

OCTOBER 2019

FieldNOTE

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



As Demolition Activities Complete; NASA Focuses on the Test Stands

Earlier this year, NASA completed its final phase of demolition activities that began in 2015. This work focused on the removal of inactive structures, concrete surfaces, and obsolete infrastructure to prepare the site for final cleanup. Now, NASA is now evaluating the test stands in accordance with the 2014 Programmatic Agreement and a NASA Office of Inspector General (OIG) report, and will make a decision about the preservation or demolition of the remaining historic test stands.

In the 2014 Programmatic Agreement with the California State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), and the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians (SYBCI), NASA stated its intention to attempt to preserve at least one test stand and control house, contingent on maintenance costs, cultural resource considerations, and that cleanup goals could be met.

However, in 2015, in response to community and stakeholder interest, NASA agreed to defer demolition of all the remaining test stands and control houses, provided that retention did not present a risk to safety, health or the environment. The decision to defer was re-affirmed in 2017, at the request of several members of the California congressional delegation.

In March of this year, in a report on their audit of NASA's progress in environmental remediation activities, the OIG recommended that NASA make a decision whether to preserve or demolish the test stands and related structures before soil cleanup begins, and to take action on that decision.

NASA SSFL Program Director Peter Zorba says that NASA management concurred with the OIG's recommendation and is currently reviewing the information in consultation with the California SHPO, the ACHP, and the SYBCI to reach a final decision.

"Although NASA's top priority at SSFL is cleanup, we recognize the historical significance of the test stands in the development of the nation's space flight program, and ultimately putting man on the moon," said Zorba. "As stewards of these cultural resources and the environment, we must conduct a thoughtful review of all of the information to help guide our decision."

NASA expects to make a decision in early 2020 about which test stand(s) may be preserved for historic preservation, and which may be demolished. ■

NASA Analyzing Environmental Impacts of SSFL Soil Cleanup

In April, NASA announced its intent to prepare a Supplement Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for soil cleanup activities at SSFL. The SEIS will supplement the Environmental Impact statement that NASA published in 2014. NASA is required to supplement the soil cleanup evaluation because additional data from NASA's soil investigation indicates that the amount of soil required to be removed is substantially greater than the amount estimated in the original FEIS.

Peter Zorba, NASA SSFL Project Director, says that the SEIS is an important step in the soil cleanup planning process.

"NASA must use science-based decision making and this document will evaluate updated soil data to refine and inform decision-makers, the regulating agencies, and the public about the likely environmental impacts that the clean-up will have on the community as well as the natural and cultural resources found at SSFL," said Zorba. "Ultimately, our goal is to work with DTSC and the community to implement a cleanup that is based in science, technically achievable, and protective of the surrounding community and the natural environment."

NASA is committed to communicating with the public regarding the SEIS. As part of that commitment, once the draft SEIS is released, the public will have the opportunity to comment on the document. In addition, the public will be invited to participate in public meetings that will take place after the draft SEIS is released. NASA plans to complete and release the SEIS this fall. ■



NASA Recognizes Onsite SSFL Team with Silver Achievement Medal for Quick Actions During Woolsey Fire

The onsite NASA team at SSFL safely accounted for 29 NASA contractors and support staff for rapid evacuation during the early moments of the Woolsey Fire that ignited on November 8, 2018 in the Santa Susana Mountains above Simi Valley.

Over the summer, the onsite team consisting of NASA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers civil servants, and contractors from Jacobs Engineering Group— Dr. Keith Thomson, Richard Lainhart, Randy Dean, Derek Miller, Roger Lucich, and Phillip Reid – received NASA’s Silver Achievement Medal for the outstanding actions responding to the fire and safely evacuating all personnel from NASA’s areas within just minutes of the start of the fire. NASA’s Silver Achievement Medals are awarded to government and non-government individuals or teams for a stellar achievement that supports NASA’s core values.

The NASA onsite team quickly notified the SSFL and NASA officials of the powerful 40 to 50 mph Santa Ana winds with gusts to 60 mph caused the fire to spread. Within 10 minutes, the quick action of the onsite management team allowed all NASA contractors and staff to be rounded up, accounted for and safely evacuated from SSFL.

The successful evacuation was the result of a well-planned and practiced site-specific emergency response plan, which is part of NASA’s overall priority to protect the health and safety of workers at the SSFL site. The team conducts an annual evacuation drill for situations like the Woolsey Fire and was able to execute the plan smoothly in the midst of the fire.

The NASA onsite team members received the medals – and acknowledgement of their superior performance and emergency response during the fire – from NASA leadership at SSFL, NASA Headquarters in Washington, D.C., and the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama. ■



NASA’s onsite Program Director at SSFL, along with leadership at NASA Headquarters and Marshall Space Flight Center presented the award to the onsite NASA team.



Progress continues with the restoration of pipelines lost in Woolsey Fire

NASA has been working to restore the Groundwater Extraction Treatment System (GETS) pipeline that burned in the Woolsey Fire last November.

The GETS consists of groundwater extraction wells and a network of pipelines that deliver groundwater to a treatment facility located in Boeing’s Area I. The treatment facility contains a number of technologies including ion exchange, air stripping, and liquid and vapor phase carbon, which remove chemicals from groundwater.

NASA expects to complete the installation of the new pipeline in its area at SSFL, and the entire GETS system is expected to be ready for operation by the end of 2019. ■

CONTACT

Lori Manes | Community Outreach | NASA Santa Susana Field Laboratory
☎ (818) 806-8834 | ✉ lori.manes@nasa.gov