National Aeronautics and Space Administration

FieldNOTE

AUGUST 2015

An Update on NASA's Cleanup Efforts at Santa Susana Field Laboratory

NASA is making progress with demolition of structures, roadways, and concrete surfaces in the Service Area.

DEMOLITION UPDATE 2015

NASA has been proceeding with demolition as part of preparations for cleanup of land it administers at Santa Susana Field Laboratory. In early February, NASA and demolition partners – the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and demolition contractor Bhate Environmental Associates – began demolition work in the northern part of Area II in the Service/Expendable Launch Vehicle (ELV) Area. Workers started on the inside of buildings, removing what is referred to as e-waste including lightbulbs, wiring, and mercury-containing light ballasts. Certified asbestos abatement contractors removed floor tiles, drywall, and ceiling tiles on the interior, and roof and wall shingles on the exterior of the buildings slated for demolition. NASA has made significant progress and several structures, roadways, and concrete surfaces have been demolished, including buildings 2231 and 2232. In addition, most of the aboveground structures of buildings 2201, 2202, 2203, and 2211 have been removed. Debris resulting from these activities was carefully inspected and safely transported off site to licensed disposal facilities. Demolition activity continues at buildings 2204 and 2207. NASA expects to complete demolition activities in the Service/ELV Area by the end of this year, at which time NASA will focus on demolition activities in the Delta Test Area. This work consists of a few metal buildings and tanks and the concrete bases where the test stand superstructure once stood. The next phase of demolition will include all remaining structures in Area II that are not associated with the three historic districts (Alfa Test Area, Bravo Test Area, and Coca Test Area).

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NASA recognizes there is great interest in protecting the cultural resources as well as the rich history of the Santa Susana Field Laboratory. Through active participation in the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 consulting process, NASA, the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians (SYBCI), and about 35 consulting parties identified measures NASA could take to address the adverse effects from demolition and cleanup activities. As a result of that process, NASA entered into a Programmatic Agreement with the SHPO and SYBCI that specifies at least one test stand in the Alfa or Bravo Test Area would be retained as long as NASA's cleanup goals could still be met, the abatement, operations, and maintenance cost were acceptable, and the Tribe's concerns were addressed.

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Artifacts Officers and others tour a Coca Test Area test stand to identify items for curation prior to any demolition in that area.

In April, the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, a signatory of the Programmatic Agreement, submitted a letter to NASA requesting support for the proposal that SSFL property be designated as a national monument under the Antiquities Act of 1906. While decisions about national monument designation are outside of NASA's authority, NASA clearly recognizes the importance of the unique features such as Burro Flats Cave and sacred sites of the property at SSFL. In a response letter to the Chumash Indians from Administrator Charles Bolden, NASA agreed to contact appropriate federal agencies and departments with expertise in the national monument designation process to share the proposal. Additionally, NASA agreed to defer demolition of historic test stands, including those within the Coca Test Area, for as long as possible without impacting overall cleanup responsibilities, to allow appropriate offices within the Executive Branch to consider the Chumash proposal.

NASA remains committed to its cleanup responsibilities at SSFL and to achieving a cleanup that is protective of human health and the environment. NASA is proceeding with ongoing demolition work outlined in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Record of Decision and is prioritizing activities in other parts of Area II where there are no test stands. This includes the removal of aboveground and subsurface structures, utility poles, piping, water and storage tanks, and concrete and asphalt in the Service Area and Delta Test Area, as well as the Skyline Area and Storable Propellant Area (SPA).

Additionally, NASA is proceeding with steps prescribed in the Programmatic Agreement to document, catalog, and record historical details of SSFL. (See side bar.) One requirement is that prior to any demolition in test stand areas, parts of the structures would be curated to be made available in the future for exhibit in museums. In February, the Section 106 consulting parties and NASA Artifacts Officers visited the Coca Test Area to consider which pieces of the test stands could be curated as examples of what the structures once were.

Maintaining safety during demolition and cleanup, ensuring the cleanup is protective of human health and the environment and meets requirements, and protecting cultural and historical resources are important values that NASA shares with many in the community. NASA looks forward to a decision on the determination of the national monument status and will continue to take steps towards fulfilling its cleanup responsibilities. ■

Documenting History

NASA is taking a number of steps to record and document the history of SSFL.

EXAMPLES INCLUDE

photos and narratives archived in the Library of Congress

videos representing virtual "fly-throughs" of Test Areas

curation of test stand pieces for museum exhibits

oral history interviews

an enthnographic history

Other Ongoing Investigation Work

In addition to demolition work, NASA is completing investigations to fill in remaining data gaps and is conducting treatability studies. One study is looking at technologies such as in-situ chemical oxidation (ISCO) to evaluate effectiveness in treating site-specific contaminants under environmental conditions present at SSFL. Results will be used to help NASA to determine the final remedy and continue to move towards cleanup.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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Photos and demolition updates are available at
http://ssfl.msfc.nasa.gov/news/demolition-updates.aspx

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