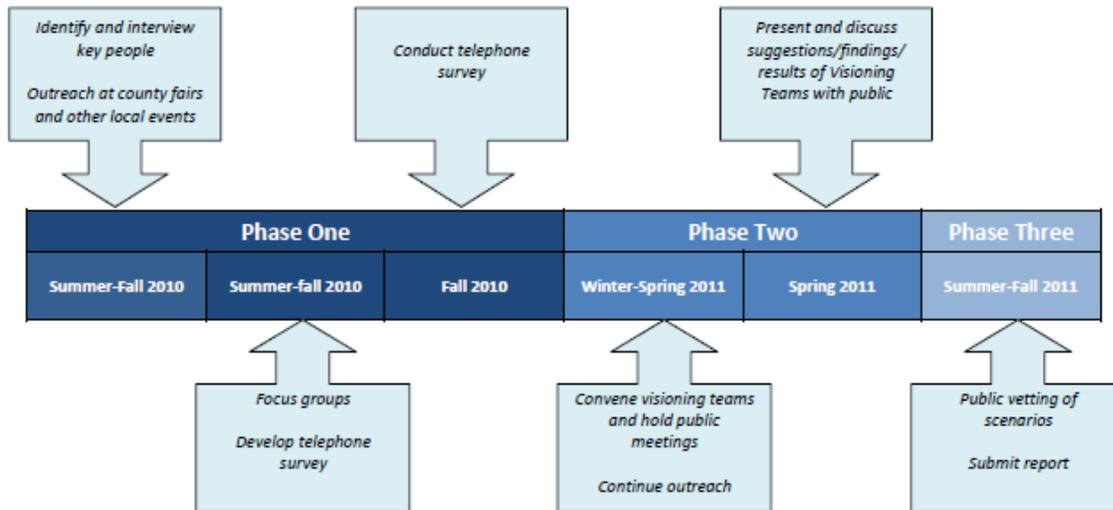


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant (PORTS) in Piketon, Ohio was constructed between 1952-1956 bringing thousands of jobs to southeast Ohio. After construction was complete, and the facility began enriching uranium for use in the Department of Defense nuclear weapons program and later for commercial nuclear reactors, it remained a major employer in a region that has historically had the lowest population density and some of the highest poverty ratings in the State. As such, the plant has created substantial economic and environmental impacts in Pike, Scioto, Jackson, and Ross Counties over the years.

In 2001 PORTS ceased uranium enrichment operation and the plant was placed in “cold standby” status. In October 2005 the plant’s operational status transferred from “cold standby to “cold shutdown” a precursor to Deactivation and Decommissioning activities. In August 2010 the United States Department of Energy announced that Fluor-B&W Portsmouth LLC was awarded the Deactivation and Decommissioning contract at the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant. This shift from uranium enrichment to clean-up has led to a decline in numbers and types of jobs at the plant. The declining employment situation at the plant raised serious concerns among residents of the region that has long been the most economically challenged part of the state, as one indicator, unemployment statistics released in May 2011 indicate that Pike County has the highest unemployment rate in the state.

The Ohio University PORTSfuture Project signifies efforts of DOE to significantly engage the community about the future of the former Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant. PORTSfuture was designed in three phases, using a community-based participatory approach, to ensure a comprehensive public outreach and engagement strategy.



PHASE ONE

Phase One of the project focused on outreach activities that included gathering data and opinions from specific individuals, groups, and the general public. The activities and methods used in Phase One included: 1) identifying and interviewing important stakeholders, 2) engaging the community through focus group discussions, and 3) polling the general public through a telephone survey.

The findings from the interviews and focus groups very clearly illustrated that residents in the four-county region support repurposing the PORTS facility, mainly due to the fact that it has been one of the largest employers in southern Ohio for the past 50 years. However, when participants in Phase One were asked about their perceptions of the plant, secrecy, mistrust, and lack of information all emerged as salient themes.

A telephone survey further assessed the major problems facing the local communities, awareness of and information about the plant, and preferences for the future use of the site. A total of 1,000 responses were collected from county residents aged 18 and older -- a response rate of 37.9 percent. Seventy-five percent of the survey respondents (n = 747) indicated familiarity with the PORTS site, of which 38.2 percent felt they knew a lot about the site. When asked if they were interested in learning more about what is happening at the site 73.6 percent answered “yes” or “maybe.”

More than 75 percent of the respondents during the telephone poll indicated that PORTS is very important to the future of their community and 68 percent of individuals familiar with the PORTS site favored using the site for an energy production plant while 18.2 percent favored using the site for a manufacturing plant.

PHASE TWO

The overall goal of Phase Two of the PORTSfuture project was to facilitate community members' drafting of future-use scenarios for PORTS. Numerous individuals participated in this phase of the project through attendance at large public meetings, individual county visioning teams, and as members of an advisory group. More than 100 people attended two kickoff meetings in March 2011. These meetings were structured and facilitated in order to ensure maximum input in the limited time available. Perhaps the most important outcome of the kickoff meetings was the discussion about a vision for the future of the region and the site's role in this vision. It is clear from the dominant ideas that emerged from these kickoff events that participants place a critical emphasis on jobs associated with the site, and believe that the reuse of PORTS is critical to the long term vision for the region.

Visioning teams comprised of volunteers from the four counties convened in April 2011 to draft scenarios for the future use of PORTS. The visioning teams used the ideas generated from the kickoff meetings as well as numerous additional sources to generate ideas that would be incorporated into alternatives. Nineteen possible future-use scenarios moved forward from the visioning teams to an advisory group comprised of volunteers from each of the counties.

The advisory group began their discussion with the 19 scenarios, ultimately, identifying 9 scenarios that they believed not only captured the work of the visioning teams but also addressed insights gleaned from the public outreach data. The advisory group rated these 9 scenarios using specific criteria and ranked the scenarios from the most preferred to the least preferred as follows: 1) Industrial Park, 2) Green Energy Production, 3) Multi-Use Southern Ohio Center, 4) National Research and Development, 5) Training and Education, 6) Greenbelt, 7) Warehousing, Transportation and Distribution Hub, 8) Nuclear Power Plant, and 9) Metals Recovery.

PHASE THREE

In order to provide context for public voting, information was incorporated from a related project focused on analyzing and estimating the economic impacts of the nine scenarios. The economic information was combined with descriptions of the scenarios and presented to the public for informed voting opportunities at county fairs, other community events and presentations, and online.

The overall goal of Phase Three was to gather public opinion from residents in the four counties about preferred scenarios for the future use of the site. During this phase, it was estimated that over 1.6 million media impressions were delivered via multiple communication channels in the 4 counties.

Since the goal of public voting was to gather future-use preferences of as many residents of the four counties as possible, a two-pronged approach was therefore implemented: 1) in-person voting with simple paper ballots and 2) online voting via the PORTSfuture.com website. Participants were asked to select, at most, 3 future-use scenarios they preferred. Between July 15, 2011 and September 30, 2011 a total of 1,141 participants responded via either the paper ballots (422) or the online survey (719). While four scenarios appear to be most preferred – industrial park, green energy production, nuclear power plant, and national research and development – several participants commented on the feasibility of blending two or more future-use scenarios.