

## **Intergenerational Equity and Long-Term Stewardship Plans**

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For an untold number of contaminated sites throughout the world, stewardship will be inevitable. For many such sites, stewardship will be a reasonable approach because of the uncertainties associated with present and future site conditions and site contaminants, the limited performance of available technologies, the nonavailability of technologies, and the risk and cost associated with complete cleanup. Regardless of whether stewardship is a realistic approach to site situations or simply a convenient default, it could be required at most contaminated sites for multiple generations. Because the stewardship plan is required to protect the release of hazardous contaminants to the environment, some use restrictions will be put in place to provide that protection. These use restrictions will limit access to resources for as long as the protection is required. The intergenerational quality of long-term stewardship plans and their inherent limitations on resource use require that they be designed to achieve equity among the affected generations.

Intergenerational equity, defined here as the fairness of access to resources across generations, could be achieved through a well-developed stewardship plan that provides future generations with the information they need to make wise decisions about resource use. Developing and implementing such a plan would take into account the failure mechanisms of the plan's components, feature short stewardship time blocks that would allow for periodic reassessments of the site and of the stewardship program's performance, and provide present and future generations with necessary site information.

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