



# LISTENING SESSION RESPONSE PLAN

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Santa Susana Field Laboratory  
Ventura County, CA

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California Environmental Protection Agency  
Department of Toxic Substances Control  
9211 Oakdale Avenue  
Chatsworth, CA 91311

August 2010

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**MISSION STATEMENT  
OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF TOXIC SUBSTANCES CONTROL (DTSC)  
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAM**

It is the mission of DTSC's Public Participation Program to ensure that the public and other interested stakeholders are informed and involved early; that their issues and concerns are heard, considered and responded to in a timely manner.

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## **SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION**

This Santa Susana Field Laboratory Listening Session Response Plan (Plan) outlines proposed community involvement activities that are based on community comments from a series of four listening sessions that were held in April 2010 relating to the Department of Toxic Substances Control's (DTSC) site investigation and cleanup activities taking place at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL), located in Ventura County, California. DTSC is the State agency that has direct oversight regarding the investigation and cleanup of hazardous and radioactive waste at SSFL under the California Health and Safety Code section 25359.20. DTSC's mission is to provide the highest level of safety, and to protect public health and the environment from toxic harm.

The approach presented in this document is designed to provide the community surrounding the SSFL site and all interested stakeholders with accurate and up-to-date information about the investigation and cleanup at SSFL, while making available the opportunity to provide their perspective during DTSC's decision-making process. DTSC's goal is to ensure transparency by a clearly-defined process in DTSC decision-making regarding SSFL and to build and maintain public trust in DTSC as a highly credible source of information on the investigation and cleanup of SSFL.

## **SECTION 2 – LISTENING SESSIONS RECAP**

Listening sessions were held in four communities surrounding SSFL: Chatsworth, Oak Park, West Hills, and Simi Valley. A complete set of the notes is included in Appendix A, however a number of common themes were found:

- Easy to understand summary documents and fact sheets are needed
- Diverse interests and opinions are welcomed
- Progress needs to be communicated and project status should be provided
- Education needs to be provided to the community
- Positive information needs to be communicated
- Community should be involved early
- Candor is needed
- More publicity is needed
- Transparency is needed
- DTSC should be primary source of information
- DTSC needs to be responsive to community
- DTSC should improve coordination with other agencies to avoid overlapping meetings and comment periods
- Glossary of terms is needed
- DTSC needs to help bring new people up to speed
- Documents and reports should contain a non-technical summary

- Meeting minutes/notes should be posted

The complete set of listening session notes can be found in Appendix A.

### **SECTION 3 – PURPOSE/OBJECTIVE**

The purpose of this document is to outline an action plan for communication with stakeholders, based on what was learned at the listening sessions and DTSC's desire for public input that will enhance decision-making at SSFL.

The objectives of the Response Plan are to:

- A.** Provide a public participation process that is inclusive and accessible to all interested parties and that encourages the sharing of all points of view.
- B.** Build community capacity to provide comments on technical decisions.
- C.** Communicate progress on investigation and cleanup activities at SSFL.
- D.** Provide timely, accurate and credible information in plain language at varying levels of technical complexity.
- E.** Coordinate public information and involvement efforts related to DTSC's oversight of the investigation and cleanup process.

**The Response Plan is a living document. DTSC will revise and update the Plan as necessary throughout the site investigation and cleanup process.**

## **SECTION 4 – SSFL STAKEHOLDERS**

The audience for decisions by DTSC at SSFL includes:

- Individuals who live in the area surrounding the site, such as Canoga Park, West Hills, Chatsworth, Simi Valley, Bell Canyon, Northridge, Woodland Hills, Oak Park
- Homeowners' organizations
- Individuals who work or own businesses or property in the surrounding area
- Organizations (including public entities) that may own property in the surrounding area
- Individuals who may have been exposed to contamination from site activities
- Individuals who may be impacted by investigation and remediation of site
- Former workers at the site
- Individuals with specialized knowledge of the site and its history
- Individuals with an interest or stake in future use(s) of the site
- Environmental and conservation organizations
- Those with other unique or special relationships to the site (e.g., religious or sacred connection)
- Elected officials
- Government agencies
- Responsible parties

## **SECTION 5 – KEY MESSAGES**

- DTSC is committed to protecting public health and the environment.
- SSFL is undergoing a rigorous environmental review and cleanup process under DTSC's vigilant oversight.
- DTSC encourages the public's participation and will actively provide the opportunity for all stakeholders to be engaged.
- DTSC community involvement efforts will be open to the broadest range of stakeholders in order to gain the benefit of the variety of viewpoints represented.
- DTSC will ensure community involvement is a priority through all phases and activities of the investigation and cleanup process.
- The public needs and deserves convenient access to understandable project information; DTSC will ensure that information is easy to obtain, useful, timely, pertinent and easy to understand.

## SECTION 6 – METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT

DTSC will develop and implement the following methods to engage with stakeholders and meet its public participation and community involvement objectives:

- A. Public Participation Group** DTSC will create a DTSC-led and diverse group of community stakeholders that will meet on a regular basis to provide input to DTSC. Meetings will be held in public and meeting notes and presentations will be made available through the Website and other means. Please refer to Appendices B and D for more information.
- B. Technically-oriented meetings** – DTSC will, as appropriate, host meetings for stakeholders with greater levels of interest and knowledge of the site. Meeting notes and presentations will be made available through the Website and other means.
- C. Open houses, workshops, discussion forums** – DTSC will host a variety of forums at appropriate milestones in the decision-making process tailored to specific topics and designed to more broadly engage the community at large to inform the public and gather input.
- D. Neighborhood meetings** – DTSC will host neighborhood specific meetings when information, study results or concerns specific to a particular neighborhood are present.
- E. Virtual participation** – DTSC will develop and implement opportunities for the public to participate in the above open meetings virtually (through electronic media such as teleconference, videoconference or other Internet based methods, to make them more convenient and accessible and to facilitate broader participation.
- F. Fact sheets, timeline, public notices, updates, etc.** – DTSC will develop and disseminate written informational materials designed to inform the public in simple, understandable terms about basic facts, issues, decisions and events at SSFL.
- G. Information Repositories** – DTSC will maintain hard copies of documents and other information materials at various convenient local locations (e.g., public libraries) for stakeholders who prefer to access information in person rather than online. Electronic copies of all documents will also be maintained and made available in the document library on the Website at:

[http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/SiteCleanup/Santa\\_Susana\\_Field\\_Lab/ssfl\\_document\\_library.cfm](http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/SiteCleanup/Santa_Susana_Field_Lab/ssfl_document_library.cfm).

**H. Quarterly Newsletter** – for stakeholders who have an ongoing interest in DTSC’s actions and decisions at SSFL, the newsletter will be developed to provide a regular update of DTSC’s activities at the site and keep the public informed of progress.

**I. Website** – DTSC will enhance its website to become a user-friendly, dynamic, and informative online tool for stakeholders with varying degrees of interest and involvement in the site.

[http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/SiteCleanup/Santa\\_Susana\\_Field\\_Lab](http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/SiteCleanup/Santa_Susana_Field_Lab)

**J. Mailing Lists and Listserv** – DTSC will develop and maintain accurate and up-to-date mailing lists for dissemination of project information, updates and notices.

**K. Participation by Request** – DTSC will consider requests to participate in meetings hosted by other organizations, within reasonable travel, schedule, workload and resource constraints. All requests for DTSC participation must be made to Susan Callery 30 days in advance, and must be accompanied by a meeting agenda and a description of the information desired of DTSC. DTSC may provide the requested information through means other than in-person participation.

## **Section 7 – TIMELINE**

**DTSC will develop and maintain a schedule of upcoming events and activities (e.g. document comment periods, Workshops, Technical Seminars.)**

## **Section 8 – EVALUATION**

The range of goals, complexity of environmental problems and the diversity of interests involved at SSFL make evaluation of DTSC’s community involvement and public participation efforts a difficult task. Given that many of DTSC’s objectives are related to the community’s attitudes, satisfaction and trust, options for evaluation are necessarily subjective, rather than objective.

DTSC believes that implementation of the actions and activities described in this plan will markedly improve DTSC’s community involvement efforts.



Simply measuring how often or quantifying the techniques used to engage the public may say very little about how well we have satisfied a particular need or built mutual trust. Often, it is an anecdotal comment by a stakeholder that provides the observable evidence that public participation effectiveness has been achieved. With those caveats in mind, the following metrics may be used to assess the effectiveness of the SSFL Communication Strategy:

#### Potential Measures for Evaluating Effectiveness

To measure the benefits and effectiveness of the activities described in this plan, DTSC intends to solicit feedback from stakeholders using evaluation forms, comment forms, establishment of a dedicated email address ([ssfl@dtsc.ca.gov](mailto:ssfl@dtsc.ca.gov)), and a feedback form on its Website. Based on feedback obtained, DTSC will determine whether any modifications are necessary or additional actions should be considered.

## APPENDIX A – LISTENING SESSION NOTES

### Chatsworth Listening Session 4/7/2010

**Question 1.** What do you find most challenging to you personally about trying to participate in the decision making process for cleanup at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory?

If voice not consistent with name redacted, then not considered

All voices relevant

No clear access to information

Name redacted was source of information

Denial of Community Advisory Group (CAG)

Access to community conflicts

Need to look at diverse opinions

Get through process and be involved

To be heard in all the different venues

To be able to share views with people

Need to bring "new" people up to speed

Overwhelming/frightening

Determining what is true/fact and what isn't

Active rejection of independent experts

Endless repetition of meetings

Repetitive

Gum-beating

Time of day – need to be in evening

"Living room" meetings would be convenient

**Question 2.** Can you recall a time or an event when you felt most involved or respected in the decision making process? If so, what was it about that instance that made you feel that way?

Liked being part of selection committee of radiation background sites

Empowering community based on their site knowledge and experience

Everyone has something to give

Periodic community notifications (information letter; E-mail)

Have not experienced positive yet

Important to avoid negative

Meeting people

Exchanging views with others -- open to ideas

Must respect each other

Don't waste time

Political nature a turn-off

Monthly newsletter

ID questions and facts

Background site visits/meetings on background

- Something new

Holding listening session

Meeting @ACME with EPA on historical site assessment (with Laura teaching EPA consultants-

- Investment of time paid off

Differing opinions not accepted

Concern that if success isn't realized now, may not ever

**Question 3.** Describe to me what a good process for involving you in our (DTSC) decision making would look like and/or how it would make you feel?

CAG - independent experts (independent of DTSC and Responsible Parties)

Bring community voice to Board

Follow up

Need more focus

Make decisions

Put things to bed

Agree to disagree

Mechanism for getting information to new people

Want a place to be heard

All RPs participate -- share ideas

Receive periodic info updates – newsletter

Community as a whole doesn't know enough

Transparent process that reaches a lot of people

Description of what meeting is about

Overview history

Small roundtables

Ways to get questions answered that doesn't involve a microphone

Notices need to convey meaning

Relevant/descriptive

Needs to communicate in ways people understand

People need to understand what meetings are about

Feedback/response to questions and comments

Comments heard and listened to

Notice of results of meeting

Post-meeting reports

Action items/minutes/decisions

Attendance isn't mandatory, but meeting proceedings available

Open process for future agenda items that members of public would like to discuss

#### Common Themes

More publicity

- communicate progress
- announcements
- fact sheets
- project overview
- milestones

Diversity

- how to address diversity
- need leadership agency

Allow people to join process and not feel lost

Perception progress

Communicate positive

Two-way communication

Education

Accommodate factions

Voices – opportunity to be heard by all

[bilingual notices] capability

Communication

- Notices to all
- News articles in local newspapers

## Oak Park Listening Session 4/8/2010

**Question 1.** What do you find most challenging to you personally about trying to participate in the decision making process for cleanup at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory?

Not hearing about meetings

Haphazard notification

Inconsistent notification

- How was this publicized?
- Many good venues

No walk-in community members

Need better outreach to others

Don't always trust the information

Question information source

Avoid spin

How reliable is DTSC information?

Easier for DTSC to say it's in control

- Make our DTSC job easier

Don't trust DTSC

- Better relationship with Boeing/DOE/NASA  
Then the public

Taking too long – show progress

- Overwhelming
- A lot to digest
- Should be on everyone's mind
- Reach out to media
- Complex
  - site history
  - process issues

Getting information, meetings, documents, etc. Would be great if it was all in one place.

Follow-ups, updates, needed on key issues, everything

Unless you sign up to receive information, you don't get it

More timely notification is needed

A lot going on. Should be more focused opportunity needed to flesh things out.

Forum for community issues to be heard.

Meetings should be consolidated and conveniently located. Rotate locations.

Use YouTube as an information outlet. Webcasts?

All new learning phase

Need information

Very scientific – more challenging

Meant to be "transparent" – nothing of the sort

Steep learning curve

Lack of transparency

Lack of listening by agencies

Firing of old people – hiring new

Project staff not from here

Getting rid of perfectly good people

Right information/right time

Looking in the right places doesn't happen

Make arbitrary decisions – not scientific

Lack of consistency – too many changes in personnel

Emotionally upsetting

Can't come to meetings during the day

**Question 2.** Can you recall a time or an event when you felt most involved or respected in the decision making process? If so, what was it about that instance that made you feel that way?

Project Manager listened to community

Management in Sacramento

- This is a local issue

Need Community Advisory Group (sanctioned by DTSC)

Meetings and information helped

Technical Assistance Grants (TAG) provide assistance

Follow-up to community issues

Met with community members

Let community present

Two-way communication

Feel need to be reassured DTSC will respond/act

When DTSC's "engaged"

Community is involved

- Don't glaze over

Gerard showed/presented explained map/issues in simple language in small group setting

Just learned about Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL)

New to this

Did tour of site, but was not involved in the decision-making process

Closest to being involved is visiting DTSC website. Information is overwhelming and very technical.

There is so much information, and it is difficult to digest it all.

Meetings need to be publicized better.

Acorn is the Oak Park newspaper.

Would like clarification on the parties and players. A who's who.

Example – Oak Park community meetings. Everyone got a chance to talk instead of being talked to.

Why are things taking so long? It's been 50 years. You are a government agency and you want your jobs to continue.

Trust is an issue.

Each person has a responsibility to get the information.

Oak Park hasn't been too involved

Elected representatives came and met and were available

EPA allowing involvement in selection of rad background locations

Ability to be involved in RCRA Facility Investigation (RFI) Reports

Being respected/valued for knowledge

People don't know unless they hear

Lots of bad information out there

**Question 3.** Describe to me what a good process for involving you in our (DTSC) decision making would look like and/or how it would make you feel?

What taking so long??

- To communicate
- Cleanup process

Need better

- Overview
- Schedule of events
- Website

- clear overview

Like small group discussion

Community involvement

- E-mail
- Press release
- Web site
- Local paper
- Mailer (reach households)
- Use "Oak Park Update"

Introduction of people

- Who, where from, why they're there

Survey community

Reach out to other existing groups

- People will know there is a process and opportunity to get involved

Use voter registration form to get e-mail

Use smaller groups/committees (break-out groups) to keep people involved

- By geographic area
- By issue

1-page summary documents

Disseminate information via the newspapers, mail outs, e-mail, etc., but give folks a place to go back to i.e., website. Set up notification through e-mail.

DTSC needs a CAG. It would allow for better information exchange. More people could be involved.

Everyone who is in a CAG is an activist.

Meeting locations rotated

Make technical information easier to understand. Community-specific

Better notification of upcoming decisions

Timeline needed

Place where a variety of opinions can be heard

Get information out

Well broadcast – web, newspapers, schools, Oak Park Municipal Advisory Committee

Information – helping people learn

Meeting

- Summary of activities
- History
- Status
- Schedules available

Website

- Hierarchical – layered for different users – less to more details – drill down

Make meetings more accessible – use technology

Confidence in goal to clean up

Be accessible

#### Common Themes

People need outreach

People need to be HEARD

Want transparent and more information from DTSC on the science and DTSC decisions

What are the good facts?

Transparency

What you don't know

What not knowable

What affects cleanup

Don't hide information  
Transparency is needed to get accurate information  
Try to avoid the "spinning" of information (media)  
Understandable information  
Desire for a reliable source of information  
Someone other than the media should be the primary source of information  
Somewhere where people could post questions  
Meetings should rotate geographically  
DTSC more involved with communities  
Simple learning  
Communication  
Action  
Focus on cleanup  
Accessibility  
Candor  
Use local media (Simi Valley Acorn)

### **West Hills Listening Session 4/19/2010**

**Question 1.** What do you find most challenging to you personally about trying to participate in the decision making process for cleanup at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory?

Lack of specific information  
People who have preconceived ideas  
Have not had enough access to the site – no clear vision of what is there  
Lack of listening to Save Open Space (SOS) on Rocky Peak and CAG  
Too much influence from certain individuals  
Amount of time to gain understanding  
Difficult to master scientific technology  
Don't monitor enough offsite – worried about other seepage  
- Not enough thought or input from community  
Want information posted outside of website in different locations from website  
Follow up after this meeting  
Doesn't want to be involved in decision-making, wants to participate  
DTSC's information on decisions not readily available  
No final outcomes communicated  
Resistance within community  
Decades of inaction and no cleanup  
Can't make meetings – scheduling  
- Unable to participate  
No follow up of what happens  
- Report of proceedings  
Meeting locations – need to be on all sides of the hill  
Difficult for new people because there is so much history  
Current meetings aren't community led  
Feel as though voice isn't heard  
Agenda for meetings – get no community input  
Meetings need to be responsive  
No room for site mentors  
No way to talk to former workers who have site information  
Networking – community resources  
Rocketdyne Watch – key documents could have been lost – funding  
- Website redesign

Getting voice heard above background level (only the loudest voices are heard)  
Don't get "grown up" answers to our questions...what is DTSC's stance on the issues?

Community feels patronized

Why can't DTSC get community more involved, not enough publicity, provide more information

Every meeting – same people, DTSC only communicates with select few and many community members are unaware of DTSC's outreach.

More education

Information meetings during day when people can't attend

Project moving too slowly

- Productive meeting, then nothing happens – need more connection between events

Technical documents tough to comment on. People need cheat sheets, tech summaries to assist community with comments.

Establish a Facebook page.

**Question 2.** Can you recall a time or an event when you felt most involved or respected in the decision making process? If so, what was it about that instance that made you feel that way?

Tour – Department Of Energy (DOE) spent time discussing questions

Tour – Oct/Nov – first time felt input recognized and felt accepted

Respect and consideration for involvement

Contacted Project Manager – brought experts

- Listened to + action = results

- Frustration when no change

When community groups work together

Everybody needs access to decision makers

- Need to know who to go to

- Roles and responsibilities of staff

Repeat?

- Non defined questions

- defined by community questions

Involved in SSFL decisions

Expansion of roundtable meetings at DTSC

Fact sheets summarizing information needed

Speaking with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Secretary Adams re: listing decision

When Governor and Secretary Adams saved Ahmanson Ranch

Meetings informative

Need more open forum

- Northridge Hospital – physically "round" table – all visible and can provide input

Active involvement decision-maker

Process sought input and considered opinions

Agenda provided ahead of time

Bring in ex-workers so that DTSC learns about the past.

When tritium was found.

DTSC responsive to requests for reports/info.

DTSC makes technical presentations.

Offer advice to DTSC

Community listened to – DTSC responds

DTSC quick to respond with a summary on consent order so community could comment

Community influenced State to do testing at a park.

Key community member listen and respond – make positive changes



**Question 3.** Describe to me what a good process for involving you in our (DTSC) decision making would look like and/or how it would make you feel?

CAG – Allows community to put their interests on the agenda

- Bylaws

DTSC – method to allow public input to questions to be addressed

- Public forum
- Auditorium – large group to disseminate information
- Submit questions – follow up in the next month

Community gatherings – gather questions for DTSC to address (i.e. community concerns)

Follow up summary of technical meetings

- Newsletter

- Monthly summary

DTSC technical meetings

- Very technical
- Need basic instructions (i.e. risk assessment explanation, technical overviews – i.e. SSFL 101)

Agenda

- Accomplishments
- Activity report
- Completion time line
- Better involved/prepared

Mechanism for a CAG or throughout the community

- Hire independent experts with Responsible Parties and agencies

More meetings

More site tours

Follow through – have a parking lot of items

Banner timeline to give perspective

Questions/answers from community

- FAQs

Questions submitted in advance

Meeting time tailored to participants

Respected person makes decision “benevolent despot”

Comments need to be responded to

Group meetings

Updated information – plume maps, monitoring wells, migration

e-mail updates (Listserv)

community meetings

include people on sign-in sheets on meeting notifications

send meeting notice in mail

come back to community after decision is made and before implementation to discuss

impact with community

feedback to comments in person – group discussion of comments and responses from DTSC

community have major input

community have knowledge of what is going on before it happens

DTSC attend West Hills Neighborhood Council (WHNC) meetings, not being included as an

important entity – also include other neighborhood councils, elected officials, etc.

### Common Themes

Need for public input

Communicate with public effectively

CAG

Listening and actively responding to diverse community

Written status reports/schedules

- report successes

Use plain language to relay technical information

Advertising – get the word out

- website

Communicate progress and next steps

Information in plain English

Community-driven

Acknowledge and respond to fears in community

Convenient locations

Acknowledge unknowns

Provide project status – total technical, legal, political

Politics are frustrating – agencies and politicians

Points of contact/accountability

Inclusiveness

“New to Santa Susana” page on website

Small groups – existing forums

Use flipcharts – let community ask questions

Community can be heard

Where to go to get information

Improve outreach

- reach more people

Communicate clearly in non-technical jargon

DTSC needs to be responsive to community

Involve community early, before milestone occurs

Community gets information desired

DTSC should meet with community in-person before taking action

DTSC – don't just go through the motions of public outreach, discuss comments thoroughly with community before action

WHNC needs to be fully informed of what's going on and how it impacts the community

- summary sheets sent out frequently that are understandable
- DTSC give facts instead of word-of-mouth or newspaper
- bullet points with schedule of events/issues

Vocabulary list of acronyms

Glossary of terms

Summary cheat sheet

Respond back to community on these sessions

### Suggestions

Don't lose your audience

Pilot – put feedback from these sessions into practice (i.e. chemical background study)

Vocabulary list

### **Simi Valley Listening Session 4/28/2010**

**Question 1.** What do you find most challenging to you personally about trying to participate in the decision making process for cleanup at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory?

Disregard to commit to cleanup for human life – Boeing, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), DOE, Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board (LARWQCB)

Taking too long for cleanup

Documents large, complex

- Provide summary information

- Table of contents
- Limited access to site (on-site reference)
- Schedule open house/tour of specific area of document out for public comment.
- Post videos.
- How documents fit into process
- Use Google Earth or other technology to provide site access
- Being attacked by other community members (personal and opinions)
- DTSC taking sides of others opinion
- 1 comment – not true
- Asked not to show a meeting
- Cohesiveness with Workgroup maligned
- Inconsistency between agencies
- Need all parties to participate in the Workgroup

**Question 2.** Can you recall a time or an event when you felt most involved or respected in the decision making process? If so, what was it about that instance that made you feel that way?

- When Boeing no longer participated on Workgroup
- Public input on background study
- DTSC technical meetings
- Called Norm Riley and Susan Callery to report a problem – both were responsive
- Invited to tech meetings instead of just Workgroup
- Visit Rocky Peak
- Direct Access to technical staff
- Bring community together
- Accepting different opinions
- Formulation of own opinions – but didn't feel comfortable expressing them
- Consent Order – process actually moving forward
- Two-way format
- Workgroup format not working
- Likes World Café format
- Ideal to share opinions
- This listening session
- \$\$ for health study
- Worked with politicians
- Allowed the "human" element
- Active participation with agencies
- Used valued work on EPA environmental study
- Public input on the study
- Utilized comm. Background
- Forum to address issues
- Background and goal of project
- Feel you can make a difference
- Valued when public is informed
- Communication tools
- Access to information (i.e. website and media events)

**Question 3.** Describe to me what a good process for involving you in our (DTSC) decision making would look like and/or how it would make you feel?

- Open /inclusive process
- Friendly A-Z guide, upcoming decisions

No one sharing mailing lists or E-mail

Keep people engaged

Involve people

- All should have a voice (not currently an opportunity)

Require participation

- i.e. CAG self-regulating
- diverse

Easy for people to become involved

Continuity of participation

Send meeting invitation to broad audience

Meeting announcements – topic specific

Meeting hosts need to listen to community – inclusivity

Opportunity for round table discussion

- use flip charts/record comments (see that people were heard)

Want to see progress

SSFL Workgroup – not heard

- community has more input
- should be done at round tables
- report to workgroup

Follow-up on comments/input

Opportunity for written comments at Workgroup meetings

Distribute meeting agendas earlier

Humor/civility

Acronym fact sheet

Fact sheet on site status/process, etc.

Allow community members opportunity to monitor project (i.e. meeting transcripts, recorded)

Deploy reasonable, recent technology

- brown bag meeting = overview
- presentation by expert
- filmed and cataloged
- post online/orientation of the site

Looking for fair information accessible to everyone

Site tours are important

Understanding the health risks of the site

Toxicology important

EPA funding for independent consultants/experts to interpret documents (i.e. background study and site sampling)

SSFL 101 for new people

- intro documents that are non-technical
- moving to DTSC roundtable
- technical discussions
- = empowered

Invite and involve responsible parties

Round table – rooms needs to be bigger to allow greater participation

Availability to tools to help lay people understand risk

### Key Themes

DTSC needs to be responsive to the community

Community get info desired

DTSC needs to meet with community in-person before taking action

DTSC – don't just go through the motions of public outreach, discuss comments thoroughly with community before action

WHNC needs to be fully informed of what's going on and how it impacts the community

- Summary sheets – sent out frequently
- Understandable
- DTSC gives facts instead of word-of-mouth or newspaper
- Bullet points with schedule of major events/issues

Unite community

Listen (trust)

Two-way communication

Transparency

Inclusive process – diversity of opinion

Follow-up/action

Friendly to newcomers

Fact sheets – summaries

World Café format meetings

- Small group discussions on specific topics

Continuity

Enhanced website

- To tell people the whole story
- Fact sheets simplified

Simplify information

Improve coordination issue

- Comment periods at the same time
- Coordinated calendar on the web

Active online wizard

- Active updates
- Interactive blog

Encourage participation

Need more community engagement

Meeting locations accessible to varying communities

Access to the site (i.e. bus tour)

- Drainage areas

Opportunity to take pictures

## **APPENDIX B – SSFL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GROUP STRUCTURE**

### Establishing a SSFL Public Participation Group to Provide Input to DTSC at SSFL

One fundamental question DTSC has asked itself is: would the existence of a broad-based community group convened and led by DTSC be a necessary condition for public participation effectiveness at the site. The disadvantages of creating such a group include the resources it would take to support it, the creation of yet another “meeting” for stakeholders to attend, the challenge of constituting a group that would be perceived as diverse and representative of all relevant stakeholder interests and perspectives, and the concern by some that this group would supplant other groups already in existence. On the other hand, when considering the public’s desire for inclusive participation, transparent decision making and a safe place to engage in dialogue, such a community stakeholder group has inherent advantages, including:

- Consistent and regularly scheduled opportunities for DTSC and community stakeholders to confer with each other;
- Continuity of participation, so that group members can build and share their working knowledge of the site in order to provide informed feedback to DTSC;
- Accountability of DTSC to the group for considering its input and informing it of how that input was used;
- Accountability of the members to the group’s mission and each other;
- Ground rules for how meetings would be conducted and participants would conduct themselves;
- The ability for DTSC to receive important input on a timely and efficient basis from the whole community; and
- Provision of a venue for community input where all perspectives can be valued and given voice.

On balance, DTSC has determined that if the challenges of forming such a group can be met, the advantages outweigh the costs in terms of resources. Further, as DTSC investigations, findings, reports and decision making at the site become more prevalent and technically complex, the need to engage a broad-based group of stakeholders who have invested the time in becoming knowledgeable of the technical complexities of the site will become imperative.

### **Forming a Public Participation Group**

The challenges that must be met for such a public participation group to be successful include:

1. Defining a clear mission for the group
2. Defining the role and significance of input sought by DTSC
3. Developing a membership composition that is broadly representative of the range of interested and affected stakeholders
4. Establishing a charter or other principles of participation that defines the ground rules and other operating parameters of the public participation group’s deliberations
5. Committing the agency resources necessary to support such a group sustainably

The following page provides a discussion and proposed solution for each of these challenges.

### Defining a clear mission for the group

Because there are existing groups associated with the Santa Susana Field Lab site, the questions one must naturally answer when forming a new group are:

- Why another group?
- What makes this group different?
- What will this group accomplish?

The reason for another group is straightforward: DTSC needs a group that it can count on to provide it broad-based, informed and representative community stakeholder input.

Nationwide, this type of group is commonplace at hazardous waste cleanup sites. Many agencies rely on the members of these groups to familiarize themselves sufficiently with the technical issues at the site so that they can absorb and provide feedback on the sometimes prodigious workload of technical reports, findings and decision documents that such sites can generate. A group convened by the oversight agency creates a mutual commitment on the part of the agency and the group's members. The agency can expect the group's members to do their homework before providing input, and the public participation group can expect the agency to provide them with the information they need to do their job.

The collective aspects that would distinguish DTSC's public participation group (Group) from other groups are several and have already been alluded to:

- The Group would be highly inclusive and not dominated by any particular stakeholder group or perspective;
- While input would be sought from members in terms of topics for consideration, the DTSC would drive the agenda to ensure that the items it needs feedback on to make its decisions are the primary subjects of discussion;
- The Group's meetings would be conducted in accordance with ground rules agreed to in advance by its members, ensuring an atmosphere that is conducive to frank but respectful dialogue;
- DTSC would be responsible for recording and documenting the Group's discussions and input, with an emphasis on impartiality and accuracy; and
- DTSC would commit to keeping this group fully and transparently informed of its actions and decisions in recognition of the members' commitment to provide constructive input.

As far as what this group would accomplish, this question applies to both its mission and role. DTSC wants and needs an informed and consistent group of stakeholders involved to ensure that DTSC has fully informed itself of the potential ramifications and consequences of its actions for the community. The community has many useful perspectives to offer DTSC to ensure that it makes the best possible decisions. Some stakeholders have personal and historical knowledge of the site. Many stakeholders have different concerns based on where they live (or lived) in relationship to the site. Others may be unconcerned or unaffected by contamination at the site but may be significantly impacted by future efforts to clean it up. Involving the broadest range of potentially affected and interested stakeholders ensures that DTSC can make fully informed decisions that have the greatest community benefit and public support possible, with the least probability of creating unintended consequences. Thus, the proposed mission of the DTSC's SSFL Group is:

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Santa Susana Field Laboratory public participation group (Group) is to provide the Department of Toxic Substances Control with broad-based, informed and timely community input on reports, findings, plans and draft decision documents that DTSC deems is necessary to conduct timely and effective remediation of hazardous contamination at the site for which it has oversight.

### Defining the role and significance of input sought by DTSC

Input is not the same as making decisions or even concurrence. DTSC cannot delegate its authority for oversight and is responsible and accountable for its decisions. From experience at many other cleanup sites, it is recognized that community input is an essential ingredient for sound agency decision making, and a stakeholder working group can be a key tool in obtaining that input. However, a working group's input is typically only one, albeit primary, source for community input. The Group is intended to complement other outreach to the community of stakeholders. Public meetings, roundtables, workshops, written surveys, online feedback and other tools may be used by DTSC at various times to also solicit community input, particularly from those who may not be able to sustain the same level of commitment or participation expected of the Group members. Community input is also one of many factors that DTSC will have to consider in providing oversight and making the best decisions possible. Laws, legislation, cleanup standards, resources and the changing face of "best available science" are among many factors that DTSC will have to consider. Some of these factors may be of less importance to various community members and that is their prerogative, but DTSC will have to take all relevant factors into consideration. Therefore, the Group can expect DTSC to give the input it receives serious and thoughtful consideration, and to explain how that input influenced DTSC's decisions, but it cannot expect DTSC to always agree with or act on that input, particularly in disregard of other relevant decision-making factors.

### Developing a membership composition that is broadly representative of the range of interested and affected stakeholders

At a site as complicated as the Santa Susana Field Lab, defining the community of interested and affected stakeholders may be the greatest practical challenge of establishing a public participation group. Obtaining the commitment from all of those different stakeholders to participate consistently in the Group will also be a challenge. Nonetheless, the experience of establishing such groups at other sites is instructive. The factors that are typically considered in defining a broad, diverse and representative group of stakeholders include:

- geography/location
- differences in exposure or potential exposure to contamination
- differences in vulnerability to potential contamination
- differences in potential impacts from investigation and remediation of site
- specialized knowledge
- interest or stake in future use(s) of site
- other unique or special relationships to the site (e.g., religious or sacred connection)

In many cases, organized groups may adequately represent these differences in location, potential impact, knowledge or relationship. In such cases, the natural inclination is to ask such groups to select someone to serve on their behalf. However, there is a clear distinction between selecting members for a public participation group to represent a particular organization versus selecting members who represent a type of perspective. For example, in a region that has dozens of environmental groups, is it the agency's need to have all environmental groups represented, or to make sure that a robust environmental



perspective is present in the public participation group (which might be accomplished with two or three members rather than dozens)? Given that DTSC is establishing a group to provide input for informed agency decision-making, not to reach consensus or commit the agency to a particular course of action, a Group of diverse perspectives makes more sense both philosophically and pragmatically.

With those considerations in mind, the working list of groups or categories of individuals that DTSC has determined would likely be necessary to ensure a broad-based and geographically diverse set of community perspectives may include:

- Santa Susana Knolls HOA
- Chatsworth Neighborhood Council
- Bell Canyon HOA
- Rockpointe HOA
- West Hills Neighborhood Council
- Save Open Space
- SSFL Interagency Workgroup
- SSFL Community Advisory Group
- Tribal representatives (e.g., Chumash, Tatavian)
- Environmental groups (e.g., NRDC, Sierra Club)
- Chambers of Commerce (e.g., Simi Valley, San Fernando Valley)
- Oak Park Council
- Mobile home parks (e.g., Summit)
- Former SSFL workers
- Brandeis Bardin Institute
- Santa Susana Mountain Park Association
- Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority
- Summit Mobile Home Park
- Woolsey Canyon Mobile Home Park
- Physicians for Social Responsibility
- San Fernando Valley Audubon Society

One category of perspective that has special ramifications is whether or not to have representatives of the responsible parties participate. During the listening sessions, DTSC frequently heard that the ability to engage and ask questions of the responsible parties was important to many community members. On the other hand, since the Group is intended to provide input to DTSC in its oversight role over the responsible parties, there may be a concern that their participation could influence the group's discussions. Also, given the desire by DTSC to focus the Group on providing input to the agency for its decisions, the presence of responsible parties could detract from that focus. The best approach is to invite responsible parties to attend on an as-needed basis depending on the topic of discussion at individual meetings.

Establishing a charter or other principles of participation that define the ground rules and other operating parameters of the group's discussions

On the surface, this may appear to be a potentially daunting task. The charter or principles of participation need to address several facets of what it means to be a part of such a group and how it will operate including:

- Roles and responsibilities of the agency and Group members
- What types of topics members will be asked to address and need to be (or become) familiar with
- Description of any specific tasks or products the Group is expected to accomplish

- The qualifications or characteristics of necessary and appropriate members of the Group
- How meeting agendas are determined
- How meetings will be chaired and/or facilitated
- Grounds for addition, replacement or removal of members from the Group
- How meetings will be recorded and documented
- How meetings will be posted and/or noticed to the public
- Description of any opportunities for public comment during or after meetings
- Any provisions for “sunsetting” or termination of the Group

Fortunately, many successful public participation groups have been established in the past, and the principles for helping them operate successfully are well understood at this point. Rather than attempting to describe all of these proposed features of the SSFL Site public participation group here, Appendix D contains a prototype “Principles of Participation” that addresses these facets of the group’s charter.

Committing the agency resources necessary to sustainably support a public participation group

A detailed estimate of the necessary resources has not been developed, as several factors have not been finalized, including the number of Group members, the frequency and location of meetings and notification procedures. Given that DTSC will be requesting financial support from the responsible parties for the Group, DTSC will be developing a more detailed description in the coming month that will estimate the resources needed. For its part, DTSC has to commit the staff personnel and resources necessary to administer the Group, prepare for and participate in the group’s meetings, and document and respond to the community input it receives. However, the ability to gather together in one place all relevant stakeholders, to educate them on the technical complexities of the site, and obtain their consistent and long-term commitment to providing informed input holds the promise of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of DTSC’s consultation with the community. While the Group will not operate in isolation or to the exclusion of other public participation activities or groups, if the community of stakeholders participates fully, meaningfully and in good faith with the opportunity that a public participation group presents, the benefits will be worth the expenditure of both the agency’s and community’s resources.

# **Department of Toxic Substances Control**

## **Santa Susana Field Laboratory**

### **Public Participation Group**

#### **Principles of Participation**

#### **Representation**

Participants are being sought based upon several qualities:

- Willingness to work cooperatively with other SSFL public participation group (Group) members.
- Commitment to consistently attend Group meetings.
- Demonstrated ability to represent the perspective of a stakeholder group or constituency that is interested in or potentially affected by hazardous contamination at the Santa.Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL).
- Willingness to invest sufficient time to become knowledgeable about technical issues at the SSFL site

Group members are asked to communicate with their respective constituencies to keep them aware of the Group's discussions and ensure that they can faithfully represent the perspectives of their reference group. Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) staff will be available to assist in this communication process, if needed.

#### **Discussion Process**

Group members agree to abide by the following discussion process:

- All perspectives are valued.
- One person speaks at a time.
- All members will have an equal opportunity to participate in discussions.

- Group members treat each other with respect.
- A DTSC contractor will facilitate the meetings.

## **Meeting Attendance**

In order for the process to work effectively, full participation of members will be essential. Group members are asked to commit to attend meetings consistently. If a Group member becomes unavailable to attend a meeting, he or she may send a previously identified alternate to monitor that meeting. The alternate should be briefed by the Group member regarding the status of prior discussions and decisions. Active participation by the alternate is permissible if the alternate does not impede the progress of the Group.

## **Support**

A facilitator will conduct all Group meetings. The role of the facilitator is to ensure all perspectives are heard through a respectful, cooperative discussion process. Group meeting discussions may be audio taped to aid in the preparation of meeting summaries.

## **Meeting Agendas**

DTSC will be responsible for determining and preparing meeting agendas in consultation with Group members. At the conclusion of each meeting, DTSC will solicit suggestions from Group members for items to include in the next agenda and any action items requiring additional research or further discussion. DTSC has final authority on determining meeting agendas.

## **Observers**

Observers are welcome at Group meetings. However, meetings are intended for the benefit of DTSC and the Group members to promote balanced, constructive interaction. Observers will be asked to refrain from commenting during the proceedings. There will be an opportunity for public comment at the end of each meeting.

## **Media and External Communication**

Media present, if any, will be identified for the benefit of Group members. Should the media contact Group representative(s) outside of the meetings, members will be asked not to make public statements about the Group's discussions to the media that would tend to hamper constructive discussions or ongoing Group interactions. DTSC staff and consultants will also refrain from such statements about the Group's discussions. DTSC staff will be available to assist in any communication to the media, if desired. The overriding consideration in all communications by Group members is to honor and sustain the constructive, cooperative process developed by the Group.

## **Information Sharing**

In order to ensure that all members have the same information available to them, all documents will be distributed through the established DTSC point of contact for the Group. SSCC members are asked to provide any materials for distribution to other Group members a minimum of five business (5) days prior to the next meeting, whenever possible. These materials will be provided to all SSCC members by DTSC staff at least three (3) days before the next meeting.

## **Draft Work Product Documents**

During Group meetings, draft work product documents are often distributed in order to facilitate discussions among members. All documents should be marked DRAFT and FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY. Members will be asked not to distribute draft work product documents and/or share them with the media or others in a manner that may elicit community, agency or elected official concern or misunderstanding due to the unfinished and preliminary nature of the documents. DTSC staff will help identify materials that are available and appropriate for Group members to share with the constituencies they represent.

## **E-mail Communication**

Members will be asked not to engage in any e-mail "dialogue" among Group members on agenda items. These e-mail exchanges tend to promote the kind of speculation and incivility that causes understanding and cooperation to unravel and do not constitute true constructive dialogue. As such, Group members will be asked to use the in-person meetings for dialogue and discussion purposes. E-mail lists of Group members are for Group use only.

## **Role of Subcommittees**

At times, smaller group meetings of Group members may or may not be necessary and/or desirable to discuss specific identified technical issues. If such subcommittees are formed by DTSC, all members will have the opportunity to participate.

## **Role and Responsibility of Public Outreach**

Members will be asked to report back to the Group regarding any public outreach that they participate in to keep their respective constituencies aware of the Group's discussions and the issues that the constituencies have identified. DTSC staff and consultants will be available to provide assistance in this communication process, if desired.

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