

FERNALD PRESERVE

2023 Site Environmental Report



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Fernald Preserve

Electronic versions of Fernald Preserve documents are available at
<https://www.energy.gov/lm/fernal-d-preserve-ohio-site>.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|----------|--|
| ARAR | applicable or relevant and appropriate requirement |
| CAWWT | Converted Advanced Wastewater Treatment |
| CC | coefficient of conservatism |
| CERCLA | Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act |
| DOE | U.S. Department of Energy |
| EPA | U.S. Environmental Protection Agency |
| FFCA | Federal Facility Compliance Agreement |
| FQAI | Floristic Quality Assessment Index |
| FRL | final remediation level |
| IEMP | Integrated Environmental Monitoring Plan |
| LCS | leachate collection system |
| LDS | leak detection system |
| lidar | light detection and ranging |
| LM | Department of Energy, Office of Legacy Management |
| LMICP | <i>Comprehensive Legacy Management and Institutional Controls Plan</i> |
| µg/L | micrograms per liter |
| NPDES | National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System |
| NPL | National Priorities List |
| NRRP | Natural Resource Restoration Plan |
| ODNR | Ohio Department of Natural Resources |
| Ohio EPA | Ohio Environmental Protection Agency |
| OSDF | On-Site Disposal Facility |
| OU5 ROD | Operable Unit 5 Record of Decision |
| PCCIP | Post-Closure Care and Inspection Plan |
| PFAS | per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances |
| PFOA | perfluorooctanoic acid |
| PFOS | perfluorooctane sulfonate |
| PPDD | Pilot Plant Drainage Ditch |
| RAMP | Restored Area Maintenance Plan |
| RCRA | Resource Conservation and Recovery Act |
| ROD | Record of Decision |

| | |
|------|--|
| SARA | Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 |
| SSOD | storm sewer outfall ditch |
| USC | <i>United States Code</i> |

Measurement Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|----------------------|
| ft | feet |
| gpm | gallons per minute |
| lb | pounds |
| Mgal | million gallons |
| mg/L | milligrams per liter |
| µg/L | micrograms per liter |
| pCi/L | picocuries per liter |

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Executive Summary

The *Fernald Preserve 2023 Site Environmental Report* provides stakeholders with the results from the Fernald Preserve, Ohio, Site's environmental and natural resource management programs for 2023; a summary of U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) activities conducted onsite; a status of the ongoing groundwater remediation; and a summary of the site's compliance with the various environmental regulations, compliance agreements, and DOE policies that govern site activities. This report has been prepared in accordance with the *Comprehensive Legacy Management and Institutional Controls Plan* (LMICP) (DOE 2023a).

Remediation of the Fernald Preserve has been successfully completed, with the exception of the groundwater. During 2023, activities at the Fernald Preserve included the following:

- Environmental monitoring activities related to groundwater and surface water
- Monitoring as specified in the site's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit
- Extraction, monitoring, and treatment of contaminated groundwater from the Great Miami Aquifer (Operable Unit 5)
- On-Site Disposal Facility (OSDF) leak detection monitoring and collection, monitoring, and treatment of leachate from the OSDF
- Inspections and follow-up maintenance of the site and the OSDF to ensure that provisions of the LMICP are fully implemented
- Ongoing operation of the Fernald Preserve Visitors Center, associated outreach, and educational activities
- Ecologically restored area monitoring and maintenance to enhance, protect, and preserve site natural resources

Environmental monitoring programs were developed to ensure that the remedy remains protective of the environment. The requirements of these programs are described in detail in the LMICP and reported in this Site Environmental Report as outlined below.

Liquid Pathway Highlights

Groundwater Pathway

The groundwater pathway at the Fernald Preserve is routinely monitored to:

- Verify that hydraulic capture of the total uranium plume is maintained; track the aquifer restoration in the area of the plume, including non-uranium constituents; and evaluate water quality conditions in the aquifer that may indicate a need to modify the design or the operation of the well field.
- Meet compliance-based groundwater monitoring obligations.

During 2023, active restoration of the Great Miami Aquifer continued. A total of 93 groundwater monitoring wells were sampled to determine water quality. Aquifer water elevations were measured in 172 groundwater monitoring wells. The following highlights describe the key findings from the 2023 groundwater data:

- A total of 1.8 billion gallons of groundwater was extracted from the Great Miami Aquifer, and 271 pounds (lb) of uranium were removed from the aquifer in 2023.
- Since 1993, 56.7 billion gallons of water have been pumped from the Great Miami Aquifer, and 16,021 net pounds of uranium have been removed from the Great Miami Aquifer. Net pounds of uranium removed include a small amount of uranium that was reinjected into the aquifer between 1998 and 2004.
- Data collected in 2023 indicate that uranium concentrations within the footprint of the 30 micrograms per liter ($\mu\text{g/L}$) maximum uranium plume continue to decrease in response to pumping. The footprint of the maximum uranium plume in 2023 was approximately 72.1.0 acres, a decrease of 1.9 acre or approximately 2.6% from what was mapped in 2022. Since 2005, the area of the total uranium plume has decreased from 196.1 acres to 72.1.0 acres (63.2%).
- The results of the groundwater capture analysis and monitoring for total uranium and non-uranium constituents indicate that the design of the groundwater remedy for the aquifer restoration system remains appropriate for capture of the plume.
- Pumping of the South Plume/South Plume Optimization Module continued to meet the objective of preventing further southward migration of the southern total uranium plume beyond the extraction wells.

Groundwater Remedy

The current Operational Design for the groundwater remedy has been in effect since design changes were implemented on July 1, 2014. Three extraction wells that were no longer providing benefit to the remediation were shut down, and the pumping capacity from these wells was reallocated to extraction wells in the South Plume and southern portion of the South Field to accelerate cleanup of those areas. The system pumping rate was increased 300 gallons per minute (gpm) from 4,775 gpm to 5,075 gpm.

As reported in the 2020 Site Environmental Report (DOE 2021a), additional groundwater modeling was needed to determine whether the system could be optimized again, as it was in 2014. Modeling was completed in early 2022. The groundwater model was updated with uranium concentrations measured in the first half of 2021. Updated cleanup date predictions for the South Plume, the South Field and the Waste Storage Area were determined to be 2025, 2038, and 2045, respectively. These new cleanup time predictions assume that the no wellfield pumping changes are made to the current Operational Design. Continued use of the existing South Plume wells to complete remediation of the South Plume carried unacceptable risk. The aging extraction wells in the South Plume are no longer dependable. Some had been operating for over 28 years. Also, due to remediation progress, the wells were longer located in optimal locations to complete remediation of the remaining South Plume.

DOE completed additional modeling in 2022 that provides an alternate operational approach to completing remediation of the South Plume. DOE is installing two new extraction wells in the South Plume. These two new wells are scheduled to be operational in 2024. When operational,

the remaining original South Plume wells will no longer be needed to maintain capture of the South Plume or to complete the remediation of the South Plume.

The years 2022 and 2023 were years for change in the South Plume and South Plume Optimization Modules. DOE began shutting down the original extraction wells in both modules and began plans for two new replacement wells in the South Plume Optimization Module. At the beginning of 2022, six wells were operating: all four original South Plume extraction wells, and both of the original South Plume Optimization wells. At the beginning of 2023 four original wells remained operating: three in the South Plume Module (3924 [RW-1], 3925 [RW-2], and 3926 [RW-3]) and one well in the South Plume Optimization Module (32309 [RW-7]). At the end of 2023, only one well remained operating in the South Plume Module (3924 [RW-1]) and no wells were operating in the South Plume Optimization Module. In 2023, installation of replacement wells 33616 (RW-6A) and 33617 (RW-7A) in the South Plume Optimization Module began with a planned start date in 2024.

DOE will continue to utilize the existing annual Geoprobe groundwater sampling program to monitor for potential concentration rebound in the area between the original South Plume Module recovery wells and the two new South Plume Optimization recovery wells now that pumping from the original South Plume recovery wells has stopped in all but recovery well 3924. This effort will provide interim water quality data in this area prior to full certification being conducted.

Once the two new replacement extraction wells (33616 [RW-6A] and 33617 [RW-7A]) are operational in the South Plume Module, DOE will focus efforts on optimizing the southern South Field Plume area next. A few of the aging extraction wells in the South Field are no longer responding to rehabilitation efforts. Modeling will be conducted to determine if replacement of the older, non-responsive wells is necessary, and how to improve cleanup efficiency in the southern South Field area.

DOE collaborated with the DOE National Laboratory Network in 2021 through two focus groups to determine ways to address the continuing issues with the aging aquifer restoration infrastructure (Focus Group 1) and improve the efficiency of the aquifer cleanup (Focus Group 2). DOE is implementing National Laboratory Network recommendations that target improving the aquifer remediation and providing better model predicted cleanup dates (Focus Group 2). In late 2022 to early 2023, DOE completed work using alternative mathematical functions to trend uranium concentration data and using three-dimensional aquifer interpretations over time to improve plume metrics used to assess cleanup progress. Both methods have been successfully added to the Fernald Preserve toolbox for evaluation of the aquifer remedy. In 2023, DOE began comparing the use of the Variable Saturated Analysis Model in Three Dimensions (VAM-3D) to MODFLOW for the site groundwater modeling code. MODFLOW is a more transparent code which provides for more robust use of algorithm-based optimization programs. A decision on what code to move forward with is anticipated in 2024. More information is provided in Section 3.4 and Appendix A.

The aquifer remedy in the current Operational Design is achieving the uranium discharge limits (i.e., average monthly concentration of less than 30 µg/L and 600 lb annually) established in the Operable Unit 5 Record of Decision without routine groundwater treatment. Routine groundwater treatment has not been needed since 2010. Occasionally, groundwater is sent to treatment for very short periods of time. The reasons for the short periods of treatment vary, but

most are related to times when wells pumping low uranium concentrations are turned off for maintenance and wells pumping higher uranium concentrations continue pumping.

In 2023, 1.8 billion gallons of groundwater were pumped from the Great Miami Aquifer and 3.5 million gallons (0.19%) of groundwater were treated.

OSDF Monitoring

Engineered features within the OSDF continue to perform as designed, indicating that a leak from the facility is not occurring. Leachate flow continues to diminish as expected, and leak detection system flow volumes indicate that the cell liners are performing as designed.

In late 2021, a small amount of water was observed in OSDF valve house 7 in the area where the leachate collection system piping penetrates the valve house walls and enters the valve house through the east wall of the valve house. The leachate collection system is a double-walled pipe; the secondary containment system contained no liquid indicating that the liquid was not coming from the leachate collection system. The amount of liquid increased after precipitation events. Sampling of the liquid entering the valve house revealed that the uranium concentration of 8.2 µg/L matched the very low historical uranium concentrations in the perched groundwater in the area; therefore, the liquid in the valve house is attributed to water leaking into the valve house from immediately outside the valve house wall. DOE repaired the leak in valve house 7 in summer 2022. Unfortunately, additional leaks occurred along the inner surface of the same wall following the repair. It is believed that once the initial leak was fixed, later collection of water on the outside of the valve house wall found other entry points through the wall. Based on the nature of the leaks observed, it is assumed that water is collecting around the base of the east side of the valve house. If deemed appropriate, an engineered fix (e.g., French drain) will be evaluated.

Surface Water and Effluent Pathway

Surface water and effluent are monitored to determine the effects of Fernald Preserve activities on Paddys Run (an intermittent stream), the Great Miami River, and the underlying Great Miami Aquifer, as well as to meet compliance-based surface water and effluent monitoring obligations.

In 2023, eight surface water locations and one effluent location were sampled at various frequencies. The annual sample planned to be collected at location SWP-03 on Paddys Run was inadvertently missed during 2023, but once the error was discovered, a sample was collected in early 2024. The sample result indicated that the total uranium at the location (1.5 µg/L) was well below the total uranium surface water final remediation level of 530 µg/L (applicable outside the mixing zone in the Great Miami River) and within very low historical ranges. The following highlights describe the key findings from the 2023 surface water and effluent monitoring programs:

- Since 1995, the annual uranium mass discharged in Fernald Preserve effluent to the Great Miami River has been less than the Operable Unit 5 Record of Decision limit of 600 lb per year. In 2023, 271 lb of uranium were removed from the Great Miami Aquifer. A total of 259 lb of uranium was discharged in effluent to the Great Miami River in 2023. The difference of 12 lb was the uranium removed via treatment.
- An estimated 28 lb of uranium were released to the environment through uncontrolled stormwater runoff from the site. Therefore, the total amount of uranium released through the

effluent (259 lb) and uncontrolled surface water pathway (28 lb) during 2023 is estimated to be 287 lb.

- Analytical results of 13 of 27 surface water samples collected from location SWD-09 exceeded the surface water final remediation level for total uranium in 2023, the site's primary contaminant. SWD-09 is one of the two locations established to monitor the 2007 maintenance action completed west of the former Waste Pits Area. The second location, SWD-05, did not exceed the surface water final remediation level for uranium in 2023; the surface water final remediation level is applicable outside the mixing zone in the Great Miami River. These locations are in an area of the site that is not accessible to the public.

Analytical results of surface water samples collected at location SWD-09 have been trending downward since 2010. The surface water from this area remains isolated and does not drain normally to Paddys Run; it either evaporates or infiltrates into the ground. Any infiltration down to the aquifer in this area is within the capture zone of nearby extraction wells operating as part of the groundwater remediation.

- Compliance sampling, consisting of sampling for nonradiological pollutants from uncontrolled runoff in the storm sewer outfall ditch and effluent discharges from the Fernald Preserve, is regulated under the state-administrated NPDES program. Discharges in 2023 were in compliance with limits identified in the NPDES permit.

Site and OSDF Inspections

Quarterly site and OSDF inspections continued in 2023. Findings were mainly uncontaminated debris and invasive vegetation for the site, and woody vegetation on the cap of the OSDF. There were no activity or use limitations reported in 2023.

Debris continues to be found, primarily in the Former Production Area and the former Waste Storage Area. Examples of debris include pieces of concrete, rebar, clay tile, and metal. Weather, erosion, and earth-moving activities occasionally reveal small pieces of debris that were not visible during remediation and restoration efforts. A total of 79 pieces of debris was found and removed in 2023. No debris had fixed radiological contamination above background levels. A summary table of annual debris counts is provided in Appendix C, Table C-1.

The 2023 annual OSDF photographs required per the LMICP, Attachment B, "OSDF Post-Closure Care and Inspection Plan" (PCCIP) are provided in Appendix C along with the earliest photograph taken at each location for comparison. Also included in Appendix C are the photographs taken during the quarterly OSDF inspections. The PCCIP requires quarterly inspection photographs, as needed, of significant findings (e.g., ponded water, evidence of leachate seeps, burrowing animals, erosion). With the approval of stakeholders and regulators, the quarterly inspection photographs will no longer be taken with the exception of those required in the PCCIP (DOE 2023a).

Prescribed burning is a prairie management tool used at the Fernald Preserve. In 2022, DOE and the U.S. Forest Service entered into an inter-agency agreement to conduct prescribed burns at the site. In December 2022, a prescribed burn of prairie grasses took place in the Former Production Area; a post-burn walkdown of the area occurred in early 2023. In addition, on February 14, 2023, the U.S. Forest Service conducted a prescribed burn of the entire OSDF cap. This was the first time the entire cap, approximately 75 acres, was burned at one time. Additional

detail is provided in Section 5.4. A post-burn walkdown and a light detection and ranging (lidar) survey of the OSDF cap was conducted following the OSDF burn. This uncrewed aerial survey, was intended to provide a baseline to which future surveys will be compared, and conducting this survey following a burn allows for better data collection without vegetation obscuring the ground surface of the OSDF. The lidar survey provided data points across the cell with 0.38-foot accuracy. The subfoot accuracy detected features such as cell cap boundaries and distinct changes in slope from 6:1, 10:1, and 20:1 across the OSDF. This review also revealed a minor anomaly on the west side of the cap near the boundary between the caps of Cells 7 and 8 which coincided with inspection findings from the post-burn inspection which took place on March 1, 2023. The inspection finding was the remnant of an erosion issue that arose, and was repaired, shortly after the cap construction in 2006. While there was no active erosion occurring at the time of the inspection on March 1, 2023, soil was added to the location on March 23, 2023, to even out the surface and prevent any additional erosion issues from occurring. The next lidar survey is scheduled to occur in spring 2025 following the next planned prescribed burn; quarterly inspections will continue.

Based on results of many years of inspections, the results of the recent lidar survey, and optimal observation of cover features, DOE is recommending that walkdowns of the entire OSDF vegetated cap take place only after prescribed burns. In the event that an OSDF prescribed burn cannot be completed, DOE will still complete a walkover of the entire OSDF at least every other year. Prescribed burns are scheduled to take place every other year, with the next prescribed burn of the OSDF scheduled for 2025. Additionally, DOE is proposing to modify the frequency of trail inspections from weekly to quarterly. Trail inspections may be performed more frequently based on an event driven issues such as severe weather. Upon receipt of feedback from the public and stakeholders and approval from the regulators, these inspection changes will take place in 2025.

Natural Resources

The focus of restored area maintenance activities in 2023 involved continued eradication of invasive species, including targeted efforts on teasel species (*Dipsacus* species), giant reed (*Phragmites australis*), lesser celandine (*Ficaria verna*), and callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*). Fall foliar herbicide application to approximately 27 acres of Amur honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*), in conjunction with manual removal, also continued in 2023. In total, approximately 324 acres were addressed for invasive species. Natural resource and habitat improvement activities also occurred in 2023. Approximately 1.5 acres were overseeded to increase and improve pollinator habitat. Trees and shrubs were planted in two different areas to increase species diversity, help combat invasive species, and supplement a non-native pine habitat with native deciduous trees.

In 2020, the Fernald Natural Resource Trustees conducted a 10-year review of the Restored Area Maintenance Plan, pursuant to the Natural Resource Restoration Plan. That review resulted in the development of the Natural Resource Management Plan. This document presents a community-based approach for management and evaluation of ecologically restored areas across the Fernald Preserve. DOE implemented the Natural Resource Management Plan in 2021. The Natural Resource Management Plan was incorporated as Appendix A of Volume I of the 2023 LMICP. In 2023, the Fernald Natural Resource Trustees agreed that DOE had completed ecological restoration of the Fernald Preserve in accordance with the requirements identified in

the Consent Decree and the NRRP. Additionally, DOE communicated that DOE Legacy Management will continue long-term stewardship of site restoration pursuant to the *Fernald Preserve, Ohio, Site Natural Resource Management Plan*.

Floristic inventories were conducted in existing forest, restoration forest, and perimeter successional areas across the site in 2023. Results of this effort indicate the existing forest areas are very representative of a predominantly woodland community. Comparisons of historical data show that ecological succession is continuing in all monitored areas. Vegetation monitoring also occurs on the OSDF. These data, previously reported in the quarterly inspection reporting process, are now reported in the Site Environmental Report. Results indicate that predominantly native vegetation cover remains established on the OSDF cap. Additional information regarding monitoring activities for evaluation of ecologically restored communities is provided in Appendix C.

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1.0 Site Background

Abbreviated Timeline: 1951-2006

- 1951 Construction of the Feed Materials Production Center began.
- 1952 Uranium production started.
- 1986 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) signed the Federal Facility Compliance Agreement, thus initiating the remedial investigation/feasibility study process under the National Contingency Plan.
- 1989 Uranium production suspended. The Fernald site was placed on the National Priorities List, Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) sites most in need of cleanup.
- 1991 As part of the Amended Consent Agreement, the site was divided into operable units for characterization and remedy determination. Uranium production formally ended. The site mission changed from uranium production to environmental remediation and site restoration.
- 1992 Large-scale groundwater pumping to contain the off-property South Plume began.
- 1994 Decontamination and dismantling of the first building was completed under the Operable Unit 3 Interim Record of Decision (ROD).
- 1996 The last operable unit's ROD was signed, signifying the end of the 10-year remedial investigation/feasibility study process. (The Operable Unit 4 ROD was later reopened.) Construction began in support of the Operable Unit 1 selected remedy. Soil remedial excavation began as part of the Operable Unit 5 selected remedy.
- 1997 Construction of the On-Site Disposal Facility (OSDF) began. First waste placement began in December. Environmental monitoring and reporting were consolidated under the Integrated Environmental Monitoring Plan.
- 1998 Operable Unit 2 remedial excavations began.
- 1999 Excavation of the waste pits began (Operable Unit 1 ROD), and the first rail shipment of waste was transported to Envirocare of Utah, Inc.
- 2000 The ROD Amendment for Operable Unit 4 Silos 1 and 2 Remedial Actions was signed by EPA, thus establishing a new selected remedy for Operable Unit 4.
- 2001 Cell 1 of the OSDF was capped. Remediation of the Operable Unit 2 Southern Waste Units was completed.
- 2002 The Silos 1 and 2 Radon Control System began operation and successfully reduced radon levels within the silos. The offsite transfer of nuclear product material was completed. Wastes were placed in OSDF Cells 2 through 5.
- 2003 All major Operable Unit 2 remedial actions were completed. In addition, approximately 412,000 cubic yards of waste were placed in OSDF Cells 3 through 6.
- 2004 Removal of Silos 1 and 2 wastes from the silos to the holding tank facility began. Plans to reduce the size of the site's wastewater treatment infrastructure were approved and implemented. The last of Fernald's 10 uranium production complexes, plus an additional 35 structures and 73 trailers, were demolished. All eight cells of the OSDF were capped or received waste. Approximately 513,000 cubic yards of waste were placed in Cells 4 through 8.
- 2005 Removal of Operable Unit 4, Silo 3 waste began and the first shipment of this waste arrived at Envirocare of Utah. Remedial actions for Operable Unit 1 were completed in June. The first shipment of Silos 1 and 2 waste arrived at Waste Control Specialists in Texas.
- 2006 With the exception of groundwater remediation, site remediation was completed October 29, 2006. The site was officially transferred to DOE's Office of Legacy Management on November 17, 2006.

In 1951, the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, a predecessor agency of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), began building the Feed Materials Production Center on a 1,050-acre tract of land outside the small farming community of Fernald, Ohio. The facility's mission was to produce "feed materials" in the form of purified uranium compounds and metal for use by other government facilities involved in the production of nuclear weapons for the nation's defense.

Uranium metal was produced at the Feed Materials Production Center from 1952 through 1989. During that time, more than 500 million pounds (lb) of uranium metal products were delivered to other sites. These production operations caused releases to the surrounding environment, which resulted in contamination of soil, surface water, sediment, and groundwater on and around the site.

In 1991, the mission of the site officially changed from uranium production to environmental cleanup under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA, also known as Superfund), as amended (Title 42 *United States Code* Section 9601 et seq. [42 USC 9601 et seq.]). The site was renamed the Fernald Environmental Management Project in 1991. In 2003, the site name changed to the Fernald Closure Project to reflect the mission of the site as on a path to closure. In 2007, the site name changed to the Fernald Preserve to reflect the completion of the cleanup (with the exception of groundwater) ushered in by the successful transition to the DOE Office of Legacy Management (LM) in late 2006. In addition to completing groundwater remediation, the LM mission is now to be an asset to the community as an undeveloped park, with an emphasis on wildlife.

Abbreviated Timeline: 2006 - Present

| | |
|------|---|
| 2008 | The old Silos Warehouse was remodeled into the new Fernald Preserve Visitors Center and opened to the public in August 2008. The community was allowed unescorted access to the Fernald Preserve. |
| 2012 | The throughput capacity of the Converted Advanced Wastewater Treatment Facility (CAWWT) was reduced from 1,800 gallons per minute (gpm) to 500–600 gpm. |
| 2014 | On July 1, 2014, a new groundwater remediation operational design was implemented (DOE 2014). The target system pumping rate was 300 gpm higher than the previous design and accelerated cleanup. |
| 2015 | The decision to reduce wastewater treatment capacity to 50 gpm was made. |
| 2017 | Completed removal of treatment media, demolition of existing piping and tanks to allow room for the new wastewater treatment system within CAWWT, and design of the new system, which began in 2016. Low-level radioactive waste from the demolition project was disposed of at Waste Control Specialists in Texas. Construction of the new treatment system began. |
| 2018 | The new water treatment system became operational in April 2018. |
| 2019 | The refurbished CAWWT backwash basin was operational in November 2019. |

DOE’s Legacy Management Support contractor continues to perform site activities, including the ongoing groundwater remedy. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 5 and the Southwest District Office of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) provide regulatory oversight.

In the 1980s, the goals of environmental monitoring were to assess the impact of production operations and monitor the environmental pathways through which residents of the local community might be exposed to contaminants from the site (exposure pathways). The environmental monitoring program provided comprehensive on- and off-property surveillance of contaminant levels in surface water, groundwater, air, and biota (agricultural produce). The goal was to measure the levels of contaminants associated with uranium production operations and report this information to the regulatory agencies and stakeholders.

After the conclusion of the site’s uranium production and the completion of the CERCLA remedy selection process, the focus was on the safe and efficient implementation of environmental remediation activities and facility decontamination and dismantling operations. In recognition of this shift in emphasis toward remedy implementation, in 1997 the environmental monitoring program was revised to align with the remediation activities planned for the Fernald site. The site’s environmental monitoring program is described in the Integrated Environmental Monitoring Plan (IEMP), which is Attachment D of the *Comprehensive Legacy Management and Institutional Controls Plan (LMICP)* (DOE 2019). Noting that it is expected that fewer changes to the LMICP will be required, DOE proposed to EPA and Ohio EPA that the variance process established in the Fernald Preserve Quality Assurance Project Plan (DOE 2014) be used to communicate LMICP changes instead of updating the entire document each year. This process was approved, and changes required to be implemented for calendar year 2021 were documented and approved by the regulatory agencies in January 2021. This process was again utilized in 2022; a full revision of the LMICP was completed and approved for implementation in calendar year 2023 (DOE 2023a).

The environmental monitoring program is designed to ensure the continued protectiveness of the completed remedial actions as well as implementation of the ongoing groundwater remedy and performance of the On-Site Disposal Facility (OSDF). This *Fernald Preserve 2023 Site Environmental Report* summarizes the findings from the monitoring program and provides a status on the progress toward final site restoration. This report consists of the following:

- **Summary Report:** The summary report (Sections 1.0 through 5.0) documents the results of environmental monitoring activities at the Fernald Preserve in 2023. It includes a discussion of ongoing groundwater remediation activities and summaries of environmental data from groundwater, surface water and effluent, and natural resources monitoring programs. It also

summarizes the information contained in the appendixes. A glossary is included at the end of the summary report.

- **Appendixes:** The detailed appendixes provide the 2023 environmental monitoring data for the various media, primarily in the form of graphs, figures, and tables. The appendixes are generally distributed only to the regulatory agencies. However, a complete copy of the appendixes is available on the LM public website at <https://www.energy.gov/lm/fernald-preserve-ohio-site> or by contacting LM at (513) 648-3330; by contacting Interpretive Service at (513) 648-6000; or by sending an email to fernald@lm.doe.gov.

CERCLA Remedial Process

The process of cleaning up sites under CERCLA consists of the following general phases:

Site Characterization: During this phase, contaminants are identified and quantified, and the potential impacts of those contaminants on human health are determined. This phase includes the remedial investigation and the baseline risk assessment.

Remedy Selection: During this phase, cleanup alternatives are developed and evaluated. Activities include the feasibility study and proposed remedial action plan. After public comments are received and addressed, a remedy is selected and documented in a ROD.

Remedial Design and Remedial Action: This phase of the CERCLA process includes the detailed design and implementation of the remedy. The CERCLA process ends with certification and site closure.

A CERCLA five-year review process is triggered by the onset of construction for the first operable unit remedial action that will result in hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants remaining at the site above levels that allow for unlimited use and unrestricted exposure. Of all the operable units, the site preparation construction to support the Waste Pits Project under the Operable Unit 1 ROD (DOE 1995b) was the first such action. This construction began on April 1, 1996. To date, DOE has conducted, and the regulatory agencies have approved, five CERCLA five-year reviews (April 2001 [DOE 2001c], April 2006 [DOE 2006b], September 2011 [DOE 2011], September 2016 [DOE 2016b]), and September 2021. These reviews verify that the remedy remains effective and continues to be protective of human health and the environment.

Long-Term Stewardship of CERCLA Remedies: Site closure, relative to the completion of remediation, was defined in the contract between Fluor Fernald Inc. and DOE as the physical completion of the scope of work required by the five RODs with the exception of the groundwater remedy.

LM assumed the long-term surveillance monitoring and maintenance of the Fernald site on November 17, 2006, to ensure continued protection of human health and the environment and continued operation of the groundwater remedy. The *Comprehensive Legacy Management and Institutional Controls Plan* (DOE 2023a) defines the activities to be conducted with respect to long-term stewardship at the Fernald Preserve. The CERCLA five-year review process will continue to provide stakeholders information on remedy performance and long-term stewardship.

components by geographical location and by the potential for similar technologies to be used for environmental remediation. The remedy selection process culminated in 1996 with the approval of the final Records of Decision (RODs) for all five operable units. However, several of the RODs (including those for Operable Units 1, 4, and 5) have subsequently been modified through issuance of Explanation of Significant Difference documents or ROD Amendment documents. These documents were prepared, submitted for EPA and public review, and issued in accordance with CERCLA regulations. Following approval of the initial RODs, work began on the design and implementation of the operable unit remedies. Table 1 describes each operable unit and gives an overview of its associated remedy.

The remainder of this introductory Section 1.0 provides:

- An overview of the environmental remediation completed as well as ongoing remedy implementation.
- A description of environmental monitoring activities at the Fernald Preserve.
- A description of the physical and ecological characteristics of the Fernald Preserve.

1.1 The Path to Site Closure

In 1986, the Fernald site initiated working through the CERCLA process to characterize the nature and extent of contamination at the site, to establish risk-based cleanup standards, and to select the appropriate remediation technologies to achieve those standards. To facilitate this process, in 1991 the site was organized into five operable units. The purpose of the operable unit concept under CERCLA was to organize site

Table 1. Operable Unit Remedies

| Operable Unit | Description | Remedy Overview |
|---------------|---|---|
| 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste Pits 1–6 • Clear well • Burn pit • Berms, liners, caps, and soil within the boundary | <p>ROD approved: March 1995 Explanation of Significant Differences approved: September 2002 ROD Amendment approved: November 2003 Excavation of materials with constituents of concern above final remediation levels (FRLs), waste processing and treatment by thermal drying (as necessary), offsite disposal at a permitted facility, and soil remediation/certification. Remedial actions completed: June 2005 Final Remedial Action Report approved: August 2006</p> |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solid waste landfill • Inactive fly ash pile • Active fly ash pile (now inactive) • North and South Lime Sludge Ponds • Other South Field areas • Berms, liners, and soil within the operable unit boundary | <p>ROD approved: May 1995 Post-ROD fact sheet approved: April 1999 Excavation of all materials with constituents of concern above FRLs, treatment for size reduction and moisture control as required, onsite disposal in the OSDF, and offsite disposal of excavated material that exceeded the waste acceptance criteria for the OSDF. This was the first ROD to specify an onsite disposal in the OSDF. Remedial actions completed: June 2006 Final Remedial Action Report approved: September 2006</p> |
| 3 | <p>Former Production Area, associated facilities, and equipment (includes all above- and below-grade improvements), including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All structures, equipment, utilities, effluent lines, and K-65 transfer line • Wastewater treatment facilities • Fire training facilities • Coal pile • Scrap metals piles • Drums, tanks, solid waste, waste product, feedstocks, and thorium | <p>ROD for Interim Remedial Action approved: June 1994 ROD for Final Remedial Action approved: August 1996 Adoption of Operable Unit 3 Interim ROD; alternatives to disposal through the unrestricted or restricted release of materials as economically feasible for recycling, reuse, or disposal; treatment of material for onsite or offsite disposal; required offsite disposal for process residues, product materials, process-related metals, acid brick, concrete from specific locations, and any other material exceeding the OSDF waste acceptance criteria; and onsite disposal for material that meets the OSDF waste acceptance criteria. Post-ROD fact sheet that identifies clean buildings, structures, and materials for beneficial reuse under LM. Approved: December 2006. Remedial actions completed: October 2006 Final Remedial Action Report approved: February 2007</p> |

Table 1. Operable Unit Remedies (continued)

| Operable Unit | Description | Remedy Overview |
|---------------|--|--|
| 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silos 1 and 2 (containing K-65 residues; demolished in 2005) • Silo 3 (containing cold metal oxides; demolished in 2006) • Silo 4 (empty and never used; demolished in 2003) • Decant tank system • Berms and soil within the operable unit boundary | <p>ROD approved: December 1994</p> <p>Explanation of Significant Differences for Silo 3 approved: March 1998</p> <p>ROD Amendment for Silos 1 and 2 approved: July 2000</p> <p>ROD Amendment for Silo 3 approved: September 2003</p> <p>Explanation of Significant Differences for Silos 1 and 2 approved: November 2003</p> <p>Explanation of Significant Differences for Operable Unit 4 approved: January 2005</p> <p>Removal of Silo 3 materials for treatment and Silos 1 and 2 residues and decant sump tank sludges with onsite stabilization of materials, residues, and sludges followed by offsite disposal. Excavation of silos area soils contaminated above the FRLs with onsite disposal for contaminated soils and debris that met the OSDF waste acceptance criteria; and site restoration. Concrete from Silos 1 and 2 and contaminated soil and debris that exceeded the OSDF waste acceptance criteria were disposed of offsite.</p> <p>Remedial actions for Silo 3 completed: April 2006</p> <p>Remedial actions involving the completion of the shipment of stabilized Silos 1 and 2 material to a temporary storage facility in Texas completed: May 2006.</p> <p>Final Remedial Action Report approved: September 2006</p> <p>Permanent disposal of the 3,776 containers of Silos 1 and 2 material began on October 7, 2009, and the last container was placed on November 2, 2009.</p> |
| 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groundwater • Surface water and sediments • Soil not included in the definitions of Operable Units 1 through 4 • Flora and fauna | <p>ROD approved: January 1996</p> <p>Explanation of Significant Differences was approved in November 2001, formally adopting EPA's Safe Drinking Water Act maximum contaminant level for uranium of 30 micrograms per liter as both the FRL for groundwater remediation and the monthly average uranium effluent discharge limit to the Great Miami River.</p> <p>Extraction of contaminated groundwater from the Great Miami Aquifer to meet FRLs at all affected areas of the aquifer. Treatment of contaminated groundwater, storm water, and wastewater to attain concentration and mass-based discharge limits and FRLs in the Great Miami River. Excavation of contaminated soil and sediment to meet FRLs. Excavation of contaminated soil containing perched water that presented an unacceptable threat through contaminant migration to the underlying aquifer. Onsite disposal of contaminated soil and sediment that met the OSDF waste acceptance criteria. Soil and sediment with contaminant concentrations that exceeded the waste acceptance criteria for the OSDF was treated, when possible, to meet the OSDF waste acceptance criteria or was disposed of at an offsite facility. Also includes site restoration, institutional controls, and postremediation maintenance.</p> <p>Interim Remedial Action Report approved: August 2008</p> |

1.2 Environmental Monitoring Program

In the 1980s, DOE initiated an environmental monitoring program to assess the impact of past operations on the environment and to monitor potential exposure pathways to the local community. Additionally, for nearly 10 years DOE conducted characterization activities at the Fernald site through the remedial investigation phase of the CERCLA process. The initial environmental evaluations performed during the remedial investigation/feasibility study process were used to select the final remedy for Operable Unit 5, which addressed contamination in soil, groundwater, surface water, sediment, air, and biota—in short, all environmental media and contaminant exposure pathways affected by past uranium production operations at the site. The selected remedy for Operable Unit 5 defined the site’s final contaminant cleanup levels and established the extent of on- and off-property remedial actions necessary to provide permanent solutions to environmental concerns posed by the site.

The Operable Unit 5 remedy included plans for removing the contamination that might be released through these exposure pathways and for monitoring these pathways to measure the site’s continuing impact on the environment as remediation progressed. The characterization data used to develop the final remedy were also used to focus on and develop the environmental monitoring program documented in the IEMP. The following describes the IEMP’s key elements:

- The IEMP defines monitoring activities for environmental media, such as groundwater, surface water and effluent, and natural resources. In general, the primary exposure pathway is monitored, and the program focuses on assessing the effect on the surrounding environment.
- The IEMP establishes a data evaluation and decision-making process for each environmental medium. Through this process, environmental conditions at the site are continually evaluated. For example, environmental data are routinely evaluated to identify any significant trends that may indicate the potential for an unacceptable future impact to human health or the environment if action is not taken.
- The IEMP is reviewed annually and revised as necessary to ensure that the monitoring program adequately addresses monitoring requirements.
- The IEMP consolidates routine reporting of environmental data into this comprehensive annual report.

1.3 Characteristics of the Site and Surrounding Area

The natural settings of the Fernald Preserve and nearby communities were important factors in selecting the final remedy and remain important in the continual evaluation of the environmental monitoring program. Land use and demography, local geography, geology, surface hydrology, meteorology, and natural resources all impact monitoring activities and implementation of the site remedy.

1.3.1 Land Use and Demography

Economic activities in the area rely heavily on the physical environment. Land in the area is used primarily for crop farming and gravel pit excavation operations. A private water utility approximately 2 miles east of the Fernald Preserve pumps groundwater primarily for industrial use.

Downtown Cincinnati is approximately 18 miles southeast of the Fernald Preserve (Figure 1). The cities of Fairfield and Hamilton are 6 and 8 miles to the east and northeast, respectively (Figure 2). Scattered residences and several villages, including Fernald, New Baltimore, New Haven, Ross, and Shandon, are also near the site.

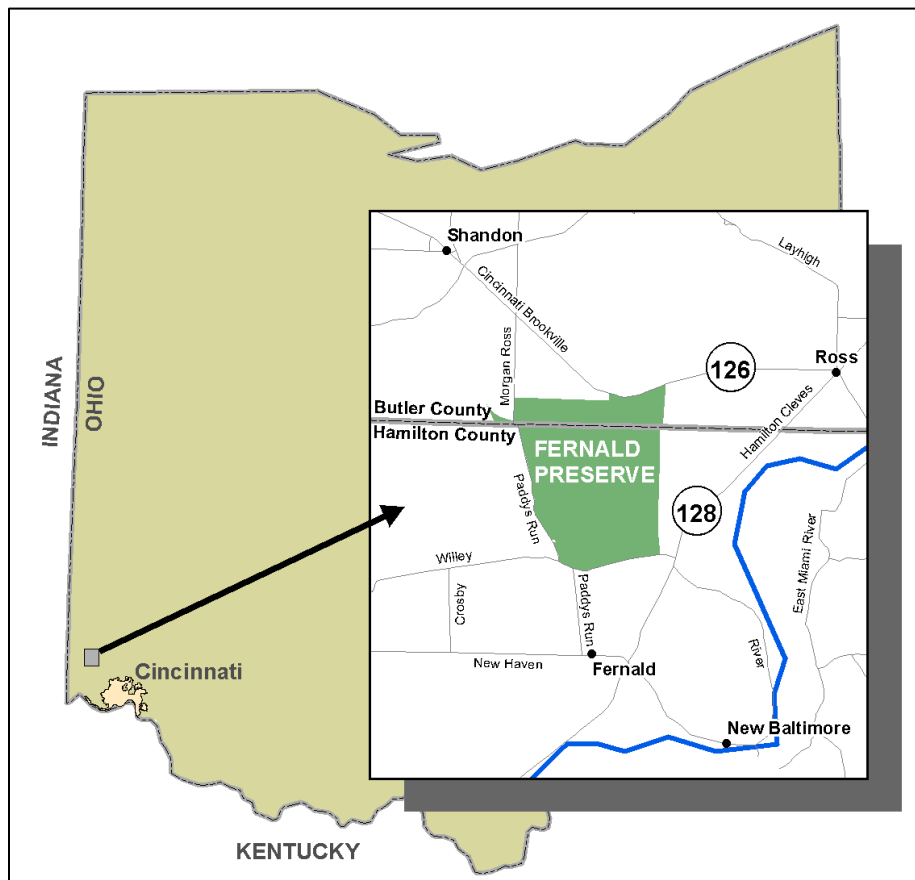
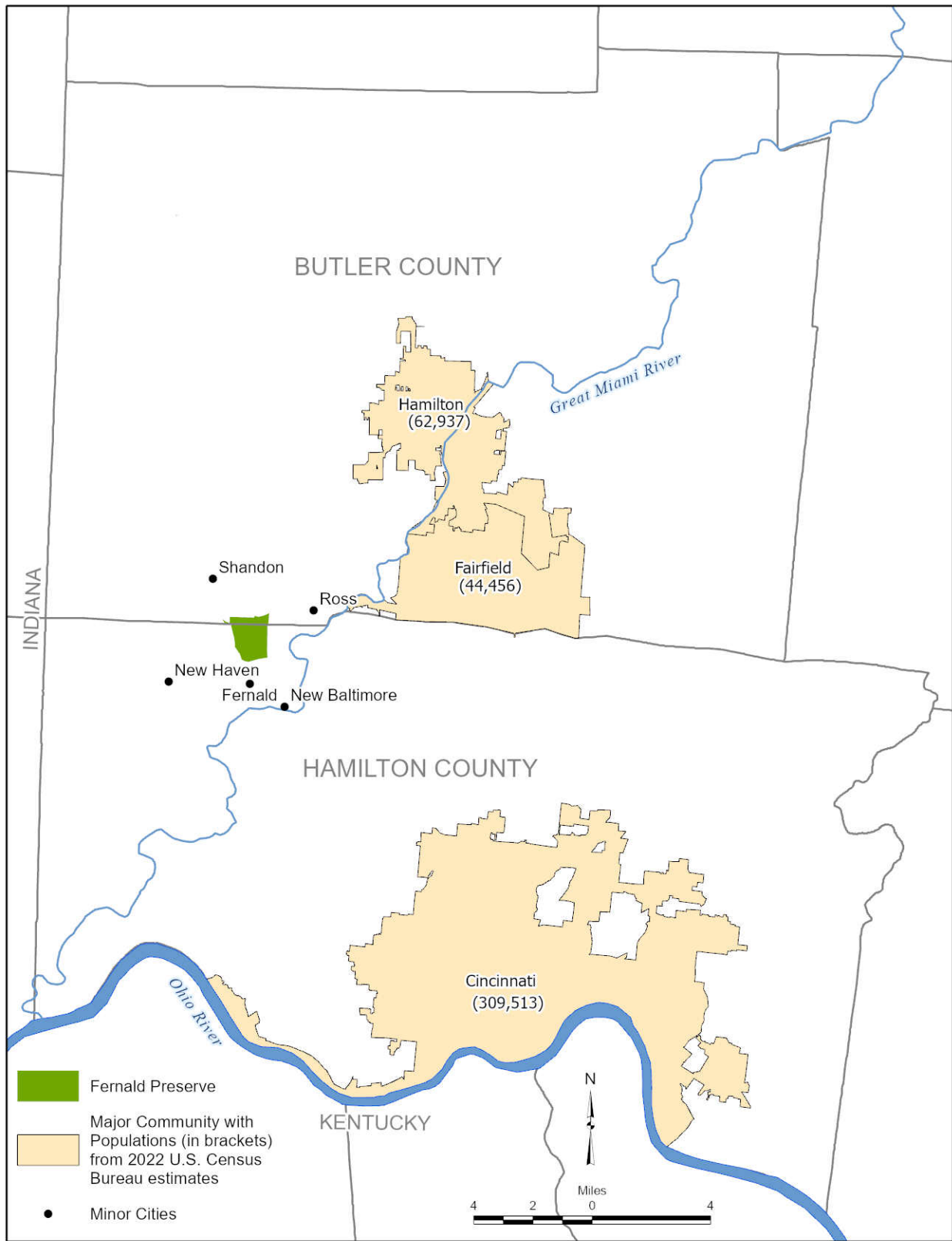


Figure 1. Fernald Preserve and Vicinity

1.3.2 Geography

Figure 3 depicts the location of the major physical features of the site, such as the buildings and supporting infrastructure. The Former Production Area and the OSDF dominate this view. The Former Production Area occupied approximately 136 acres in the center of the site and the OSDF occupies approximately 100 acres. The Great Miami River cuts a terraced valley to the east of the site, and Paddys Run (an intermittent stream) flows from north to south along the site's western boundary. In general, the site lies on a terrace that slopes gently among vegetated bedrock outcrops to the north, southeast, and southwest.



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Figure 2. Major Communities in Southwestern Ohio



Figure 3. Fernald Preserve Perspective

1.3.3 Geology

Bedrock in the area indicates that approximately 450 million years ago a shallow sea covered the Cincinnati area. Sediments that later became flat-lying shale with interbedded limestone were deposited in the shallow sea, as evidenced by the abundance of marine fossils in the bedrock. In the more recent geologic past, the advance and retreat of three separate glaciers shaped the southwestern Ohio landscape. A large river drainage system south of the glaciers created river valleys up to 200 feet (ft) deep, which were then filled with sand and gravel when the glaciers melted. These filled river valleys are called buried valleys.

The last glacier to reach the area left a glacial overburden—a low-permeability mixture of clay and silt with minor amounts of sand and gravel—deposited across the land surface. The Fernald Preserve is situated on a layer of glacial overburden that overlies portions of a 2- to 3-mile-wide buried valley. This valley, known as the New Haven Trough, makes up part of the Great Miami Aquifer. The impermeable shale and limestone bedrock that defines the edges and bottom of the New Haven Trough restricts the groundwater to the sand and gravel within the buried valley. Where present, the glacial overburden limits the downward movement of precipitation and surface water runoff into the underlying sand and gravel of the Great Miami Aquifer.

The Great Miami River and its tributaries have eroded considerable portions of the glacial overburden and exposed the underlying sand and gravel of the Great Miami Aquifer. Thus, in some areas, precipitation and surface water runoff can easily migrate into the underlying Great Miami Aquifer and also transport contaminants to the aquifer. Natural and man-made breaches of the glacial overburden in some areas of the Fernald site were key pathways where contaminated water entered the aquifer, causing the groundwater contamination plumes that are being addressed by aquifer restoration activities. Figure 4 provides a view of the structure of subsurface deposits in the region along an east-west cross section beneath the site and through the New Haven Trough, and Figure 5 presents the regional groundwater flow patterns in the Great Miami Aquifer.

1.3.4 Surface Hydrology

The Fernald Preserve is in the Great Miami River drainage basin (Figure 6). Natural drainage from the site to the Great Miami River occurs primarily via Paddys Run. This intermittent stream begins losing flow to the underlying sand and gravel aquifer south of the former Waste Pits Area. Paddys Run empties into the Great Miami River 1.5 miles south of the site. The Great Miami River, 0.6 mile east of the Fernald Preserve, runs in a southerly direction and flows into the Ohio River about 24 miles downstream of the site. The segment of the Great Miami River between the Fernald Preserve and the Ohio River is not used as a source of public drinking water.

The average flow volume for the Great Miami River in 2023 was 4,629 cubic feet per second. This average is based on daily measurements collected at the U.S. Geological Survey Hamilton stream gauge (USGS 3274000) approximately 10 river miles upstream of the site's effluent discharge.

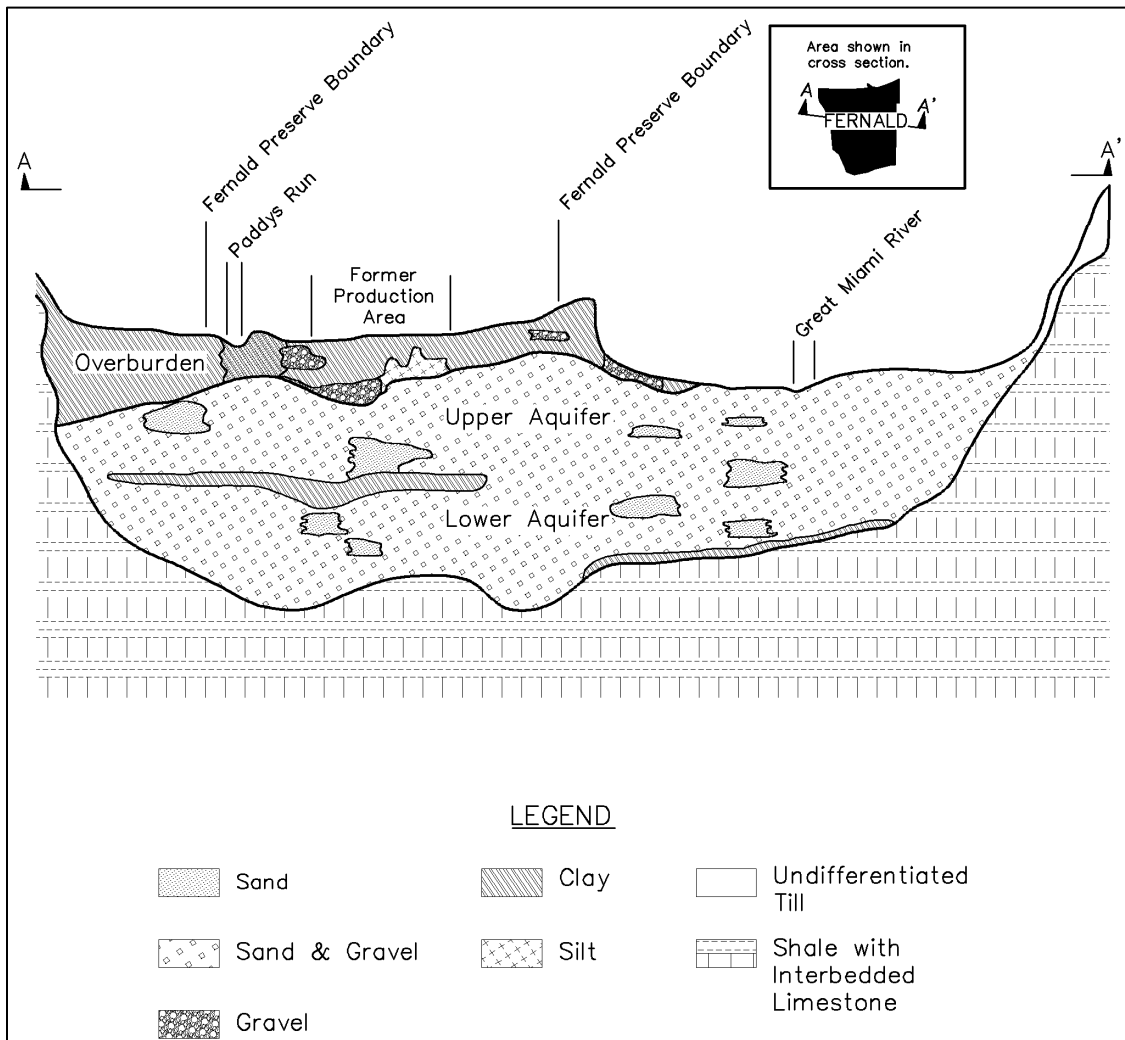


Figure 4. Schematic Cross Section of the New Haven Trough, Looking North

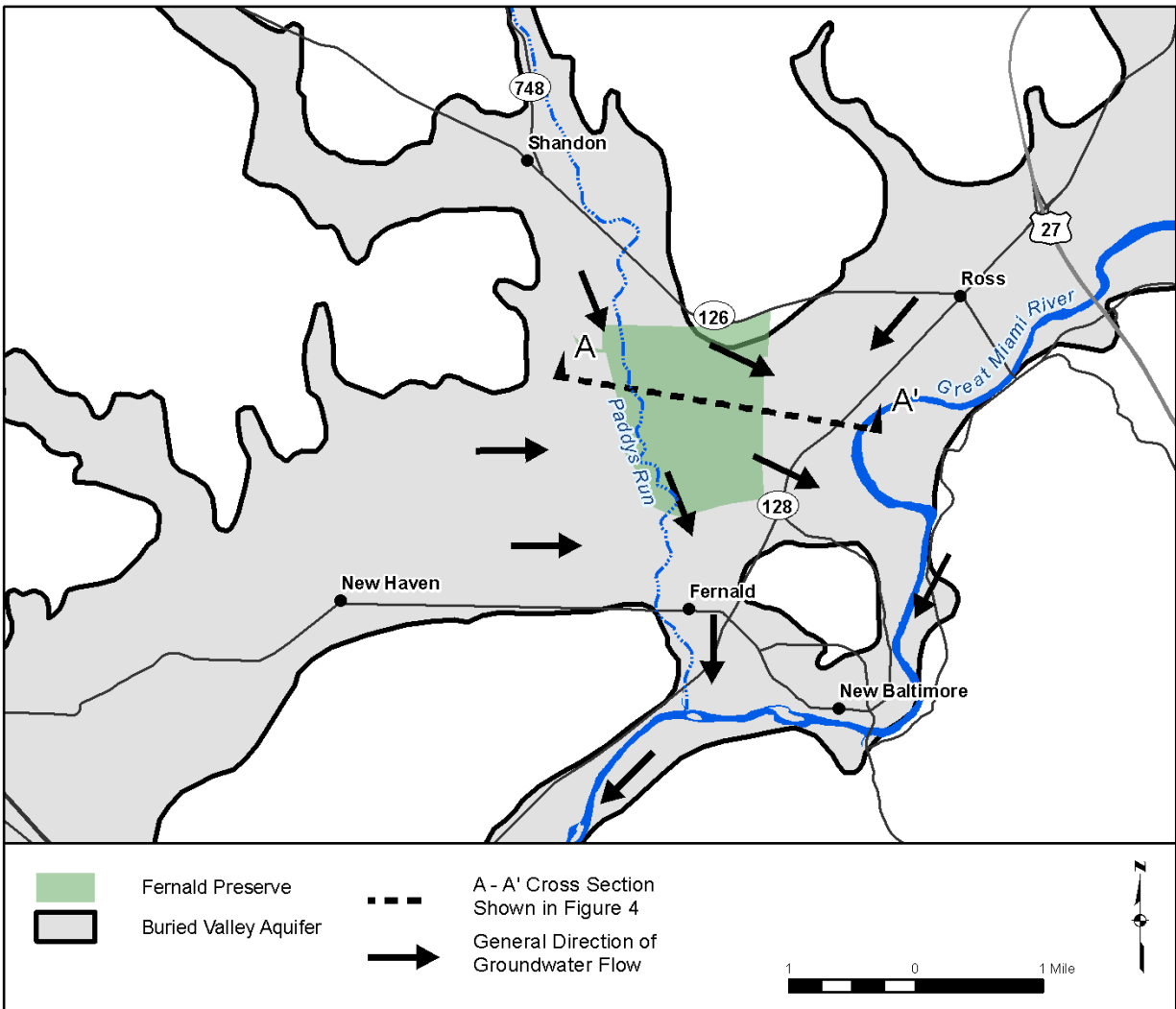


Figure 5. Regional Groundwater Flow in the Great Miami Aquifer

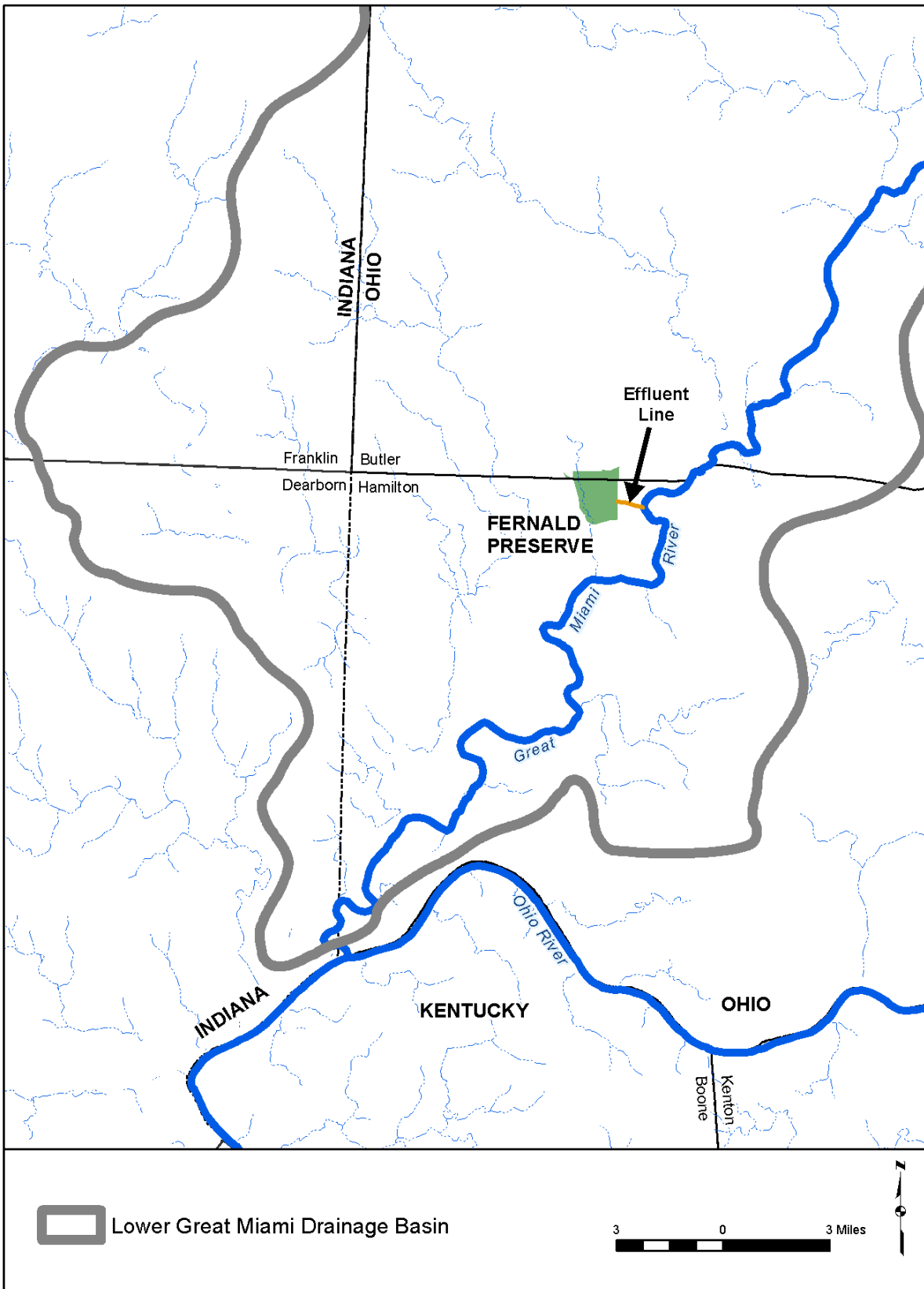


Figure 6. Southern Portion of the Great Miami River Drainage Basin

In 2023, 34.8 inches of precipitation were measured at the Butler County Regional Airport. This measurement, which represents precipitation at the site, is lower than the average annual Cincinnati-area precipitation of 41.3 inches for 1951 through 2023. Figure 7 shows the total annual precipitation recorded at the Fernald Preserve for each year from 1991 through 2023 and the average annual precipitation for the Cincinnati area from 1951 through 2023. Figure 8 shows monthly precipitation at the site for 2023 compared to the Cincinnati-area average monthly precipitation for 1951 through 2023.

1.3.5 Site and OSDF Inspections

The 2023 required inspections, maintenance, and repair activities of the site and the OSDF are discussed in Section 5.0.

1.3.6 Natural Resources

Natural resources have important aesthetic, ecological, economic, educational, historical, recreational, and scientific value to the United States. Their establishment and protection are an ongoing process at the Fernald Preserve. Section 5.0 discusses the site's cultural resources and natural resource management activities. The site is located near the transition of the Interior Plateau and Eastern Corn Belt Plains ecoregions. These ecoregions are subsections of the Eastern Deciduous Forest which consists of mosaic of oak-hickory and beech-maple forests. Regional ecology has been greatly altered by past agricultural and land management practices. Large portions of forests have been cleared and converted into agricultural land or pasture. These changes led to a fragmented landscape with a patchwork of cleared land, old fields, and second growth woodlands, with very little mature forest remaining. At the Fernald Preserve, additional changes took place with the planting of several areas of pine plantations in the northern and southern portions of the property. Additional wet forest habitat was recognized in the northern portion of the site as part of sitewide wetland delineation efforts in the 1990s.

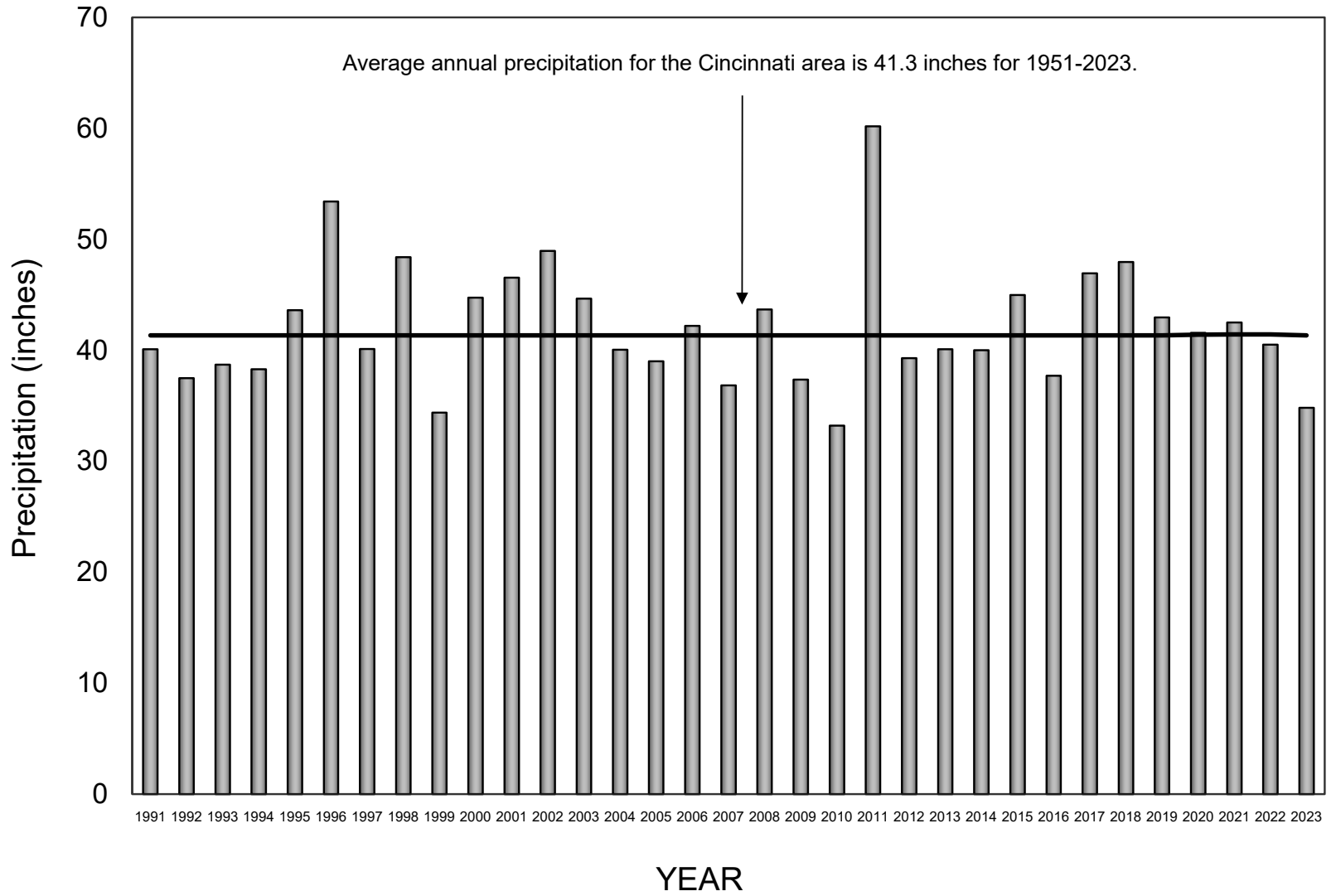


Figure 7. Cincinnati Area Annual Precipitation, 1991–2023

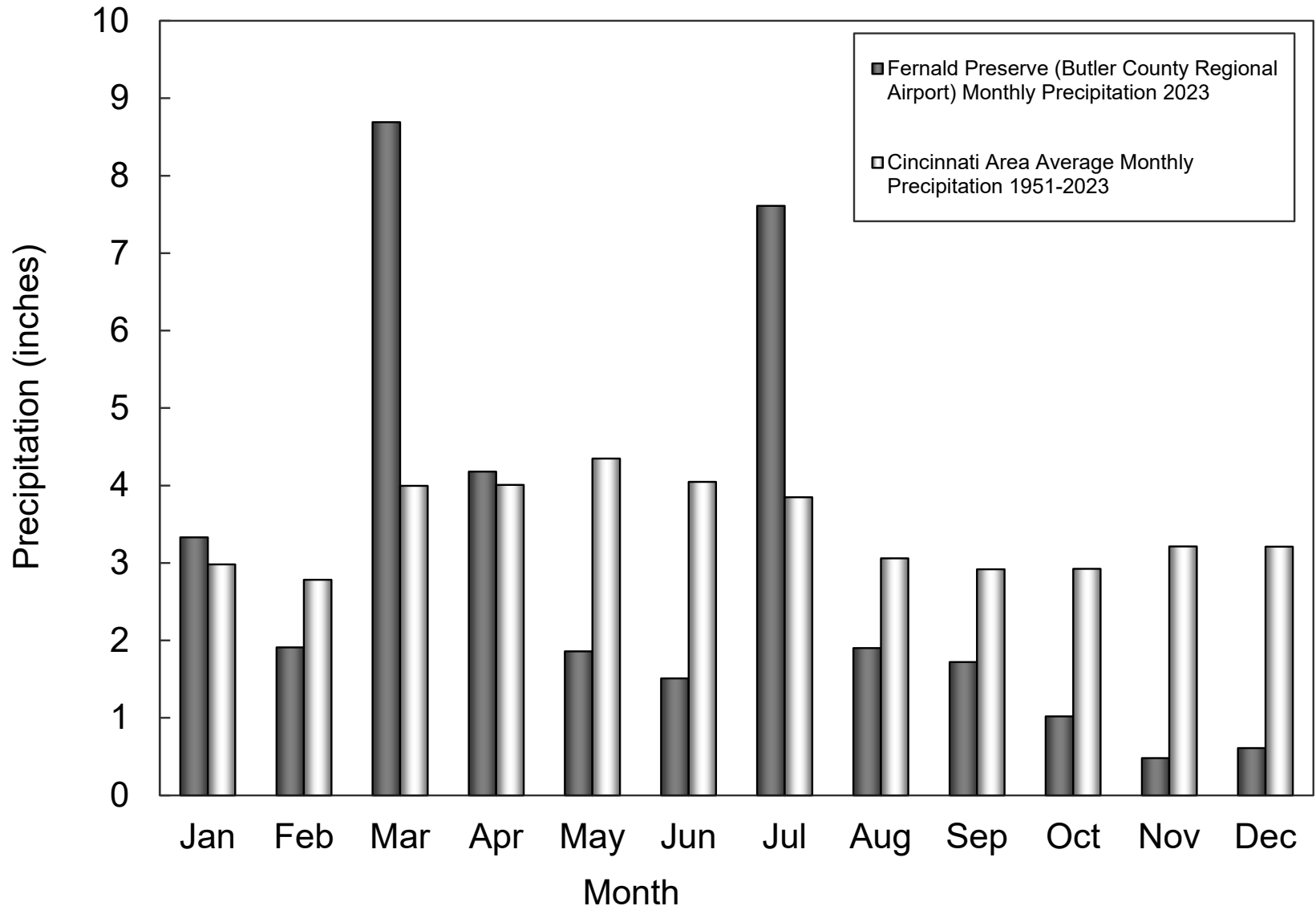


Figure 8. Monthly Precipitation for 2023 Compared to Average Monthly Precipitation for 1951–2023

2.0 Remediation Status and Compliance Summary

This section provides a summary of CERCLA remediation activities in 2023 and summarizes compliance activities with other applicable environmental laws, regulations, and legal agreements. Compliance under CERCLA dictates the environmental remediation of the Fernald Preserve.

EPA and Ohio EPA enforce the environmental laws, regulations, and legal agreements governing work at the Fernald Preserve. EPA develops, promulgates, and enforces environmental protection regulations and technology-based standards. EPA regional offices and state agencies enforce these regulations and standards by review of data collected at the Fernald Preserve. EPA Region 5 has regulatory oversight of the CERCLA process at the Fernald Preserve, with active participation from Ohio EPA.

For some programs—such as those under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), as amended (42 USC 6901 et seq.); the Clean Air Act, as amended (42 USC 7401 et seq.), excluding National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants compliance; and the Clean Water Act, as amended (33 USC 1251 et seq.)—EPA has authorized the State of Ohio to act as the primary enforcement authority. For these programs, the State of Ohio promulgates state regulations that must be at least as stringent as federal requirements. Several legal agreements between DOE, EPA Region 5, and Ohio EPA identify site-specific requirements for compliance with the regulations.

2.1 CERCLA Remediation Status

By October 2006, remedial actions were completed for four of the five operable units. As of October 29, 2006, the only remaining active remediation involves the ongoing groundwater remedy under Operable Unit 5. Activities under CERCLA during 2023 involved monitoring the performance of the completed remedies and implementing the requirements of the LMICP.

All cleanup-related CERCLA documentation, including a copy of the Administrative Record and Post-Record of Decision Index, is available online at <https://www.energy.gov/lm/ferald-preserve-ohio-site>. The Fernald Preserve staff can be contacted by phone at (513) 648-3330 for assistance in searching for a document in the CERCLA Administrative Record or Post-Record of Decision Index. The CERCLA Administrative Record and Post-Record of Decision Index are updated as new documents are created.

The completion and closure of a National Priorities List (NPL) site encompasses several milestones and specific documentation requirements for each milestone completed, as specified in the EPA publication *Close Out Procedures for National Priorities List Sites* (EPA 2011). These milestones begin with remedial action completion and end with deletion from the NPL and include:

- Remedial action completion (Final or Interim Remedial Action Reports).
- Construction completion (Preliminary Closeout Report)—all construction activities are complete, immediate threats are addressed, and long-term threats are under control.

- Site completion (Final Closeout Report)—all site cleanup goals are met, all RODs are complete, institutional controls are in place, and site conditions are protective of human health and the environment.
- Site deletion from the NPL (Notice of Intent to Delete).

DOE has prepared, and both EPA and Ohio EPA have approved, Final Remedial Action Reports for Operable Units 1, 2, 3, and 4. EPA approved the *Interim Remedial Action Report for Operable Unit 5* (DOE 2008) in August 2008. That report detailed the ongoing aquifer restoration activities and provided information indicating that all required groundwater infrastructure had been installed and was functioning as designed. Furthermore, the report provides information that all soils have been remediated (except those associated with the aquifer restoration infrastructure) and that the OSDF is functioning as designed. Operable Unit 5 will remain open until a future final Remedial Action Report for Operable Unit 5 has been prepared. DOE will develop that report once groundwater actions are complete and all soils and infrastructure associated with the groundwater remedy have been adequately addressed (estimated completion date in 2039, based on modeling projections reported in the 2014 Operational Design report [DOE 2014]). EPA issued the *Preliminary Closeout Report, U.S. DOE Feed Materials Production Center, Fernald, Ohio* (EPA 2006) in December 2006. The estimated durations for certifying the last area of the aquifer as being clean and for removing the wellfield infrastructure can be found in the *Fernald Groundwater Certification Plan* (DOE 2006a).

CERCLA Section 121(c) also requires a five-year review process for remedial actions implemented under the signed ROD for each operable unit. The purpose of a five-year review is to determine, through evaluation of performance of the selected remedy, whether the remedy at a site remains protective of human health and the environment. The methods, findings, and conclusions are documented in five-year review reports. In addition, the five-year review reports identify issues found during the review, if any, and document recommendations to address the issues.

EPA approved the first five-year review report for the Fernald Preserve (DOE 2001c) in September 2001. The second five-year review report was submitted in April 2006 (DOE 2006b) and approved by EPA in September 2006. The third five-year review report was submitted to EPA in March 2011 (DOE 2011) and approved by EPA in August 2011. The fourth five-year review began in 2015 and was approved by EPA in September 2016 (DOE 2016b). The fifth five-year review began in fall 2020 and was approved in September 2021 (DOE 2021b).

In the site's fourth CERCLA five-year review report, DOE was required to address the presence of perfluorinated compounds, now called per- and polyfluoroalkyl alkyl substances (PFAS). PFAS are a large group of emerging potential chemicals of concern, of which perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) are the two most prevalent. PFAS could be present at the Fernald site because very small volumes (i.e., less than 25 gallons) of aqueous foam firefighting agents containing PFOA and PFOS were used for fire training exercises at the former Fire Training Facility from 1976 to 1990. During the extensive site remediation, over 13,000 cubic yards of impacted soil were removed from the Fire Training Facility alone.

In December 2016, DOE submitted the *Draft Perfluorinated Compound Groundwater Screening Sampling and Analysis Plan* (DOE 2016c). In March 2018, DOE submitted the *Draft Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances (PFASs) Investigation Plan for the Fernald Preserve* (DOE 2018b). Based on information presented in both documents, PFAS are not a widespread

issue at the Fernald Preserve. Interim recommendations were established for PFOA and PFOS by EPA in December 2019 (EPA 2019). To date, no sampling for these emerging contaminants has occurred at the Fernald Preserve.

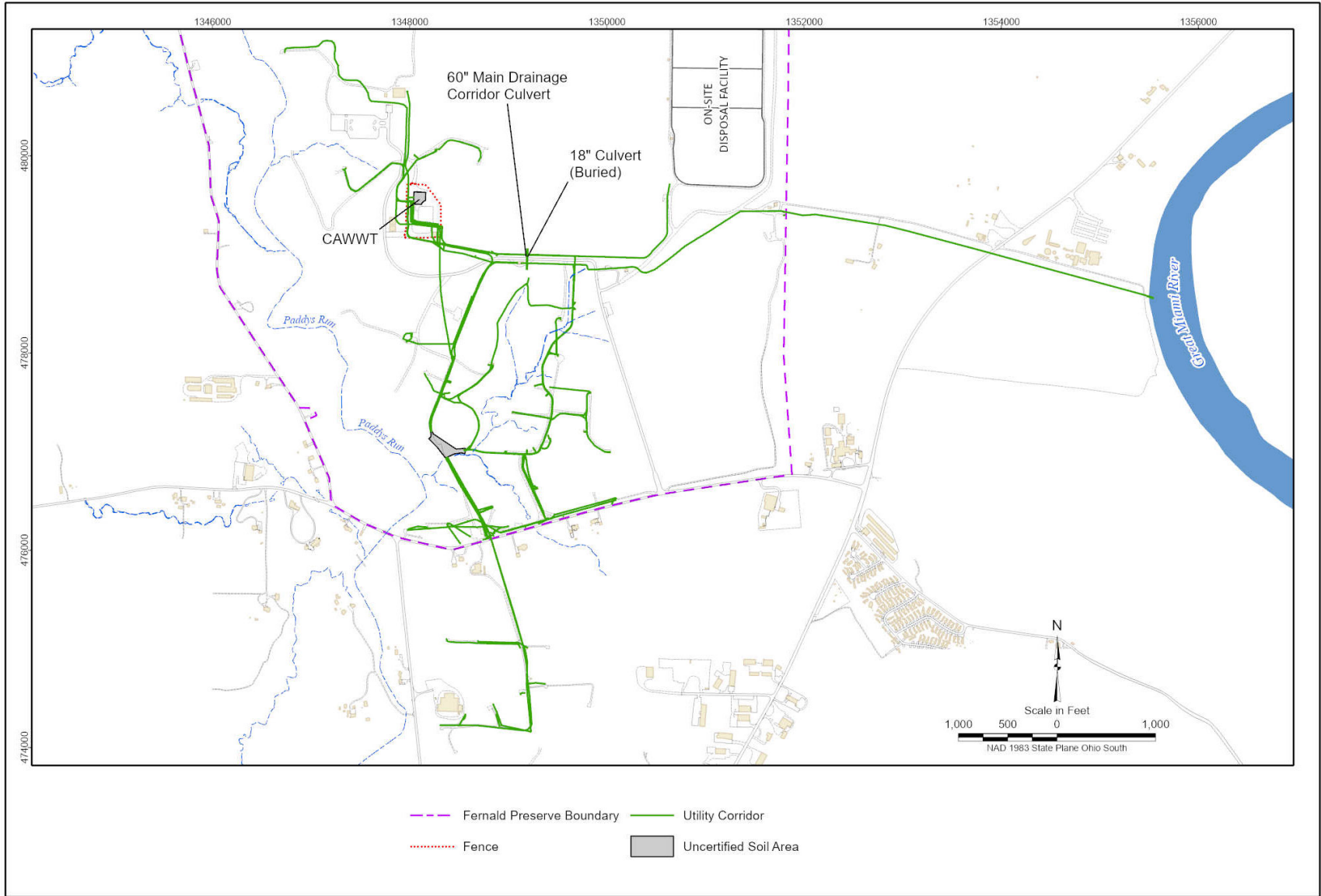
In the fifth CERCLA five-year review report, DOE reviewed and evaluated the potential for all emerging contaminants currently recognized by the EPA to have been present at the site. An emerging contaminant is a chemical or material that is characterized by a perceived, potential, or real threat to human health or the environment or by lack of published health standards. This evaluation is presented in the approved *Final Fifth Five-Year Review Report for the Fernald Preserve* (DOE 2021b). With the exception of PFAS, no other emerging contaminant required additional evaluation. The initial evaluation of PFAS at the site focused on aqueous film-forming firefighting foams, but new information has identified additional industrial processes that may have used PFAS. An evaluation of these newly identified general industrial uses of PFAS was conducted to determine if they were historically used at the Fernald site and may have the potential to adversely impact human health and the environment. That evaluation (DOE 2022a) was submitted to the regulators in fall 2022 and indicated that large volumes of PFAS-containing chemicals were not used in any historical processes at the site. Of the approximately 60 general industry PFAS uses evaluated, 5 potential uses of PFAS in historical processes were identified including firefighting foams; laboratory-related supplies; lubricants and greases; pipes, pumps, fittings, and liners; sealants; and water and effluent treatment. Generally, liquid-phase PFAS chemicals would have the most potential to cause environmental concerns if used or disposed directly into the environment. Of the uses identified, firefighting foams and a calibrant used in the laboratory are the only liquid-phase PFAS chemicals identified. No manufacturing of PFAS chemicals or large-scale of PFAS-containing chemicals were identified in this evaluation.

CERCLA remediation highlights during 2023 included the following:

- For 2023, the ongoing groundwater remedy resulted in extraction of 1.8 billion gallons of groundwater from the Great Miami Aquifer and removal of 259 lb of uranium from the aquifer. Section 3.0 discusses groundwater monitoring and remediation performance.
- The OSDF continues to operate as designed. The OSDF cap underwent four formal inspections. Such inspections are part of the standard operation and maintenance requirements for the facility. Minor maintenance of the cap and associated drainages continues; examples include the removal of small trees and shrubs, spot herbicide application on woody stumps and other invasive plant species and repairing animal burrows. A prescribed burn of the OSDF cell cap vegetation was conducted by the U.S. Forest Service in February 2023. A light detection and ranging (lidar) survey of the OSDF was conducted following the prescribed burn. The eight leachate valve houses continued to be inspected daily via operational rounds. Leachate generation has continued to decline as expected, and liner performance is meeting design requirements. Leachate flow and leak detection performance is discussed in Section 3.0. Cap performance is discussed further in Section 5.0.
- Figure 9 indicates soil areas that remain uncertified, pending completion of aquifer restoration and the decontamination and decommissioning of related facilities and associated utilities.

- Elevated uranium concentrations persist in surface water in an area adjacent to former Waste Pit 3. (This issue is further discussed in Section 4.0.) Weekly surface water monitoring in that area continued in 2023. The Paddys Run streambank stabilization project was completed in 2016 to prevent migration of the Paddys Run streambed into this area. In 2017, DOE replaced several boulders on an in-stream crossvane that were dislodged during 2016 flooding. One additional stone became dislodged in 2018. Site personnel monitored the streambed in 2022 and determined that repairs were not needed. Shifting of boulders in the crossvane occurred in 2023; the area will be evaluated in 2024 to determine whether maintenance is required.
- All required site and OSDF inspections were performed in 2023. In addition, two post-burn walkdowns occurred; one of the 20 acres of prairie that were burned in December 2022, and one of the OSDF that was burned in February 2023. The post-burn walkdowns were incorporated into regularly scheduled quarterly inspections. Inspection findings in 2023 were similar to those from previous years and consisted mainly of the presence of invasive vegetation and deer exclosure fencing that was damaged by fallen trees and limbs. Debris also continues to be found, primarily in the Former Production Area and the former Waste Storage Area. Minor violations of the institutional controls established in the LMICP included occasional instances of hikers straying off trail. Section 5.0 includes further discussion of the restored area activities and the inspection process.

Construction of the onsite modular offices for site field personnel, which was initiated in 2022, continued in 2023. The modular office area is located adjacent to the CAWWT facility. Portions of subsurface infrastructure (buried electric and water lines) were installed within the uncertified CAWWT footprint. Uncertified soil removed during construction was stockpiled within the CAWWT uncertified area and regraded and seeded. Sanitary waste from this facility, and the CAWWT building sanitary system, were connected into and will be treated at the Visitors Center biowetland.



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Figure 9. Uncultivated Areas and Subgrade Utility Corridors

2.2 Summary of Compliance with Other Requirements

CERCLA requires compliance with other laws and regulations as part of remediation of the Fernald Preserve. These requirements are referred to as applicable or relevant and appropriate requirements (ARARs). ARARs that are pertinent to remediation of the Fernald Preserve are specified in the ROD for each operable unit. This section of the report highlights some of the major requirements related to environmental monitoring and waste management and describes how the Fernald Preserve complied with these requirements in 2023.

The regulations discussed in this section have been identified as ARARs within the RODs. The Fernald Preserve must comply with these regulations while site remediation under CERCLA is underway; compliance is enforced by EPA and Ohio EPA. Some of these requirements include permits for effluent discharges to the Great Miami River, which are also discussed in this section.

2.2.1 RCRA

RCRA regulates the treatment, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste and mixed waste (waste that contains radioactive and hazardous waste components). These wastes are regulated under RCRA and Ohio hazardous waste management regulations; therefore, the Fernald Preserve must comply with legal requirements for managing hazardous and mixed wastes. EPA has authorized Ohio EPA to enforce its hazardous waste management regulations in lieu of the federal RCRA program. In addition, hazardous-waste management is subject to the 1988 Consent Decree between the State of Ohio and DOE, the 1993 Stipulated Amendment to the Consent Decree between the State of Ohio and DOE, and a series of Director's Final Findings and Orders issued by Ohio EPA.

2.2.1.1 RCRA Property Boundary Groundwater Monitoring

The Ohio EPA Director's Findings and Orders for Groundwater, which were signed September 10, 1993, described an alternative monitoring system for RCRA groundwater monitoring. A revision of this document was approved on September 7, 2000, to align with the groundwater monitoring strategy identified in the IEMP. Section 3.3.2 provides a more detailed discussion of the groundwater monitoring program.

2.2.1.2 Waste Management

Although the RCRA regulations remain applicable, the Fernald Preserve had no hazardous waste treatment, storage, or disposal activities during 2023. Wastes managed during 2023 were limited to universal waste (e.g., spent batteries) and radiologically-contaminated solid wastes.

2.2.2 Clean Water Act

Under the Clean Water Act, as amended, the Fernald Preserve is governed by National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) regulations that require the control of discharges of nonradiological pollutants to waters of the State of Ohio. The NPDES permit, issued by the State of Ohio for storm water and wastewater, specifies discharge and sample locations, sampling and reporting schedules, and discharge limitations. Until June 1, 2022, the site operated under an NPDES permit that took effect on March 1, 2015. A new permit was approved and took effect on March 2, 2022. This permit will expire on May 31, 2027. Fernald Preserve submits monthly reports on NPDES activities to Ohio EPA to document compliance with stipulated discharge limits. There were no instances of noncompliance at any of the permitted outfalls in 2023.

A Notice of Intent to use the Ohio General Construction Permit was submitted on May 12, 2022, and approved on May 16, 2022, for construction activities related to the modular office area near CAWWT. Weekly and post-rainfall event inspections were conducted as needed and controls maintained until construction activities were completed, or reseeded areas reached emergence and required coverage parameters. The annual stormwater evaluation, which is no longer required as part of the new NPDES permit was conducted on December 15, 2023, as a best management practice, and no issues were identified.

2.2.3 Clean Air Act

Ohio EPA is authorized to enforce the State of Ohio's air standards for particulate matter at the Fernald Preserve. DOE maintains compliance by implementing the Fugitive Dust Control Policy negotiated between DOE and Ohio EPA in 1997. The policy allows for visual observation of fugitive dust and implementation of dust control measures. During construction activities, the site personnel utilized enforced speed limits, water spray, and roadway cleaning to comply with fugitive dust requirements.

2.2.4 Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986

The Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (SARA) amended CERCLA and was enacted, in part, to clarify and expand CERCLA requirements. SARA Title III is also known as the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act. No chemicals exceeded threshold reporting quantities during 2023, so no report was required.

Another SARA Title III report, the Section 313 Toxic Chemical Release Inventory Report (Form R), is required if quantities of chemicals used or released at the Fernald Preserve exceed an applicable threshold for any SARA 313 chemical. If required, the Toxic Chemical Release Inventory Report lists routine and accidental releases and information about the activities, uses, and waste for each reported toxic chemical. No chemical usage or releases have exceeded the threshold for several years at the Fernald Preserve and, as in past years, no chemical exceeded a reporting threshold during 2023.

Also under SARA Title III, any offsite release meeting or exceeding a reportable quantity as defined by SARA Title III, Section 304, requires that immediate notifications be made to local emergency planning committees and the state emergency response commission. Notifications are also made to the National Response Center and other appropriate federal, state, and local regulatory entities. DOE evaluates and documents all releases that might occur at the Fernald

Preserve to ensure that proper notifications are made in accordance with SARA and under CERCLA Section 103, RCRA, the Toxic Substances Control Act, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and Ohio environmental laws and regulations. During 2023, there were no releases at the Fernald Preserve that met the reporting criteria.

2.2.5 Other Environmental Regulations

In addition to those described above, the Fernald Preserve is also required to comply with other environmental laws and regulations. Table 2 summarizes compliance with each of these requirements for 2023.

2.2.6 Permits and Licenses

Certain environmental regulations are implemented through permits. The Fernald Preserve's permit for discharging water under NPDES regulations is discussed in Section 2.2.2. In addition, the Fernald Preserve maintains a permit administered through the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) for collection of wildlife specimens. A permit is also obtained to remove Canada goose nests, if necessary. A commercial pesticide applicator license is maintained by site personnel in order to apply herbicide at the Fernald Preserve. As a result of the 2022 interagency agreement between DOE and the U.S. Forest Service for conducting prescribed burns, the U.S. Forest Service secures burn-ban waivers and permits for prescribed burning activities onsite. These activities are discussed in Section 5.0.

2.2.7 Federal Facility Compliance Agreement

In July 1986, DOE entered into a Federal Facility Compliance Agreement (FFCA) with EPA, which requires the Fernald Preserve to:

- Maintain a sampling program for the South Plume extraction wells and report the results to EPA, Ohio EPA, and the Ohio Department of Health. The sampling program conducted to address this requirement has been modified over the years and is currently governed by an agreement reached with EPA and Ohio EPA on May 1, 1996 (DOE 1996a). These data are reported in Appendix A.
- Maintain a continuous sample collection program for radiological constituents at the effluent discharge point and report the results to EPA, Ohio EPA, and the Ohio Department of Health. The sampling program was modified several times and was governed by an agreement reached with EPA and Ohio EPA that became effective May 1, 1996 (DOE 1996a). The first IEMP, finalized in 1997, was developed to combine the multiple programs (including the FFCA effluent monitoring) under one reporting structure to facilitate review of the performance of the environmental protection actions for various media under CERCLA remediation of the site. These data are reported in Appendix B.

Table 2. Compliance with Other Environmental Regulations

| Regulation and Purpose | Background Compliance Issues | 2023 Compliance Activities |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Toxic Substances Control Act Regulates the manufacturing, use, storage, and disposal of toxic materials, including polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and PCB items.</p> | <p>EPA Region 5 conducted the last routine Toxic Substances Control Act (15 USC 2601 et seq.) inspection of the Fernald Preserve's program on September 21, 1994. No violations of PCB regulations were identified during the inspection.</p> | <p>No PCB liquids or items were used, stored, or shipped in 2023.</p> |
| <p>Ohio Solid Waste Act Regulates infectious waste.</p> | <p>The Fernald Preserve was registered with Ohio EPA as a generator of infectious waste (generating more than 50 lb per month) until December 6, 1999, when Ohio EPA concurred with the Fernald Preserve's qualification as a small quantity generator.</p> | <p>No infectious waste was generated in 2023.</p> |
| <p>Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act Regulates the registration, storage, labeling, and use of pesticides (such as insecticides, herbicides, and rodenticides).</p> | <p>The last inspection of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (7 USC 136 et seq.) program conducted by EPA Region 5 on September 21, 1994, found the Fernald Preserve to be in full compliance with the requirements of the mandated Act.</p> | <p>Pesticide applications at the Fernald Preserve were conducted according to federal and state regulatory requirements.</p> |
| <p>National Environmental Policy Act Requires the evaluation of environmental, socioeconomic, and cultural impacts before any action, such as a construction or cleanup project, is initiated by a federal agency.</p> | <p>An Environmental Assessment for proposed final land use was issued for public review in 1998. It was prepared under DOE's guidelines for implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act, Title 10 <i>Code of Federal Regulations</i> Section 1021. The assessment requires DOE to consult the public before making any decisions on land use; it includes previous DOE commitments.</p> | <p>One categorical exclusion was approved in 2023 to support delivery and installation of a stand-alone solar electric vehicle charging supply equipment.</p> |

Table 2. Compliance with Other Environmental Regulations (continued)

| Regulation and Purpose | Background Compliance Issues | 2023 Compliance Activities |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Endangered Species Act</p> <p>Requires the protection of any threatened or endangered species found at the site as well as any critical habitat that is essential for the species' existence.</p> | <p>Ecological surveys conducted by Miami University and DOE, in consultation with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, have established the following list of threatened and endangered species and their habitats existing on site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cave salamander (<i>Eurycea lucifluga</i>), state endangered, marginal habitat—small limestone outcrops and streams—none found. • Sloan's crayfish (<i>Orconectes sloanii</i>), state-threatened—found on northern sections of Paddys Run. • Indiana bat (<i>Myotis sodalis</i>), federally endangered—found in northern wooded areas along Paddys Run. • Northern long-eared bat (<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>), federally threatened—potential habitat within northern wooded areas along Paddys Run—none found. • Running buffalo clover (<i>Trifolium stoloniferum</i>), federally endangered—potential habitat on disturbed areas along Paddys Run—none found. • Spring coralroot (<i>Corallorhiza wisteriana</i>), state-threatened—potential habitat within northern wooded areas—none found. • American burying beetle (<i>Nicrophorus americanus</i>), federally endangered—potential habitat within a variety of restored areas—released as part of ongoing recovery efforts. | <p>As of 2022, Sloan's crayfish (<i>Orconectes sloanii</i>) is no longer listed as threatened by the state of Ohio. Monitoring is no longer required at the site for Sloan's Crayfish.</p> <p>Running buffalo clover (<i>Trifolium stoloniferum</i>) was delisted in 2021 and is no longer considered endangered or threatened. Monitoring is no longer required at the site for running buffalo clover.</p> <p>The Cincinnati Zoo requested termination of the 5-year Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Cincinnati Zoo to introduce the federally endangered American burying beetle to the Fernald Preserve (DOE 2012a and DOE 2017). The agreement was originally set to expire in 2022, but the Cincinnati Zoo determined the resources were better applied at other release sites across the region (Ray 2021). All parties agreed to terminate the agreement. As of 2021, the American burying beetle has been down listed from endangered to threatened.</p> <p>As of January 2023, the northern long-eared bat is listed as federally endangered.</p> |
| <p>Floodplains/Wetlands Review Requirements</p> <p>DOE regulations require a floodplain/wetlands assessment for DOE construction and improvement projects. The Clean Water Act also protects jurisdictional wetlands and "Waters of the U.S."</p> | <p>A wetlands delineation of the Fernald Preserve, completed in 1992 and approved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in August 1993, identified 36 acres of freshwater wetlands on the Fernald Preserve property. Wetland mitigation monitoring activities from 2009 to 2011 resulted in the delineation of approximately 31 acres (13 hectares) of mitigated jurisdictional wetlands on the Fernald Preserve property (DOE 2012c).</p> | <p>No construction or improvement projects occurred in 2023 that required floodplain/wetland review.</p> |
| <p>National Historic Preservation Act</p> <p>Establishes a program for the protection, maintenance, and stewardship of federal prehistoric and historic properties.</p> | <p>The Fernald Preserve is in an area of sensitive historic and prehistoric cultural resources that are eligible for or are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These cultural resources include historic structures, buildings, and bridges, plus Native American villages and campsites.</p> | <p>No archaeological surveys were required, and no unexpected cultural discoveries were identified in 2023.</p> |

Table 2. Compliance with Other Environmental Regulations (continued)

| Regulation and Purpose | Background Compliance Issues | 2023 Compliance Activities |
|--|---|---|
| Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act | | |
| <p>Establishes a means for Native Americans to request the return or repatriation of human remains and other cultural items. Federal agencies must return human remains, associated funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony to the Native American nations or tribes with cultural affiliation to the remains or material.</p> | <p>Native American remains have been discovered during remediation activities at the Fernald Preserve. Native American remains and artifacts have been removed or left in place with consultation from Native American nations, tribes, and groups.</p> | <p>No Native American remains were discovered or repatriated to Native American nations, tribes, or groups in 2023.</p> |
| Natural Resource Requirements Under CERCLA and Executive Order 12580 | | |
| <p>Requires DOE to act as a trustee (i.e., guardian) for natural resources at its federal facilities.</p> | <p>DOE and the other trustees, which include Ohio EPA and the U.S. Department of the Interior (administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), meet regularly to discuss potential impacts to natural resources and to coordinate trustee activities. The trustees also interact with the Fernald Community Alliance, which is a stakeholder organization that works to promote the Fernald Preserve as an asset to the community.</p> <p>In November 2008, the State of Ohio and DOE reached a settlement of the 1986 natural resource injury claim at the Fernald site. While the components of restoration had been established through a 2001 Memorandum of Understanding (DOE 2001d), the State of Ohio and DOE settled outstanding issues such as the payment of monetary penalties, establishment of environmental covenants, and a mutually agreed-upon Natural Resource Restoration Plan (NRRP), which is Appendix B of the <i>Consent Decree Resolving Ohio's Natural Resource Damage Claim Against DOE</i> (State of Ohio 2008). In 2009, activities commenced as required in the final NRRP.</p> | <p>In 2020, the Fernald Natural Resource Trustees conducted a 10-year review of the Restored Area Maintenance Plan, pursuant to the NRRP. The review resulted in the development of the Fernald Natural Resource Management Plan. This document presents a revised community-based approach for management and evaluation of ecologically restored areas across the Fernald Preserve. DOE implemented the revised Natural Resource Management Plan in 2021. The Natural Resource Management Plan was incorporated as Appendix A of Volume I of the 2023 LMICP (DOE 2023a). In 2023, the Natural Resource Trustees agreed that DOE has completed all commitments in the Consent Decree and NRRP. DOE committed to continue to manage the ecologically restored site as part of their stewardship responsibilities.</p> |

2.3 Split Sampling Program

Since 1987, DOE has participated in a split sampling program with Ohio EPA. Split samples are obtained when technicians alternately add portions of a sample to two individual sample containers. This collection method helps ensure that both samples are as close as possible to being identical. The split samples are then submitted to two analytical laboratories; this allows for an independent comparison of data to ascertain quality assurance for laboratory analysis and field sampling methods. Ohio EPA occasionally performs independent sampling in addition to split sampling.

Table 3 provides the analytical results of groundwater samples. Figure 10 shows the split sample location 2060.

Table 3. 2023 DOE and Ohio EPA Groundwater Split Sampling Total Uranium Result Comparison

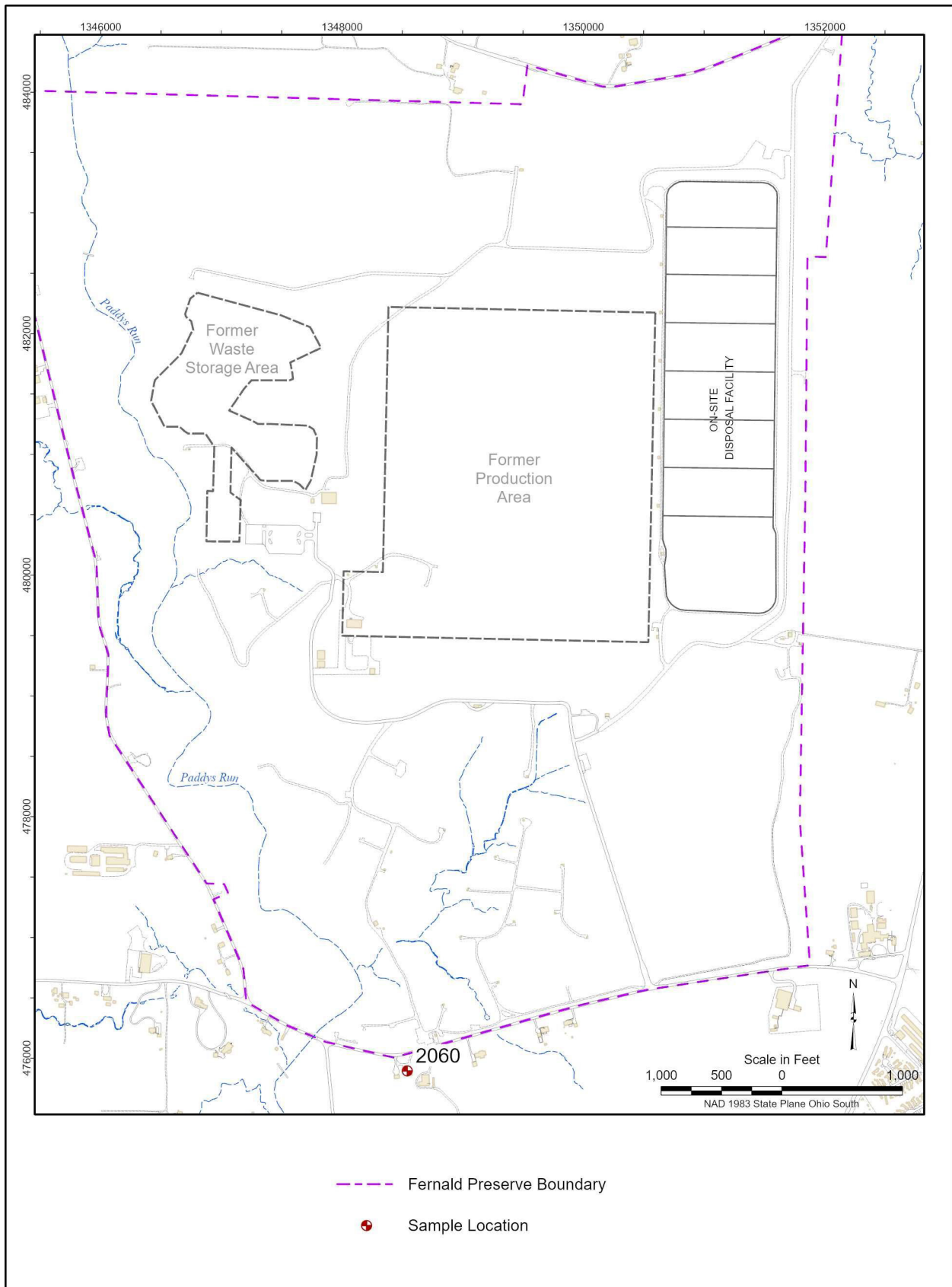
| Sample Location | 2023 Sample Date | DOE Result (µg/L) ^a | Ohio EPA Result (µg/L) | FRL ^b (µg/L) |
|-----------------|------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2060 | June | 19.4 | 12.8 | 30 |
| 2060 | December | 23.0 | 23.0 | 30 |

^a µg/L = micrograms per liter

^b The groundwater pathway and final remediation levels (FRLs) are discussed in Section 3.0.

The split sampling program is composed of private homeowner wells and is the longest running groundwater monitoring effort at the site. The program was initiated in 1982 in response to monitoring results indicating above background concentrations of uranium in private wells near the site. By 1984, the site had officially established the program with the monthly sampling of 19 privately-owned wells. In 1996, the private well program had grown to 32 private wells. At a property owner's request, any drinking water well near the site was sampled for uranium, and the one-time results were reported to the well owner. If any special request sample showed a questionable or significant total uranium concentration, or if the private well was determined to provide critical groundwater information in an area, the property owner had the option to participate in the routine sampling program. These private wells were sampled monthly or quarterly depending upon location, and sampling results were reported annually in the Site Environmental Report. In 1997, with implementation of the IEMP, the private well program was modified to only include three private wells (13, 14, and 2060). Well 2060 is the private well where off-property contamination was initially reported in 1981 (DOE 1997a). The other private wells previously monitored were not carried forward into the IEMP program because a public water supply was made available to the surrounding properties that had been affected by the off-property groundwater contamination (DOE 1998). These three private wells continued to be sampled through 2022. Data from these three remaining private wells have contributed to the delineation of the total uranium plume presented in Section 3.0.

At the end of sampling in 2022, well 13 had been below the final remediation level (FRL) since 2002 and well 14 has been below the FRL since this well was first sampled in 1988. These wells are located offsite and are outside of the uranium plume boundary identified in Section 3.0 and had been below the FRL for over 20 years. For these reasons, DOE proposed to eliminate monitoring in two of the private wells which are outside the current plume (13 and 14) and to continue monitoring in well 2060. That change took effect in the 2023 LMICP (DOE 2023a) with approval from the stakeholders and the regulators. Notification letters were distributed to affected property owners.



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Figure 10. DOE and Ohio EPA Groundwater Split Sample Locations

3.0 Groundwater Pathway

Results in Brief: 2023 Groundwater Pathway

Groundwater Remedy

Since 1993

- 56,688 Mgal of water have been pumped from the Great Miami Aquifer.
- 16,021 net lb of uranium have been removed from the Great Miami Aquifer.

During 2023

- 1,765.52 Mgal of water were pumped from the Great Miami Aquifer.
- 270.6 lb of uranium were removed from the Great Miami Aquifer.

Groundwater Monitoring Results: Data collected in 2023 show continued progress in reducing the footprint of the maximum uranium plume and that the pumping wells were capturing the uranium plume. Between 2022 and 2023:

- The footprint of the greater than or equal to 30 µg/L total uranium plume was reduced by 1.9 acre (2.6%).
- The footprint of the greater than or equal to 50 µg/L total uranium plume decreased by 0.1 acre (0.2%).
- The footprint of the greater than or equal to 100 µg/L total uranium was unchanged.

During 2023, the well field underwent an annual planned shutdown that lasted for 39 days (from May 31 to July 9, 2023). The well field in 2023 also underwent a maintenance shutdown for 21 days from August 2 to August 23 to clean the inside surfaces of the discharge piping. Due to the second shutdown, the wellfield operated less in 2023 than it normally has in the past.

OSDF Monitoring: In 2023, Great Miami Aquifer wells of each of the eight OSDF cells were sampled semiannually for 13 parameters. The leachate collection system, leak detection system, and horizontal till well of each cell were sampled semiannually for uranium, boron, sodium, and sulfate. Flow data from the disposal facility, coupled with the water quality monitoring results and the results of quarterly facility physical inspections, indicate that the OSDF performed as designed in 2023.

This section provides background information on the nature and extent of groundwater contamination in the Great Miami Aquifer due to past operations at the Fernald Preserve, and it summarizes aquifer restoration progress and groundwater monitoring activities and results for 2023.

Restoration of the affected portions of the Great Miami Aquifer and continued protection of the groundwater pathway are primary considerations in the groundwater remediation strategy for the Fernald Preserve. The groundwater pathway will be monitored following remediation according to the *Fernald Groundwater Certification Plan* (DOE 2006a).

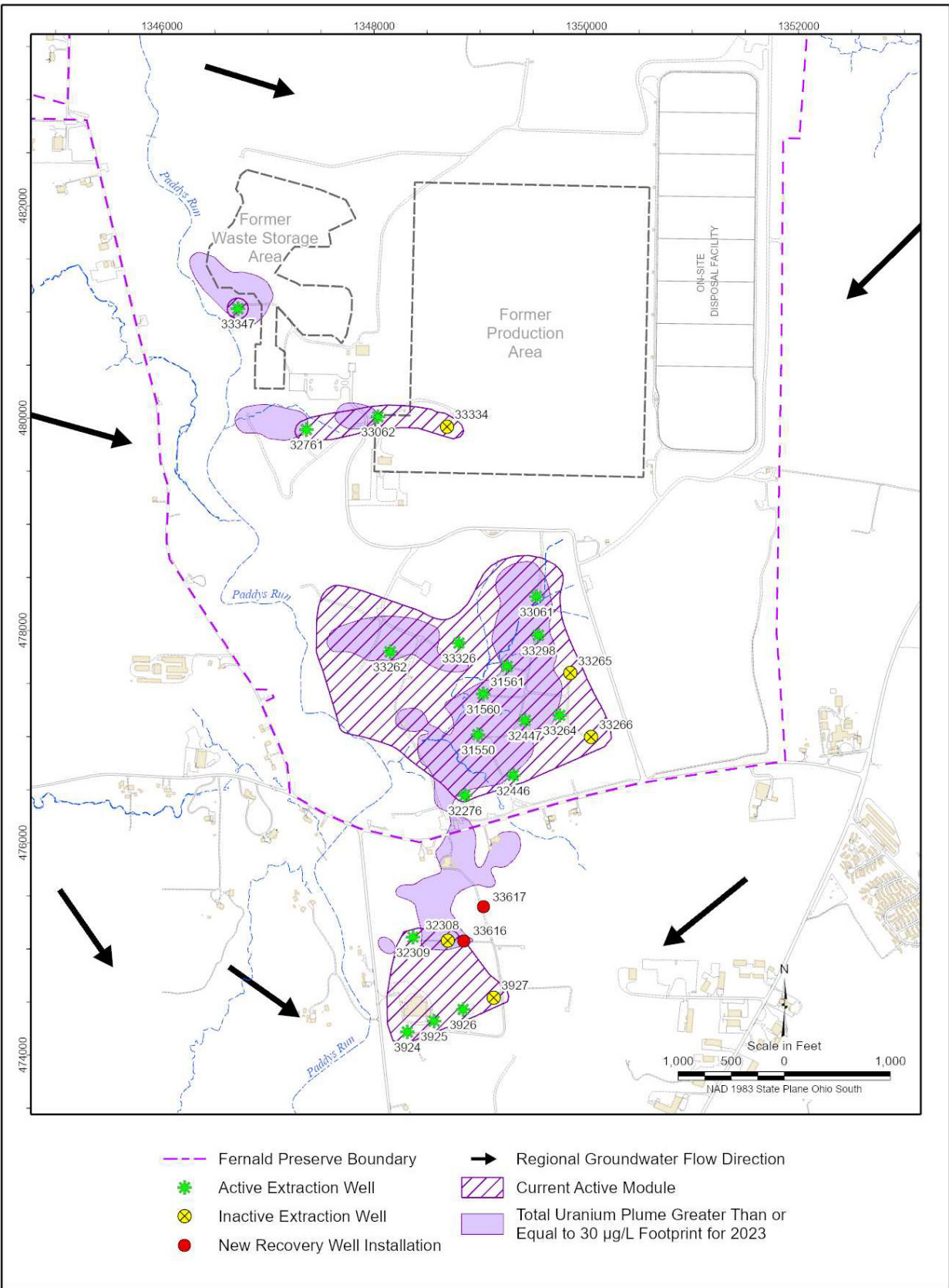
3.1 Summary of the Nature and Extent of Groundwater Contamination

The *Remedial Investigation Report for Operable Unit 5* (DOE 1995d) described the nature and extent of groundwater contamination from operations at the Fernald site and evaluated the risk to human health and the environment from

those contaminants. As documented in that report, the primary groundwater contaminant at the site is uranium.

Groundwater contamination resulted from infiltration of contaminated surface water through the bed of Paddys Run, the storm sewer outfall ditch (SSOD), the Pilot Plant Drainage Ditch (PPDD), and the old drainage ditch from the Plant 1 Pad. In these areas, the glacial overburden is absent (eroded), creating a direct pathway between surface water and the sand and gravel of the aquifer. To a lesser degree, groundwater contamination also resulted where past excavations (such as the waste pits) removed some of the protective clay contained in the glacial overburden and exposed the aquifer to contamination.

Figure 11 shows the 2023 maximum extent (most conservative) footprint of the 30 micrograms per liter (µg/L) uranium plume within the aquifer, as well as the current active restoration modules involved in the groundwater remedy. The current active restoration modules are represented by the cross-hatched areas in the figure, as well as the extraction wells that belong to each module.



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Figure 11. Extraction Wells Active in 2023

3.2 Selection and Design of the Groundwater Remedy

Groundwater Modeling at the Fernald Preserve

The Fernald Preserve uses a computer model to make predictions about how the concentration and location of contaminants in the aquifer will change over time. Because the model contains simplifying assumptions about the aquifer and the contaminants, the predictions about future behavior must be verified with laboratory analyses of groundwater samples collected during monitoring activities.

If groundwater monitoring data indicate the need for operational changes to the groundwater remedy, the groundwater model is run to predict the effect those changes might have on the aquifer and the contaminants. If the predictions indicate the proposed changes would increase cleanup efficiency and potentially reduce the cleanup time and cost, the operational changes are made once EPA and Ohio EPA concurrence is obtained. Monitoring data are then collected after the changes to verify whether model predictions were correct. If model predictions prove to be incorrect, modifications may be made to the model to improve its predictive capabilities.

While a remedial investigation/feasibility study was in progress and a groundwater remedy was being selected, off-property contaminated groundwater was being pumped from the South Plume area by the South Plume Removal Action System (referred to as the South Plume Module). In 1993, this system was installed south of Willey Road and east of Paddys Run Road to stop the uranium plume in this area from migrating any farther to the south. Figure 11 shows South Plume Module and South Plume Optimization Module extraction wells that were still operating in

2023 (3924, 3925, 3926, 32309). These extraction wells have successfully stopped further southward migration of the uranium plume beyond the wells and have contributed to significantly reducing total uranium (i.e., sum of all of the isotopes of uranium, measured in $\mu\text{g/L}$) concentrations in the off-property portion of the plume.

After the nature and extent of groundwater contamination was defined in the *Remedial Investigation Report for Operable Unit 5* (DOE 1995d), various remediation technologies were evaluated in the *Feasibility Study Report for Operable Unit 5* (DOE 1995a). Remediation cost and various land-use scenarios were considered during the development of the preferred remedy for restoring the quality of groundwater in the aquifer. The *Feasibility Study Report for Operable Unit 5* recommended a concentration-based, pump-and-treat remedy for the groundwater contaminated with uranium, consisting of 28 groundwater extraction wells located on and off property. Groundwater modeling suggested that the 28 extraction wells pumping at a combined rate of 4,000 gallons per minute (gpm) would remediate the aquifer within 27 years.

The recommended groundwater remedy, which included EPA, Ohio EPA, and community acceptance, was presented in the *Proposed Plan for Operable Unit 5* (DOE 1995c) as the preferred groundwater remedy. Once the proposed plan was approved, the *Record of Decision for Remedial Actions at Operable Unit 5* (OU5 ROD) (DOE 1996b) was issued. The OU5 ROD formally defines the selected groundwater remedy and establishes FRLs for all constituents of concern.

The OU5 ROD commits to an ongoing evaluation of innovative remediation technologies so that remedy performance can be improved as such technologies become available. As a result of this commitment, an enhanced groundwater remedy was presented in the *Operable Unit 5 Baseline Remedial Strategy Report, Remedial Design for Aquifer Restoration (Task 1)* (DOE 1997b).

Reinjection at the Fernald Site

From 1998 to 2004, reinjection was an enhancement to the groundwater remedy at the Fernald site, supplementing pump-and-treat operations. The term "well-based" refers to the injection of treated groundwater through specially designed reinjection wells. Groundwater pumped from the aquifer was treated via ion exchange to remove contaminants and then reinjected into the aquifer at strategic well locations. Because the treatment process was not 100% efficient, a small amount of uranium was reinjected into the aquifer with the treated water. However, the reinjected groundwater increased the speed at which dissolved contaminants moved through the aquifer and were pulled by extraction wells, thereby decreasing the overall remediation time. Based on updated groundwater modeling and the unfavorable results of a cost-benefit analysis, well-based reinjection was discontinued in 2004.

Groundwater modeling studies conducted to design the enhanced groundwater remedy suggested that, with the early installation of additional extraction wells and the use of reinjection technology, the remedy could potentially be reduced to 10 years. EPA and Ohio EPA approved the enhanced groundwater remedy that relied on pump-and-treat and reinjection technology. The groundwater remedy included the use of well-based reinjection until September 2004.

Evolution of the enhanced groundwater remedy has been documented through a series of approved designs. These designs are:

- *Operable Unit 5 Baseline Remedial Strategy Report, Remedial Design for Aquifer Restoration (Task 1)* (DOE 1997b).
- *Design for Remediation of the Great Miami Aquifer in the Waste Storage and Plant 6 Areas* (DOE 2001a).
- *Design for Remediation of the Great Miami Aquifer South Field (Phase II) Module* (DOE 2002).
- *Comprehensive Groundwater Strategy Report* (DOE 2003).
- *Groundwater Remedy Evaluation and Field Verification Plan* (DOE 2004).
- *Waste Storage Area Phase II Design Report and Addendum* (DOE 2005b).
- *Operational Design Adjustments-1, WSA Phase-II Groundwater Remediation Design, Fernald Preserve* (DOE 2014).

The enhanced groundwater remedy commenced in 1998 with the startup of the South Field (Phase I), the South Plume Optimization, and the Reinjection Demonstration Modules. It focused primarily on the removal of uranium but was also designed to limit further expansion of the plume, achieve removal of all targeted contaminants to concentrations below designated FRLs, and prevent undesirable groundwater drawdown impacts beyond the site boundary. Startup of the enhanced groundwater remedy included a year-long reinjection demonstration that began in September 1998. Through the years, extraction and reinjection wells had been added and removed from these initial restoration modules.

In 2001, EPA and Ohio EPA approved the *Design for Remediation of the Great Miami Aquifer in the Waste Storage and Plant 6 Areas* (DOE 2001a). Approval of this design initiated the installation of the next planned aquifer restoration module. The design specified three extraction wells in the former Waste Storage Area to address contamination in the PPDD plume (Phase I) and two extraction wells to address the remaining contamination after the waste pits excavation was completed (Phase II). One of the three Phase I Waste Storage Area wells (well 32761) was installed in 2000 to support an aquifer pumping test to help determine the restoration well field design. The remaining two Phase I wells (well 33062 and well 33063) were installed in summer 2001 after EPA and Ohio EPA approved the design. All three wells became operational on May 8, 2002. Well 33063 was abandoned in 2004 to facilitate site remediation work. A

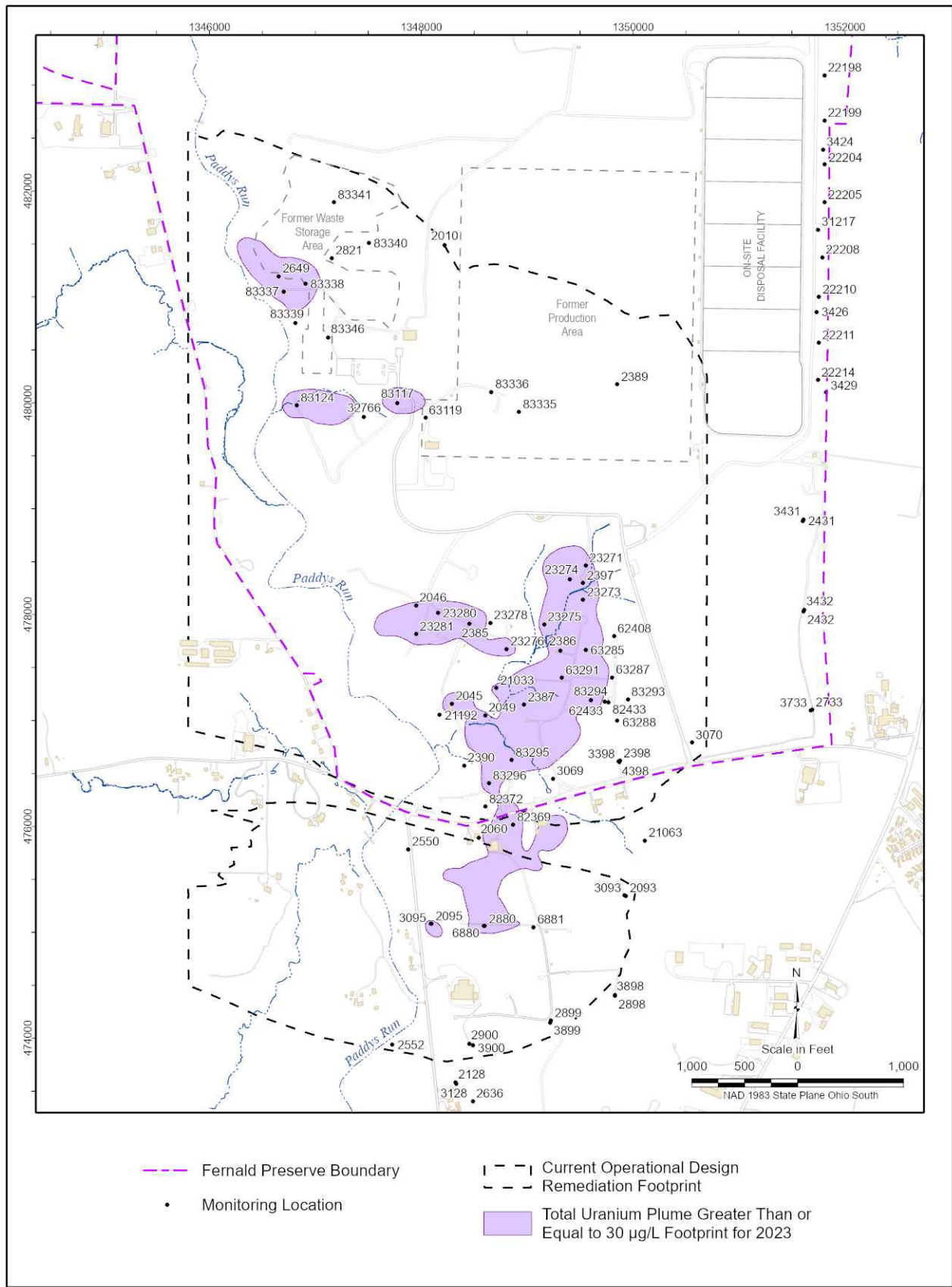
replacement well (well 33347) was installed and began operating in 2006. Figure 11 shows the existing well locations.

The *Design for Remediation of the Great Miami Aquifer in the Waste Storage and Plant 6 Areas* (DOE 2001a) also provided data indicating that the uranium plume in the former Plant 6 Area was no longer present. It was believed that the uranium concentrations in the plume had decreased to levels below the FRL as a result of plant operations shutting down in the late 1980s and the pumping of highly contaminated perched water as part of the Perched Water Removal Action No. 1 in the early 1990s. Because a uranium plume with concentrations above the groundwater FRL was no longer present in the former Plant 6 Area at the time of the design, a restoration module for the area was determined to be unnecessary. Groundwater monitoring continues in the former Plant 6 Area, with one well (well 2389) in the area identified as having intermittent uranium FRL exceedances. This well is further discussed in Attachment A.2. Figure 12 shows the location of monitoring well 2389.

In 2002, EPA and Ohio EPA approved the next planned groundwater restoration design document, the *Design for Remediation of the Great Miami Aquifer South Field (Phase II) Module* (DOE 2002). The Phase II design presents an updated interpretation of the uranium plume in the South Field area along with recommendations on how to proceed with remediation in the area, based on the updated plume interpretation. Installation of Phase II components began in 2002. The overall system (Phases I and II) is referred to as the South Field Module.

In 2003, groundwater remediation approaches were evaluated to determine the most cost-effective groundwater remedy infrastructure, including the wastewater treatment facility, to remain after site closure. An evaluation of alternatives was presented in the *Comprehensive Groundwater Strategy Report* (DOE 2003). In October 2003, DOE held initial discussions with the regulators and the public concerning the various alternatives identified in the report. These discussions culminated in an identified path forward to work collaboratively with the Fernald Citizens Advisory Board, EPA, and Ohio EPA to determine the most appropriate course of action for the ongoing aquifer restoration and water treatment activities at the Fernald site.

In 2004, following regulatory and public input, a decision regarding the future aquifer restoration and wastewater treatment approach was made. In May 2004, EPA and Ohio EPA approved the decision to reduce the size of the advanced wastewater treatment facility and in June 2004 approved the decision to discontinue the use of well-based reinjection. Reducing the size of the advanced wastewater treatment facility provided the opportunity to dismantle and dispose of approximately 90% of the existing facility in the OSDF in time to meet the 2006 closure schedule. This resulted in a protective, more cost-effective, long-term water treatment facility to complete aquifer restoration. Well-based reinjection was discontinued in 2004 on the basis of groundwater modeling cleanup predictions presented in the *Comprehensive Groundwater Strategy Report* (DOE 2003) and the *Groundwater Remedy Evaluation and Field Verification Plan* (DOE 2004). As a result of refined modeling input, updated modeling indicated that the aquifer restoration time frame would likely be extended beyond dates previously predicted.



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Figure 12. Locations for Semiannual Total Uranium Monitoring

The updated modeling also indicated that continued use of the groundwater reinjection wells would shorten the aquifer remedy by approximately 3 years. However, the cost of maintaining the reinjection infrastructure was more than operating the extraction well field for this time period. Therefore, well-based reinjection was discontinued in September 2004 to support construction of the CAWWT. All reinjection wells remain in place as potential groundwater remedy performance monitoring locations.

In 2005, the *Waste Storage Area Phase II Design Report* (DOE 2005b) was issued. Comments received from EPA and Ohio EPA resulted in the issuance of an addendum to the report in December 2005. The design consisted of the installation of one more extraction well (well 33347) in the former Waste Storage Area, near the former silos area. Figure 11 shows the location of well 33347.

In 2005, an infiltration test was conducted in the SSOD. The test consisted of gauging the flow into and out of the SSOD with six Parshall flumes to obtain the overall infiltration rate along the SSOD. Findings from the test were included in the *Storm Sewer Outfall Ditch Infiltration Test Report* (DOE 2005a). The decision was made that pumped, clean groundwater would supplement natural storm water flow into the SSOD. This activity continued from 2006 through 2012, when DOE concluded that enough data had been collected to document infiltration rates through the base of the SSOD. Under normal flow conditions, potential infiltration to the aquifer from within the monitored portion of the SSOD (while flowing at or near 500 gpm) is approximately 109–129 gpm. With Ohio EPA and EPA concurrence, supplemental pumping of clean groundwater to the ditch was stopped and the flumes were removed in 2013 to allow water to freely flow down the SSOD. The rapid movement of water through the ditch during storm events will help to scour the ditch channel of fine-grained sediment and is expected to increase the potential for infiltration.

The *Fernald Groundwater Certification Plan* (DOE 2006a) defines a programmatic strategy for certifying completion of the aquifer remedy. It was developed through a series of four technical information exchange meetings held in 2005 among DOE, EPA, and Ohio EPA. Approved by EPA and Ohio EPA, the *Fernald Groundwater Certification Plan* identifies that the IEMP will continue to be the plan that includes remedy performance monitoring requirements.

In 2006, the Waste Storage Area Phase II Module components became operational, marking completion of the groundwater remediation system design. Completion of the Waste Storage Area Phase II Module construction brought the total number of extraction wells in the former Waste Storage Area to four (wells 32761, 33062, 33334, and 33347). These four well locations are shown in Figure 11.

In 2014, with approval from EPA and Ohio EPA, DOE implemented operational changes to optimize the groundwater remedy. Three wells no longer providing benefit to the groundwater remediation were shut down. The freed-up pumping budget was reallocated to the South Plume and South Field to accelerate cleanup of those areas. The operational changes were based on groundwater modeling results reported in 2014 (DOE 2014). The new 2014 design is referred to in this report as the current Operational Design and was implemented on July 1, 2014. Figure 11 shows the extraction well locations. The following subsections present the operational information associated with these modules.

Groundwater modeling conducted in 2012 (in support of the 2014 operational changes) predicted that under the current pumping rates, pumping would continue until 2022 in the South Plume and Southern South Field, 2030 in the northern South Field, and 2035 in the former Waste Storage Area. Annual monitoring results used to track remedy progress indicate that these dates would not be achieved.

In early 2022, the groundwater model was rerun to determine what the new cleanup times would be if uranium concentrations measured in the first half of 2021 were loaded into the model as initial conditions.

As was done for past model runs, modeled predicted cleanup date uncertainty due to changes in the elevation of the water table in the aquifer over time was bracketed by modeling using three different sets of boundary conditions for the elevation of the water table (i.e., wet, nominal, and dry). During wet boundary conditions the water table elevation is at its highest, and during dry boundary conditions the water table elevation is at its lowest. Nominal is the average elevation of the water table. The results were as follows:

| Plume Area | Wet Boundary Conditions | Nominal Boundary Conditions | Dry Boundary Conditions |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| South Plume | 2024 | 2025 | 2024 |
| South Field | 2035 | 2033 | 2038 |
| Waste Storage Area | 2040 | 2040 | 2045 |

As was done in previous modeling runs, the maximum model predicted cleanup date for each boundary condition was selected as the new targeted cleanup date, resulting in the following new predicted cleanup years.

- South Plume – 2025
- South Field – 2038
- Waste Storage Area – 2045

These new cleanup time predictions assume that the no wellfield pumping changes are made to the current Operational Design.

Model-predicted cleanup predictions have not been realized in the past, therefore, South Plume wells may need to continue pumping past 2025. Groundwater modeling predicted that capture of the remaining South Plume could be achieved using the existing six South Plume recovery wells pumping at lower rates without impacting the model-predicted cleanup date of 2025. Pumping at lower rates from the existing wells should prolong the operational life of the wells, but continued operation of the existing aging wells comes at an operational risk because their dependability is uncertain. Also, the existing six South Plume wells were no longer situated in good locations to remediate the remaining uranium plume. The leading edge of the South plume is now north of the original recovery wells 3924, 3925, 3926, and 3927. New wells that are better positioned to remediate the present location of the plume would produce a more efficient cleanup.

To reduce the operational risk of continuing to pump the existing South Plume recovery wells, and to provide for a more efficient cleanup of the remaining South plume, a modeled operational

alternative was selected that replaces the six existing original South Plume recovery wells with two new recovery wells. The two new recovery wells are better positioned to capture and remediate the remaining South Plume than the current original six recovery wells. The modeling further predicts that when the two new wells are operational, the original South Plume recovery wells (3924, 3925, 3926, and 3927) will no longer be needed to maintain capture of the remaining South plume.

This operational alternative (replacing the six original South plume wells with two newly positioned recovery wells) is being implemented by DOE. The operational alternative removes the risk involved with the continued operation of the existing aging recovery wells and is not predicted to prolong the remediation of the South Plume. Use of this operational alternative also provides DOE with the option of continuing to operate remaining South Plume recovery wells (3924, 3925, 3926, and 3927) at lower pumping rates to provide additional flushing of the South Plume.

Installation of the two new wells began in 2023; the wells are scheduled to be operational in spring 2024. The locations of the two new wells are shown on Figure 11.

In 2022, the operational risk of continued use of the existing South Plume recovery wells due to their age and maintenance problems began to materialize. During the years 2022 and 2023, five of the original six South Plume extraction wells were permanently shut down (3925, 3926, 3927, 32308, and 32309). In 2022, recovery wells 3927 and 32308 were permanently turned off on June 6, 2022, and July 25, 2022, respectively, and the target pumping rate for 32309 was reduced from 300 to 200 gpm. In 2023, three additional wells were permanently turned off: well 3925 on October 31, 2023, well 3926 on June 12, 2023, and well 32309 on October 24, 2023. At the end of 2023, only recovery well 3924 continued to operate and struggled to maintain its operational setpoint. Additional information is provided in Attachment A.1.

3.3 Groundwater Monitoring Highlights for 2023

Groundwater monitoring results are discussed in terms of restoration and compliance monitoring. The key elements of the Fernald Preserve groundwater monitoring program design are described below. Site personnel completed all groundwater monitoring requirements.

Sampling: Sample locations, frequency, and constituents address operational assessment, restoration assessment, and compliance requirements. Monitoring is conducted to ascertain groundwater quality and groundwater flow direction.

As part of the comprehensive groundwater monitoring program specified in the current IEMP, 93 wells were monitored for water quality in 2023. Figure 12 identifies the location of the current water quality sampling locations for uranium. Figure 13 is a diagram of a typical groundwater monitoring well. Figure 14 illustrates relative monitoring well depths and screen locations. Figure 15 indicates the locations for non-uranium monitoring. In addition to water quality monitoring, 172 wells are used to measure groundwater elevations to verify groundwater flow direction. Figure 16 depicts the routine water-level (groundwater elevation) monitoring wells.

Figure 14 illustrates that there are six different types of monitoring wells (i.e., Type 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8). Monitoring well types 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 are single-level monitoring wells with a well screen that is 10 or 15 ft in length. Type 8 monitoring wells are multichannel monitoring wells that

contain three to six individual 10 ft screens. The Type 8 multichannel monitoring wells provide for sampling a depth profile at a single location. The single-level wells monitor a single 10 ft depth. As summarized below, the location of the monitoring depth is identified by the first digit in the well identification number:

- Type 1: Screen positioned in perched groundwater in the glacial overburden
- Type 2: Screen positioned at the water-table zone of the Great Miami Aquifer
- Type 3: Screen positioned above a clay layer in the Great Miami Aquifer
- Type 4: Screen positioned below a clay layer in the Great Miami Aquifer
- Type 6: Screen positioned at a depth that is between a Type 2 and Type 3

Additionally, 29 locations were sampled using a direct-push (i.e., temporary) sampling tool in 2023. Results are provided in Appendix A, Attachment A.2.

Data Evaluation: The integrated data evaluation process involves review and analysis of the data collected from wells and direct-push sampling locations. The evaluation determines capture and restoration of the total uranium plume, capture and restoration of non-uranium FRL constituents, water quality conditions in the aquifer that indicate a need to modify the design and installation of restoration modules, and the impact of ongoing Fernald Preserve groundwater restoration on the downgradient Paddys Run Road Site plume. The Paddys Run Road Site is a separate contaminant plume, unrelated to the Fernald Preserve, which resulted from industrial activities on privately owned land in the area south of the Fernald Preserve along Paddys Run Road.

Reporting: All data listed for collection in the IEMP are reported in the annual Site Environmental Reports.

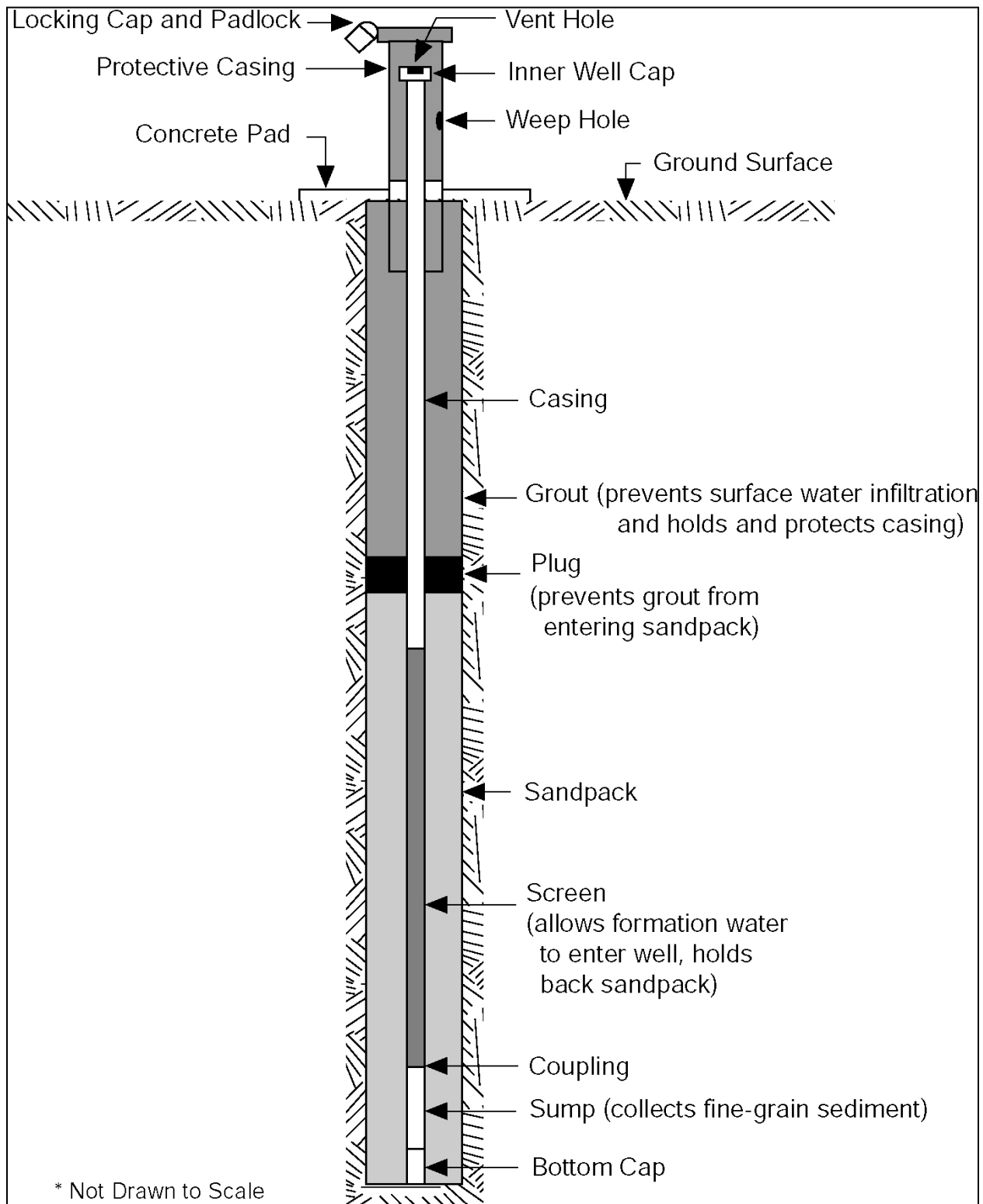


Figure 13. Diagram of a Typical Groundwater Monitoring Well

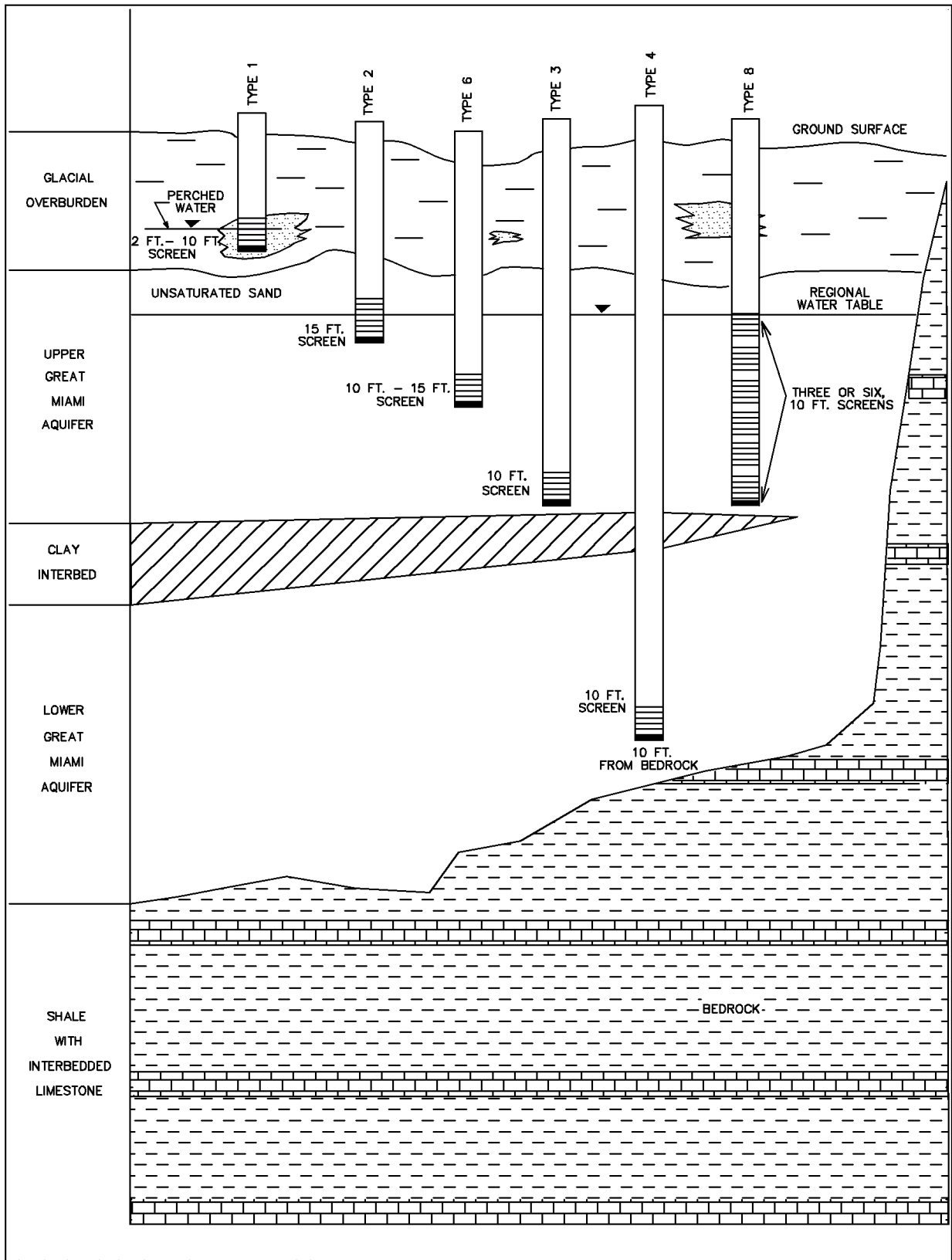
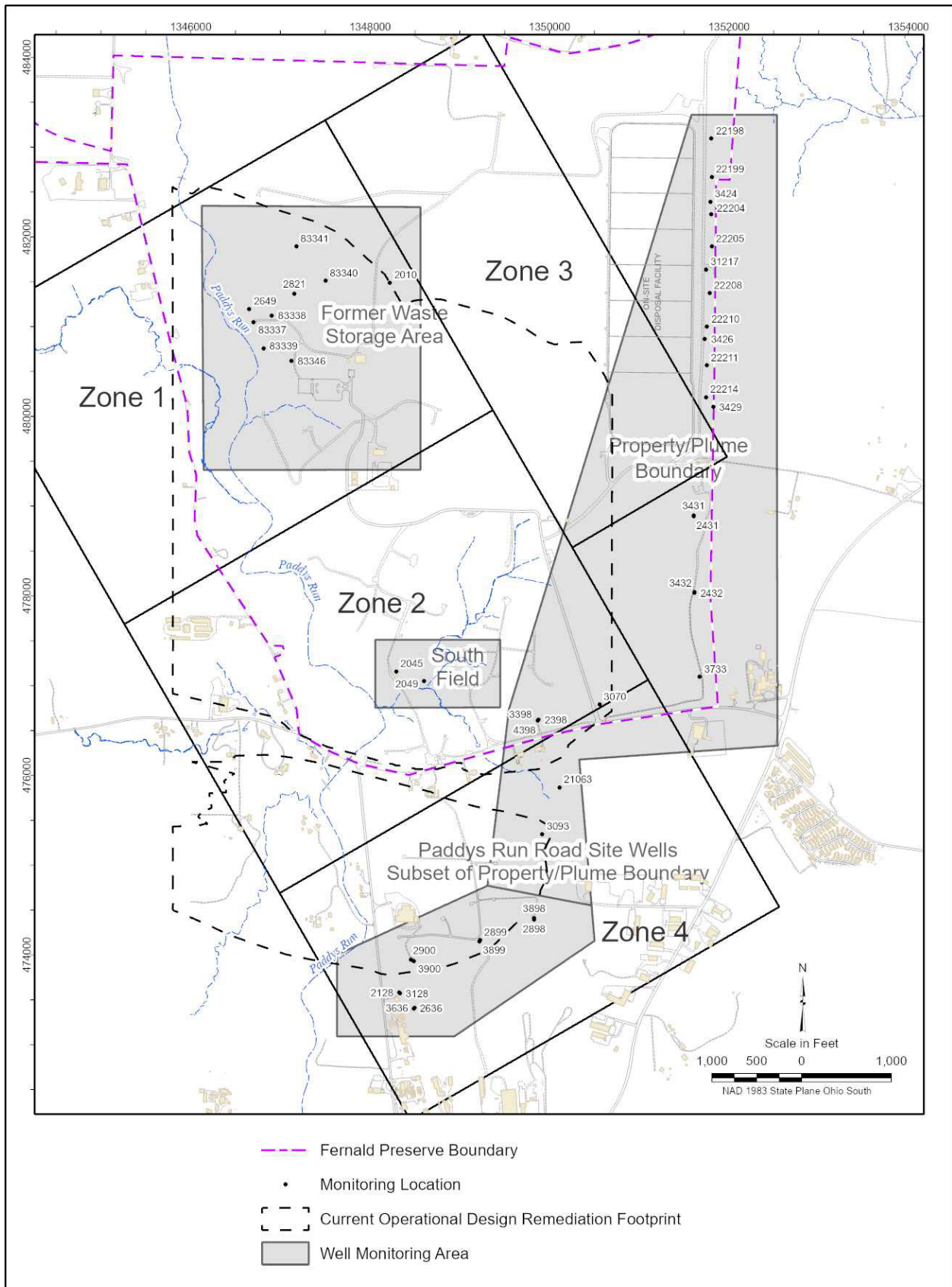


Figure 14. Monitoring Well Screen Locations



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Figure 15. Locations for Non-Uranium Monitoring

3.3.1 Restoration Monitoring

The Operable Unit 5 ROD (DOE 1996b) states that “areas of the Great Miami Aquifer exceeding FRLs will be restored through extraction methods.” Uranium is the primary constituent of concern for groundwater. The groundwater FRL for total uranium is 30 µg/L. The background total uranium concentration for unfiltered groundwater samples from the Great Miami Aquifer near the Fernald Preserve is 1.2 µg/L (DOE 1994). Both the area of the aquifer targeted for remediation and the statistical procedures that will be used to verify that the aquifer cleanup objectives have been achieved are presented in the *Fernald Groundwater Certification Plan* (DOE 2006a).

In general, restoration monitoring tracks the progress of the pump-and-treat stage of the groundwater remedy and water quality conditions. Operations are evaluated throughout the year to determine the progress of aquifer remediation. Total uranium concentration maps are developed from analytical data and compared with groundwater elevation maps to show the status of remediation progress and to verify capture of the total uranium plume.

Appendix A provides more-detailed information. Sections that follow identify the specific attachment of Appendix A where the detailed information can be found.

3.3.1.1 Operational Summary

During 2023, the well field underwent an annual planned shutdown that lasted for 39 days (from May 31 to July 9, 2023). The well field also underwent a maintenance shutdown for 21 days from August 2 to August 23, 2023, to clean the inside surfaces of the discharge piping. Due to the second shutdown, the wellfield operated less in 2023 than it normally has in past years.

Since 1993:

- 56,688 Mgal of water have been pumped from the Great Miami Aquifer.
- 1,936 Mgal of treated water were reinjected into the Great Miami Aquifer.
- 16,0211 net lb of total uranium have been removed from the Great Miami Aquifer.

Appendix A, Attachment A.1, provides detailed operational information on each extraction well. The following sections provide an overview of the individual modules.

CAWWT

As presented in the *Fernald Preserve 2015 Site Environmental Report* (DOE 2016a), the CAWWT system had become oversized and reached the end of its useful life. Additionally, equipment corrosion and corrective maintenance had become ongoing issues for facility operations.

In March 2015, a CAWWT Condition Assessment Report was finalized (Whitman, Requardt & Associates 2015) confirming that many of the treatment system components were at or nearing the end of their useful life. A decision was made to replace the CAWWT treatment system with a 50-gpm system inside the CAWWT building. DOE received concurrence on a path forward in July 2015 from EPA and Ohio EPA and in

August 2015 from the Fernald Community Alliance. DOE planning for the project began in August 2015.

The project was initiated in 2016 and completed in April 2018. The new system became operational on April 3, 2018.

Refurbishment of the nearby backwash basin occurred in 2019. The backwash basin is used to temporarily store wastewater originating from a variety of sources (i.e., well rehabilitation, CAWWT backwash, OSDF leachate, groundwater sampling, CAWWT laboratory, and CAWWT storm water drainage). Construction began in late summer of 2019 and was completed in December 2019. Accumulated sediment was removed, dried, and packaged for shipment to a licensed low-level radioactive waste disposal facility, Waste Control Specialists, in Texas. The basin liner and wall panels were replaced, and aeration cover systems were installed.

Pulse Pumping

In September 2012, with concurrence from EPA and Ohio EPA, a pulse-pumping exercise began at extraction wells 31550, 31560, 31561, and 33061. These four wells are equipped with pumps and motors that operate most efficiently at rates of approximately 300 gpm. The Waste Storage Area (Phase II) Design called for a target pumping rate of 100 gpm for each of these wells. The 100-gpm rate was being achieved by throttling back on the flow from each of the wells; however, this type of operation was not energy efficient.

To become more energy efficient, beginning in 2012, the wells were being pumped at a higher rate for a shorter period each day to remove the daily volume of water prescribed by the Waste Storage Area (Phase II) Design (DOE 2005b). Specifically, the wells are being pumped for 300 gpm for 8 hours a day (a total of 144,000 gallons per day) rather than 100 gpm for 24 hours a day (a total of 144,000 gallons per day). Flow and particle path monitoring predictions indicate that the new pumping schedule will maintain capture of the total uranium plume. With implementation of the current Operational Design in July 2014, the target pumping rate of extraction well 31561 was increased from 100 to 200 gpm, so pulse pumping was stopped at this well. Pulse pumping continues for the other three wells.

Figure 11 shows the extraction well locations associated with the restoration modules operating in 2023. Also shown in Figure 11 are the three extraction wells that were shut down in April 2014 (33265, 33266, and 33334) and the two wells shutdown in the South Plume in 2022 (32308 and 3927). Table 4 summarizes the mass of total uranium removed and the volume of groundwater pumped during 2023. Additional details are provided in the module operational summaries in Sections 3.3.1.2 through 3.3.1.4. Figure 17 identifies the yearly and cumulative mass of total uranium removed from the Great Miami Aquifer from 1993 through 2023.

Table 4. Groundwater Restoration Module Status for 2023

| Modules and Restoration Wells | Target Design Pumping Rate | Volume Pumped | Uranium Removed |
|---|----------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| | gpm | Mgal | lb |
| South Plume/ South Plume Optimization Module: 3924, 3925, 3926, 32309 | 800 | 276 | 31 |
| South Field Module: 31550, 31560, 31561, 32276, 32446, 32447, 33061, 33262, 33264, 33298, 33326 | 2,875 | 1,150 | 186 |
| Waste Storage Area Module: 32761, 33062, 33347 | 800 | 340 | 54 |
| Aquifer Restoration System Total | 4,475 | 1,766 | 271 |

3.3.1.2 South Plume/South Plume Optimization Module Operational Summary

The four original extraction wells (3924, 3925, 3926, and 3927) of the South Plume Module began operating in August 1993. The two original extraction wells (32308 and 32309) of the South Plume Optimization Module began operating in August 1998. Figure 18 illustrates the southern extent of capture observed for the South Plume/South Plume Optimization Module at the beginning of 2023.

The years 2022 and 2023 were years of change for the South Plume and South Plume Optimization Modules. In 2022, DOE began shutting down some of the original South Plume and South Plume Optimization Module recovery wells. One of the original South Plume recovery wells (3927) and one of the original South Plume optimization wells (32308) were shut down in 2022. Two additional original South Plume Module wells (3925 and 3926) and the last original South Plume Optimization Module extraction well (32309) were permanently shut down in 2023. At the end of 2023 only one of the Original South Plume Module recovery wells (3924) continued to operate. The permanent shutdown dates of each well are listed below:

- 3927 – June 6, 2022
- 32308 – July 25, 2022
- 3926 – June 12, 2023
- 32309 – October 24, 2023
- 3925 – October 31, 2023

The original wells were shut down for three reasons: (1) the age of the wells and associated maintenance issues, (2) change in the location for the leading edge of the South Plume after 29 years of pumping, and (3) groundwater modeling predictions that showed that the groundwater remedy would be more effective and efficient if the original six extraction wells (3924, 3925, 3926, 3927, 32308, and 32309) were replaced with two new extraction wells that would be better positioned to effectively remediate the remaining plume.

The four original South Plume recovery wells had operated from 1993 to 2023, a period of 30 years, and the two South Plume Optimization recovery wells operated from 1998 to 2023, a period of 25 years. Maintenance and operation during these long periods had taken its toll on the metal components of the wells. Exposure to liquid acid descaler during periodic well treatments and rehabilitations had slowly attacked the metal components of the wells, resulting in leaks. All of the South Plume wells were constructed with pitless adaptors, which complicate repair of the wells due to the excavation that would be required to access the pitless adaptors for repair.

After approximately 30 years of pumping using the four original South Plume recovery wells, the leading edge of the uranium plume is now located to the north; continued operation of the South Plume recovery wells was providing little added benefit for remediating the remaining uranium plume. DOE utilized the site groundwater model in 2022 (DOE 2022b) to determine whether it would be best to install new extraction wells in more strategic locations or repair and continue to operate the South Plume recovery wells. Groundwater modeling predicted that replacing the leading-edge wells in the same location would provide little benefit to the remaining remedy because the leading edge of the uranium plume was now situated further north, near South Plume extraction wells 32308 and 32309. A better modeling solution was to install replacement wells further north near 32308 and 32309, but at new locations that would be better situated to better capture the remaining uranium plume.

South Plume recovery wells that were shut down in 2022 (3924 and 32308) were discussed in the 2022 Site Environmental Report (DOE 2023b), and a strategy for shutting down the remaining extraction wells was presented in the document. This strategy was followed in 2023 for the shutdown of three more extraction wells (3925, 3926, and 32309). To be conservative, the objective of the shutdown strategy was to continue to operate the remaining South Plume wells as long as possible to continue to flush the area of the aquifer influenced by their pumping.

In 2023, DOE began installing two replacement wells based on modeling predictions (33616 and 33617) and continued to operate the remaining original south plume recovery wells according to operational criteria presented in Section A.1.4.4, “Operational Path Forward for Existing South Plume Wells” which was first presented in the 2022 Site Environmental Report and is included in this report. The wells continued to operate with the understanding that once they failed again, the wells would not be repaired.

On June 12, 2023, well 3926 was permanently turned off. Well 3926 began operating on August 27, 1993, and operated for almost 30 years. The flow rate had decreased to approximately 60 gpm, and the metal components of the well were too badly corroded to implement liquid acid descaler treatments.

On October 24, 2023, well 32309 was permanently turned off. Well 32309 began operating on August 9, 1998, and operated for approximately 25 years. In 2021, well 32309 was chemically treated, but when the pump and motor were restarted, sand was entering the well screen. This can damage the pump and indicates that there may be a hole in the well screen. Using a downhole camera, no visible holes were detected in the screen; therefore, the problem was believed to be with the casing at the bottom of the screen. A cement plug was installed in the base of the screen, which corrected the problem. With the addition of the concrete plug, the well struggled to maintain 300 gpm in 2022, so the target pumping rate was lowered to 200 gpm. On October 24, 2023, well 32309 was shut down due to a motor malfunction; the well was

scheduled to be shut down permanently the week of November 20, 2023, to facilitate drilling and installation of two new extraction wells. The decision was made to leave the well permanently shut down rather than replace the motor for 1 additional month of service.

On October 31, 2023, well 3925 was permanently turned off. Well 3925 began operating on August 27, 1993, and operated for approximately 30 years. The pumping rate in had fallen to 80 gpm and the pitless adaptor was too badly corroded to be repaired without extensive excavation. The metal port was also too badly corroded to administer liquid acid descaler for treatment (i.e., threads on the metal port were too badly corroded, and attempts to administer liquid acid descaler through another, smaller port did not significantly increase the flow rate).

During 2023, the South Plume/South Plume Optimization Module removed 276 Mgal of groundwater and 31 lb of total uranium from the Great Miami Aquifer. Based on analysis of the data collected in 2023, the module continued to meet its primary objectives as demonstrated by the following:

- Southward movement of the total uranium plume beyond the southernmost extraction wells has not been detected.
- Active remediation of the central portion of the off-property total uranium plume continues to reduce plume concentration. Nearly the entire off-property total uranium plume concentration is now below 100 µg/L. When pumping began in 1993, areas in the off-property total uranium plume had concentrations of over 300 µg/L.
- The Paddys Run Road Site plume (contamination not attributed to Fernald site operations), south of the Fernald Preserve extraction wells, is not being pulled upgradient toward the South Plume extraction wells.

As discussed previously, the years 2022 and 2023 were years for change in the South Plume and South Plume Optimization Modules. DOE began shutting down the original recovery wells in both modules and began plans for two new replacement wells in the South Plume Optimization Module.

At the beginning of 2022, six wells were operating: the four original South Plume recovery wells and the two original South Plume Optimization wells. At the beginning of 2023, four wells remained operating: three in the South Plume Module (3924, 3925, and 3926) and one well in the South Plume Optimization Module (32309). At the beginning of 2023, only one well remained operating in the South Plume Module (3924) and no wells were operating in the South Plume Optimization Module. In 2023, replacement wells 33616 and 33617 were being installed in the South Plume Optimization Module with a planned start up in 2024.

DOE will continue to utilize the existing annual Geoprobe groundwater sampling program to monitor for potential concentration rebound in the area between the original South Plume Module recovery wells and the original South Plume Optimization recovery wells now that pumping from the original South Plume recovery wells has stopped in all but recovery well 3924. This effort will provide interim water quality data in this area prior to certification being conducted in accordance with the *Fernald Groundwater Certification Plan* (DOE 2006a). Any plan to address concentration rebound would include getting input from the stakeholders and approval from the regulators.

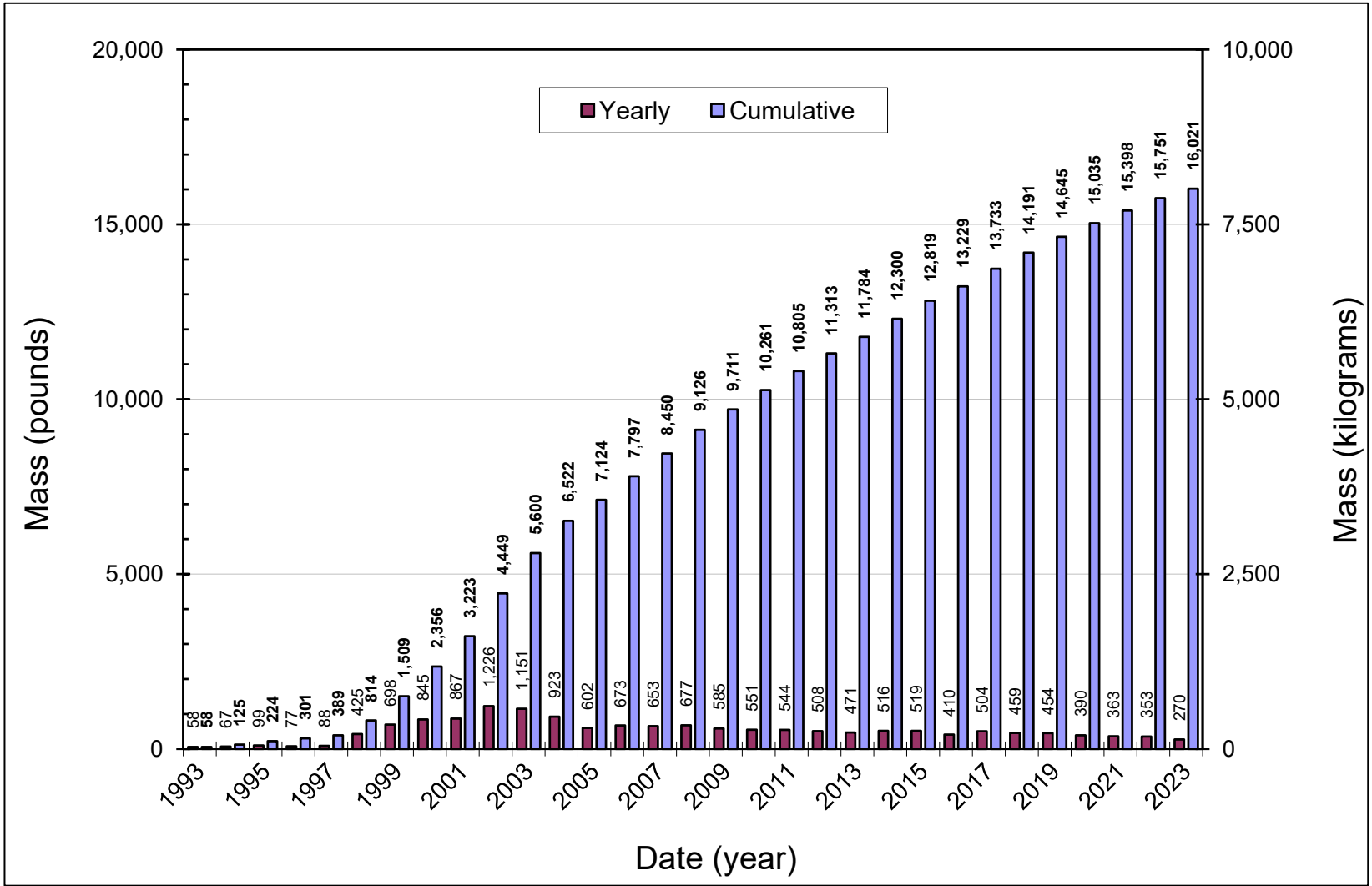


Figure 17. Yearly and Cumulative Mass of Uranium Removed from the Great Miami Aquifer, 1993–2023

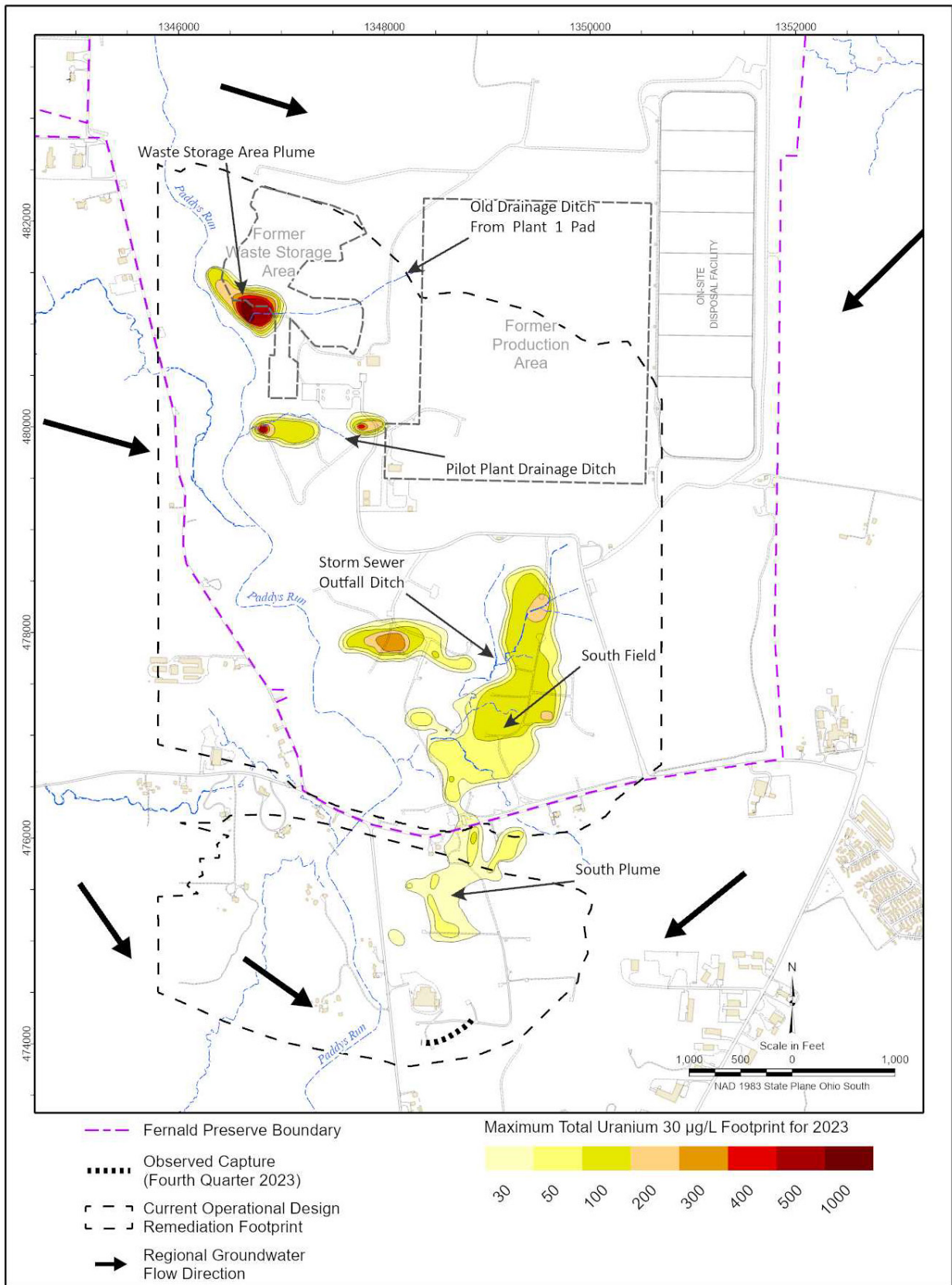


Figure 18. Total Uranium Plume in the Aquifer with Concentrations Greater Than or Equal to 30 µg/L at the End of 2023

3.3.1.3 South Field Module Operational Summary

The South Field Module was constructed in two phases. Phase I began operating in July 1998, and Phase II began operating in July 2003. During 2023, 11 extraction wells were operational.

The 10 original extraction wells installed under Phase I were 31550, 31560, 31561, 31562, 31563, 31564, 31565, 31566, 31567, and 32276. Six of the original 10 wells have been shut down (31562, 31563, 31564, 31565, 31566, and 31567).

- Extraction wells 31564 and 31565 were shut down in December 2001 and May 2001, respectively. Because these wells were located near the upgradient edge of the plume, total uranium concentrations in that region of the aquifer were low. In addition, soil remediation was underway in the area around the wells.
- Extraction well 31566 was shut down in August 1998 and was replaced by extraction well 33262, which was installed as part of South Field (Phase II) Module.
- Extraction well 31563 was shut down in December 2002 and converted to a reinjection well that operated in 2003 and 2004.
- Extraction well 31562 was shut down in March 2003 and replaced by extraction well 33298.
- Extraction well 31567 was shut down in September 2005 and replaced by extraction well 33326.

Three new extraction wells (32446, 32447, and 33061) were added to the South Field Module between 1998 and 2002. These new wells were installed in the eastern, downgradient portion of the South Field plume at locations where total uranium concentrations were considerably above the FRL. Two of these three wells (32446 and 32447) were installed in late 1999 and began pumping in February 2000. The third extraction well (33061) was installed in 2001 and became operational in 2002.

Phase II components of the South Field Module are described in the *Design for Remediation of the Great Miami Aquifer, South Field (Phase II) Module* (DOE 2002), which was issued in May 2002. The design provided an updated characterization of the total uranium plume in the Great Miami Aquifer beneath the southern portion of the site and a modeled design for the South Field Module in that area. All Phase II design components became operational in 2003. The components include:

- Four additional extraction wells; one in the former Southern Waste Units (extraction well 33262) and three along the eastern edge of the on-property portion of the southern total uranium plume (extraction wells 33264, 33265, and 33266).
- One additional reinjection well in the former Southern Waste Units (reinjection well 33263).
- An extraction well (31563) that was converted into a reinjection well.
- An injection pond that was located in the western portion of the former Southern Waste Units excavations.

In September 2004, the South Field Module reinjection components were shut down. In 2014, operational changes were made to wells in the South Field following recommendations made in a modeling study that was released in 2014 (DOE 2014). On April 14, 2014, extraction

wells 33265 and 33266 were shut down because the data indicated that they were no longer providing benefit to the groundwater remedy.

During 2023, the South Field Module removed 1,150 Mgal of groundwater and 185.5 lb of total uranium from the Great Miami Aquifer.

3.3.1.4 Waste Storage Area Module Operational Summary

The Waste Storage Area Module was constructed in two phases. Phase I became operational on May 8, 2002, nearly 17 months ahead of the October 1, 2003, start date established in the Operable Unit 5 Remedial Action Work Plan. Phase I consisted of three extraction wells (32761, 33062, and 33063). These three wells were installed to remediate a total uranium plume in the PPDD area, according to the *Design for Remediation of the Great Miami Aquifer in the Waste Storage and Plant 6 Areas* (DOE 2001a). In July 2004, extraction well 33063 was plugged and abandoned to make way for surface excavation activities required for site remediation. A replacement well for extraction well 33063 was installed in 2005 (extraction well 33334) and became operational on June 29, 2006. Phase II consisted of one additional extraction well (extraction well 33347), which became operational on October 5, 2006.

In 2014, operational changes were made to wells in the former Waste Storage Area following recommendations made in a modeling study that was released in 2014 (DOE 2014). On April 14, 2014, extraction well 33334 was shut down because the data indicated that it no longer provided a benefit to the groundwater remedy.

During 2023, 339.6 Mgal of groundwater and 53.9 lb of uranium were removed from the Great Miami Aquifer through the Waste Storage Area Module.

3.3.1.5 Monitoring Results for Total Uranium

Total uranium is the primary FRL constituent because it is the most prevalent site contaminant and it has affected the largest area of the aquifer. Focusing on remediating the uranium plume also addresses the remaining contaminants. Figure 18 shows the mapped outline of the total uranium plumes in the aquifer through the end of 2023. The total uranium plumes identified in the figure represent the interpreted size of the maximum total uranium plume in which concentrations are at or above the 30 µg/L groundwater FRL for total uranium.

Data collected in 2023 show continued progress in reducing the uranium footprint, as described below:

- The mapped footprint of the total uranium plume decreased in size by 1.9 acre (2.6%). The area at or above 30 µg/L in 2022 was mapped as being 74.0 acres, and the area above 30 µg/L in 2023 was mapped as being 72.1 acres.
- The area of the total uranium plume above a concentration of 50 µg/L decreased in size by 0.1 acre (0.2%). The area at or above 50 µg/L in 2022 was mapped as being 49.4 acres, and the area above 50 µg/L in 2023 was mapped as being 49.3 acres.
- The area of the total uranium plume above a concentration of 100 µg/L remained the same between 2022 and 2023.

Figure 18 identifies hydraulic capture observed during the fourth quarter of 2023 for the active restoration modules and also presents regional groundwater flow directions. The map indicates that the existing extraction system is hydraulically capturing the South Plume and preventing further movement of uranium to the south beyond the extraction wells. Figure 18 also depicts the zone of influence remediation footprint that was predicted by modeling the current Operational Design.

Appendix A, Attachment A.2, provides detailed total uranium plume maps for 2023. Appendix A, Attachment A.3, provides quarterly groundwater elevation maps and capture interpretations, along with graphical displays of groundwater elevation data. Highlights for 2023 for the former Waste Storage Area, former Plant 6 area, and South Field/South Plume area are provided below.

Geoprobe (Direct-Push) Sampling

The Geoprobe, a hydraulically powered, direct-push sampling tool, is used at the Fernald Preserve to obtain groundwater samples at specific depth intervals without installing a permanent monitoring well. Direct-push employs the weight of the vehicle the tool is mounted on and percussive force (hammering) to push the tool into the ground without drilling (or cutting) to displace soil in the tool's path. The Fernald Preserve uses this technique to collect data on the progress of aquifer restoration and to determine the optimal location and depth of additional monitoring and extraction wells that may be installed in the future.

Former Waste Storage Area: This area includes the PPDD plume. In 2023, no direct-push samples were collected from the former Waste Storage Area to supplement routine sampling of monitoring wells.

Between 2022 and 2023 the mapped footprint of the 30 µg/L total uranium plume remained the same at 12.5 acres. This is because no direct-push sampling took place in the Former Waste Storage

area in 2023. Figure 18 shows the outline of the maximum total uranium plumes in the former Waste Storage Area, as measured in 2023. Data are presented in Appendix A, Attachment A.2.

Former Plant 6 Area: Plans for a restoration module in the former Plant 6 area were abandoned in 2001 based on the outcome of the *Design for Remediation of the Great Miami Aquifer in the Waste Storage and Plant 6 Areas* (DOE 2001a). The design data indicated that the total uranium plume in the former Plant 6 area was no longer present. EPA and Ohio EPA concurred with this decision. Monitoring in the area continues.

Monitoring well 2389 is the only well remaining in the area. Total uranium FRL exceedances were detected at this well again in 2023. As discussed in past Site Environmental Reports, FRL exceedances occur in this area when the water-table elevation exceeds 515 ft above mean sea level. The two samples collected in 2023 at monitoring well 2389 had total uranium concentrations above 30 µg/L. Both samples were collected when the water table had an elevation above 515 ft above mean sea level. The former Plant 6 area will continue to be targeted for additional direct-push sampling when the water table is high to determine whether the total uranium groundwater FRL exceedance is dissipating over time. This location is within the capture zone of the pump-and-treat system.

South Field and South Plume Areas: In 2023, direct-push samples were collected at 29 locations in the South Field and South Plume areas to supplement routine sampling of monitoring wells. Direct-push data for 2023 are presented in Appendix A, Attachment A.2.

In 2023, the mapped footprint of the 30 µg/L total uranium plume in the South Field and South Plume decreased by 1.9 acres. The area above 30 µg/L in 2022 was mapped as 61.5 acres, and the area above 30 µg/L in 2023 was mapped as 59.6 acres.

In 2023, the area of the total uranium plume in the South Field and South Plume above a concentration of 50 µg/L decreased by 0.1 acre. The area above 50 µg/L in 2022 was mapped as 39.5 acres, and the area above 50 µg/L in 2023 was 39.4 acres.

In 2023, the area of the total uranium plume in the South Field and South Plume above a concentration of 100 µg/L remained the same at 20 acres.

3.3.1.6 Monitoring Results for Non-Uranium Constituents

Although the groundwater remedy is primarily targeting remediation of the total uranium plume, other FRL constituents within the total uranium plume are also being monitored. Figure 19 identifies the locations of the monitoring wells that had non-uranium FRL exceedances. Table 5 shows the number of wells with non-uranium constituents exceeding FRLs in 2023, the number of wells with constituents exceeding FRLs outside the current Operational Design Remediation Footprint, the groundwater FRLs, and the range of 2023 data inside and outside the current Operational Design Remediation Footprint.

Table 5. Non-Uranium Constituents with Results Above FRLs During 2023

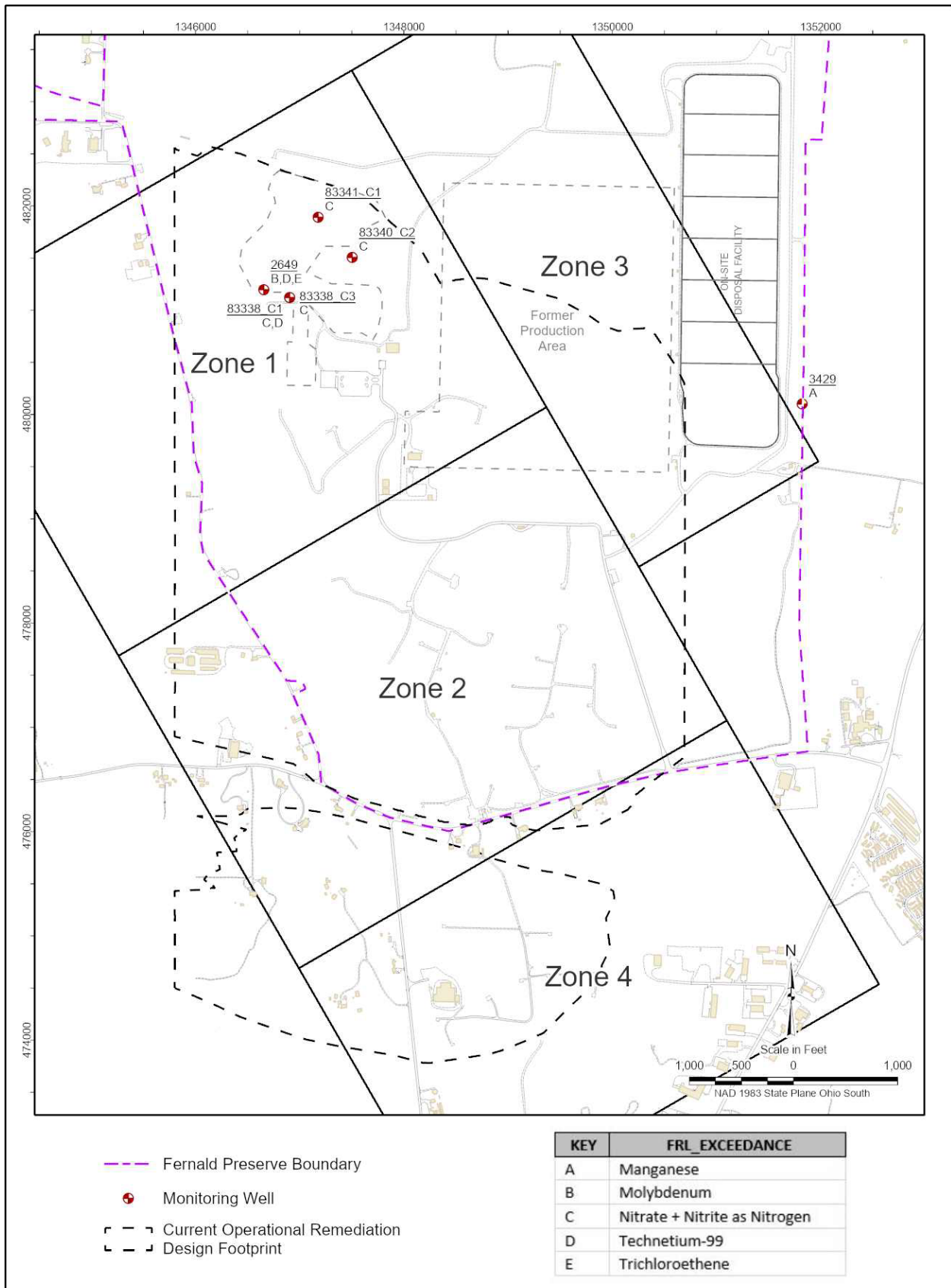
| Constituent | Number of Wells Exceeding the FRL | Number of Wells Exceeding the FRL Outside the Current Operational Design Remediation Footprint | Groundwater FRL ^a | Range of 2023 Data Inside the Current Operational Design Remediation Footprint ^a | Range of 2023 Data Outside the Current Operational Design Remediation Footprint ^{a,b} |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|------------------------------|---|--|
| General Chemistry | | | (mg/L) | (mg/L) | (mg/L) |
| Nitrate + Nitrite as Nitrogen | 4 | 0 | 11 ^c | 12.9 to 44.4 | NA |
| Inorganics | | | (mg/L) | (mg/L) | (mg/L) |
| Molybdenum | 1 | 0 | 0.10 | 0.523 | NA |
| Manganese | 1 | 1 | 0.021 | 0.939 | 0.939 |
| Organics | | | (µg/L) | (µg/L) | (µg/L) |
| Trichloroethene | 1 | 0 | 5 | 9.4 | NA |
| Radionuclides | | | (pCi/L) | (pCi/L) | (pCi/L) |
| Technetium-99 | 2 | 0 | 94 | 285 to 303 | NA |

^a mg/L = milligrams per liter, µg/L = micrograms per liter, pCi/L = picocuries per liter.

^b NA = not applicable.

^c FRL is based on nitrate from OU5 ROD, Table 9-4; however, the sampling results are for nitrate + nitrite as nitrogen.

During 2023, five non-uranium constituents had FRL exceedances. One location was outside the current uranium-based Operational Design Remediation Footprint (monitoring well 3429, manganese). Additional routine samples will be collected from monitoring well 3429 in 2024 for manganese to determine whether the exceedance is persistent. No plumes were identified for the non-uranium constituents above FRLs at the locations outside the current Operational Design Remediation Footprint in the extensive groundwater characterization efforts evaluated as part of the *Remedial Investigation Report for Operable Unit 5* (DOE 1995d). More details are provided in Appendix A, Attachment A.4.



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Figure 19. Non-Uranium Constituents with 2023 Results Above FRLs

Non-uranium constituents with FRL exceedances in 2022 at the well locations outside the current Operational Design Remediation Footprint were further evaluated in 2023 to determine if they were random events or if they were persistent according to criteria discussed in Appendix A, Attachment A.4. Additional routine data collected in 2023 were used to determine that the FRL exceedance detected in well 22205 in 2022 for zinc was not persistent.

3.3.2 Other Monitoring Commitments

Two other groundwater monitoring activities are included in the IEMP: private well monitoring and property boundary monitoring. As stated earlier, the groundwater data from these activities, along with the data from all other IEMP groundwater monitoring activities, are collectively evaluated for total uranium and, where necessary, non-uranium constituents of concern. This section provides additional details on these two other compliance monitoring activities.

The sampling program at private homeowner wells is the longest running groundwater monitoring effort at the site. Off-property groundwater contamination was initially detected at well 2060 in 1981. The private homeowner well sampling program was initiated in 1982 in response to monitoring results indicating above background concentrations of uranium in private wells near the site. By 1984, the site had officially established the program with the monthly sampling of 19 privately-owned wells. In 1996, the private well program had grown to 32 private wells.

In 1997, with implementation of the IEMP, the private well program was modified to include only three wells, which included the first private well where off-property contamination was initially reported in 1981 (DOE 1997a). Other private wells that had been previously monitored were not carried forward into the IEMP program because a public water supply was made available to the surrounding properties who had been affected by the off-property groundwater contamination (DOE 1998).

The three private wells (13, 14, and 2060) continued to be sampled through 2022. With problems associated with the privately-owned pump in well 13 and with an Ohio EPA proposal to reduce split sampling, DOE proposed in the 2021 Site Environmental Report (DOE 2022c) to eliminate monitoring in two of the private wells which were outside the plume (13 and 14) but continue monitoring in well 2060. Appendix A, Attachment A.2, presents additional information concerning these wells. Following discussions with the homeowners, and with concurrence from EPA and Ohio EPA, this change was implemented beginning in 2023.

One private well (2060) located along Willey Road was monitored under the IEMP in 2023 to assist in the evaluation of the total uranium plume migration. Data from the private well sampled under the IEMP are detailed in Section 2.3 and were incorporated into the total uranium plume maps shown in Figure 18 and Appendix A, Attachment A.2.

Data collected from the 11 wells in the Paddys Run Road area under the property boundary monitoring program indicate that the Paddys Run Road Site plume (contamination not attributed to Fernald site operations), downgradient of the Fernald Preserve extraction wells, is not being pulled toward the South Plume extraction wells.

As indicated in Section 2.0, Ohio EPA issued the Director’s Findings and Orders on September 7, 2000. These orders specify that the site’s groundwater monitoring activities will be implemented in accordance with the IEMP. The revised language allows modification of the groundwater monitoring program as necessary, via the IEMP revision or variance process (subject to Ohio EPA approval), without issuance of a new Director’s Order. As determined by Ohio EPA, the IEMP will remain in effect following remediation.

3.4 Groundwater Remediation Assessment

Data collected in 2023 indicate that the maximum total uranium plume continues to decrease in response to pumping. Table 6 provides a summary.

Table 6. Comparison of 2022 and 2023 Maximum Total Uranium Plume Footprint Areas

| Year | Area Greater Than 30 µg/L | Area Greater Than 50 µg/L | Area Greater Than 100 µg/L |
|----------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2022 (acres) | 74 | 49.4 | 27.8 |
| 2023 (acres) | 72.1 | 49.3 | 27.8 |
| Change (acres) | -1.9 | -0.1 | 0 |
| Change (%) | -2.6 | -0.2 | 0 |

Groundwater elevations measured in 2023 continue to indicate that the pumping wells are maintaining capture of the uranium plume by enhancing and modifying natural groundwater flow directions within the aquifer. Appendix A, Attachment A.3, provides additional information concerning capture of the total uranium plume.

Each year, three predictions of how much uranium will be removed in subsequent years to achieve cleanup of the aquifer are provided in Attachment A.2 of the Site Environmental Report. In the 2022 Site Environmental Report (DOE 2023b), the following predictions for mass removal were presented for 2023:

- 405 pounds calculated using stretched exponential regressions of concentration data
- 382 pounds based on model prediction
- 492 pounds using the 95% upper confidence limit

Data collected in 2023 show that the mass of uranium removed from the aquifer was 271 pounds, below all three predictions. The year 2023 was not a normal operational year. In addition to the annual planned well field shutdown, a second well field shutdown lasting 21 day was conducted to clean the inside surfaces of the well field discharge pipes. Also, five of the original South Plume/South Plume Optimization extraction wells (which were modeled as pumping) did not pump for the entire year. All of these factors attributed to less pumping taking place, and subsequently, less uranium being removed from the aquifer in 2023 than predicted. Once the two new extraction wells in the South Plume are operational in 2024, the modeling scenario for operating the two new extraction wells, without any of the original South Plume wells, will be used to predict future remedy progress which should result in the actual pounds of uranium removed being in closer agreement with predictions.

Appendix A, Attachment A.1, provides additional information concerning the mass of uranium removed from the aquifer.

In 2022, the site groundwater model was updated with uranium concentrations measured in the first half of 2021. Updated modeled cleanup date predictions for the South Plume, South Field, and Waste Storage Area were determined to be 2025, 2038, and 2045, respectively. These new cleanup time predictions assume that the no wellfield pumping changes are made to the current Operational Design.

DOE also modeled in 2022 how best to optimize the South Plume extraction wells moving forward, and how to possibly speed up the cleanup of the South plume. The first model runs focused on utilizing the existing South Plume recovery wells. A big risk factored into these modeling runs though was the assumption that the existing extraction wells would continue to operate dependably until they are no longer needed. DOE was successful in prolonging the operational life of recovery well 3927 by lower its target pumping rate. This approach was therefore modeled for the other extraction wells. The modeling results indicated that predicted cleanup of the South Plume could still be achieved in 2025, even with the existing recovery wells pumping at the lower pumping rates.

Modeling was also conducted in 2022 to provide an alternative approach, should one or more of the existing extraction wells fail. The selected model alternative replaces the four existing South Plume recovery wells (3924 through 3927) and two existing South Plume Optimization Module recovery wells (32308 and 32309) with two new recovery wells that are better positioned for capture and remediation of the remaining South Plume. With operation of the two new recovery wells, the existing six South plume extraction wells are no longer needed to capture and remediate the remaining portions of the South Plume. This operational alternative, therefore, removes the risk involved with the continued operation of the existing aging South Plume recovery wells. This alternative also provides DOE with the option of continuing to operate remaining South Plume recovery wells at lower pumping rates to provide additional flushing in the South Plume.

As discussed in Section 3.3.1.2 recovery wells 3927 and 32308 were permanently shut down in 2022 due to operational problems associated with the old age of the wells. In 2023, recovery wells 3925, 3926, and 32309 were permanently shut down due to operational problems associated the old age of the wells. DOE is proceeding with the alternative modeling approach discussed above and is installing two new extraction wells in the South Plume to continue with remediation of the remaining South Plume. The two new extraction wells are scheduled to be operational in 2024.

Bulk plume metrics (i.e., plume acres, average plume concentration, and dissolved uranium mass) are also provided in this year's Site Environmental Report to track groundwater remediation progress. Until 2022, these bulk plume metrics were based on Ricker method calculations (Ricker 2008). Beginning with the 2022 Site Environmental Report, bulk plume metrics are also provided through the use of Earth Volumetric Studio software. Table 7 provides a summary of the Ricker method bulk plume metrics over time, showing an overall decrease for all three metrics between 2006 and 2023.

Table 7. Bulk Plume Metrics (2006 to 2023)

| Year | Plume Area (Acres) | Average Plume Concentration (µg/L) | Remaining Dissolved Uranium Mass (lb) |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2006 | 145.7 | 92.11 | 306 |
| 2010 | 132.7 | 89.96 | 272 |
| 2014 | 108.0 | 86.41 | 213 |
| 2016 | 108.0 | 79.32 | 195 |
| 2017 | 97.3 | 79.12 | 175 |
| 2018 | 95.9 | 86.23 | 190 |
| 2019 | 89.2 | 81.58 | 166 |
| 2020 | 85.9 | 80.77 | 158 |
| 2021 ^a | 81.6 | 82.46 | 153 |
| 2022 | 80.7 | 88.58 | 163 |
| 2023 | 75.6 | 87.25 | 150 |

^a Average plume concentration and remaining dissolved uranium mass were corrected from data reported in the 2021 Site Environmental Report (DOE 2022b) from 80.85 µg/L and 150 lb, respectively.

Based on the Ricker method, dissolved mass decreased by approximately 51% between 2006 and 2022, decreasing from 306 lb in 2006 to 150 lb in 2023.

Earth Volumetric Studio software determined bulk plume metric for results for October 1, 2006, October 2, 2021, October 1, 2022, and October 1, 2023, are as follows.

| Metric | October 1, 2006 | October 1, 2021 | October 1, 2022 | October 1, 2023 |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Dissolved Mass (lb) | 159.64 | 67.21 | 56.59 | 56.93 |
| Average Concentration (µg/L) | 68.44 | 67.47 | 61.10 | 64.12 |
| Area (acres) | 136.50 | 88.87 | 84.93 | 83.13 |
| Volume (cubic feet) | 279.55 | 119.39 | 111.00 | 102.67 |
| Average Thickness (feet) | 22.45 | 14.73 | 14.33 | 13.54 |

It should be noted that an error was made in the 2022 Site Environmental Report for reporting Earth Volumetric Studio metrics for October 1, 2022. Earth Volumetric Studio results for December 1, 2022, were reported by mistake. The table above was corrected and correctly reports results for October 1, 2022. The table below show results for both October 1, 2022, and December 1, 2022, for comparison.

| Metric | October 1, 2022 | December 1, 2022 |
|------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Dissolved Mass (lb) | 56.59 | 54.45 |
| Average Concentration (µg/L) | 61.10 | 59.21 |
| Area (acres) | 84.93 | 85.25 |
| Volume (cubic feet) | 111.00 | 110.21 |
| Average Thickness (feet) | 14.33 | 14.17 |

Based on Earth Volumetric Studio software, dissolved plume mass decreased by approximately 64% between 2006 and 2023, decreasing from a maximum 159.64 lb in 2006 to 56.93 lb in 2022.

It should be noted that the total mass computed by Earth Volumetric Studio software is significantly lower than the mass calculated by the Ricker method. The 2006 plume mass calculated by the Ricker method is 306 lb compared to 160 lb calculated by the software. The Ricker method is a two-dimensional approach, and conservative assumptions are applied to account for the third vertical dimension. A conservative plume thickness of 30 ft is assumed in the Ricker calculations, and the maximum uranium concentration at each sample location is applied to the full plume thickness. These assumptions are not needed when concentration variations are visualized in three dimensions, so Earth Volumetric Studio software provides a more realistic estimate of plume mass. For example, the average plume thickness calculated by the software for October 2006 is 22.5 ft (25% less than the 30 ft plume thickness assumed for the Ricker method), and the average concentration is 68 µg/L (26% less than the 92 µg/L estimated by the Ricker method). If the mass calculated by the Ricker method is adjusted to account for the overestimates of plume thickness and average concentration, then the 2006 Ricker method calculated mass becomes 170 lb, which is very similar to the 160 lb mass calculate by Earth Volumetric Studio software.

Two calculations, plume center-of-mass and total uranium mass remaining in the aquifer, are presented in Appendix A, Attachment A.2. Plume center-of-mass calculations show that the center of mass of each plume area has shifted slightly upgradient, but otherwise has remained fairly stationary between 2006 and 2023, indicating that the surrounding pumping wells are capturing the plume and not allowing the center of mass to migrate as it would if no pumping was taking place. Of note is that the center of mass has shifted to the north in the South Field. This provides additional support for the determination that uranium concentrations in the South Plume are decreasing, and that progress is being made in achieving the objective of cleaning up the South Plume first.

The Ricker method calculation for mass remaining in the aquifer estimates the dissolved mass present in the groundwater as total aqueous uranium. The estimate for the mass of aqueous uranium is used to estimate the solid uranium mass adsorbed to aquifer sediments (Deutsch 1997). The dissolved mass and solid mass combined provide an estimate of the total uranium mass remaining in the aquifer. Calculation of the pounds of uranium remaining in the aquifer (dissolved and sorbed) for both the Ricker method and through Earth Volumetric Studio software analysis is 3,124.5 lb and 1,143.98 lb, respectively.

National Laboratory Network Recommendations

In early 2021, a DOE National Laboratory Network Collaboration was conducted concerning the Fernald Preserve groundwater remediation. EPA and Ohio EPA participated in the collaboration, with the understanding that any official input or endorsement for any of the recommendations would be reserved for if, and when DOE decides to pursue implementation of a recommendation at the site. The objective of the collaboration was to present recommendations to improve the ongoing aquifer remediation at the Fernald Preserve.

The collaboration involved two focus groups. Focus Group 1 was challenged with developing recommendations on how to maintain and keep an aging well field system operating efficiently.

Focus Group 2 was challenged with developing recommendations to improve the efficiency and success of the existing pumping remedy and to improve the aquifer cleanup predictions for planning purposes while considering the following three site priorities:

1. Focus first on the off-property plume.
2. Focus second on the southern South Field plume.
3. Focus third on the recalcitrant areas of the plume in the South Field and former Waste Storage Area.

Results of Focus Group 1: Aging Well Field System

Focus Group 1 did not identify anything that is currently being done to maintain the aging well field system at the Fernald Preserve that should stop being done. Focus Group 1 acknowledged that operating an aging wellfield system efficiently is somewhat of a “art” rather than a “science” in that there is no one proven method or process that seems to always work. Success involves a degree of trial and error to determine the optimal operational practice for any given well. Given the operational challenges at the Fernald Preserve, the current operation and maintenance program was determined to be sound. When the DOE National Laboratory Network Collaboration personnel contacted area experts for information, those familiar with the site’s well field maintenance program emphasized that they often refer to the Fernald Preserve when they need an example of how to approach the challenge. Focus Group 1 presented the following three consensus recommendations:

1. Test the use of automatic biofilm and scale control in the extraction wells.
2. Test the use of carbon dioxide to rehabilitate extraction wells.
3. Enhance rehabilitation contact (i.e., use of satellite wells to deliver treatments).

DOE began implementing these recommendations in 2022 by conducting a small-scale test of the automatic biofilm and scale control recommendation.

The automatic biofilm and scale control recommendation calls for the routine administration of a biocide like peracetic acid instead of the current practice of doing periodic administration of liquid acid descaler. Routine administration of the peracetic acid will require infrastructure modifications to the wellheads of the extraction wells. Before making these wellhead modifications, DOE conducted a manual test on a select couple of extraction wells. The National Laboratory Network recommendation called for the use of a biocide like peracetic acid on a new extraction well. A new extraction well was not available, so two recently rehabilitated extraction wells were selected for the test. With concurrence from EPA and Ohio EPA, the manual test began in November 2021 and lasted 6 months. Specific capacity data collected during the small-scale test indicate that the routine use of peracetic acid on aged wells that were recently rehabilitated brought no improvement in the efficiency of the wells specific capacity compared to the periodic use of liquid acid descaler on a recently rehabilitated well. However, the scenario of doing routine administration of peracetic acid on a brand-new extraction well remains untested. DOE may attempt the test again when a newly installed extraction well is available.

All three National Laboratory Network recommendations from Focus Group 1 pertain to extending the life of an extraction well. Considering the age of the existing extraction wells,

rather than trying to prolong their lives further, the best option may be to strategically replace them. DOE will revisit all three Focus Group 1 National Laboratory Network recommendations as deemed appropriate when replacement of an extraction well is being considered.

Results of Focus Group 2: Improve Efficiency of the Aquifer Cleanup

Focus Group 2 did not identify anything that is currently being done to improve efficiency of the aquifer cleanup at the Fernald Preserve that should be stopped. Six recommendations were presented. Four of the six recommendations involved doing things that are *not* being done at the Fernald Preserve. Two of the six recommendations involved things that the Fernald Preserve are being done but that should be supplemented with something that the Fernald Preserve is *not* doing.

What the Fernald Preserve is not doing, but should be doing:

1. Use alternative mathematical expressions to predict cleanup time frames.
2. Conduct targeted data mining of available site information for enhanced understanding of prior fate and transport behavior and improved predictions of future behavior.
3. Prepare three-dimensional visualizations of key hydrogeologic and geochemical parameter distributions over time.
4. Conduct algorithm-based optimization for future remedy operation and design.

What the Fernald Preserve is doing that should be supplemented with something else:

1. Refine plume metric calculations to reduce uncertainty.
2. Continue to port the site groundwater model to a modern hydrologic software platform.

DOE implemented two of the Focus Group 2 recommendations in 2022: (1) The use of alternative mathematical expressions (discussed in Appendix A, Attachment A.1) and (2) The three-dimensional visualization of key hydrologic and geochemical parameter distributions over time (discussed in Appendix A, Attachment A.2). DOE began preparing for the implementation of algorithm-based optimization in 2023 by comparing the Variable Saturated Analysis Model in Three Dimensions (VAM-3D) modeling code with the MODFLOW modeling code to determine what code to use for the algorithm-based optimization work. DOE anticipates resolution in 2024. Implementation of any National Laboratory Network recommendation is subject to availability of resources, stakeholder coordination (as appropriate), and regulatory approval.

Both of the completed recommendations noted above add value to the ongoing aquifer remediation by improving the interpretation capabilities and providing more powerful data analysis techniques. The objective of continuing with the implementation of the remaining recommendations is to improve the predicative capability of the site groundwater model and lead to a more efficient and timely remediation of the remaining contaminant plume.

3.5 OSDF Monitoring

Monitoring of the OSDF is conducted in the leachate collection system (LCS), leak detection system (LDS), glacial till (perched water), and Great Miami Aquifer. Figure 20 identifies the OSDF footprint and monitoring well locations for Cells 1 through 8. Flow is monitored

within the facility in the LCS and LDS to determine whether the facility is operating as designed. Water quality is monitored in the LCS, LDS, glacial till, and Great Miami Aquifer to identify any potential water quality changes that could have resulted from leakage from the facility.

LCS and LDS flow data collected in 2023 indicate that engineered features within the OSDF continue to perform as designed. Leachate flow continues to diminish as expected, and LDS flow volumes indicate that the cell liners are performing as designed.

A comparison of water quality data collected in 2023 from within the facility (LCS and LDS) to water quality data collected beneath the facility (perched groundwater in the glacial till and groundwater in the Great Miami Aquifer) indicates that the facility is operating as designed. Table 8 summarizes the groundwater, LCS, and LDS monitoring information for Cells 1 through 8 of the OSDF by providing the range of total uranium concentrations measured in 2023. The majority of total uranium concentrations measured in 2023 fell within the historical range of concentrations previously measured for each monitoring horizon. New high and new low concentrations measured in 2023 are identified in bold in Table 8.

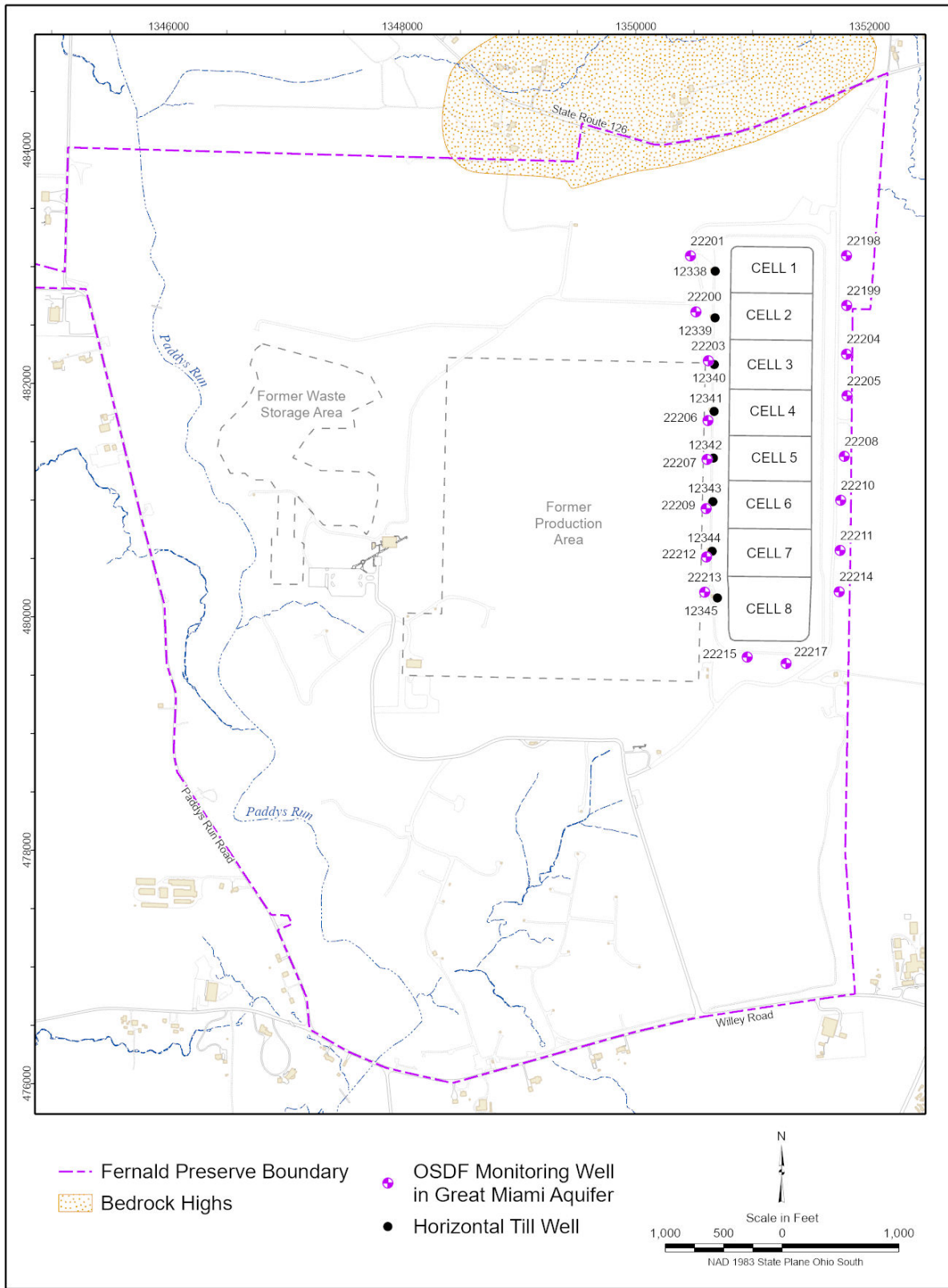


Figure 20. OSDF Footprint and Monitoring Well Locations

Table 8. OSDF Groundwater, Leachate, and LDS Monitoring Summary

| Cell (Waste Placement) | Monitoring Location | Monitoring Zone | Date Sampling Started | Total Number of Samples | Range of Total Uranium Concentrations ^{a,b} (µg/L) | First Half 2023 ^{a,c} (µg/L) | Second Half 2023 ^{a,c} (µg/L) | Historical Trend ^d (Year Last Sampled) |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Cell 1 (Dec 1997) | 12338C | LCS | Feb 17, 1998 | 78 | ND–206 | 26.0 | 12.0 | None (2023) |
| | 12338D | LDS | Feb 18, 1998 | 37 | 1.50–37.0 | DRY | DRY | Up (2011) |
| | 12338 | Glacial Till | Oct 30, 1997 | 87 | ND–19 | 7.13 | 7.97 | Up (2023) |
| | 22201 | Great Miami Aquifer | Mar 31, 1997 | 94 | ND–12.4 | 8.31 | 6.82 | Up (2023) |
| | 22198 | Great Miami Aquifer | Mar 31, 1997 | 143 | 0.540–15.2 | 3.25 | 2.77 | Down (2023) |
| Cell 2 (Nov 1998) | 12339C | LCS | Nov 23, 1998 | 74 | 4.51–686 | 67.1 | 49.6 | Up (2023) |
| | 12339D | LDS | Dec 14, 1998 | 29 | 4.08–25.8 ^e | DRY | DRY | None (2013) |
| | 12339 | Glacial Till | Jun 29, 1998 | 98 | ND–36.9 | 18.0 | 16.0 | Up (2023) |
| | 22200 | Great Miami Aquifer | Jun 30, 1997 | 89 | ND–4.69 | 0.365 | 1.27 | Up (2023) |
| | 22199 | Great Miami Aquifer | Jun 25, 1997 | 120 | ND–12.1 | 0.359 | 0.5 54 | Down (2023) |
| Cell 3 (Oct 1999) | 12340C | LCS | Oct 13, 1999 | 72 | 9.27–206 | 151 | 162 | Up (2023) |
| | 12340D | LDS | Aug 26, 2002 | 20 | 8.90–27.7 ^e | DRY | DRY | Down (2007) |
| | 12340 | Glacial Till | Jul 28, 1998 | 31 | ND–58.5 | 15.9 | 18.0 | None (2023) |
| | 22203 | Great Miami Aquifer | Aug 24, 1998 | 84 | ND–23.5 | 21.723.5 | 6.92 | Up (2023) |
| | 22204 | Great Miami Aquifer | Aug 24, 1998 | 115 | ND–22.9 | 2.79 | 8.25 | Up (2023) |
| Cell 4 (Nov 2002) | 12341C | LCS | Nov 04, 2002 | 58 | 4.41–234 | 86.2 | 99.8 | None (2023) |
| | 12341D | LDS | Nov 04, 2002 | 41 | 5.74–79.8 | DRY | DRY | Up (2022) ^f |
| | 12341 | Glacial Till | Feb 26, 2002 | 71 | 3.38 –7.91 | 3.39 | 3.38 | Down (2023) |
| | 22206 | Great Miami Aquifer | Nov 06, 2001 | 75 | ND–5.78 | 0.742 | 1.50 | Up (2023) |
| | 22205 | Great Miami Aquifer | Nov 05, 2001 | 102 | 0.446–19.7 | 1.28 | 5.41 | None (2023) |
| Cell 5 (Nov 2002) | 12342C | LCS | Nov 04, 2002 | 60 | 3.39–285 | 114 | 123 | None (2023) |
| | 12342D | LDS | Nov 04, 2002 | 40 | 2.93–27.1 | DRY | DRY | Down (2013) |
| | 12342 | Glacial Till | Feb 26, 2002 | 72 | 7.29 –21.1 | 7.29 | 7.61 | Down (2023) |
| | 22207 | Great Miami Aquifer | Nov 06, 2001 | 75 | ND–4.48 | 0.371 | 0.298 | Down (2023) |
| | 22208 | Great Miami Aquifer | Nov 05, 2001 | 101 | ND–2.1 | 0.419 | 0.298 | None (2023) |

Table 8. OSDF Groundwater, Leachate, and LDS Monitoring Summary (continued)

| Cell (Waste Placement) | Monitoring Location | Monitoring Zone | Date Sampling Started | Total Number of Samples | Range of Total Uranium Concentrations ^{a,b} (µg/L) | First Half 2023 ^{a,c} (µg/L) | Second Half 2023 ^{a,c} (µg/L) | Historical Trend ^d (Year Last Sampled) |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Cell 6 (Nov 2003) | 12343C | LCS | Oct 27, 2003 | 57 | 8.03–276 | 99.1 | 110 | Down (2023) |
| | 12343D | LDS | Oct 27, 2003 | 55 | 3.1–160 | DRY | 72 | Up (2023) |
| | 12343 | Glacial Till | Mar 14, 2003 | 64 | ND–24.2 | 7.67 | 8.16 | None (2023) |
| | 22209 | Great Miami Aquifer | Dec 16, 2002 | 70 | ND–2.43 | 0.445 | 0.408 | Down (2023) |
| | 22210 | Great Miami Aquifer | Dec 16, 2002 | 96 | ND–1.02 | 0.678 | 0.818 | None (2023) |
| Cell 7 (Sep 2004) | 12344C | LCS | Sep 02, 2004 | 53 | 4.72–355 | 99.7 | 126 | Down (2023) |
| | 12344D | LDS | Sep 02, 2004 | 29 | 12.2–169 ^e | DRY | DRY | Up (2015) |
| | 12344 | Glacial Till | Feb 24, 2004 | 61 | 0.674–12.1 | 3.82 | 4.25 | Up (2023) |
| | 22212 | Great Miami Aquifer | Jan 21, 2004 | 63 | ND–5.53 | 0.397 | 0.414 | Down (2023) |
| | 22211 | Great Miami Aquifer | Jan 21, 2004 | 86 | ND–4.31 | 0.429 | 1.13 | None (2023) |
| Cell 8 (Dec 2004) | 12345C | LCS | Oct 18, 2004 | 50 | 1.51–335 | 139 | 152 | None (2023) |
| | 12345D | LDS | Oct 18, 2004 | 45 | 9.38–315 | DRY | DRY | Up (2021) |
| | 12345 | Glacial Till | May 19, 2004 | 20 | 3.48–7.3 | DRY | DRY | Up (2008) |
| | 22213 | Great Miami Aquifer | Mar 31, 2004 | 62 | ND–0.71 | 0.388 | 0.444 | Up (2023) |
| | 22214 | Great Miami Aquifer | Mar 31, 2004 | 86 | ND–2.95 | 0.260 | 1.61 | Down (2023) |
| | 22215 | Great Miami Aquifer | Aug 22, 2005 | 53 | ND–16.4 | 0.517 | 0.414 | None (2023) |
| | 22217 ^g | Great Miami Aquifer | Aug 22, 2005 | 52 | ND–18.3 | 2.16 | 5.80 | Down (2023) |

Note: The data on this table represent the raw data from the database. However, data presented in the Attachment A.5 subattachments have gone through a statistical processing and analysis. In regard to the statistical processing, the data were quarterized (normalized to one result per quarter) and outliers were removed to arrive at an accurate distribution model. Because of the processing, the total number of samples and range of concentrations on this table might not match the text, tables, and figures in Attachment A.5. The rules used for the statistical processing and analysis in Attachment A.5 are discussed in Section A.5.2.1, and the results are summarized in Table A.5-2.

Note: Uranium concentration versus time graphs can be found in the Attachment A.5 subattachments. See Figures A.5.1-5A and A.5.1-5B for Cell 1; Figures A.5.2-5A and A.5.2-5B for Cell 2; Figures A.5.3-5A and A.5.3-5B for Cell 3; Figures A.5.4-5A and A.5.4-5B for Cell 4; Figures A.5.5-5A and A.5.5-5B for Cell 5; Figures A.5.6-5A and A.5.6-5B for Cell 6; Figures A.5.7-5A and A.5.7-5B for Cell 7; and Figures A.5.8-7A and A.5.8-7B for Cell 8.

^a **Bold text indicates a new high or low detected in 2023.**

^b ND = not detected.

^c Where there are more than two data points for the half year, the higher result is used.

^d The trends presented here are based on nonparametric Mann-Kendall procedure and come from the tables in Attachment A.5 subattachments for each cell. See Tables A.5.1-1, A.5.2-1, A.5.3-1, A.5.4-1, A.5.5-1, A.5.6-1, A.5.7-1, and A.5.8-1.

^e Some data are not considered representative of LDS in Cell 2 (December 14, 1998, through May 23, 2000, dataset) due to malfunction in Cell 2 leachate pipeline and resulting mixing of individual flows. It is suspected that some November 2004 samples were switched (i.e., 12339C with 12339D, and 12340C with 12340D). If data from these events were included above, maximum total uranium concentrations would be 71 µg/L for 12339D and 72.4 µg/L for 12340D. It is suspected that samples were switched in 2014 (i.e., 12344D with the field duplicate for 12345C). If the data point from this sampling event was not included above, maximum total uranium concentration for 12344D would be 37.6 µg/L.

^f The Cell 4 LDS was dry, resulting in no data from fourth quarter 2011 through 2016.

^g Monitoring location 22216 was plugged and abandoned in April 2006. Monitoring location 22217 is its replacement. The results listed for location 22217 also include the results for location 22216.

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4.0 Surface Water and Effluent Pathway

Results in Brief: 2023 Surface Water and Effluent Pathway

Surveillance Monitoring: No effluent analytical results from samples collected in 2023 exceeded any surface water FRL, which is applicable outside the mixing zone in the Great Miami River.

Uranium Discharges: In 2023, 259 lb of uranium were discharged in effluent to the Great Miami River. Approximately 28 lb of uranium were released to the environment through uncontrolled storm water runoff. The estimated total mass of uranium released through the surface water and effluent pathway was approximately 287 lb.

NPDES Permit Compliance: There were no instances of noncompliance at any sample location in 2023.

This section presents the 2023 monitoring activities and results for surface water and effluent to determine the effects of site activities on the surface water pathway.

In general, low levels of contaminants enter the surface water pathway at the Fernald Preserve by two primary mechanisms: effluent that is monitored as it is discharged to the Great Miami River and uncontrolled runoff entering the site's drainages from remediated areas that are now certified and restored. Because these discharges have continued through remediation and legacy management, the surface water pathway will continue to be monitored.

4.1 Summary of Surface Water and Effluent Pathway

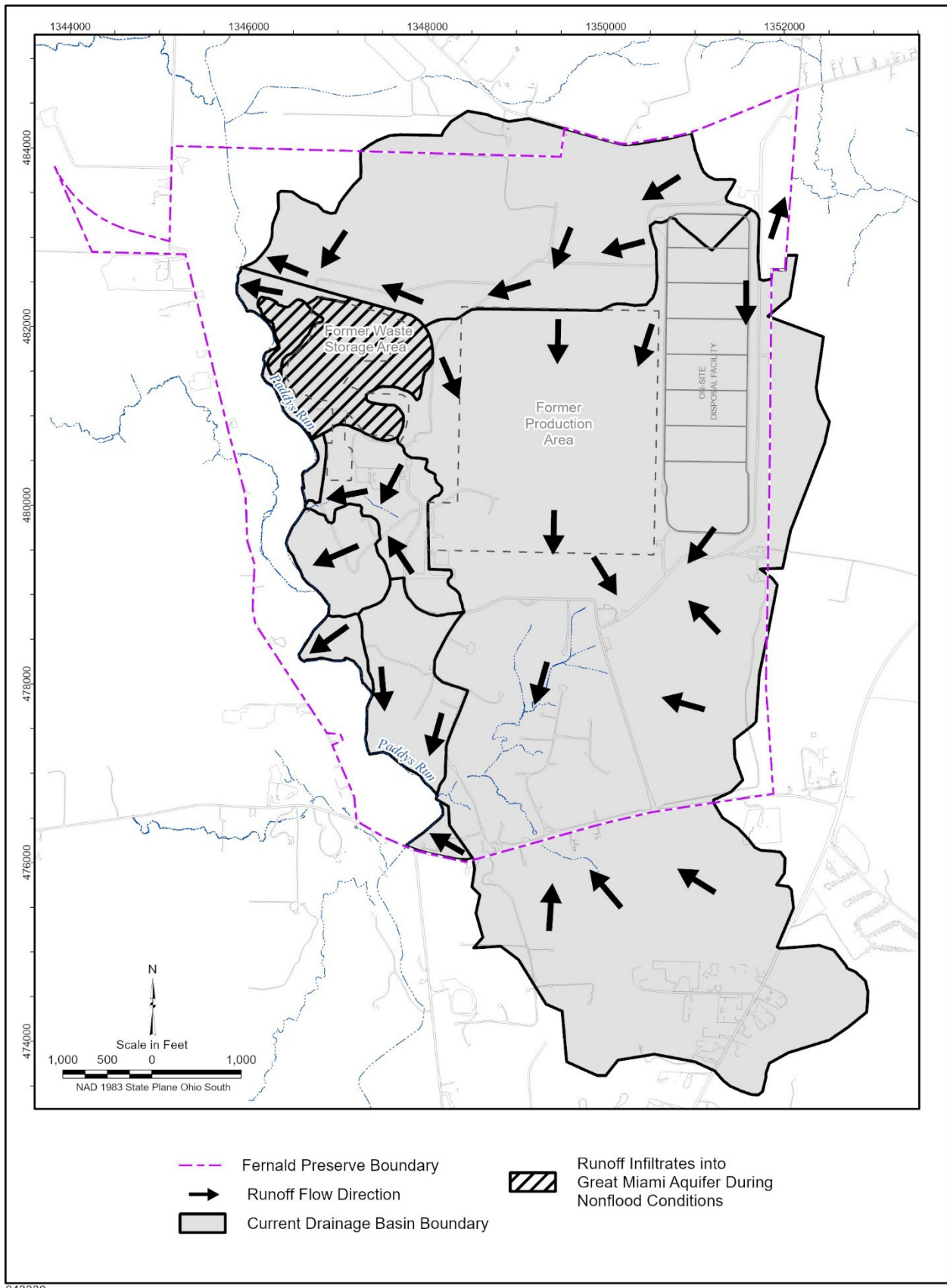
To assist in the understanding of this section, the following key definitions are provided:

- **controlled runoff.** Storm water that is collected and, under normal circumstances, treated and discharged to the Great Miami River as effluent. However, currently, the only storm water that is controlled is associated with the footprint of the outdoor processing activities at the wastewater treatment facility.
- **uncontrolled runoff.** Storm water that is not collected for treatment but enters the site's natural drainages.
- **effluent.** Primarily untreated groundwater discharged to the Great Miami River via the effluent line. A small amount of groundwater is routed to treatment each month and blended with water from the backwash basin. The small volume of treated water is blended with untreated groundwater and is discharged to the Great Miami River via the outfall line.
- **surface water.** Water that flows within natural drainage features.

The effluent pathway consists of flows discharged to the Great Miami River via the Parshall Flume, sample location PF 4001. Discharges through this point are considered under the control of wastewater treatment operations. Effluent is currently composed of treated and untreated groundwater, treated leachate from the OSDF, and storm water associated with the footprint of the outdoor processing activities at the wastewater treatment facility. Groundwater is no longer routinely treated to meet discharge limits. A small volume of groundwater is blended with other wastewater stored in the CAWWT backwash basin when basin water is treated.

The backwash basin is an above-ground lined impoundment that is used to temporarily store wastewater originating from a variety of sources (i.e., well rehabilitation, CAWWT backwash, OSDF leachate, groundwater sampling, CAWWT laboratory, and CAWWT stormwater drainage).

The volume and flow rate of uncontrolled runoff depend on several tributaries to Paddys Run (e.g., SSOD) as well as the northeast drainage that flows to the Great Miami River. The arrows in Figure 21 indicate the general flow direction of uncontrolled runoff as determined from the topography. Uncontrolled runoff from the Fernald Preserve leaves the property via two drainage pathways: Paddys Run and the northeast drainage ditch.



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Figure 21. Uncontrolled Surface Water Areas and Runoff Flow Directions

4.2 Remediation Activities Affecting the Surface Water Pathway

Activities that had the potential to affect the surface water pathway included routine operation and maintenance activities of the OSDF and the CAWWT and ecological restoration activities conducted throughout the property, including repairing areas of erosion.

Now that surface remediation has been completed at the Fernald Preserve and the groundwater remedy continues, the restored areas of the site are the primary focus relative to uncontrolled runoff. Controls to mitigate sediment leaving the site are primarily based on the vegetation and stabilization practices (e.g., erosion controls) within the restored areas.

One small area west of the former waste pits, continued to show elevated total uranium concentrations in surface water samples. The location of elevated uranium area is a series of small puddles and drainage ditches due west of the center of former Waste Pit 3, which drain generally south to a depression near the former Waste Storage Area runoff control basin known as the “cement pond.” This area does not drain directly to Paddys Run and is not open to the public. A streambank stabilization project was conducted in 2014 and 2015 to ensure that Paddys Run does not erode into this area.

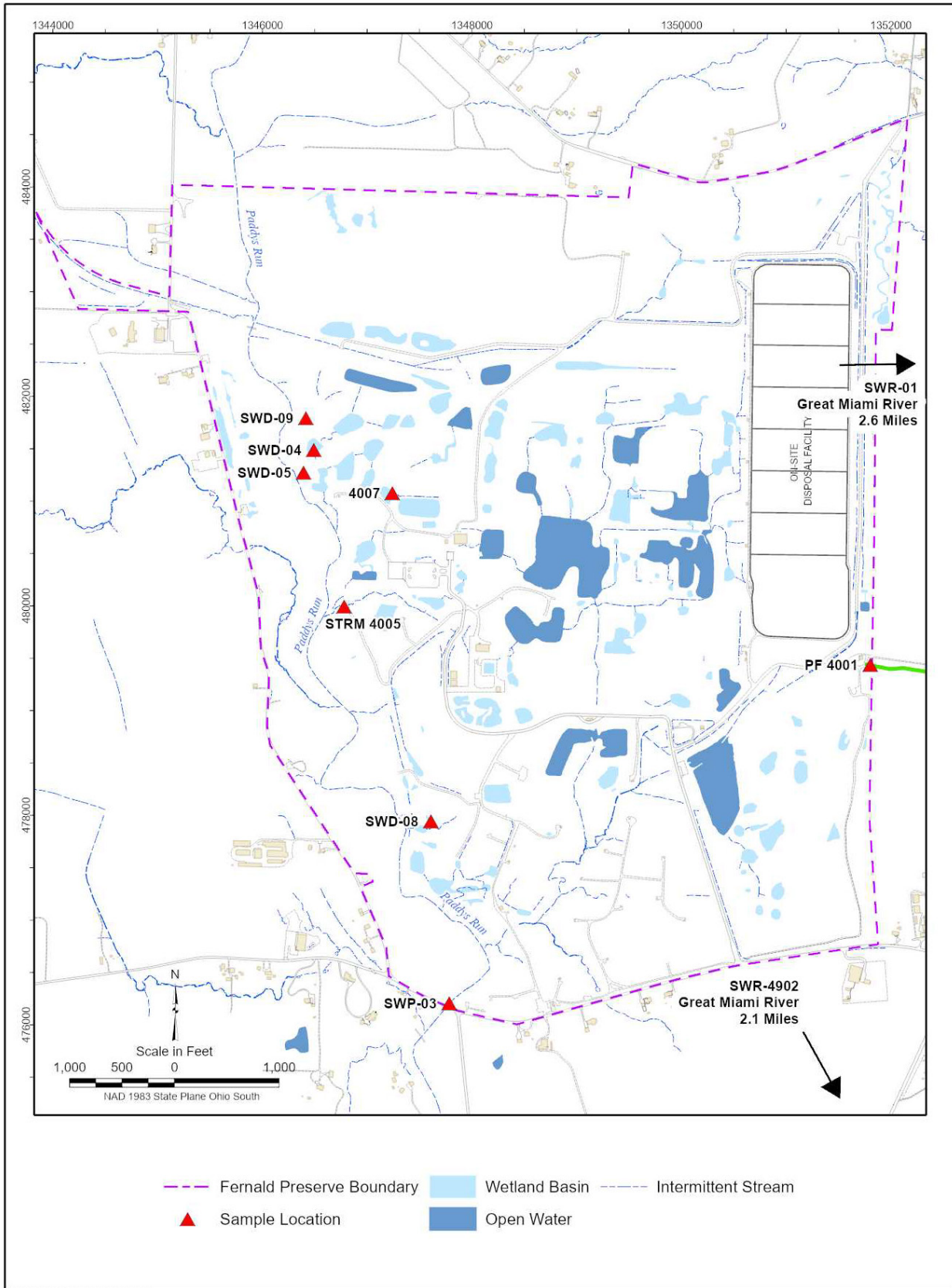
After a limited maintenance activity was completed in the fall of 2007, DOE committed to continue monitoring of the elevated uranium area. Two monitoring points (SWD-05 and SWD-09) were added to the surface water program to fulfill this monitoring commitment (Figure 22). These two locations were sampled weekly when water was present. In 2023, surface water volume was sufficient to collect 18 samples at SWD-05 and 27 samples at SWD-09. In 2023, concentrations measured were within the historical range for the area. After discussions with stakeholders and approval from the regulators, DOE will continue sampling these locations, but at a reduced frequency beginning in 2024. The sampling frequencies will be semiannual for SWD-05, and quarterly for SWD-09. The reduced frequencies result from analysis of the large datasets that have been established since 2007 indicating downward trends in contaminant concentrations at each location. Additional information is provided in Appendix B.

4.3 Surface Water and Effluent Monitoring Program

Surface water and effluent are sampled to determine the effect of the Fernald Preserve’s activities on the environment. Surface water is sampled at several locations in the site’s drainage areas and analyzed for various radiological and nonradiological constituents. Effluent is sampled before discharge into the Great Miami River.

The key elements of the surface water and effluent program design are:

- **Sampling:** Sample locations, frequency, and constituents were selected to address requirements of the NPDES permit, the FFCA, and the OU5 ROD and to provide a comprehensive assessment of surface water quality at key locations, including two background (i.e., offsite) locations (Figure 22). Surface water is monitored for three FRL constituents; surface water FRLs are applicable outside the mixing zone in the Great Miami River.



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Figure 22. IEMP/NPDES Surface Water and Effluent Sample Locations

- **Data Evaluation:** The integrated data evaluation process focuses on tracking and evaluating data and comparing analytical results with background and historical ranges, FRLs, and NPDES permit limits. This information is used to assess impacts on surface water due to site remediation activities affecting uncontrolled runoff or effluent to the Great Miami River. The assessment also includes identifying the potential for impacts from surface water to groundwater in the Great Miami Aquifer. The ongoing data evaluation is designed to support remedial action decision making.
- **Reporting:** Surface water and effluent data are reported through the annual Site Environmental Report. Monthly discharge monitoring reports required by the NPDES permit are submitted to Ohio EPA.

Data from samples collected under the IEMP are used to fulfill surveillance and compliance monitoring functions. Surveillance monitoring results of the IEMP surface water and effluent program are used to assess the collective effectiveness of site remediation in preventing unacceptable impacts to the surface water and groundwater. Compliance monitoring includes sampling at stormwater and effluent discharge points and is conducted to comply with provisions in the NPDES permit, the FFCA, and the OU5 ROD. The data are routinely evaluated to identify any unacceptable trends and to trigger corrective actions, when needed to ensure protection of these critical environmental pathways. Figure 22 depicts IEMP and NPDES surface water and effluent sample locations for 2023.

4.3.1 Surveillance Monitoring

Effluent is discharged to the Great Miami River through the effluent line identified in Figure 22. Samples of the effluent are collected at the Parshall flume (PF 4001). The resulting data are used to calculate the concentration of each FRL constituent after the effluent mixes with the water in the Great Miami River.

Surveillance monitoring in 2023 was based on an evaluation of analytical results from samples collected during the year. This evaluation indicated that during 2023, there were no exceedances of total uranium in any of the effluent samples analyzed. Thirteen of the 27 surface water analytical results (48%) from sample location SWD-09 exceeded the surface water FRL, which applies outside the mixing zone in the Great Miami River, for total uranium (530 µg/L) in 2023. The

2023 high result of 1,142 µg/L is lower than the highest result of 2,087 µg/L collected in 2016. There were no surface water total uranium FRL exceedances in 18 samples collected at SWD-05 in 2023. Analysis of all results from samples collected at SWD-05 and SWD-09 indicates a downward trend for both locations. Residual uranium in the soil appears to be the cause for the elevated uranium concentrations. The contamination appears localized to the area around SWD-09, and the uranium concentrations measured in water collected from locations SWD-05 and SWD-09 appear to be influenced by seasonal changes. Surface water monitoring locations SWD-05 and SWD-09 were established to monitor the area west of the former Waste Pits Area where elevated uranium concentrations have been detected. Based on the number of years of data collected at SWD-05 and SWD-09, DOE proposed to reduce the weekly sampling frequency at these locations in 2024 as stated in the LMICP. Appendix B provides additional details.

The following two key sample locations represent points where surface water or effluent leaves the site:

- Paddys Run at the Willey Road property boundary (surface water sample location SWP-03)
- The Parshall Flume (sample location PF 4001) at the entry point of the effluent line leading to the Great Miami River

The annual sample planned to be collected at SWP-03, located on Paddys Run, was inadvertently missed during 2023; however, once the error was discovered, a sample was collected in on March 6, 2024. The total uranium concentration at SWP-03 in the sample collected March 6, 2024, was 2.1 µg/L, well below the surface water total uranium FRL of 530 µg/L that applies outside the mixing zone in the Great Miami River and within the very low historical ranges. Figure 23 illustrates the decrease of the total uranium concentration in Paddys Run from 1985 through 2024. The large decrease in concentration in 1987 is attributable to the installation of the stormwater retention basin in 1986, which greatly reduced the volume of contaminated runoff flowing into Paddys Run from the Former Production Area.

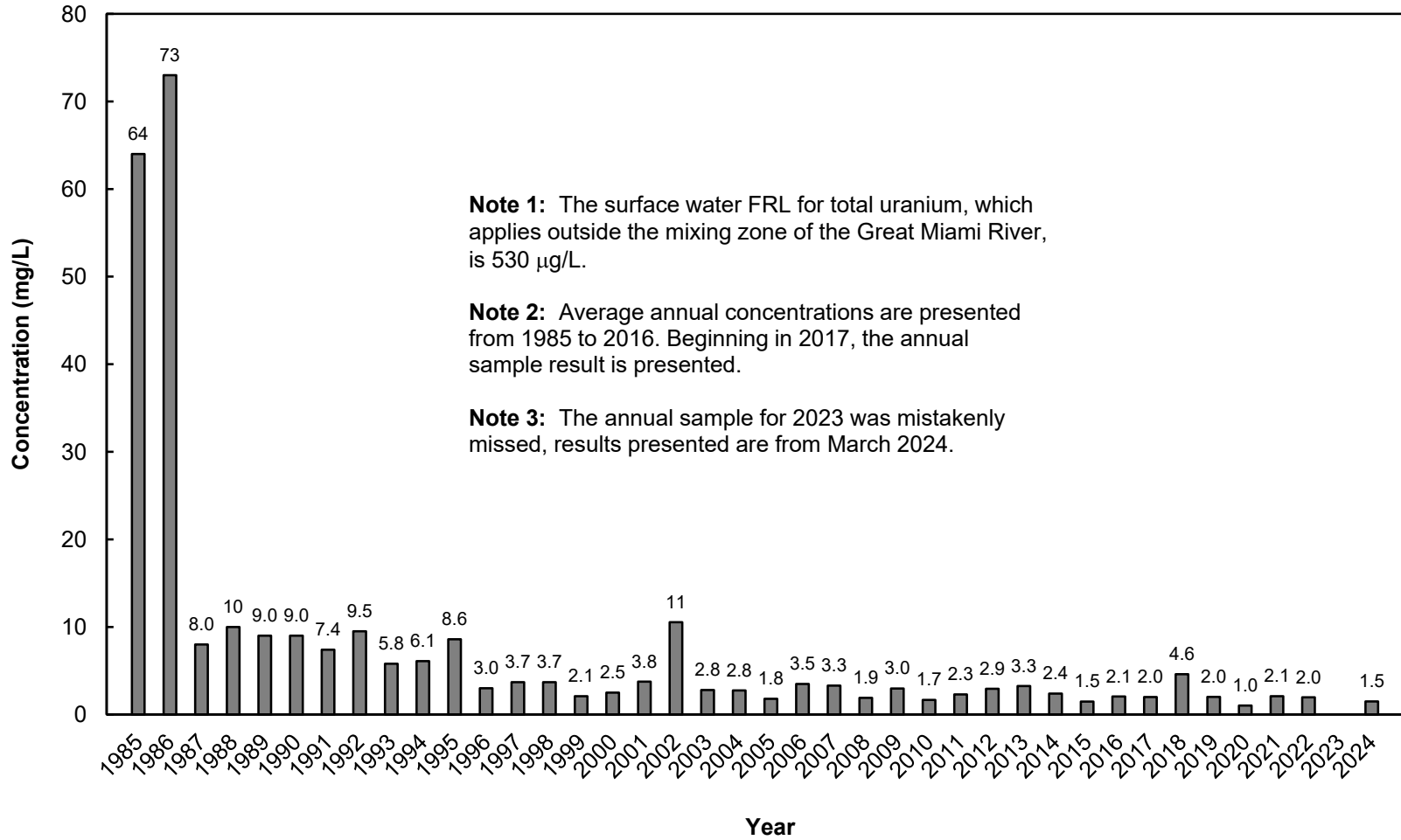


Figure 23. Annual Average Total Uranium Concentrations in Paddys Run at Willey Road (SWP-03 Sample Location)

Samples collected at PF 4001 are used in the surveillance evaluation because this is the last point where effluent is sampled before discharge to the Great Miami River. The maximum daily total uranium concentration at PF 4001 in 2023 was 21.3 µg/L on September 13, 2023. This result is below the drinking water standard (30 µg/L) and far below the surface water total uranium FRL of 530 µg/L, which applies outside the mixing zone in the Great Miami River. A mixing equation (discussed further in Appendix B) is used to account for the actual flow rate in the Great Miami River and the discharge flow rate at PF 4001 when the maximum uranium concentration was detected. The resulting concentration in the river after mixing was estimated to be 2.53 µg/L for September 13, 2023.

Surface water data are also evaluated to provide an ongoing assessment of the potential for cross-media impacts from surface water to the underlying Great Miami Aquifer. In areas where glacial overburden is absent, a direct pathway exists for contaminants to reach the aquifer. This contaminant pathway to the aquifer was considered in the design of the Fernald Preserve groundwater remedy. The groundwater remedy includes pumping from groundwater extraction wells downgradient of these areas where direct infiltration occurs. This pumping serves to capture and remove contaminated groundwater from the aquifer, mitigating any potential cross-media impacts. To provide this assessment, sample locations were selected to evaluate contaminant concentrations in surface water just upstream or within those areas where site drainages have eroded through the protective glacial overburden. The locations are SWD-04, SWD-05, SWD-08, and STRM 4005.

In 2023, sample results from surface water cross-media impact locations SWD-04 and SWD-05 exceeded the total uranium groundwater FRL of 30 µg/L. Location SWD-04 is in the former Waste Storage Area and SWD-05 is in the swale west of the Waste Storage Area. These locations are within the capture zone of the aquifer remediation system. Appendix A, Attachment A.2, provides additional information concerning the impact of surface water infiltrating into the Great Miami Aquifer. Sampling at these locations will continue to provide an assessment of the cross-media impact. Appendix B presents additional details of the FRL exceedances.

In 2015, DOE conducted an assessment of the scope of the surface water quality monitoring program. The assessment concluded that the scope of the program could be reduced. With approval from EPA, Ohio EPA, and local stakeholders, DOE implemented these reductions in 2017. The current surface water program is presented in the IEMP (Attachment D of the LMICP [DOE 2023a]). A similar assessment of the surface water quality monitoring program occurred in 2021 and based on this assessment, which was presented in Appendix B of the 2021 Site Environmental Report (DOE 2022c), additional monitoring reductions were warranted. With approval of the 2023 LMICP, these reductions were incorporated into the surface water program beginning in calendar year 2023.

Additional assessment of the surface water program was presented in the 2022 Site Environmental Report (DOE 2023b) related to sampling frequency at SWD-05 and SWD-09. Based on the number of years of data collected at SWD-05 and SWD-09, DOE proposed reducing the frequency of sampling at these locations from weekly to semiannual to align with the sampling of the remaining surface water locations. After discussions with the regulators, sampling of SWD-09 was reduced to quarterly and SWD-05 was reduced to semiannually. This change was implemented in 2024 with approval of the 2024 LMICP variances.

4.3.2 Compliance Monitoring

4.3.2.1 FFCA and OU5 ROD Compliance

The Fernald Preserve is required to monitor effluent discharges at the Parshall Flume (sample location PF 4001) for total uranium mass discharges and total uranium concentrations. This requirement is identified in the July 1986 FFCA and the OU5 ROD (DOE 1996b). The OU5 ROD requires treatment of effluent so that the mass of total uranium discharged to the Great Miami River through PF 4001 does not exceed 600 lb per year. The OU5 ROD and the subsequent *Explanation of Significant Differences for Operable Unit 5* (DOE 2001b) also require that the monthly average total uranium concentration in the effluent not exceed 30 µg/L, the EPA-established drinking water standard.

Figure 24 shows that the cumulative mass of total uranium discharged to the Great Miami River through the Parshall Flume (PF 4001) during 2023 was 259 lb, which is below the annual discharge limit of 600 lb. Figure 25 shows that the monthly average total uranium concentration in water discharged through the Parshall Flume (PF 4001) was below the 30 µg/L discharge limit every month during 2023.

4.3.2.2 NPDES Permit Compliance

Compliance sampling, consisting of sampling for nonradiological pollutants from uncontrolled runoff in the SSOD and effluent discharges from the Fernald Preserve, is regulated under the state-administrated NPDES program. A new NPDES permit was approved in early 2022 and took effect on June 2, 2022, and will expire on May 31, 2027. There were no instances of noncompliance at any of the permitted outfalls in 2023.

4.3.3 Uranium Discharges in Surface Water and Effluent

As identified in Figure 24, 259 lb of uranium in effluent were discharged to the Great Miami River through the Parshall Flume (PF 4001) in 2023. In addition to the effluent, uncontrolled runoff is also contributing to the amount of uranium entering surface water. Figure 26 presents the mass of uranium from the uncontrolled runoff and controlled discharges from 1993 through 2023.

A loading term is used to estimate the pounds of uranium discharged to Paddys Run via uncontrolled runoff. With the approval of the 2017 Site Environmental Report (DOE 2018a) by EPA and Ohio EPA, the loading term was revised. The revision of the loading term was based on total uranium data from surface water sampling locations, which reflects the decreasing total uranium concentrations measured at points discharging to Paddys Run as a result of significant historical improvements in the capture of contaminated stormwater and remediation of site soil. The current loading term is 0.8 lb of uranium per inch of precipitation. During 2023, 34.8 inches of precipitation fell at the Fernald Preserve; therefore, an estimated 27.9 lb of uranium entered the environment through uncontrolled runoff. The estimated total amount of uranium discharged to the surface water pathway for the year, including controlled effluent discharges and uncontrolled runoff, was approximately 287 lb.

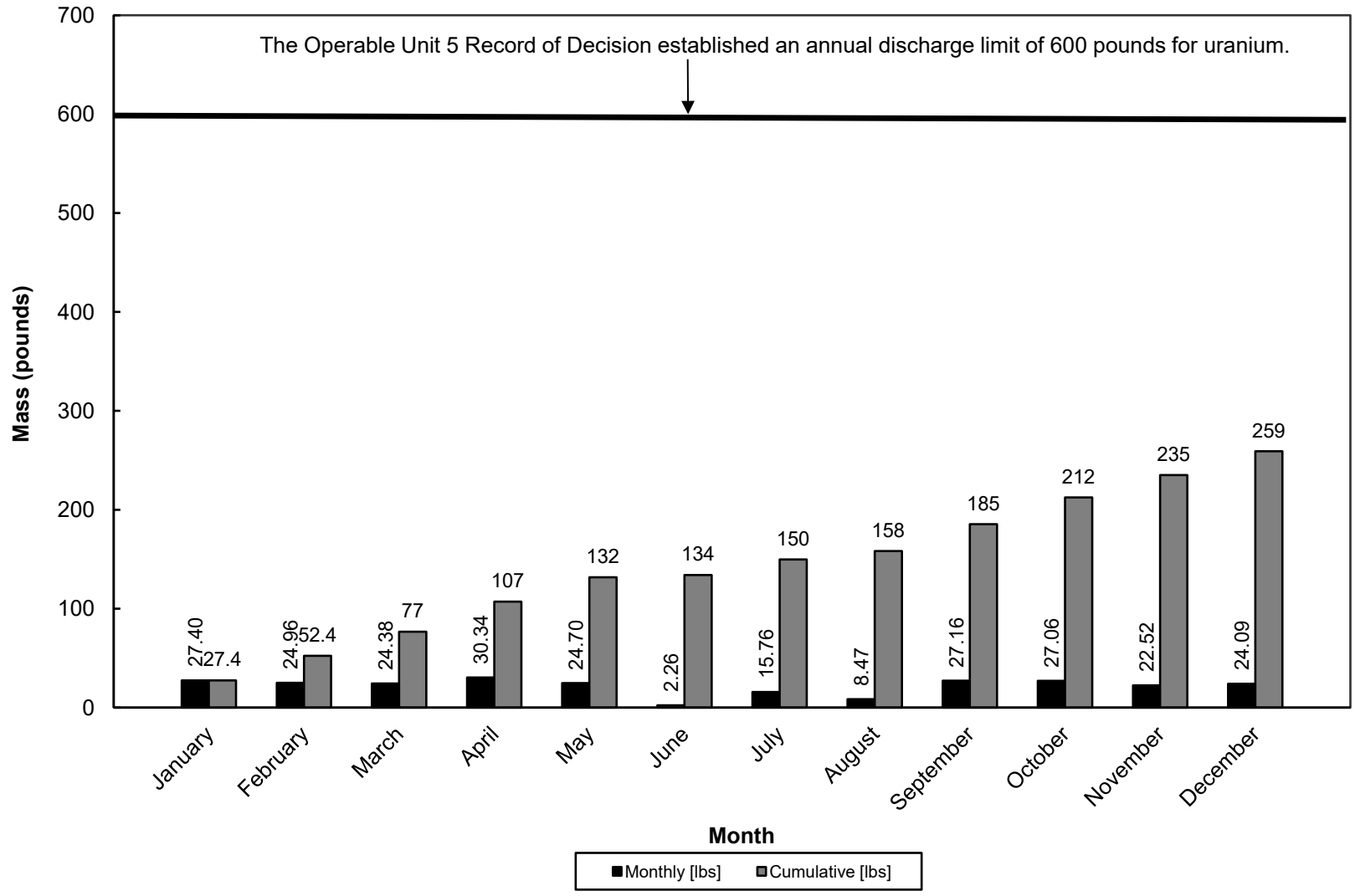


Figure 24. Mass of Uranium Discharged to the Great Miami River Through the Parshall Flume (PF 4001) in 2023

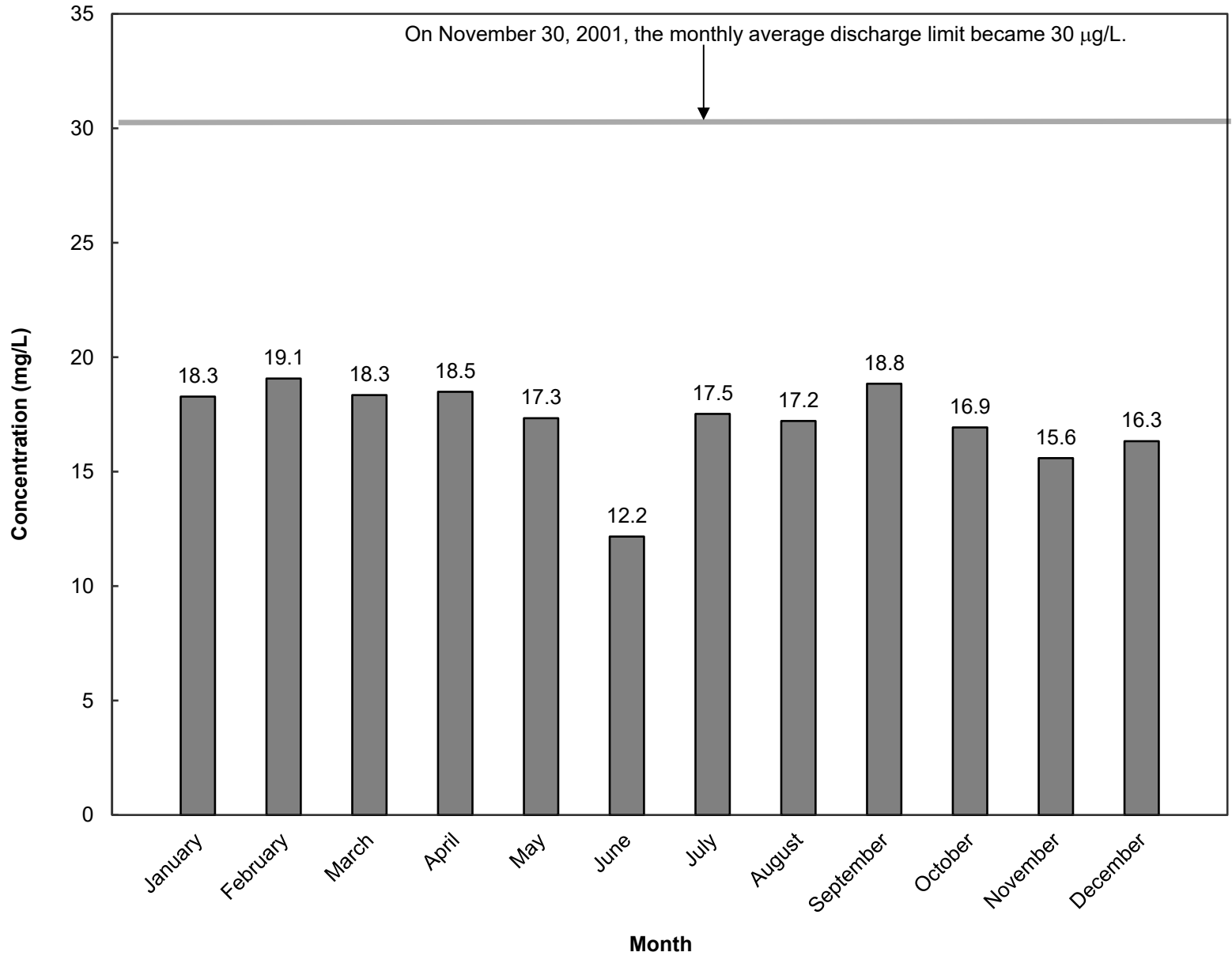


Figure 25. 2023 Monthly Average Total Uranium Concentration in Water Discharged Through the Parshall Flume (PF 4001) to the Great Miami River

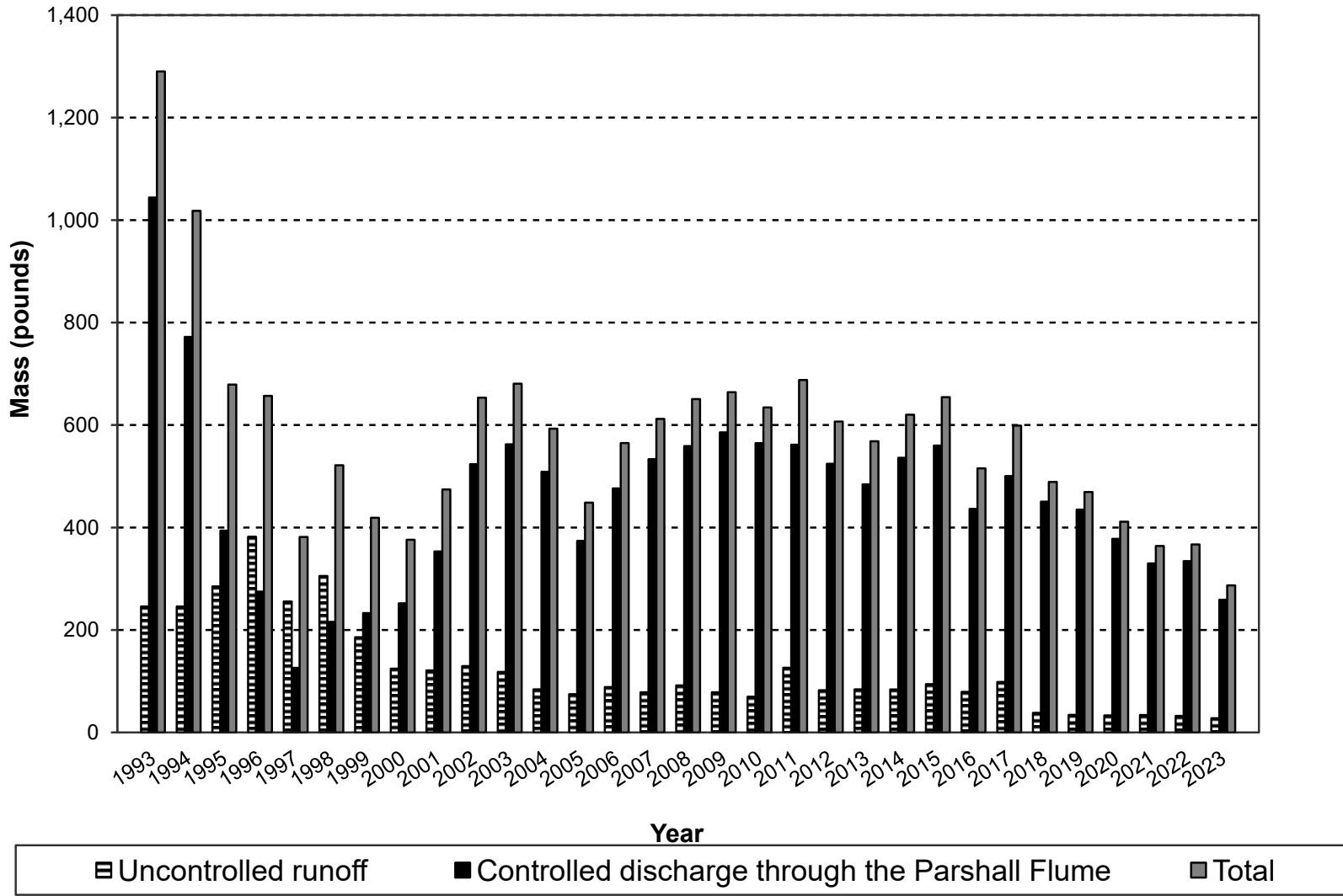


Figure 26. Uranium Discharged via the Surface Water Pathway, 1993–2023

5.0 Inspections and Natural Resource Management

Results in Brief: Site and OSDF Inspections

- Findings were primarily invasive herbaceous plants and woody vegetation in the restored areas and on the OSDF. Debris continues to be found, mostly in the Former Production Area and the former Waste Storage Area. The Main Drainage Corridor culvert access prevention grating that had become dislodged, identified in December 2022, was repaired in October 2023.
- A prescribed burn of the OSDF was completed in February 2023. The post-burn walkdown was conducted in conjunction with the March 2023 quarterly OSDF inspection. A lidar flyover was also completed following the prescribed burn.
- No issues were observed with respect to institutional controls or the integrity of the OSDF cap.

Results in Brief: Natural Resource Management

A floristic inventory of existing forest communities across the site indicates they are representative of a predominantly woodland community. The restoration forest communities are in varying stages of succession. The perimeter successional communities are still early in the succession process, which is expected.

This section provides background information on the natural resources associated with the Fernald Preserve and summarizes the activities in 2023 relating to these resources. Included in this section is a discussion of the following:

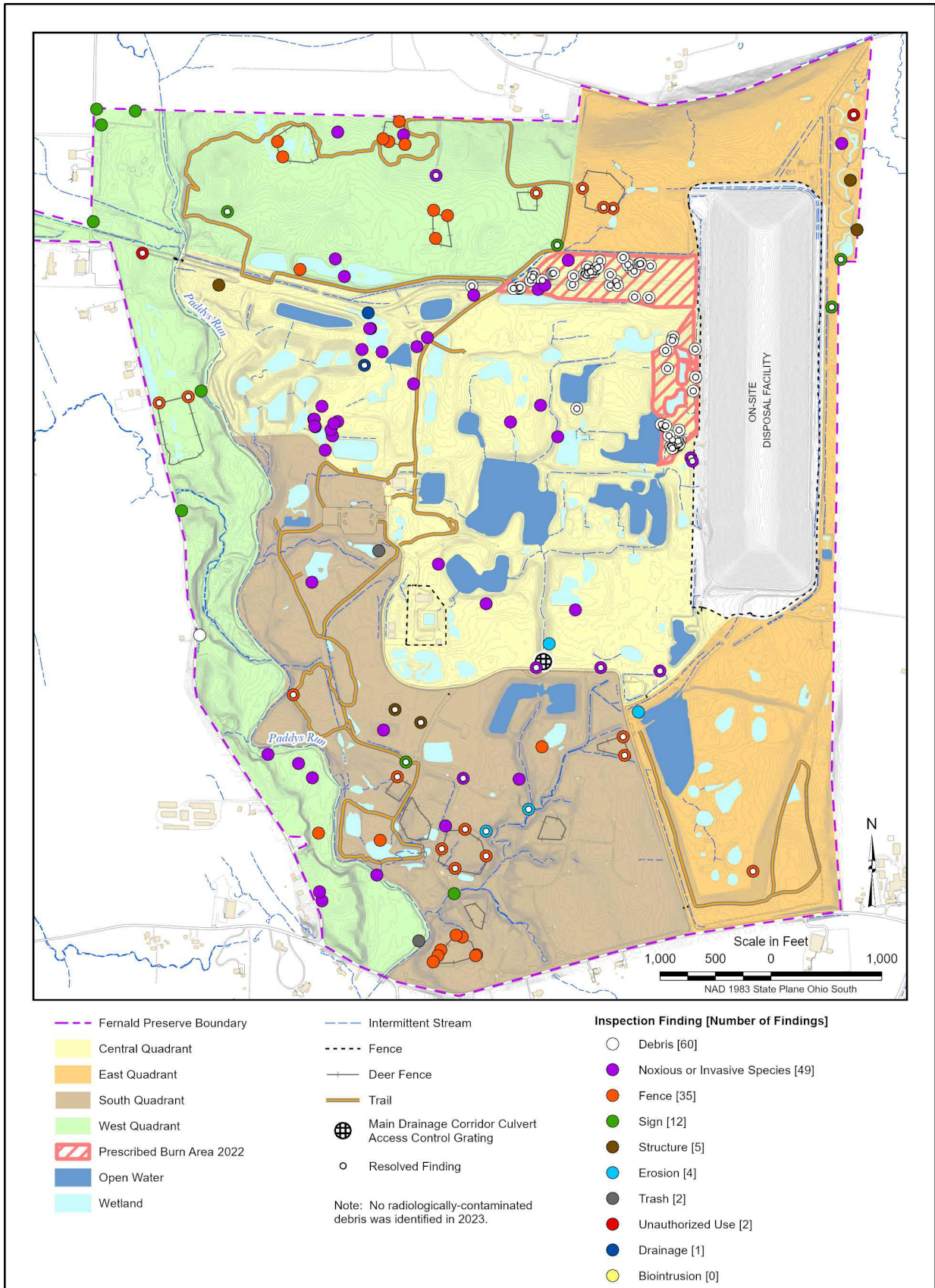
- Site and OSDF inspections
- Threatened and endangered species
- Cultural resources
- Natural Resource Management

5.1 Fernald Preserve Site, OSDF, and Trail Inspections

The LMICP, Volume II, *Institutional Controls Plan*, and Attachment B, “On-site Disposal Facility Post-Closure Care and Inspection Plan,” (PCCIP) identifies the inspection process for the site and OSDF, respectively.

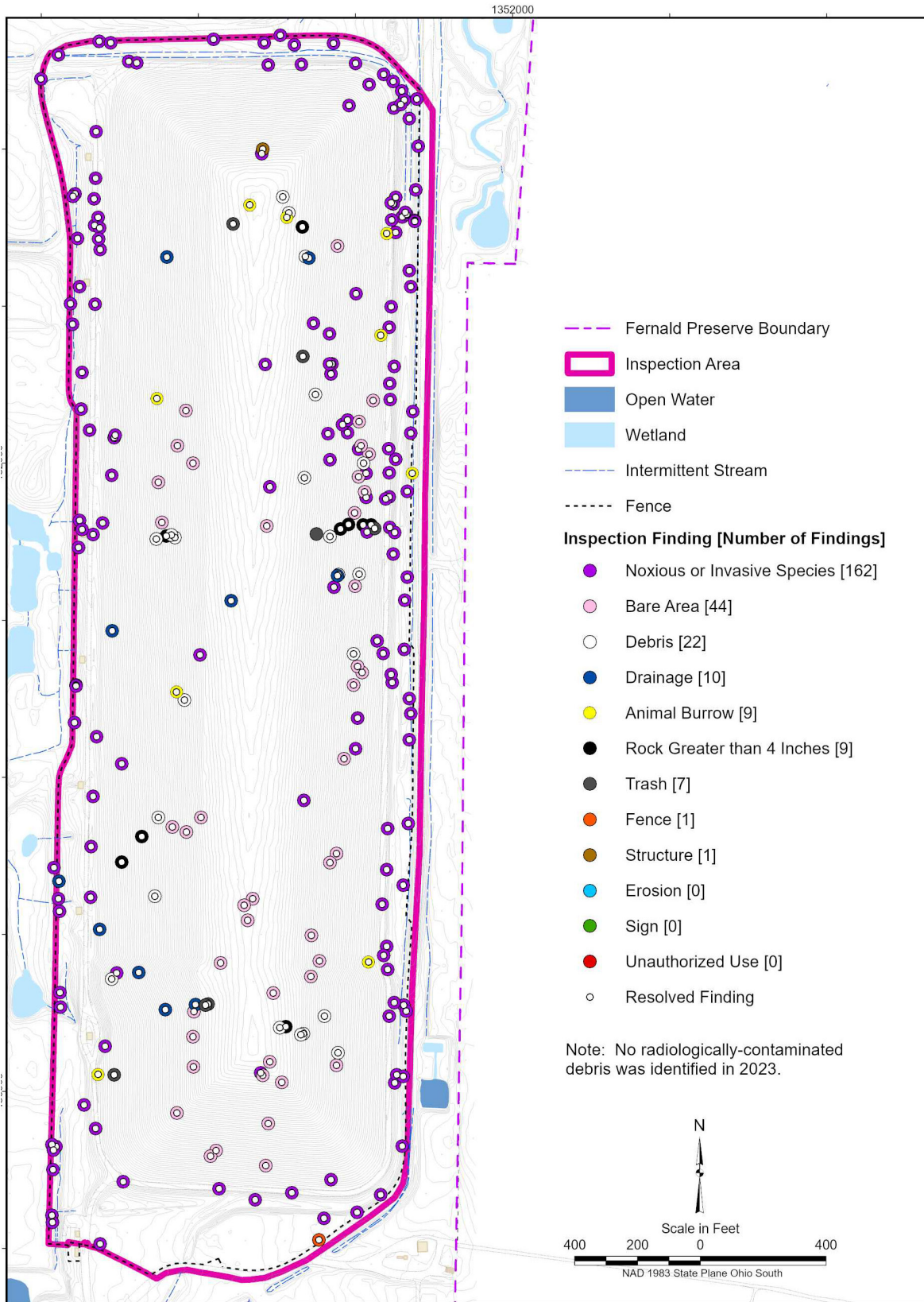
Inspections are conducted quarterly with joint participation from the regulators. Inspections document evidence of unauthorized uses, the effectiveness of institutional controls, and any need for repairs. Inspections are conducted in several phases. Quarterly inspections focus on signs, fencing, gates, site and OSDF access, OSDF drainages, and so on. Field walkdowns take place in the winter months when vegetation is dormant, optimizing visibility of site conditions and allowing for easier access to some areas. Ecologically restored areas and the OSDF vegetated cap are evaluated for the presence of noxious weeds, erosion, condition of vegetation, presence of potentially contaminated debris, and signs of damage from nuisance animals. In addition to quarterly inspections, the public trails and overlooks are inspected weekly to ensure that institutional controls are in place and that the trails are safe and usable for the public; no significant findings from the trail inspections were noted in 2023. DOE is proposing to modify the frequency of trail inspections from weekly to quarterly. Trail inspections may be performed more frequently based on an event driven issues such as severe weather. Upon receipt of feedback from the public and stakeholders, these inspection change will take place in 2025 with approval from the regulators.

The 2023 site and OSDF inspection findings are presented in Figure 27 and Figure 28, respectively. Additional information concerning inspections is provided in Appendix C. Quarterly inspection reports are posted on the LM public website at <https://www.energy.gov/lm/fernaldd-preserve-ohio-site>. The quarterly inspection reports can also be viewed online at the Fernald Preserve Visitors Center or by contacting the site at (513) 648-3330.



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Figure 27. Site Inspection Findings for 2023



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Figure 28. OSDF Inspection Findings for 2023

5.1.1 Site Inspections

As with recent years, site inspection findings in 2023 consisted mostly of the uncontaminated debris and the presence of noxious and invasive weeds. Beginning in 2022, only findings associated with activity and use limitations for the site are detailed in quarterly inspection reports. No activity and use limitation findings were reported in the 2023 quarterly inspection reports.

In October 2023, new access control grating was installed on the main drainage corridor culvert (Figure 27). The original access control grating had experienced natural degradation of the concrete which caused the rebar to become dislodged. The finding was identified during the December 2022 point-specific institutional control inspection. The culvert, along with an adjacent 18-inch culvert that is completely buried, was left in place and has fixed radiological contamination. These culverts are directly below the OSDF leachate conveyance system and the main effluent line running between the CAWWT and the Great Miami River. Because of their location, these culverts could not have been removed without potentially impacting ongoing CAWWT and OSDF operations. Instead, metal grating was installed to prevent access to the 60-inch culvert. Site inspections ensure that the 60-inch culvert grating is in place and is serviceable, and that the 18-inch culvert is not exposed through erosion or other ground disturbance.

Debris continues to be found, primarily in the Former Production Area and former Waste Storage Area; however, debris finding numbers were lower in 2023 than in previous years. During remediation of the Fernald Preserve, every effort was made to remove and dispose of all debris. However, weather, erosion, and earth-moving activities occasionally reveal small pieces of debris that were not visible during remediation and restoration efforts. Examples of debris include pieces of concrete, rebar, clay tile, asphalt, and metal. Debris is discovered during site inspections and construction activities, and by personnel during field activities. In 2023, 79 pieces of debris were discovered, mainly in the area in which a prescribed burn was conducted in December 2022. The debris was identified during the post-burn walkdown which is required following the prescribed burns of any area. The prescribed burns allow for greater visibility of the ground surface. Radiological surveys were conducted of all debris and no debris was observed to have fixed radiological contamination above background levels. All debris was removed from the field and properly disposed.

5.1.2 OSDF Inspections

For inspections of the OSDF, inspectors perform a quarterly walkdown of the perimeter and toe, and an annual walkdown and evaluation of the vegetated cap to verify its integrity. In 2023, the OSDF cap was burned and a post-burn walkdown was conducted as part of the March quarterly inspection. This resulted in two walkdowns of the cap in 2023, the March post-burn walkdown and the regularly scheduled full cap walkdown in December. Trees, shrubs, erosion rills, holes from burrowing animals, noxious weeds, settlement cracks, and other indications that there may be an issue with the proper functioning of the cap are flagged and repaired. In 2023, there were no signs that the integrity of the cap had been compromised in any way. Findings consisted mainly of woody vegetation and noxious weeds, animal burrows, and remnants of minor erosion that had been stabilized.

Following the prescribed burn of the OSDF cap in February 2023, a post-burn walkdown and a lidar survey of the OSDF cap was conducted. This uncrewed aerial survey was intended to provide a baseline to which future surveys will be compared, and conducting this survey following a burn allows for better data collection without vegetation obscuring the ground surface of the OSDF. The lidar provided data points across the cell with 0.38-foot accuracy. The subfoot accuracy detects features such as cell cap boundaries and distinct changes in slope from 6:1, 10:1, and 20:1 (Figure 29). This review also revealed a minor anomaly on the west side of the cap near the boundary between the caps of Cells 7 and 8 which coincided with inspection findings from the post-burn inspection that took place on March 1, 2023. The inspection finding was the remnant of an erosion issue that arose, and was repaired, shortly after the cap construction in 2006. While there was no active erosion occurring at the time of the inspection on March 1, 2023, soil was added on March 23, 2023, to the location to even out the surface and prevent any additional erosion issues from occurring. The next survey is scheduled to occur in spring 2025 following the next planned prescribed burn; quarterly inspections will continue.

Based on results of many years of inspections, the results of the recent lidar survey, and optimal observation of cover features, DOE is recommending that walkdowns of the entire OSDF vegetated cap take place only after prescribed burns. In the event that an OSDF prescribed burn cannot be completed, DOE will still complete a walkover of the entire OSDF at least every other year. Prescribed burns are scheduled to take place every other year, with the next prescribed burn of the OSDF scheduled for 2025. With approval from the stakeholders and regulators, this change will take place in 2025.



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Figure 29. OSDF Lidar Imagery

5.2 Threatened and Endangered Species and Species Inventories

Potential Threatened and Endangered Species at the Fernald Preserve

Indiana Bat: The federally endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) forms colonies in hollow trees and under loose tree bark along riparian (streamside) areas during the summer. Excellent habitat for the Indiana bat has been identified at the Fernald Preserve along the wooded banks of the northern reaches of Paddys Run. The habitat provides an extensive mature canopy of older trees and water throughout the year. One Indiana bat was captured and released on the property in August 1999.

Northern Long-Eared Bat: The federally endangered northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) will roost singly or in colonies in the summer using either live trees with loose bark or dead hollow trees (snags). The Fernald Preserve has been recognized as potential summer roosting habitat for the northern long-eared bat. Although no captures have been recorded at the preserve, a variety of live and dead trees and water sources in the preserve may provide ideal habitat within the known range of this species. The status of the northern long-eared bat was changed from threatened to endangered in January 2023.

Spring Coral Root: The state-threatened spring coral root (*Corallorhiza wisteriana*) is a white and red orchid that blooms in April and May and grows in partially shaded areas of forested wetlands and wooded ravines. This plant has not been identified at the Fernald Preserve; however, suitable habitat exists in portions of the Northern Woodlot Enhancement area.

Cave Salamander: The state-endangered cave salamander (*Eurycea lucifuga*) is slender and its coloring is red to orange with irregular black dots. It is found in caves, springs, small limestone streams, outcrops, and old springhouses where groundwater is present. It has only been documented in Ohio in Hamilton, Butler, and Adams counties. Suitable habitat within the Fernald Preserve is limited, but populations have been observed just north of the site.

The Endangered Species Act requires the protection of any federally threatened or endangered species and any habitat critical for the species' existence. Several Ohio laws mandate the protection of state endangered species as well. Since 1993, a number of surveys have been conducted to determine the presence of any threatened or endangered species at the site. As a result of these surveys, the federally endangered Indiana bat and the formerly state threatened Sloan's crayfish (*Orconectes sloanii*) are the only threatened or endangered species observed on the property. As of 2022, Sloan's crayfish was removed from Ohio's threatened or endangered species lists. Suitable habitat exists for the federally endangered Indiana bat, federally threatened northern long-eared bat, the state-threatened spring coral root, and the state-endangered cave salamander. With the exception of an Indiana bat and Sloan's crayfish, none of these species have been found on the site, but their habitat ranges encompass the Fernald Preserve. Figure 30 shows the potential habitats for these species. According to the LMICP (DOE 2023a), Section 5.0, "Natural Resources," threatened or endangered species habitat will be surveyed as needed before any construction activities. If threatened or endangered species are identified, appropriate avoidance or mitigation efforts will be taken.

5.3 Cultural Resources

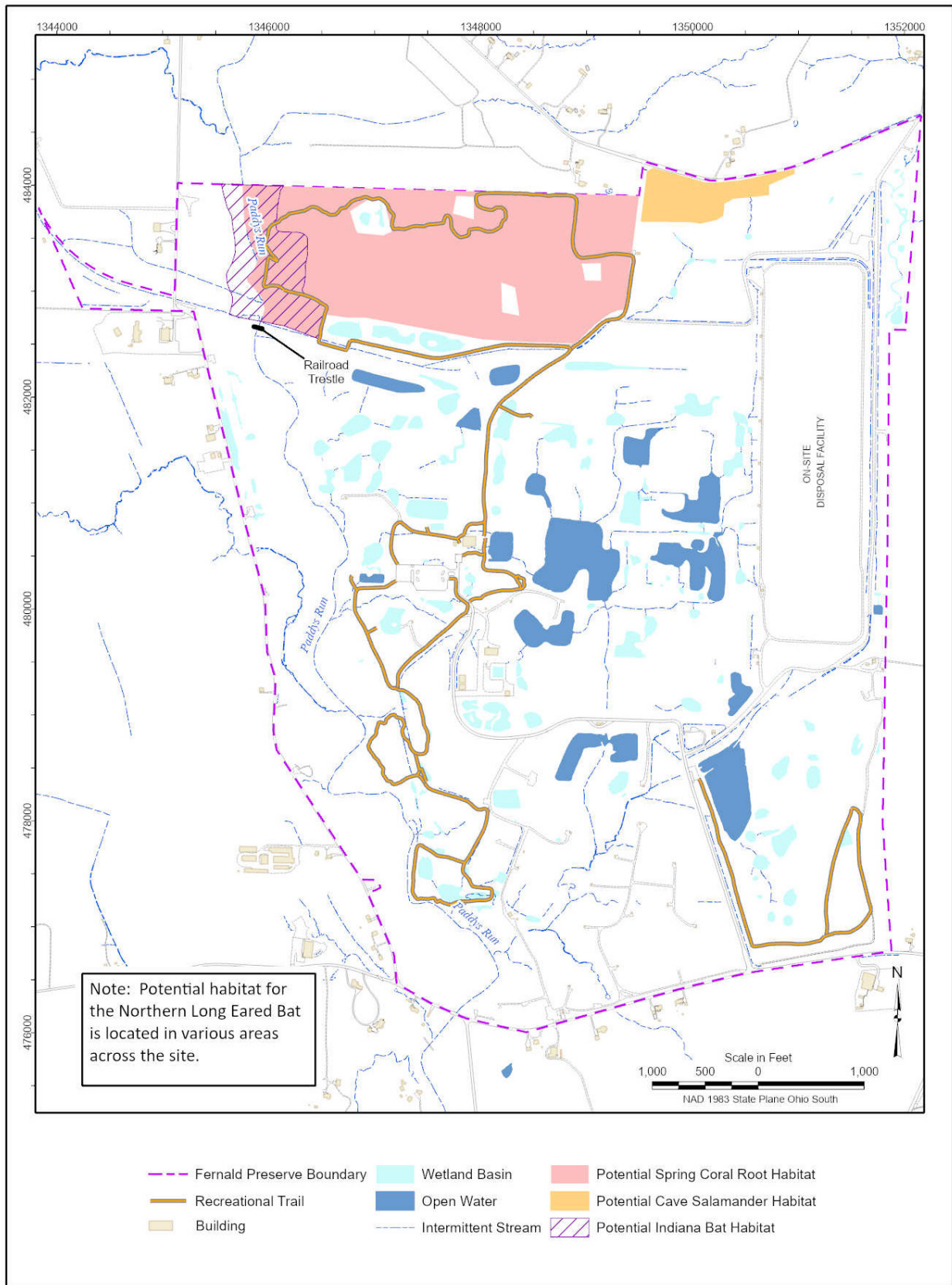
The Fernald Preserve and surrounding area are in a region of rich soil and many sources of water, such as the Great Miami River. Because of its advantageous location, the area was settled repeatedly throughout prehistoric and historical time, resulting in diverse cultural resources. At a minimum, 148 prehistoric and 40 historic sites have been identified within 1.2 miles of the Fernald Preserve.

Several laws have been established to protect cultural resources. The National Historic Preservation Act requires DOE to consider the effects of its actions on sites that are listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (Title 43 *Code of Federal Regulations* Section 10 [43 CFR 10]) requires that prehistoric human remains, and associated artifacts, be identified and returned to the appropriate Native American tribe. Compliance with these laws is addressed through a

Programmatic Agreement between DOE and the Ohio State Historic Preservation Office (DOE 2012d), which was updated in 2012.

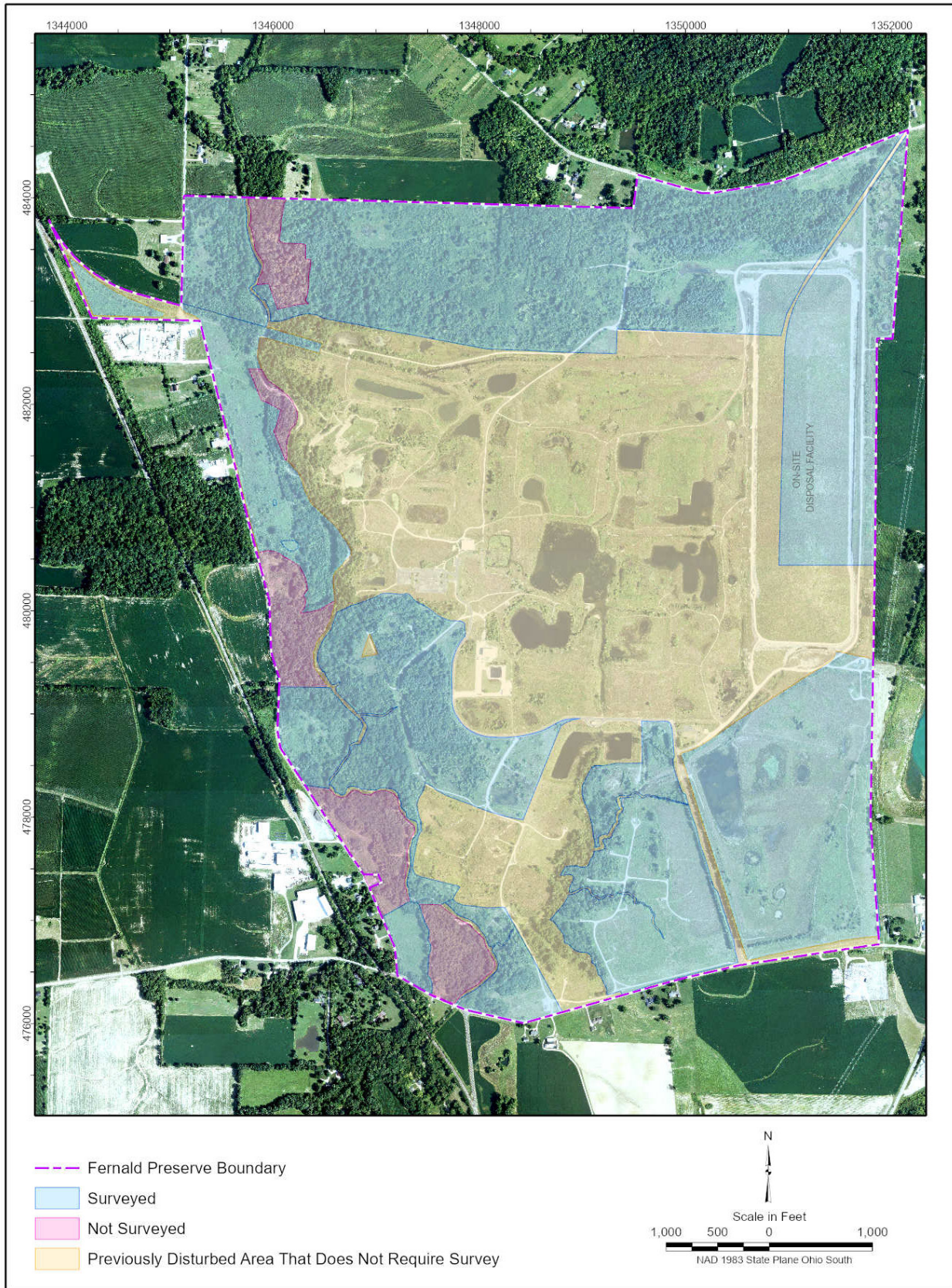
To comply with these laws and the Programmatic Agreement, DOE conducted archaeological surveys before remediation activities occurred in undeveloped areas of the Fernald Preserve. Figure 31 shows the areas of the Fernald Preserve that have been surveyed. These surveys have resulted in the identification of five sites that may be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. None of these sites were affected by construction activities in 2023.

No archaeological surveys were conducted in 2023, and no unexpected discoveries were encountered during field activities. All ground-disturbing activities took place in previously disturbed or surveyed areas.



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Figure 30. Threatened and Endangered Species Potential Habitat Areas



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Figure 31. Cultural Resource Survey Areas

5.4 Natural Resource Management

Much of the 1,050 acres of the Fernald Preserve property is undeveloped land that provides habitat for a variety of animals and plants. Wetlands, deciduous and riparian (streamside) woodlands, old fields, grasslands, and aquatic habitats are among the site's natural resources. Over 900 acres of the site have undergone ecological restoration. Figure 32 shows the restoration project areas that have been completed. The Fernald Preserve's mission of long-term stewardship under LM includes establishing, managing, and monitoring ecologically restored areas across the site. In 2023, the Fernald Natural Resource Trustees agreed that DOE has completed ecological restoration of the Fernald Preserve. DOE committed to continue to manage the ecologically restored site as part of their stewardship responsibilities.

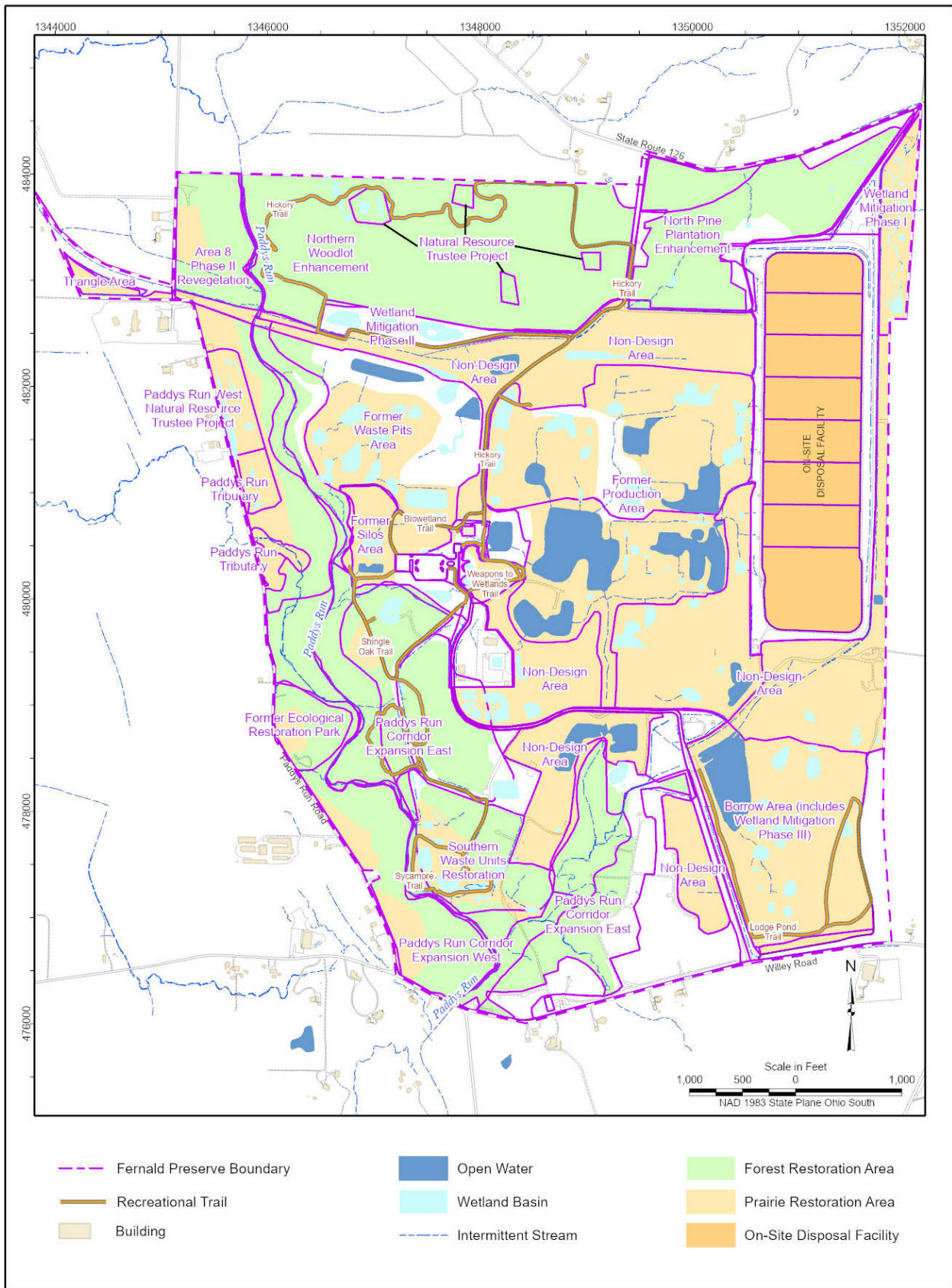
Monitoring of the natural and cultural resources was addressed in the "Natural Resource Monitoring Plan," which was included as Appendix A of Attachment D of the LMICP (DOE 2019). The Natural Resource Monitoring Plan presented an approach for monitoring and reporting the status of several priority natural resources to remain in compliance with pertinent regulations and agreements. The approach for the monitoring and maintenance of ecologically restored areas was also addressed. Restoration monitoring has been ongoing following an expanded approach in 2009, when DOE and Ohio EPA signed a Consent Decree in November 2008 that settled a long-standing natural resource damage claim under Section 107 of CERCLA. As part of the settlement, the Fernald Natural Resource Trustees (DOE, Ohio EPA, and the U.S. Department of the Interior) finalized the Natural Resource Restoration Plan (NRRP), which is Appendix B of the *Consent Decree Resolving Ohio's Natural Resource Damage Claim against DOE* (State of Ohio 2008). The NRRP specified an ecological monitoring program for restored areas at the site. This included an enhanced wetland mitigation monitoring program and a functional monitoring program that evaluated restored communities. An implementation monitoring program was also in place and was used to determine whether revegetation efforts were successful following construction activities.

The NRRP also specified creation of a Restored Area Maintenance Plan (RAMP). This document detailed the approach that was used for managing ecologically restored areas across the site through 2020. The RAMP included provisions for planting and seeding, control of invasive species, management of wetland water levels, erosion control, nuisance animal control, and maintenance of public amenities (DOE 2012b). Field personnel used this plan as a basis for management of restored areas described in the annual Site Environmental Report.

The NRRP required that the RAMP be reviewed after 10 years of implementation. DOE, along with the other Natural Resource Trustees, conducted this review in 2020, which resulted in the development of the Natural Resource Management Plan. The Natural Resource Management Plan outlines the management and evaluation of ecologically restored areas, including revised ecological monitoring methods. A 10-year review of ecological monitoring results showed that restored communities have for the most part been successfully established across the site. The floristic inventory monitoring method outlined in the Natural Resource Management Plan shifts the focus from management area evaluations to restored community evaluations. These results will be used to help manage natural resources in future years. Figure 33 shows the breakdown of the communities to be evaluated. Existing forest, remediation forest and perimeter successional communities were monitored in 2023 using the floristic inventory monitoring method. Prairies will be monitored in 2025 and forests will be monitored in 2026. Floristic monitoring will be

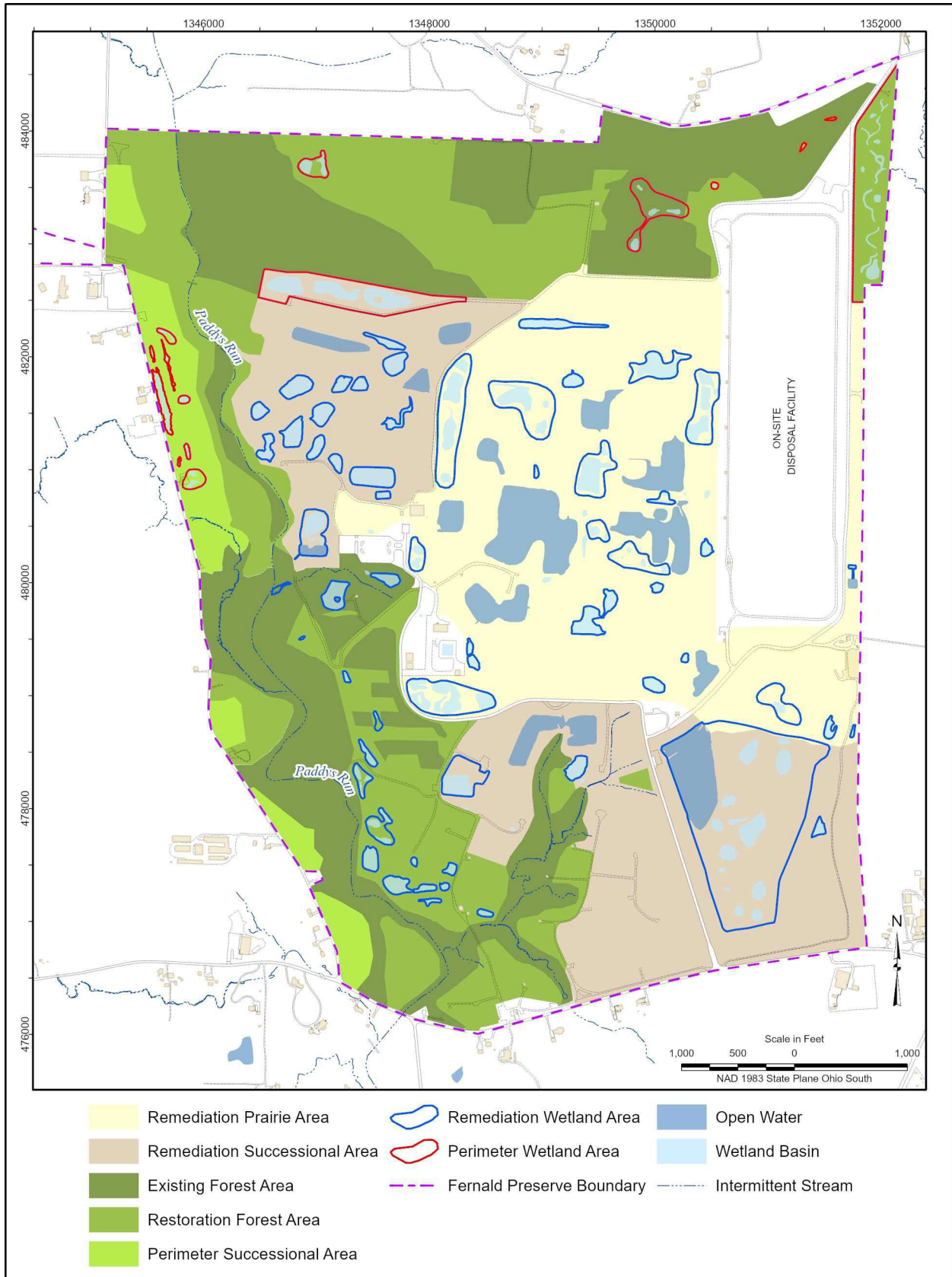
reevaluated after 2026. The Natural Resource Management Plan was incorporated as Appendix A of Volume I of the 2023 LMICP (DOE 2023a). Additional details are provided in Appendix C.

Maintenance in ecologically restored areas included mowing; planting trees and shrubs; seeding; repair and removal of deer enclosure fence; installing protective tree cages; mitigating potential impacts to site infrastructure caused by beaver activities; and controlling invasive herbaceous plants, shrubs, and trees. Prescribed burning is a prairie management tool and has been used onsite since 2009 . In 2022, DOE and the U.S. Forest Service entered into an interagency agreement to conduct prescribed burns at the site. On February 14, 2023, the U.S. Forest Service conducted a prescribed burn of the entire OSDF vegetated cap, which is approximately 75 acres. The post-burn walkdown of this area was completed in March 2023. Figure 34 shows the location of 2023 ecological maintenance activities, which are discussed in the following sections.



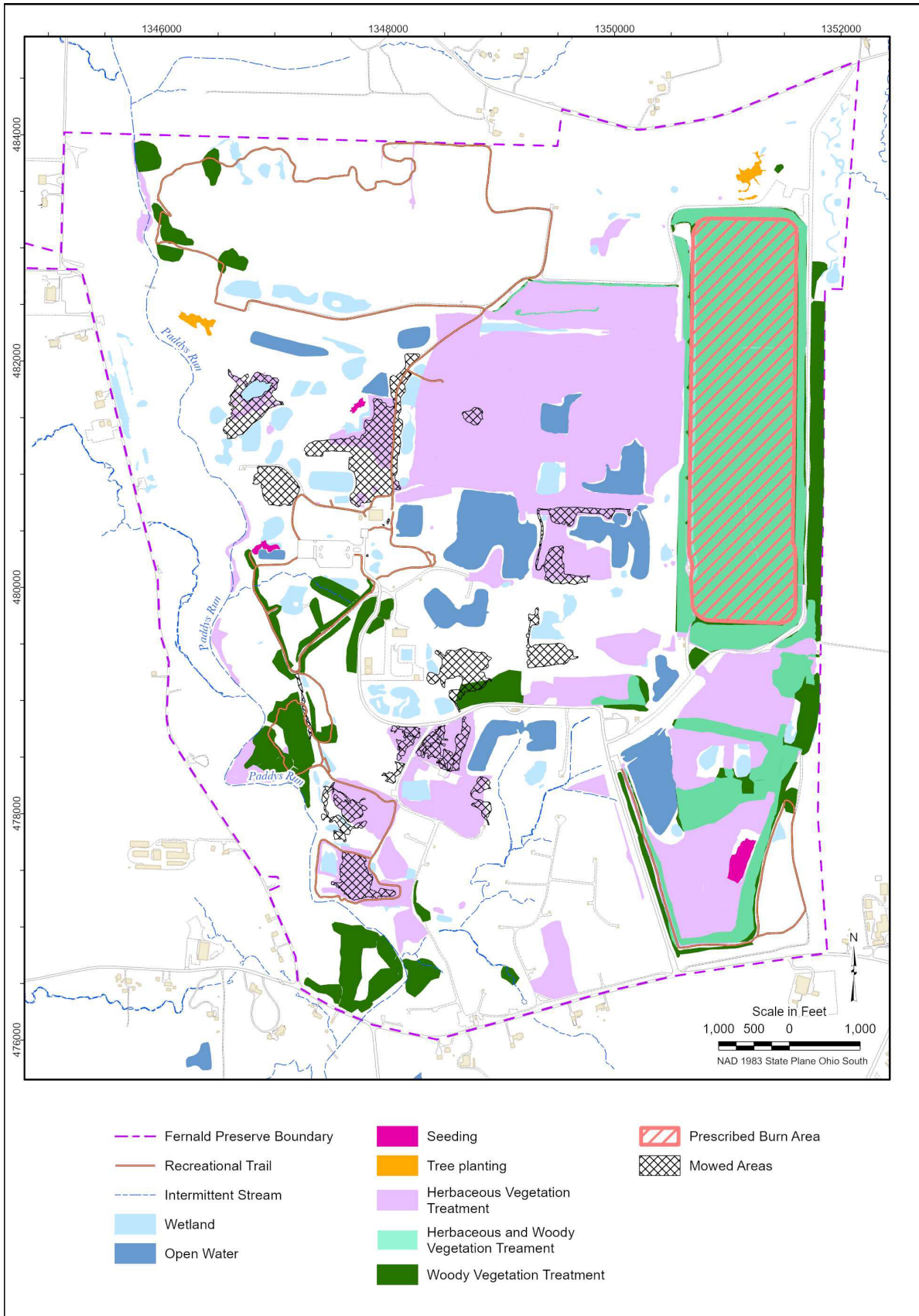
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Figure 32. Restoration Project Areas



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Figure 33. Ecological Community Types



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Figure 34. Ecological Maintenance Activities 2023

5.4.1 Restored Area and OSDF Maintenance and Repair

The primary focus of 2023 restored area maintenance activities (Figure 34) was vegetation management and enhancement, some of which addressed inspection findings identified throughout the year. Figure 27 and Figure 28 show the location of 2023 site and OSDF inspections findings, respectively. The goals of restored area maintenance are to combat the invasive species, improve the vegetation quality, and increase species diversity.

Invasive herbaceous species are addressed using a variety of methods including herbicide application, mowing, burning, manual removal, or a combination of these methods. For example, in 2023, several areas with heavy teasel infestations were mowed in late winter then treated with herbicide in the spring. Approximately 31 acres were mowed for invasive species control. Spot spraying with herbicide to control noxious and invasive herbaceous weeds in restored areas and on the OSDF cap continued in spring 2023. Target herbaceous species are listed on Table 9. Approximately 308 acres were treated with herbicide for invasive herbaceous species.

Table 9. Invasive Herbaceous Species Treated in 2023

| Common Name | Scientific Name |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| Teasel species | <i>Dipsacus sp.</i> |
| Canada thistle | <i>Cirsium arvense</i> |
| Johnson grass | <i>Sorghum halapense</i> |
| Chinese bush clover | <i>Lespedez cuneata</i> |
| Crown vetch | <i>Coronilla varia</i> |
| Garlic mustard | <i>Allaria petiolata</i> |
| Giant reed | <i>Phragmites australis</i> |
| Lesser celandine | <i>Ficaria verna</i> |
| Mugwort | <i>Artemisia vulgaris</i> |
| Reed canary grass | <i>Phalaris arundinacea</i> |

Invasive woody vegetation is physically removed or treated with herbicide across the site and on the OSDF cap and perimeter drainages. Trees and shrubs must not become established on the OSDF cap, so they are removed or treated with herbicide once discovered.

Large scale foliar herbicide application to control amur honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*) continued in the fall of 2023. Dense infestations of honeysuckle will crowd out native species, prevent sunlight from reaching the ground, and prevent seedling development of desirable vegetation. A characteristic of honeysuckle is that it does not go dormant until a few weeks after most other vegetation. Timing herbicide application after nearby plants have gone dormant in the fall allows the use of herbicide to treat honeysuckle while avoiding harm to surrounding vegetation. This technique is widely used and has proven to be an effective means of control. Approximately 27 acres of honeysuckle were treated in 2023 using this method. In addition to foliar herbicide application, cutting woody vegetation and painting the cut stumps with herbicide was a technique used to aid in the control of several different invasive woody vegetation species, and is a method that can be used throughout the year. Targeted spot spraying of small individual trees and shrubs was also conducted at various times throughout the year. Approximately 174 acres of invasive woody vegetation was managed using this combination of methods across the site (Table 10).

Table 10. Invasive Woody Vegetation Species Treated in 2023

| Common Name | Scientific Name |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Amur honeysuckle | <i>Lonicera maackii</i> |
| Autumn olive | <i>Elaeagnus umbellata</i> |
| Callery pear | <i>Pyrus calleryana</i> |
| Japanese honeysuckle | <i>Lonicera japonica</i> |
| Multiflora rose | <i>Rosa multiflora</i> |
| Tree-of-heaven | <i>Ailanthus altissima</i> |

In addition to treatment and removal of invasive vegetation, approximately 170 trees and shrubs were planted to help increase species diversity, enhance successional development of restored areas, and decrease forest fragmentation. Some of these trees were planted to add diversity and improve habitat where dense honeysuckle was mechanically removed in 2022. Others were planted to add species diversity in an area that is in the early stages of forest succession.

A large deer enclosure fence was removed from a restoration forest area along Paddys Run at the southwest corner of the site. The fence had become a regular maintenance item, with findings identified during every west quadrant inspection. The area was part of the Paddys Run Corridor Expansion West Project (Figure 32). The trees are now established well enough that the decision was made to remove the fence. Individual cages were placed around smaller trees in the project area that might not be able to withstand deer rub or might be favorable for beaver. Monitoring results for the project area are part of the restored forest results in Appendix C.

There is a resident population of Canada geese at the Fernald Preserve. Canada geese are considered nuisance animals primarily because of their potential for aggression to humans. However, due to establishment of vegetation and an increase in natural predators, there has not been a population growth, and goose hazing (i.e., scaring and harassing) has not been needed since 2014. Site personnel continue to monitor the Canada goose population each year. The site applies for an ODNR permit to remove nests or addle eggs annually, if necessary.

The mute swan is non-native, invasive, and considered a nuisance species by ODNR; therefore, ODNR grants permission to addle the eggs of the mute swans. No formal permit is required. Reduced site staffing in response to the coronavirus pandemic prevented Fernald Preserve staff from monitoring nesting activities and addling eggs in 2020, which resulted in an increase in the number of mute swans onsite. In spring 2021, DOE authorized ODNR to conduct mute swan management activities in support of the ODNR statewide mute swan management program. No mute swan management activities occurred in 2023. Mute swan egg addling by site staff will be employed in 2024, if eggs are present. DOE maintains the agreement with ODNR to allow mute swan management activities onsite.

5.4.2 Ecological Monitoring

Ecological Monitoring Parameters

There are a number of ways to evaluate the type and quality of habitats within an area. At the Fernald Preserve, ecological monitoring focuses on determining the extent of native plant species composition and calculating a Floristic Quality Assessment Index (FQAI). The FQAI process is described in the *Floristic Quality Assessment Index (FQAI) for Vascular Plants and Mosses for the State of Ohio* (Andreas et al. 2004). The specific parameters used at the Fernald Preserve include the following:

- **Total Species:** The total number of species sampled within a given area.
- **Native Species:** The total number of species native to Ohio. The updated *Ohio Vascular Plant Database* is used to determine whether a species is native (Gara 2013).
- **Percent Native Species:** The number of native species divided by the total number of species. Relative frequency of native species is also used. This is calculated by dividing the frequency (or number of times a species is observed) by the total number of observations for a given area.
- **Average Coefficient of Conservatism (CC):** The CC is a number between 0 and 10 that has been assigned to virtually every species that may be found in Ohio. The CC value is related to how “tolerant” a species is, as well as its habitat requirements. Nonnative plants have a CC of 0. Common species that can grow in a wide variety of habitats are considered “tolerant” and are scored a CC between 0 and 3. Native plants with very specific habitat requirements are scored high CC values, in the 7–10 range. The updated *Ohio Vascular Plant Database* (Gara 2013) lists the CC for each plant found in Ohio.
- **Floristic Quality Assessment Index (FQAI):** The CC values described above are used to calculate the FQAI. The FQAI is the average CC value divided by the square root of the total number of species for a given area.

Before 2021, a two-tier ecological monitoring program was used to assess restoration efforts. Implementation monitoring was used to assess vegetation establishment following seeding and planting projects. Functional monitoring was used to assess the progress of the development of a restored community (prairie, wetland, forest) by comparing floristic quality parameters to those of baseline and reference sites. Reference sites are offsite communities that represent an ideal end-state for site restoration projects. The NRRP states the goals for vegetation establishment were 50% native species and 90% total cover. For woody vegetation, the goal was 80% survival (State of Ohio 2008).

As stated in Section 5.0, the Fernald Preserve Natural Resource Trustees reviewed the ecological monitoring program as part of the 2020 RAMP update. A revised approach to functional monitoring methods and area focus was proposed and subsequently implemented in 2021. This revised method consists of conducting florist inventories and will focus on a specific restored community type each year. Perimeter wetland and remediation wetland areas were monitored in 2021. Prairie areas and remediation successional areas were monitored in 2022 and existing forest, restoration forest, and perimeter successional areas were monitored in 2023 (Figure 33). This same community-type cycle will be used for ecological monitoring in 2024, 2025, and 2026, returning to perimeter and remediation wetland areas in 2024.

Functional monitoring activities previously conducted compared restored communities to prerestoration “baseline” conditions and high-quality reference sites. Baseline and reference sites were characterized in 2001 and 2002. From 2003 to 2005, restored areas were evaluated. Wetlands were evaluated in 2003, prairie communities in 2004, and forest habitats in 2005. The same 3-year rotation resumed in 2009 and continued through 2014. In 2015, monitoring efforts shifted from sitewide community types to an area-based approach on a 3-year basis. The area-based approach continued through 2020, completing two full cycles of monitoring. In 2021, functional monitoring took place in wetland communities, implementing the new floristic inventory method. In 2022, remediation prairie and remediation successional areas (Figure 33) were monitored. In 2023, the floristic inventory method was used to monitor existing forest, remediation forest, and perimeter successional areas. For each floristic inventory, the entire monitoring area was examined, and each species observed was recorded. Native and non-native

species richness and composition, area mean coefficient of conservatism (CC), and Floristic Quality Assessment Index (FQAI) were calculated from the data to assess the condition of the monitoring areas. The latest Ohio FQAI database (Gara 2013) is used to determine nativity status and CC values. Appendix C provides a more detailed discussion regarding ecological monitoring results.

The 2023 vegetation monitoring results indicate that native vegetation is established across all the restored areas monitored. Percent nativity, mean CC and FQAI values are higher in the existing forest areas while the perimeter successional areas had the lowest values, as expected. A historical comparison of these values suggests that ecological succession is continuing in a desirable trajectory for each of the areas.

Additionally, as a result of 2023 monitoring efforts, the invasive tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) was found to occur more extensively than was previously known at the Fernald Preserve. Because this species is a primary food source and attractant for the invasive spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*), efforts to remove this invasive species will be a focus during 2024.

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6.0 References

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15 USC 2601 et seq. “Toxic Substances Control Act,” as amended,

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42 USC 6901 et seq. “Resource Conservation and Recovery Act,” as amended, *United States Code*.

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7.0 Glossary

applicable or relevant and appropriate requirement (ARAR). Requirements set forth in regulations that implement environmental and public health laws that a selected remedy must attain unless a waiver is invoked. ARARs are divided into three categories: chemical-specific, location-specific, and action-specific, according to whether the requirement is triggered by the presence or emission of a chemical, by a vulnerable or protected location, or by a particular action.

aquifer. A geologic formation, group of formations, or part of a formation that contains sufficient saturated permeable material to yield economical quantities of water to wells and springs.

capture zone. Estimated area that is being “captured” by the pumping of groundwater extraction wells. The definition of the capture zone is important in ensuring that the total uranium plumes targeted for cleanup are being remediated.

certification. The process by which a soil remediation area is certified as clean. Samples from the area are collected and analyzed, and then the contaminant levels are compared to the FRLs established in the OU5 ROD. Not all soil remediation areas at the Fernald Preserve require excavation before certification is done.

contaminant. A substance that when present in air, surface water, sediment, soil, or groundwater above naturally occurring (background) levels causes degradation of the media.

crossvane. A U-shaped structure of boulders built across a stream channel to reduce water velocity and energy along the streambank.

effluent. Water from numerous areas at the site that is routed through the site’s wastewater treatment facility and discharged to the Great Miami River.

Floristic Quality Assessment Index (FQAI). A method of evaluating an ecosystem based on the type and quality of plants present.

glacial overburden/glacial till: Silt, sand, gravel, and clay deposited by glacial action on top of the Great Miami Aquifer and surrounding bedrock highs.

Great Miami Aquifer. Sand and gravel deposited by the meltwaters of Pleistocene glaciers within the entrenched ancestral Ohio and Miami rivers. This is also called a buried channel or a sand and gravel aquifer.

groundwater. Water in a saturated zone or stratum beneath the surface of land.

mixed waste. Hazardous waste (as defined by RCRA) that has been contaminated with low-level radioactive materials.

radionuclide. Refers to a radioactive nuclide. There are several hundred known radionuclides that can be artificially produced or naturally occurring. Radionuclides are characterized by the number of neutrons and protons in an atom's nucleus and their characteristic decay processes.

remedial action. The actual construction and implementation phase of a Superfund site cleanup that follows the remedy selection process and remedial design.

remedial investigation/feasibility study. The first major event in the remedial action process that serves to assess site conditions and evaluate alternatives to the extent necessary to select a remedy.

removal action. A short-term cleanup or removal of released hazardous substances from the environment. A removal action is performed in response to a release or the imminent threat of release of hazardous substances into the environment.

surface water. Water that is flowing within natural drainage features.

uncontrolled runoff. Storm water that is not collected by the site for treatment but enters the site's natural drainages.

waste acceptance criteria. A disposal facility's specifications for the types and sizes of materials, the acceptable levels of constituents, and other criteria for all material that can be disposed of in that facility. Offsite disposal facilities such as the Nevada National Security Site (formerly called the Nevada Test Site) that dispose of Fernald Preserve waste have specific waste acceptance criteria. In addition, the OSDF had waste acceptance criteria that were approved by the regulatory agencies.