office (FFRRO) at (202) 260-9924 or view the Report at www.epa.gov/swerffrr/ferdcrrpt/toc.htm

Federal Agency FFERDC Contact Information

- **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).** USDA, 14th Street & Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, DC 20250; Phone: 202/720-2791; Internet Address: www.usda.gov.
- **U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).** NOAA Office of Public & Constituent Affairs, U.S. Department of Commerce, 14th Street & Constitution Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20230; Phone: 202/482-6090; Internet Address: www.noaa.gov.
- **U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), Environmental Security/Cleanup.** DoD's Environmental Cleanup homepage: www.dtic.mil/envirodod.
- **U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Office of Environmental Management (EM).** The Center for Environmental Management Information, EM Program, U.S. Department of Energy, P.O. Box 23769, Washington, DC 20026-3769; Phone: 1-800-736-3282; Internet Address: www.em.doe.gov.
- **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).** The ATSDR Information Center: 888-422-8737 or 888-42ATSDR; Internet Address: www.atsdr.cdc.gov/atsdrhome.html

Federal Agency FFERDC Contact Information Continued

- **U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance (OEPC).** OEPC, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C St., N.W., Washington, DC 20240; Phone: 202/208-3891; Internet Address: www.doi.gov/oepc/oepchome.html.
- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Federal Facilities Restoration and Reuse Office (FFRRO).** U.S. EPA/FFRRO, 401 M St., Mail Code 5101, Washington, DC 20460; Phone: 202/260-9924; Internet Address:

Consensus: Principles for Environmental Cleanup (restated from FFERDC Final Report, April 1996)

1. The federal government has a moral and ethical obligation to clean up the contamination it has caused or permitted.
2. The federal government must make a sustained commitment to environmental cleanup.
3. The federal government has an obligation to make special efforts to reduce the adverse impacts of environmental contamination related to federal facility activities on affected communities that have historically lacked economic and political power, adequate health services, and other resources.
4. Federal facilities should be treated consistently with private sector sites.
5. Federal facility cleanup contracts need to be reformed to ensure that cleanup activities are conducted as efficiently as possible.
6. Funding mechanisms for cleanup should be reformed to provide greater flexibility in the timing of expenditures.

7. The decisionmaking process must ensure that the roles of all of the stakeholders are preserved and balanced.
8. Negotiated cleanup agreements play a critical role in setting priorities at sites.
9. Risk assessment should be used in a manner that recognizes its limitations and assumptions, and human health risk is only one factor among many that warrant consideration in priority setting.
10. Pollution prevention and pollution control activities differ from cleanups and should be funded as a cost of doing business.
11. Reasonably anticipated future land use should be considered when establishing cleanup standards for federal facilities.
12. The identification and characterization of contamination are essential parts of the cleanup process and should not be arbitrarily limited.
13. Priority-setting decisions should be made in a manner that recognizes their interconnectedness to other environmental problems.
14. Cleanup decisions must include the views of the affected communities.

