



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

Site-wide Baseline Air Monitoring Program Underway

NASA installs four air monitoring stations in Areas I and II at SSFL

April 15 marked the start of a year-long site-wide baseline air monitoring program for the Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL). The purpose of the baseline air monitoring program is to evaluate air quality conditions at 14 locations along the SSFL boundary. Understanding baseline conditions will help NASA and the other responsible parties (The Department of Energy and Boeing) determine what impacts, if any, cleanup would have on the air quality surrounding the SSFL site.

In cooperation with the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) and the other responsible parties, NASA installed four air monitoring stations on the property it administers. The locations were strategically selected based on guidance obtained from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). They take into consideration areas to be remediated, typical wind patterns, topographic features, and accessibility. In addition to the air monitoring stations, NASA also placed a weather monitoring station intended to show the predominant wind patterns at the SSFL site.

The current baseline monitoring phase will last one year. During that time NASA's air monitoring stations will measure concentrations of airborne dust and volatile organic compounds. At the end of the year, NASA will evaluate local particulate concentrations relative to regional background levels as well as the variability between local measurements taken from the monitoring stations. Based on the results of the monitoring during the cleanup phase, cleanup activities may be modified or additional controls could be implemented if indications of excessive emissions are observed.



Air monitoring station at the perimeter of NASA's property in Area I.

NASA Implementing Final Phase of Demolition Program

NASA's demolition program, targeting the removal of inactive structures in NASA-administered areas at SSFL, continues to make considerable strides and is paving the way for NASA cleanup activities.

Early this year, NASA completed Phase 3-A demolition in the Alfa and Bravo Test Areas. In March, NASA kicked off Phase 3-B. This phase focuses on the Coca Test Area, excluding the test stands and control house (for more information about test stand



A large inactive hydrogen tank located in the Coca Test Area is among the structures scheduled for demolition in Phase 3-B.

deferral, see page 2). Demolition in the Coca Test Area includes removal of obsolete pipelines, infrastructure and tanks, including the large black inactive hydrogen tank, also known as the "hydrogen sphere" (see photo, adjacent).

Managing demolition activities safely and effectively has required extensive planning and coordination among the demolition and environmental teams, as well as with cultural and biological resources management.

"NASA's demolition program is a testament to our ongoing commitment to making progress at Santa Susana," said Peter Zorba, NASA's SSFL Project Director. "I'm proud of how well our teams have worked together to achieve results with such a complex project," said Zorba.

NASA expects to complete Phase 3-B and conclude its demolition program by the end of 2018. Photos showing demolition progress can be viewed online at <https://ssfl.msfc.nasa.gov/cleanup/demolition>.



Demolition and Preservation: A delicate balance



NASA is retaining three “pill box” observation bunkers, such as the one shown here in the Coca Test Area.

considered individually eligible for listing on the NRHP for their important role in the historical development and testing of rocket engines, and for their achievements in engineering and design. The Alfa, Bravo and Coca Test Areas meet the definition of Historic District as the properties within each complex contain a concentration of structures (multiple test stands and associated buildings) linked by design, historical events, and function.

In 2015, NASA made the decision to defer the demolition of the historic test stands and control houses as long as cleanup goals can still be met, a decision it re-affirmed in 2017. As demolition has progressed, NASA has retained a few additional structures of significance. For example, NASA decided to keep three observation bunkers located in the Alfa/Bravo, Coca, and Delta Test Areas. The bunkers, also known as “pill boxes” (see photo, above) are considered contributing resources to the historic districts.

At the request of the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians (SYBCI), NASA has also retained a blast wall in the Service Area (see



The blast wall pictured here is located in the Service Area and retained at the request of the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians for its unique link between modern day space exploration and archaeoastronomy.

Many SSFL stakeholders and community members have expressed their desire for NASA to preserve the site’s important historical resources. NASA SSFL Project Director Peter Zorba says that, although NASA’s top priority is to conduct a cleanup that is fully protective of public health and the environment, NASA has taken steps to safeguard the rich history of SSFL.

“NASA remains committed to fulfilling its responsibility to clean up our portion of Santa Susana, as well as being the best stewards that we can of the site’s unique historical, cultural, and natural resources,” said Zorba.

In 2007, NASA conducted an historical resources survey of buildings and structures within the areas it administers at SSFL. The purpose of the survey was to provide an overall historic context for the land, and to identify all properties eligible for placement on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the official list of the nation historic places worthy of preservation.

The six existing test stands located in the Alfa, Bravo, and Coca Test Areas, as well as their associated control houses, are each con-

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- Peter Zorba, NASA SSFL Project Director

photo, left). The SYBCI views land within the SSFL to be a merger of two periods of history in which indigenous and modern cultures have occupied the land to develop and practice rituals, ceremonies, and technologies that could connect humankind and the heavens. The SYBCI requested that the large blast wall be retained with the hope that one day it might support an Interpretive Center that would merge, narrate, and contrast the two periods of cultural significance. NASA believes it can meet its cleanup responsibilities with the test stands still in place, however, the final decision to either maintain or demolish the test stands and other retained structures is dependent upon a number of factors. These factors include the impact to prospective future stewards of the property, the long-term maintenance costs, and the risks to public health or public safety by maintaining the structures.

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