

022735 Interviewer: Just say your name and where you were born and raised and just a little bit about your education to start with.

022744 Doug: My name is Douglas Sarno. I was born in New York City, raised in a variety of places. We moved around a bit when I was a kid. Spent some time Roanoke, Virginia actually went to high school in Syracuse, New York, upstate New York. From there I went to, got my undergraduate degree at University of Virginia in civil engineering and then my Master's degree, an MBA from the University of Maryland.

022807 Interviewer: What sort of work did you get coming out of school? How did you wind up in the business of consulting and facilitation of public participation?

022820 Doug: It was actually kind of a long path. I started out as a civil engineer after my undergraduate I went right to work I didn't go back to graduate school right away and started out in the Superfund field. Superfund was brand new when I got out of college and it was just very fascinating to me, this whole problem of hazardous waste and how to clean them up and how to protect the environment, and I went out and got a job for a consulting firm doing Superfund clean-up work, engineering work, and enjoyed it. Did it for a couple of years, but found increasingly frustrated that technically we could solve these problems, we came up with solutions, but we could never get them implemented because of either policy reasons or reasons for public participation or just the inability of people to get together and agree to what was going to happen. So we'd spend millions and millions of dollars in studies and tests and designs and then nothing would happen. And I thought a lot of it was management related, which is how I ended up going to get an MBA, I thought if I could learn how to better manage companies, the consulting firm I was at, I felt, was poorly managed and I felt that was a big part of the problem. And as I was getting my MBA I decided to leave the consulting firm and go the Environmental Protection Agency and try to see if I could help from the inside out. Worked there for a couple of years and became more and more convinced about the ineffectiveness of communications and people working together. And went from there to a non-profit organization called Clean Sites, and there I did a lot more grassroots type of policy work and tried to understand how decisions got made and how people participated in decisions and how the decision-making process for Superfund can be improved. And while I was there and doing that had the opportunity to meet a lot of really neat people and do a lot of really exciting work and I wrote a lot. And I had a number of articles out in newspa..., professional journals that described a way of thinking about cleaning up hazardous waste sites and a way of thinking about decision-making that relied much more on projecting future uses and understanding what the site could and should be and getting full inclusion of all stakeholders in decision-making. And John Applegate read one of my pieces and called me from just out of the blue one day and said, "Hey we've got this site here in Ohio, it's called Fernald, and we are trying to put together a new Citizens Advisory Board and I read your paper and I'm just very taken with your ideas and it's how I'm thinking about this problem and how we should approach this problem and could you come out and talk to me for a day?" And so I did. I came out and talked to him for a day and we just hit it off. We just both, it was kind of like, you know, lost brothers who'd just found each other, we thought about things exactly the same way. We just clicked on all of our ideas and so he told me that they're going to be looking for technical support, technical help, this was Fall of 1993, and that they were going

to put out an RFP and you know I should watch for it and he hoped I would bid on it. At the same time I had been at the non-profit I was working at for about five years and was looking for something new and decided to go off on my own and one of the first things I did in being off on my own was to bid on this Fernald work and won the job. I've been helping the Citizens Advisory Board here ever since.

023151 Interviewer: You mentioned a couple of aspects of your thinking that appeared in print and was developed a little bit in your years before Fernald. One was thinking from a future use standpoint and the other thinking about sort of more inclusive structures or frameworks for public participation. What were some of the things that influenced your thinking with those two items? Things you saw, things you read or what was going on in the 1980s and early '90s that led you to some of these conclusions?

023224 Doug: Well, it's interesting. Believe it or not, in the 1980s at least with regard to federal government clean-up, Superfund clean-up, the idea of public participation was not that widely held and the idea of future use didn't even exist. The Superfund law as it was re-authorized in 1986 under SARA, there was still a basic thinking that these sites were to be cleaned up to unrestricted uses and EPA. And I remember distinctly working for the Superfund program as an EPA employee in the mid '80s and sitting in on conversations about clean-up and about future use in terms of the fact that all Superfund clean-ups in their risk perceptions entered the decision process with the assumption that the site was going to be cleaned up for unrestricted use. Now the reality was most of those sites were not cleaned up for unrestricted use. Most of those sites when the remedy was actually put into place were capped or something where a lot waste was left in place. They weren't usable for anything much less unrestricted. So it struck me as very unsettling that we were driving the decision to clean up these sites based on a hypothetical use that then when we actually cleaned up we never achieved. To my mind that was just flawed logic and flawed thinking, and so I sought out people who were working on this problem. After I left EPA and I was working for Clean Sites, I ran a project, a policy program called "Improving Remedy Selection." We were looking at the Remedy Selection program within Superfund, recognizing it was broken and trying to figure out how do you fix it. So we sought out who was thinking about this problem, who were the minds on all sides of the equation, the policy makers on the Hill and in government, the citizens, the industrial folks who were faced with these cleanups, the environmental thinkers, who were all the people who were also struggling with this problem and we brought them together in a variety of venues and workshops and big sessions and these sorts of things and tried to wrangle with these issues. And so coming out of that we kind of distilled all those ideas into a new approach to Remedy Selection. And the, a couple of things that came out of that very strongly were the need for future use planning and the need for full stakeholder inclusion, in particular public participation.

023459 Interviewer: What were some of the public participation mechanisms within the CERCLA and NEPA, some of the conventional federal environmental legislation that was out there, what were some of their strengths and limitations as they were existing prior to the formation of Citizens Advisory Groups in the '90s?

023521 Doug: Well the laws as they're written, and actually these laws still basically are on the books in the same fashion, uh although the guidance and the regulatory thinking has gone beyond what these minimum requirements are. But on the books the laws basically require the agencies to inform the public about decisions and they require the agencies to provide a period for feedback, a public comment period as it were. And that only happens once in a process at the point where the decision has been drafted and put, basically put on the table and said this is our proposed approach, this is what we propose doing. At that point, they're required to put that out for public comment and give at least thirty days for public comment and take that written comment, there, it's encouraged that they hold a public meeting but it's not necessarily required that a public meeting be held, and then they take those comments and they have to respond back to those comments. So that's the kind of on the books at the law level. The guidance now that's in a lot of agencies goes well beyond that, rightly so, in terms of not only to do more to try to create more of an inclusive approach to our decision-making, but to start much earlier. Because in truth, and this is one of the things that I had written about extensively and that John had understood and that the Citizens Advisory Board here at Fernald was going to create the opportunity for, was to get the citizens involved much earlier in the process than after a decision was basically made or proposed. Where citizen input can actually make a difference is in the alternative development stage because if the citizens' concerns and ideas and issues aren't known and aren't incorporated into the various alternatives that are available then the decisions not gonna have their concerns or interests incorporated into it either. So they're going to be commenting on something that already doesn't address their issues and needs and so we had to back the process way up, start getting people involved much, much earlier in the process.

023737 Interviewer: I think we're going to go ahead and change tapes.

030035 Interviewer: Let's go back to you getting a call from John. Where were you located at that point? This Clean Sites non-profit, were is that located?

030042 Doug: Alexandra, Virginia. Just outside of Washington, D.C., that's where I lived.

030047 Interviewer: And you got a call and an invite to come to Cincinnati for a visit. In that kind of initial conversation, John mentioned that there was a group that's going to start as Citizens Advisory Board connected with the DOE site. What had you heard about DOE, environmental issues facing DOE, and potential moves within the complex to develop some citizen advisory groups? I think Fernald was probably one of the first ones.

030115 Doug: They were. This had been going on for several years. I was very familiar with Department of Energy and their problems from the mid '80s on as Department of Energy sites were in the news and became more and more open about their problems and people became more and more concerned about their problems. The Department of Energy facilities and their environmental problems seemed to dwarf the Superfund program in many ways and interestingly, when I was working at EPA as an EPA employee, many of my co-workers had started to leave EPA to join DOE because DOE had been gearing up its environmental program in the late 1980s and early 1990s. And there were a lot of defections from EPA over to DOE to form the basis of their environmental management program. A lot of those individuals are still

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there; I bump into them all the time. So I was very familiar with the Department of Energy. I was not that familiar with Fernald per se as a site. Fernald isn't one of the larger sites, it hadn't gotten as much as the national news as some of the others. The Rocky Flats with the FBI raids and the Oak Ridges with their enormous ground water plumes coming to light and things like that had really captured more of the national imagination. And those of us inside the environmental community certainly were familiar with that.

030235 Interviewer: Did you know anything about the work of the Keystone group that was making recommendations?

030240 Doug: Yes, they were doing their work commensurate with doing our work at Clean Sites, so there was a lot of interplay between us. We were doing similar types of projects. The Federal Facilities Environmental Restoration Dialogue Committee is the group that was meeting at the time and they came out with a report, I don't remember the date but early '90s, there was a report of that committee. And that report strongly recommended that these federal facilities put together some sort of citizen advisory type panels. That was a few years after our report had come out and really talked a lot about citizens' participation and citizen advisory so I had been watching that. I went to a lot of the meetings and sat in the room and listened to the dialogues and things like that. So I was well aware of that whole process, obviously John was aware of that process and the site was aware of that process. There's Ken Morgan, who was the public affairs director here at the time, participated in that process and was very much taken with that idea and thought, given the state of things here at Fernald and the very tense situation with the citizens that something like that would be very helpful. So the time I was called, the Citizens Advisory Board was actually in place. They had been convened over the spring of 1993 and John Applegate had been put in place as the chair and they had met two or three times, this was probably in October when I met with John. They had had their kickoff meeting in August and they were struggling because DOE had basically laid on them just this huge agenda. Four big, over-arching questions that they wanted the citizens to look at, the good news being it was virtually unprecedented what DOE was asking of these citizens and the amount of trust and the amount of interest they were having in public participation and it was a wonderful opportunity to show how public participation can work. The bad news was they really didn't know how to go about it. It was just so huge that they were struggling and that's when John was thinking, you know, let's try to get a little outside help here and see if there isn't somebody who can give us a hand.

030459 Interviewer: What was DOE hoping to accomplish at Fernald and perhaps some of its other sites in forming the advisory boards in terms of improving the level of public participation or trust or the communication between diverse groups of stakeholders at various sites and the DOE? What were some of the problems they were facing?

030422 Doug: Of course I can't really speak for DOE completely but uh, certainly I think there was a desire to find a way to find workable solutions. Again, harking back to my experience a decade earlier when I was working as an engineer and was finding over and over again, you know, we can come up with technical solutions but we can't implement them, we can't get things to work because the communication is so terrible. The ability of getting people together and

coming to any kind of consensus on this issues is so terrible, you spend so much time and effort and money getting to a point only to have it completely stopped by some group who doesn't like it. And a lot of times it's not because the solution itself was all that off the mark, but that the solution was arrived at without participation of people who mattered and who it would potentially impact. And so they weren't going to like anything that was put in place because they weren't part of the process to get there. And that was a big part of this happening. I think there was a lot of very clear thinking at Fernald that wasn't present at other sites that recognized that issue and that understood if we are going to make any progress at all we're gonna have to do it together, we're gonna have to bring all the stakeholders together. And a couple of really wonderful things happened. One is they brought the citizens in but another is they also recognized it's not just let's have a citizens' board and have them work over here on the side and kind of feed us input, but let's put them right smack in the middle of this thing. Let's have DOE at the table, let's have the regulators at the table, let's have everybody talking about these issues and let's try to reach a solution together that we can all live with. And that's the approach that we took. And what John asked me to do, once I won the contract and came in, is basically help him craft an approach and a plan and a process to make that happen and that's what I was charged with doing sort of the minute I walked in the door.

030320 Interviewer: What were some of your initial impressions of the kind of diverse set of folks that formed that first advisory board both in terms of sort the classic stakeholder groups and individual people? What did you, what kind of hand do you think John was dealt there in terms of the initial selection of folks to be on that board and how did you work sort of in the early months to form group cohesion?

030750 Doug: Well the very first thing, I came in a little late. They had already had a retreat a kind of kickoff and they had had several meetings so I was reluctant to repeat that kind of an event. Ordinarily, that's what I would have done with a new group is have some sort of retreat, do team-building type things. But a couple of things were working against that. One, they had already started and the second was the time frame they were on and the time pressure they were under was quite extreme. Uh, so I came in. The first thing I did I individually interviewed every member of the advisory board so that I could develop a relationship with them and understand them and where they're coming from. And after having done that, was very impressed with the group of people that had been pulled together and their sincere interest in trying to put aside personal agendas and work as a group to move forward. So I didn't feel like I had to break down a lot of walls, which was very fortunate. Another wise thing that was done was that the advisory board was formulated as a representative group, but not a group that represented specific constituencies. In other words, it was representative of the overall community, there were people from all walks of life, there were people from different viewpoints and different types of organizations that were there, but once they were on the board they didn't hold a seat representing a constituency, they were there as individuals to work on solving a problem. So I didn't have to work on how all the factions were gonna play off each other. I could just reiterate and reinforce the fact that we were a team and we were after certain goals. So I could keep those goals in front of them and keep it moving. So I think John and I were fortunate in that and that we had a good group of people and it proved to be true that during the two years, it was about eighteen months from the time I first put a work plan on the table, I put an eighteen-month work

plan together, and we achieved that work plan and came to our conclusions at the end of that eighteen-month period, which was almost two years after they were convened. So, for those two years we didn't lose a single member of that board, every original member was there to sign the document at the end. So there was just a very strong commitment and uh, we met monthly and rarely did anyone miss a meeting, it was just a real cohesive group.

031021 Interviewer: How was the thinking with you and John in terms of taking the big set of issues that DOE put on the table and sort of working out a process taking it one at a time or formulating a set of activities that would cut across the issues or how did you work through and set an agenda for the group?

031040 Doug: It was a fairly complicated process because while there was four distinct areas that DOE wanted input on, it wasn't as if they were not interrelated and you could just take them one at a time, you couldn't. The first thing we recognized, though, the overriding issue was we had to do a lot of education, just a whole lot of education. There was, all four of these topics were extremely technical, uh extremely complex. These were the large decisions that the teams of scientists and engineers were trying to figure out on-site. Data was available, data was coming in over the course of that year and a half we were working, uh and another complication was that very seemingly important and big decisions were being made during that eighteen-month period and we made a very conscious decision not to address those intermediate decisions. And this was something I was able to bring to the table right away. And one of the reasons that the board was having trouble focusing when I got there and not really understanding how to approach things was that there was so much going on, there were so many decisions. These are called Records of Decision (ROD) in Superfund parlance, where when you get to the point on a project where you're ready to say this is how we're going to approach, this is the solution we're going to implement for this remedial action, you write a record of decision. Well there were five Operable Units on the site, all of them very large, complicated issues, and at least two of them had Records of Decisions coming up in that eighteen-month period. What I recognized, however, was that those decisions were not the ultimate determining factors in what the site was going to be like when all was said and done. That the decisions that were most important were the decisions that related to soil clean-up and groundwater clean-up and how clean that site would be when all was said and done and how that would go about and the decision of whether or not waste would be left on site or not. And those decisions were eighteen months away. So that's what gave us the eighteen-month window to work with. We spent a lot of time in the early months, probably most of the first year, simply learning about all aspects of the site. That in itself presented a lot of challenges because we didn't want people to get bored and drift away without feeling like they weren't getting anywhere, that's a real risk, a real downside. So we had to also create opportunities for sort of small wins along the way, small issues we could kind of pull out and get recommendations on so that people felt they were making some impact while not keeping, while keeping our eye on the ball per se where we really needed to focus out here where the important stuff was. Every meeting we reinforced where we were; we had the eighteen-month work plan, it said each meeting for eighteen months what we're gonna do, what we're gonna work on, where we're gonna be by the end of that meeting, how that meeting helped to build to that ultimate conclusion. And we spent a lot of time reinforcing that as we went through so people just always knew where we were and why we were doing what we were doing.

031359 Interviewer: You had opportunities to make recommendations on clean up levels and sort of future use scenarios and I was reading a report that you all had done and it seems like the group decided to sort of take a macro-level approach or try to develop some criteria for decision-making first before getting into too many details first on the individual issues. How did that play out in some of the discussions?

031430 Doug: Here again, we were trying to understand a process for decision-making and we recognized that. We had to get a grip on what we thought about the criteria for decision-making and the values that were important to us in moving forward. And so we spent some time working on a value statement that kind of laid out, this is what's important to us. As we're evaluating these things and as we're going to make recommendations, these are the kinds of principles that we're gonna hold ourselves to and that we want to see the clean up held to. Doing that achieves a number of things. One is again it helped create cohesion with the group, it helped give them something to work on, something to feel good about, helped them recognize what a consensus process was all about, how a consensus process worked and to see that they could achieve consensus on something of relative weight and importance. Then once that was done and we had that document, we could hold that up to say this is what we're after, these are the guidelines we've set for ourselves. So if they strayed for things, if they struggled with making recommendations or understanding which way to go, we used that screen and said but let's look at it against what we've decided is important to us and that always helped to ground us and keep us focused on where we're going.

031550 Interviewer: Do you remember an example of one of those sort of value criteria that might illustrate?

031559 Doug: Gosh it's been so long now, my mind's a little blank.

031601 Interviewer: Something about, I recall something about future use issue about, certainly about some things that would not wanna be ...

031614 Doug: Right, well ultimately what guided our final decision-making in terms of, the irony is that we're still working on these issues today and it's all building on what a lot of those initial thoughts were in terms of how do we see this site when DOE goes away? How do we envision what will be here, what our children will be able to do, what their children will be able to do, how they'll view this site? And there was very much a sense of, almost from the very beginning, wanting to create a legacy here that was something positive from something negative. Uh, and so there was very much a thought of not allowing simply clean-up to the point where you could have dirty industry come in and get it dirty again. Uh, there was the thought that trying to bring environmental values to the front so that people would forever be able to learn from the Fernald experience and think about what they're doing as they're doing it and not simply being left with this huge mess at the end. So those kinds of values were things that got built into this and how do we create that for future generations and keep a continuous learning environment here at the site so that people can come, see what happened, see how we solved the problem and understand the continuing benefits of that solution.

031737 Interviewer: You talk about a consensus-based approach, uh can you comment a little bit about the difference between that and more of an advocacy or litigation or adversarial model, and how you tried to work with the group to take a more consensus approach and what challenges that presented?

031800 Doug: Well, a lot of these types of groups, they will approach a problem, talk about it a little bit, and then take a vote. What often happens in those kinds of situations, people come into a situation with preconceived issues and preconceived agendas and preconceived positions and if you're simply discussing an issue what you're simply doing is batting those preconceived notions back and forth. Sometimes people will alter their positions or learn new things in that kind of environment, but mostly not because what they're doing is not listening so much to what's being said to them but crafting their next response to support their position back and forth. We took a completely different approach. We tried not to dialogue about issues at all until we spent a lot of time in baseline education, so that we assumed nobody knew anything about the subject but we would all learn about it together. And we would build up that common base of knowledge, then once we had that common base of knowledge begin to dialogue about what the possible solutions are. And through that approach I think we found almost unanimously throughout the entire process, we were able to, sometimes with difficulty, sometimes with a lot of concessions being made, but we were able to find something that everybody could agree to, some place that everybody could get to that uh, solved the problem and no one really felt like they couldn't live with that.

031934 Interviewer: What were the benefits of that approach sort of from a long-term perspective or in terms of a staying power of various kinds of recommendations...?

031945 Doug: Well, the most obvious benefit was that because we also had the regulators and DOE at the table, by the time we came up with our report the approaches and the ideas and the recommendations were basically already adopted into the decision-making and thinking at the site. So that when the ultimate decisions were made the taskforce recommendations were basically adhered to lock, stock, and barrel, because we had all come to that conclusion together so that we were very much, it wasn't, oh here we've given you our recommendations and now we'll wait on pins and needles while you get back to us. We already knew that things were gonna happen this way because we were all there together, we were all discussing it and moving forward. Now it was still a relief to see the RODs being crafted just the way we helped and that sort of thing 'cause the details were far from certain, but it really was a very much a group process in getting that. Not just with the citizens, but with everybody involved.

032047 Interviewer: And the regulatory folks, DOE folks, and some health folks served as what sort of capacity vis-à-vis the board?

032056 Doug: Technically, they are ex-officio members, which means they participate but they do not vote. Now let me talk a little bit about voting. We are a consensus board, but within the Federal Advisory Committee Act and the way it's all done we still ultimately vote on our recommendations. In seven years of voting, I remember only two votes that were not unanimous,

and in each case there was a single vote that went the other way for very specific philosophical reasons and we knew the vote was going to go that other way and it was basically a statement and we accepted that and we allowed that, you know, to happen because that certainly is everybody's right. But in almost every case, we know the outcome of the vote before we vote cause we've agreed to it. We've gotten to the point where we've reached consensus on those issues. For all intents and purposes, the ex-officios are every bit as much a part of that, the consensus process, as anyone else on the board. Of course, they don't cast a vote at the final voting point, but they're very much a part of the process of thinking and deciding and dialoguing.

032208 Interviewer: Are there any, I think you can speak to using this approach in some other places besides Fernald too, but are there any downsides or limitations or things to be aware of in terms of in trying a consensus approach in environmental problem-solving or ...?

0342228 Doug: Well, sure, I mean it takes a lot longer. The level of education, the level of information that's required to do this kind of public participation is much more stringent than simply pulling some people together and letting them have a conversation and asking them what they think. You've really got to delve into these things. A lot of people don't believe citizens are capable of this, you know, and that was one of the really nice things about the Fernald experiment was that we proved them wrong. We said, look, we can pull people from all walks of life and we're not gonna make them experts on these technical issues, although I dare say that some of these people are experts on these issues 'cause they've spent so much time on them, but our goal is to make them informed enough to be able to make a meaningful contribution to the decision. And we've been able to do that without fail every single time. The added benefit of it all is that the materials that we produce and the process that we use, I believe, have actually helped the site in numerable ways beyond the citizen participation process because the way we approach decision-making is the way anyone should approach decision-making. And I think it has helped DOE, and it has helped the contractors and the regulators make their own decisions about what's right by helping them to take a practical approach, an informed approach, and a streamlinee approach to decision-making.

032353 Interviewer: Talk a little bit about the role of the Future Site simulation activity and getting folks to grapple with some of the pragmatic issues involving such things as waste transportation or waste disposition on the site and when that was implemented?

032410 Doug: Here again, our desire to make education effective really drove everything we did. We got to the point where we recognized there were just enormous decisions to be made about what to do with the incredible volumes of material that were gonna be generated, waste material that were gonna be generated at Fernald. You have a thousand-acre site, and beyond the thousand-acre site areas where for forty years contamination had spread, airborne contamination had spread, and infiltrated the soil. So you had elevated levels of uranium for a wide area around the site and to dig up all that soil resulted in a huge problem: what you're gonna do with all this soil? You can't simply send it to your local landfill. It has to either go to a regulated licensed facility that's able to accept this material of which at the time there was only one and still really at this time there is only one in the country. Or it could go on site in a specially designed on-site

disposal facility. Now that was the biggest challenge that we faced throughout this whole process was how would the citizens be able to accept waste staying on the site? And we had to understand whether that was a viable solution or not, what were the parameters? And again, we approached this as a problem requiring as much education as possible. We did not want to have an emotional solution to this. If you walk into a public meeting and you say, "Hey citizens, do you want a large, radioactive waste disposal facility in your backyard?" what do you think the answer's going to be? I mean it's going to be no. Nobody in their right mind would say yes to that question. Well that wasn't the question to ask. The question to ask was how do we deal with this problem and what are we as responsible citizens of this country going to recommend to DOE that they do? And as we did that we realized we had to have a way to really truly get people to understand the ramifications of the various decisions both on site and off site. So we created an exercise, we called it Future Site, and it was actually a scale model of the site, which had colored stacks of – they were actually poker chips – placed on the site in different segments of the site which showed how much volume of material was there and you would have to remove to get to certain levels of cleanliness. Then you would take that material off and physically move it somewhere else. You could either move it to an on site disposal facility, and depending on how much waste you removed from the board it would help you calculate how large a disposal facility you would need, or you could move it off site and then you could calculate how many trainloads or how many truckloads it would take to take this somewhere else. At that time Utah and Nevada were the options for taking it off site. This created a very visual way for people to see the ramifications of decision-making. We did this and we ran this exercise with the advisory board obviously, but we ran it with ,we had other advisory boards visit we ran it with them. We had large workshops with site employees and Department of Energy and others and we ran it with them. We had large workshops with the broader community, we brought other community members who weren't on the CAB (Citizens Advisory Board), and we ran the exercise with them. We ran it literally hundreds of times. And it, over and over it helped people to really see what the different ramifications were. People came up with all different solutions, not everybody agreed. But over time people, really came to understand what the issues were about. So when it came to making a decision, what the CAB clearly saw was that to truck all this stuff off site was simply too much a burden for them to place on the rest of the United States. That's how they felt. They felt it just wasn't a balanced approach to have all these thousands and thousands and thousands of trucks rumbling down the highways and dumping this somewhere else. So they ultimately sought what they called a balanced approach where the most hazardous things would leave the site because of the natural environment surrounding Fernald, the high level of rainfall we get, and the setting of the site over a sole source aquifer, it just simply was not safe for this high-level material to be able to be safely stored on site. However the lower-level stuff, which was by far the much greater volume of material, they said yes it's our responsibility, we'll take care of that, we'll have an on site disposal facility. That was a huge breakthrough; it was just an enormous breakthrough; never ever would have happened if we didn't have some way for people to grapple, physically grapple with the problem.

032919 Interviewer: That was one of the recommendations, early recommendations from the board. How was that recommendation and this initial set of recommendations coming out in '95,'96, how was that received by the surrounding community and by DOE in terms of them taking those recommendations and acting on them.

032940 Doug: Well, in terms of DOE, they basically adopted all our recommendations. I mean if you look at our '95 report and you look at all the subsequent RODs, it's basically the same. So for whatever, you know, whether or not DOE might have ended up there anyway, I don't know. They certainly wouldn't have ended up there with the support of the community, and I don't think they would have been able to end up there in any event. Was there unanimous, you know, hurrahs throughout the community? No, of course not. If you hadn't gone through the process and you hadn't come to the understanding that these citizens came to, you were still sitting at home thinking "not in my backyard," and there were a lot of people who still felt that way. Uh, but one of the things that we did and we worked really hard at was we tried not to simply have this fifteen-member board moving forward with the process. Throughout the whole year and a half, we held intermittent public workshops, where we would invite as many people as we could possibly get into to talk about things like the on-site disposal facility, how it would work, what it would be all about, you know, to come in and play the Future Site game and do these things. So literally we had touched hundreds of other stakeholders, and because of that I think that we had a fair amount of support in the community. That once those recommendations came out there was certainly no uproar and there was a fair amount of support.

033107 Interviewer: Can you comment a little on John Applegate's sort of leadership facilitation qualities and the significance of kind of picking the right chair for this initial period and certainly all the boards should be credited with these recommendations, but sort of the role he played along the lines.

033131 Doug: I think John's leadership was instrumental to making the whole thing happen and his selection was truly inspired. You got to understand, it was a real leap to choose someone like John because he was not a member of Fernald community. He was a law professor at UC, he had no relationship with any people around the site prior to becoming the chair, but in a way that's what made him so effective. He came in as a chair who understood his role to galvanize this group and help this group achieve success. He was not burdened with his own agenda on what the right thing to do was and I think that made all the difference. Uh, he really was able to be objective and to lend a steady hand to the group as it moved forward. On top of that, John has just some really, truly wonderful personal traits that allow him to be a leader of a group like this. He's very calm, he's very patient, he has a very keen mind, and he put in countless hours. I spent a lot of time here for those years and most of it I spent with John and for literally, I think John was the chair of the board for nigh on five years total. I probably talked to John every day during those five years. I mean he was that committed. We spent just untold hours working on these problems, working on this board, and helping make this thing happen. So his sacrifice as a volunteer was just unbelievable, and without somebody like John with his abilities and with his dedication, this would not have happened. Absolutely not.

033322 Interviewer: If you think of the board's sort of history, I sort of think of it that '95, '96 period when the recommendations came out, the report came out of sort of its initial phase, and then the next four or five years were sort of another phase where the board was sort of in search of that next set of tasks or issues to make recommendations about. What were some of the issues

that the board dealt with and some of the challenges once it got past that initial set of questions the DOE gave it?

033358 Doug: Well remember it wasn't automatic that the board would even exist beyond that July '95 report. In fact, the original name of the board was the Fernald Citizens Task Force, not the Fernald Citizens Advisory Board. Very much given the idea that this group had a task to do and when it was done they would go away and most people on the board I think felt that way and that was the way we looked at it. We issued those reports in July and we basically all slumped back in our chairs and said, "Hooch, we did it. We will get back together in a while and figure out what's next." We came back together three months later in September and said, "What do we do now? Is there still something here that needs to be done by this group of people or by some group of people?" And we very much decided that yes there was, there was just too much work happening at the site. The role of the citizen in this particular project was just too important and that we would continue it. So we spent a lot of years doing monitoring-level stuff, trying to make sure that our recommendations were being implemented properly, that keeping an eye on things, and making sure things were going well and as issues popped up, tackling them. But in the last year and a half or so we've also recognized how important it is for us to be custodians of the future of this site. That when remediation is complete, DOE will be gone and there will be some new regime in place both to manage the site and also an environmental regime about what the site is and will be all about. And that hasn't been determined yet and the citizens need to play a really instrumental role in that. And so we've been working for the last year and a half to figure those things out and to begin to develop the kinds of infrastructure that this site is going to need well into the future to make all that work.

033603 Interviewer: Yes, since probably the middle of 1999 there's been focusing on what we may have been calling the future of Fernald or stewardship, uh, what sort of national level trends or issues ...

040031 Doug: ... right now (tape change).

040035 Interviewer: Uh, how did you and the group kind of figure out a process for engaging in community and coming up with a new set of recommendations concerning future use and stewardship of the site?

040057 Doug: Well again, this grows out of the earliest work we did which was everything was based on the idea of future use and where we wanted to go. So in the '95 recommendations we laid out sort of the do's and don'ts of future use. We said clearly that there would be no agricultural use on the site, there would be no residential use on the site. We also felt that it important that there be no heavy industry on the site. So we left sort of a limited ban of what the site could be used for, recognizing that the specific decisions about future use were probably best left for some future time. I think we got spurred into action by a number of things. One is the recognition after our, after the '95 report, in about the '96 or so time frame, there was a lot of talk about accelerating clean-up progress on the site and DOE national, after again Fernald kind of pushed this forward, that we said, "Look, if we can clean this site up in ten years we could save literally billions of dollars from what the original estimates were." You know, the original

estimates were this clean-up could stretch out to '20, '25 and if we could pull that back to 2006 or so we could just save an enormous amount of money simply by not having to deal with all that infrastructure for all that period of time and it's within our reach to be able to do that. So the Fernald CAB really got behind that idea and explored it and pushed for it very hard. As a result of that, Fernald was kind of held out a bit as model site, got some extra funding from DOE to make this early clean-up happen and ultimately DOE adopted a ten-year vision for the entire complex based on the work we have done here at Fernald. That has since come under a lot of duress and it's not going to happen for reasons outside the control of the Fernald site due to funding constraints. But it still was a very positive direction to be going into. With that we recognized, hey the future is going to be here a lot sooner than we thought and we need to really think about what it is we want here on site and if we want things to be constructed to provide the community some sort of resource, for instance as ecological areas get restored and we want a trail to go through them it is much more cost effective for that trail to be built in conjunction with the ecological restoration than to come back at some future date and design and plan that trail. So we realized, you know, we don't really have a lot of time to think about this. These plans have to be put into place in the very near future so that they can be implemented concurrent with clean-up. And so with that the Fernald CAB kind of developed this whole process, we call the Future of Fernald process, and we went at this in a very different way than we had gone at other things. We went at this very much as an inclusive process, trying to bring in other groups and other citizens right from the start in terms of let's make sure the whole community is learning about this together and at the same time and moving forward. And we have at this point, it's a long, complicated process and there's a lot work being done, but we've had three workshops to date and are looking at more things that will help us. But at the most recent workshop we came to a community consensus, not just a CAB but the community. We've had well over a hundred people involved in this process on what we call the vision of the Future of Fernald. And it's a very detailed vision statement of exactly the types of things we'd like to see at the Fernald site once clean up is complete.

040456 Interviewer: Legally or from a sort of a regulatory standpoint, Citizens Advisory Boards don't, they don't regulate, they were created to provide recommendations to the Department of Energy. At Fernald, generally speaking, the CABs have been ... the CAB's recommendations had a lot of weight. But what are some of the experiences of some CABs around the complex in terms of interacting with the DOE and making recommendations or having some issues with sort of the limited power they may have over what's going on in the clean-up of some sites?

040535 Doug: Well, I harken back to some of the things I talked about earlier that were fortuitous to us in the way this board was set up. And in a lot of ways we benefited from the fact that we were the first out of the gates and we were set up outside of the FACAct; FACAct being the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Ultimately DOE came in and said "Look we're going to do boards at every site and we're going to charter them under a full FACAct-chartered committee." That brings with it lots of fairly stringent rules and they've been interpreted in a lot of different ways but, but in setting up the boards at other sites, my observations have been that some of them have adopted those FACAct rules in the most stringent and suffocating ways. So that they spend a lot of time sort of chafing under the rules and getting very little done rather than of saying, "Look, let's try to really focus on the problems here and try to figure out what we're

doing." I don't see the kinds of cooperation and integration of the regulators and DOE sitting at the same table and putting the Citizens Advisory Board in the mainstream of decision-making. Most of these Citizens Advisory Boards are off to the side, you know, they're feeding their recommendations in and they are getting feedback back, but they are off to the side and they're having fairly limited impact. Not everywhere, but in a lot of cases.

040701 Interviewer: Has there been much of an effort to bring SSABs either leadership or membership together to try to provide DOE headquarters with sort of national-level recommendations and how successful has that been?

040714 Doug: Recently this has started to happen. This is something John Applegate and I pushed for, for years. We tried really hard and just got a lot of resistance to it, the other boards just were not interested in this kind of cooperation. And we got pretty frustrated with our inability to get other boards to recognize the power of the synergy of these boards working together to give recommendations. I mean, just imagine if you said, these, there about ten boards around the complex and they have on average 15 to 20 members, so you could say these two hundred citizens representing all ten of the DOE major sites all agree that DOE should be doing this. That is a very powerful statement, yet we couldn't get people to recognize that. Until about two years ago and there was a workshop sponsored at Nevada Test Site by their board, on low-level waste issues. It was mostly, "let's come together and talk about low-level waste issues and see what we think," but it became clear in that workshop that we had a lot of common issues. And there were a lot of statements generated as a result of that workshop all of the participants at that workshop could agree to. What happened was when those went back to boards, the boards themselves couldn't get their hands around them, couldn't adopt them, couldn't move those forward. And we've had a number of additional workshops and each time we've done new workshops we've been able to get more and more consensus to the point now where the last workshop we held on stewardship issues, last October, went back to the boards and all the boards adopted the recommendations from that workshop. And so we've really come full circle on that and are moving forward. In addition, the chairs of all the SSABs meet twice a year and the chairs have started to recognize that power, finally, of working together and have begun to move some things forward as joint statements of the chairs.

040920 Interviewer: How much of the difficulty of consensus-building among the different SSABs has to do with just the different problems they face, the different positions they're in and their own history and evolution and how much of it may be due to sort of the structural nature of the DOE as a bureaucracy itself which sort of is decentralized to some extent?

040943 Doug: It's all of the above and more. I mean there are problems with how they were established right off the bat. It's problems with who chairs the boards and their approach to moving that thing forward. It's a problem with who at DOE is the responsible person for that and what is DOE's approach to the board. It's a problem with who's giving them professional staff support and how that's working. You know, when those things are in place and working well or most of them are working well, the board works well. When a lot of those things are broken, the board doesn't work well. So it's a real combination of issues that play together.

041021 Interviewer: I read something that John Applegate wrote, something to the effect that Citizen Advisory Boards work best when given broad level policy recommendations as things to work on and they don't work quite as well or they have more difficulty holding citizens' interest when they are more of a watchdog or monitoring the minutia aspects. What sort of issues face the Fernald board right now either in terms of the bigger issues or smaller issues that are going to be challenges for the board here in the next few years?

041055 Doug: Right now the biggest challenge that we're addressing that we have an opportunity to really affect, are the long-term future use issues and the stewardship issues. We're also addressing other challenges such as the problems with under-funding of the site, the problems of having to ... the cause of that under funding basically go through and re-think all of the funding assumptions that go into the clean-up and how that's gonna work over the next ten years. While I believe those are important, well they're extremely important issues and I think they're important issues for citizens to weigh in on, I really, honestly feel the ability for citizens to make a huge impact is probably minor. And that's, that's the key. Where is the opportunity for impact? If the opportunity for impact is relatively small, then why would people take, you know, inordinate amounts of time out of their lives to come and provide this kind of input when they're really not going to be able to change what happens. If the opportunity for impact is large, and it can be large on those broader policy issues and the types of things we've tried to focus on mostly in the CAB's life, then of course there's a real sense of satisfaction that you were able to help solve these problems.

041216 Interviewer: The CAB is now almost 8 years running and we've had some folks that have been members since the outset and those challenges in terms of membership recruiting and overall sort of maintaining membership interest and commitment. What do you think can be done in terms of either community education or selecting issues to make sure that the interest level is maintained over the next several years and to what extent is that going to be a challenge?

041254 Doug: It's always, success in these cases breeds its own challenges. You know, when the house is burning down everybody in the neighborhood will run out and grab a bucket and throw water on it. You have no problem mobilizing people in a crisis. When the house is being eaten by termites, you know, you're not gonna get that same kind of approach. You're going to get a few people who are really concerned trying to work the problem and that's kind of what it's like with this is that we, the house isn't burning down any more. We've solved all the real, big, hard things and the crises have come and gone and we have a direction. But there are lots of nagging problems that it would be a terrible thing for this community if nobody were minding the store, if the citizens stopped paying attention. So it's very important that citizen participation continue and in a lot of ways the challenges facing us for the next few years are, while not crises and not at the same level of interest as some of the earlier ones, are probably the most important with regard to the impacts on the local community in terms of when will the site get finished, how will the work be done, and what will be left here when DOE leaves. And those are the challenges we're facing right now. What we have to do is find a way of connecting with people on those challenges and finding new people who are engaged with and excited by those challenges.

Fernald Living History Project

Name: Doug Sarno

Date Interviewed: 3/9/01

Tape # 45/46/47

041424 Interviewer: I have just one more question. This is a history project sort of with an eye toward future generations or school-age kids learning about Fernald and citizen participation at Fernald. Are there any sort of closing statements you would kind of like to make that you'd like to see be reinforced in any kind of educational program about the history of Fernald and the history citizen involvement in the remediation at Fernald?

041444 Doug: I think that what's very important in regard to the FCAB and how history will look back on this is the incredible importance of citizen participation and the incredible amount of impact citizen participation can make on a process. And how it can be such a positive force for doing the right things in a project. So I'd like to see, while there's all these other things that the CAB is dealing with to make sure that people understand about the environment and understand about the clean-up and understand about the Cold War and all the history and the obvious things that you'd want to learn from a situation like this, I think the CAB itself brings to the table a lesson that I hope will be captured in some way and whatever legacy is left behind.

041542 Interviewer: Anything else? Andrea do you have any questions?

One thing I'm discovering, we've been working on this project since October of '97 in some way or another conceptually, and the history is still in the making. For example just sort of the out years in terms of the clean up seems to be in flux and focus on various clean-up options, and so I hope we're not, I don't think we're premature in starting to document this history but you know five years from now the history may be somewhat totally different. Just a case in point: we had Dennis Carr, we scheduled to interview him a month ago and he just kind of casually mentioned the day of his interview "You know I've done this once already." And he wasn't on my list and one hundred and it was actually like 1-0-7, they did seven extra one at some point. So he was interviewed back in '99. Right at that moment he was dealing with this first few weeks of this re-baselining stuff and we decided not to redo the interview but just in thinking about that, you know, what's on his mind today versus '99 totally different. So interviewing you a year from now or after tomorrow's meeting ... But nonetheless it's good to get on record what people think especially in dealing with issues that's little bit in the past that we can reflect on. But you know, it's a work in progress. It's no doubt about that.

Doug: Well, I appreciate that opportunity. Thank you!

Interviewer: Thank you very much.