National Aeronautics and Space Administration

NASA Protects the Environment and Native American Resources at Santa Susana Field Laboratory

NASA is committed to cleaning up the Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL) in a manner that is protective of public health and the environment, and the site's natural and cultural resources.

Located on 2,850 acres, SSFL is 30 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles, California. NASA is responsible for 450 acres of the facility, where test stands were used to test rocket engines that sent astronauts to space during the Apollo and Space Shuttle programs. Some chemicals have been found in the soil and groundwater on the grounds of SSFL. Primary contaminants include metals, petroleum products, and solvents. NASA has been rigorously investigating and conducting remediation activities where possible, since contamination was found in the late 1980s.

The overarching goal in NASA's cleanup efforts at Santa Susana Field Laboratory have been to safely protect human health, the environment, and the cultural legacy of the site.

SSFL has been identified as an Indian Sacred Site where the ancestors of Native American Tribes worshipped and lived, and it remains culturally significant to members of those Tribes. Native American sacred and archeological sites, ancient pictographs, stone tool production sites and habitation sites are located at SSFL. For more than a decade, NASA has engaged with both federally recognized and non-federally recognized Native American Tribes with cultural ties to the area, to better understand the significance of Native American cultural resources, and to work with tribes to protect the resources during NASA remediation.

In August 2007, NASA, Boeing, the U.S. Department of Energy, and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) signed an agreement to address the cleanup of soils and groundwater at SSFL. Subsequently, in December 2010, NASA entered into an agreement with DTSC with specific requirements to complete the characterization and cleanup of soils in NASA-administered areas.

Most recently, in 2022, NASA completed the demolition of the two Bravo Test Stands at SSFL and continued to work with DTSC to develop a final, comprehensive groundwater cleanup plan for NASA-administered areas at SSFL. The agency also kicked off a pilot study to test the effectiveness of bedrock vapor extraction to clean up contamination in the underlying bedrock matrix. NASA continues to consult and collaborate with the Native American community on a wide range of topics, working to ensure the sacred nature of the site is accessible and respected.

Contact

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