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DOE and NASA Reach Cleanup Agreements with the State of California for the Santa Susana Field Laboratory

Washington, D.C. - The Department of Energy and NASA both signed Administrative Orders on Consent (AOC) with the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal EPA) today that define the process for characterization and the cleanup end-state for portions of the Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL).

The agreements come after more than 10 months of negotiations and extensive public comment on the conceptual framework for cleanup outlined in the Agreement in Principle and additional public comment on the legally enforceable process and procedures in the draft Administrative Order on Consent.

"By working closely with the State of California, we have reached an historic agreement that will allow the Department to carry out its important cleanup work and protect the health of both the surrounding community and the environment," said Secretary of Energy Steven Chu.

"NASA is pleased to join with the Department of Energy and the State of California in signing these agreements and will do its part to assist with the Santa Susanna cleanup," said NASA Administrator Charles Bolden. "We are committed to working with these partners to address the environmental concerns at this former test site."

U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, said, "The landmark agreements announced today between NASA, the Department of Energy and the State of California are an important step toward real protection for families who live near the Santa Susana Field Laboratory. For many years I have strongly supported the state's and communities' efforts to ensure that a comprehensive cleanup is conducted at Santa Susana that protects the health of the public including children and pregnant women. I am pleased that NASA and the Department of Energy have stepped up to the plate and agreed to clean up the Santa Susana site to the levels California has determined will provide the greatest protection to nearby communities."

DOE's agreement is a commitment to clean up Area IV and the Northern Buffer Zone of the SSFL to background levels for both chemical and radiological constituents.

DOE's AOC includes several key steps needed to reach the desired end-state of a cleanup to background.

- * The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) will determine the radiological background for each radionuclide based upon their on-going radiological background study
- * The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) will determine the chemical background for each potential chemical constituent based upon their on-going chemical background study.
- * The USEPA will determine, through the ongoing radiological characterization survey, the nature and extent of any remaining radiological contamination.
- * DTSC will determine the nature and extent of any remaining chemical contamination based on the previously submitted chemical sampling results, results from co-locating samples with USEPA for chemical analysis, and any DTSC determined necessary additional sampling.
- * A major component of the framework is the involvement of USEPA to serve as technical advisor to DTSC and DOE. USEPA will perform confirmatory sampling after DOE has completed cleanup to help ensure that all cleanup goals have been met. USEPA will also approve for use DOE identified areas of backfill.

In addition to providing the legal framework for the agreement, the Administrative Order on Consent also outlines a process to address the court-ordered Environmental Impact Statement.

The Administrative Order on Consent will be available here <<http://www.etec.energy.gov/>>.

NASA is responsible for the environmental cleanup of the Federal real property at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory. The NASA-held (Federal) portion of the site has been used historically for the research, development and testing of rocket engines associated with the Apollo and Space Shuttle Programs. Under NASA's AOC, the agency will work with the California Department of Toxic Substances Control to determine the chemical background for each potential chemical constituent based upon their on-going chemical background study. The agency will also work with DTSC to determine the nature and extent of any remaining chemical contamination based on the previously submitted chemical sampling results, and any DTSC-determined necessary additional sampling.

Originally developed as a remote site to test rocket engines and conduct nuclear research, the 2,850-acre SSFL, located in the hills between Chatsworth and Simi Valley, is owned primarily by the Boeing Company, with small portions administered by the NASA. The former Atomic Energy Commission conducted nuclear research on nuclear powered space vehicles and sodium coolant mediums at 10 small reactors at the Energy Technology Engineering Center - 90 acres within SSFL Area IV - from the 1950s until 1988.

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