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State Reaches Agreements In Principle on SSFL Cleanup with DOE and NASA

SACRAMENTO, CA—Capping months of negotiations, the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), the federal Department of Energy (DOE) and NASA today announced a major breakthrough in the cleanup of the Santa Susana Field Lab (SSFL) site in Simi Valley. The agreements in principle reached by the three agencies regarding the cleanup of DOE's 290-acre and NASA's 451-acre portions of the facility will meet the strict environmental standards set by state law (SB 990).

"This is a significant step forward in cleaning up the SSFL site to the highest environmental standard," said Linda Adams, Secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA) who has been leading this effort. "I'm happy to see that DOE and NASA have stepped up to the plate and will not only meet but exceed our standards, in addition to paying for the state's oversight costs."

SSFL is a former rocket engine test and nuclear research facility on more than 2,800 acres along the border of Los Angeles and Ventura counties. The Boeing Company, NASA and DOE operated facilities on portions of the property from 1949 to 2006, and are responsible for the cleanup overseen by DTSC. The state has been in negotiations with all three responsible parties for several years. DOE once operated several nuclear reactors, associated fuel facilities and laboratories on what is known as "Area IV" of the SSFL facility. NASA conducted basic liquid-fuel rocket engine testing on its portion of the facility, commonly called "Area II" and part of "Area I".

"We applaud DOE and NASA for their efforts. The agreements in principle are proof of their dedication to the environment and to the community surrounding the SSFL property," said Adams.

These agreements in principle integrate the United States Environmental Protection Agency's just-launched radiological survey work into the site investigation, using U.S. EPA's expertise and resources to identify areas of radiological contamination needing cleanup. The timing of the agreements in principle allows for the state to maximize resources by using U.S. EPA's survey, accelerates the cleanup timeline and also avoids costly duplication of effort. Radiological wastes will be disposed at a permitted or DOE facility, while hazardous wastes will be taken to a permitted hazardous waste disposal facility.

Signed into law in 2007, Senate Bill 990 required the entire SSFL property to be cleaned up to stringent and protective standards, and placed the cleanup of both chemical and radioactive contamination under the oversight of DTSC. In December 2008, Boeing sued DTSC over the enforceability of the bill, and like NASA, continues to clean up the property under an earlier agreement that is not to the stringent environmental standard called for in SB 990. Despite the lawsuit, the state continues to negotiate with Boeing

"We are hopeful that negotiations with Boeing are as successful as they have been with DOE and

NASA,” Adams said. “The nearby communities and indeed all Californians deserve a cleanup that meets or exceeds our standards to protect human health and the environment.”

These agreements in principle must be finalized formally before they become effective. DTSC invites public review and comment until October 1, 2010. All comments should be addressed to: ssfl@dtsc.ca.gov. Public can view the documents through the following website links:

DOE Agreement in Principle: http://www.dtsc-ssfl.com/files/lib_correspond/agreements//64704_FINAL_DOE_Agreement_in_Principle.pdf

DOE Confirmation Sampling Protocol: http://www.dtsc-ssfl.com/files/lib_correspond/agreements//64709_DOE_Confirmation_Sampling_Protocol.pdf

NASA Agreement in Principle: http://www.dtsc-ssfl.com/files/lib_correspond/agreements//64711_FINAL_NASA_Agreement_in_Principle.pdf

(NOTE to Media: All of these individual documents can be accessed more conveniently in one single location as of Tuesday, 9/7/10 at http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/SiteCleanup/Santa_Susana_Field_Lab/SSFL-Agreements.cfm. DTSC’s website is down for maintenance over the Labor Day weekend and these individual links are provided so that the media and public can have access during the weekend.)

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FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES: Contact the Department of Toxic Substances Control by phone at (800) 728-6942 or visit www.dtsc.ca.gov. To report illegal handling, discharge, or disposal of hazardous waste, call the Waste Alert Hotline at (800) 698-6942.

The Mission of the Department of Toxic Substances Control is to provide the highest level of safety, and to protect public health and the environment from toxic harm.