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July 12, 2024

VIA E-MAIL ONLY

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Department of Toxic Substance Control
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RE: Santa Susana Field Laboratories Clean-up

Dear DTSC Officials:

The purpose of this letter is to express the County of Ventura's (County) strong concern regarding the prolonged status of clean-up activities at the Santa Susana Field Laboratories (SSFL) as overseen by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC).

As DTSC is well-aware, SSFL is one of the most contaminated sites in California, affected by major radioactive and chemical contamination resulting in a threat to public health that was kept hidden for decades. One of its nuclear reactors experienced a partial nuclear meltdown in 1959, causing releases of radioactivity into the air, and two other reactors experienced accidents with significant fuel damage. This, in addition to incineration of a wide array of radioactive and toxic chemical waste in open-air burn pits, dumping of trichloroethylene and perchlorate, and other contamination, from more than 50 years of operations, left the site polluted with radioactive and chemical contaminants.

The County has a compelling interest in ensuring the timely and complete remediation of contamination at the SSFL to standards that are protective of public health, and the welfare and safety of the surrounding communities. Due to the past history at the site, residents in the surrounding areas are understandably concerned about cleanup being delayed, information not being shared, and risks not being disclosed. Indeed, at recent meetings of the Board of Supervisors, the County has

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heard from numerous members of the public who are gravely worried that DTSC is not acting with enough urgency and diligence to initiate a full and timely cleanup at SSFL.

After years of inaction, there were signs of progress when DTSC certified the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for the cleanup project in 2023. However, the County shares the concerns that there has not been significant movement since. For example, when the PEIR was certified, DTSC stated it anticipated release of the first of the cleanup plans for public review and comment in late 2023. We now understand that DTSC does not anticipate releasing the first plan, for NASA's Groundwater Phase 1 Statement of Basis, until Fall 2024. This is nearly a year behind schedule, with no public explanation from DTSC for these delays or assurances that future postponements will not occur.

Based on recent public comments, these delays are clearly contributing to a loss of public confidence in DTSC and to suspicions that DTSC is not prioritizing public health and environmental considerations in its SSFL cleanup efforts. DTSC needs to act with greater urgency and be more open and transparent with its planning and approval process. DTSC needs to assure the public that cleanup decisions and actions are forthcoming, supported by the best available science disclosed to the public, and with the involvement of the local jurisdictions and communities affected by the cleanup and long-term impacts.

To that end, the County requests that DTSC timely and publicly inform the County and the public on the current status of the SSFL cleanup and identify concrete milestones for the next steps with said milestones actually being met moving forward. Thank you for DTSC's consideration of these critical concerns.

Sincerely,



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