



Santa Susana Mountain Park Association

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September 2005 Newsletter

PUBLIC RADIO INTERVIEW OF DAN HIRSCH, PRESIDENT OF BRIDGE THE GAP, ON 8/19/05:

Editor's comment: From 1954 to 1983, Rocketdyne performed 21,509 rocket engine tests at the Santa Susana Field Lab. Some 77 % of those were conducted for the Dept. of Defense to test engines for such nuke-tipped rockets as the Navajo, Atlas and Jupiter missiles. In the process, the company slopped 1.73 million gallons of the solvent onto the ground. The solvent was then sluiced into open-air ponds. Approximately 500,000 gallons of this solvent has sunk into the substrata and groundwater underneath the facility and has begun to migrate from under the field lab site. One plume is moving toward Canoga Park in LA County. Nearby residents are concerned about the release of multiple carcinogenic contaminants to the air, water, and soil in the area from the open field lab to the surrounding hills including the Santa Susana Mountain Range, Simi Hills, and the Santa Monica Mountains, as well as increased risk of exposure pathways to residents, agriculture, flora and fauna. The contamination controversy has led to numerous legal actions, many of which have not yet been resolved. Boeing, the parent company of Rocketdyne and current owner of the lab, acknowledges that environmental contamination has occurred, but has disputed many of the claims made against it regarding human health effects.

Radio host's introduction: A recent study called Health Implications of Perchlorate Ingestion by the National Research Council found that infants cannot consume a rate of six parts per billion of a chemical called perchlorate without facing a myriad of development effects. Nursing mothers are at a risk for perchlorate consumption. Most of the perchlorate manufactured in the U.S. is used as a primary ingredient of solid rocket propellant. Wastes from the manufacture and improper disposal of perchlorate-containing chemicals are increasingly being discovered in soil and water. Recently in Simi Valley, here in Southern California, trace amounts of perchlorate were found in well water blended with their drinking water. Officials have downplayed the risk. Daniel Hirsch is the president of the Committee to Bridge the Gap. He joins us on the phone. Welcome, Daniel.

D.H.: Thank you very much.

Q: The source of perchlorate in Simi Valley is supposed to be the Boeing-owned Santa Susana Field Laboratory. What specifically did
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General Membership Program Meeting Monday, September 19, 2005:

Successful public/private partnerships are consistent with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's long-term planning and objectives. Its ecologist, Paul Edelman, has pinpointed all of the land from the Santa Susana Mountains to Santa Monica that the Conservancy wants to acquire and preserve as wildlife "corridors" linking segments of habitat. Corridors allow animals to roam, increase their populations and genetic diversity, forage for more abundant food, and escape from wildfires. Paul will speak on the current status at SSMPA's next general meeting. We hope you can join us for an informative and interesting evening.

SSMPA General Membership Program meetings take place every 3rd Monday of the months during the months of September through November and January through May. Program meetings begin at 7:15 p.m. and generally conclude by 9:00 p.m. The venue is the Rockpointe Clubhouse, 22300 Devonshire, Chatsworth, on the south side, 1 block before entering Chatsworth Park South. Refreshments will be served.

Members are also invited to attend SSMPA Board of Director meetings. Contact Jan Miller at (818) 702-0854 for information.



Dayton Canyon Ridgeline

Sophia Wong

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this laboratory do in order to have this perchlorate leak out?

A: This facility, the Santa Susana Field Laboratory, has been in existence in the Santa Susana Mountains, the hills above Simi Valley and above Canoga Park since the '40s, and it is about 2,800 acres and was used for rocket testing, about 30,000 rocket tests, which continue to this day, plus nuclear reactor development. Perchlorate is a key ingredient in solid rocket fuels; it's also secondarily used in nuclear reactor development. So this facility has very large concentrations of perchlorate contamination in soil and in groundwater at the property, and perchlorate has been found migrating off the property in surface water runoff. In other words, when it rains, the rain carries with it the perchlorate that is contaminating the soil. Several years ago perchlorate was found in monitoring wells in Simi Valley, in about a quarter of the monitoring wells tested. And one of those wells was a few hundred feet from a major drinking water well that was used for the population in Simi Valley. Until a few weeks ago it had been said that that well used for drinking purposes was not affected by perchlorate contamination, but it's recently been revealed that in fact since a year ago they have been finding perchlorate in that well. I should make clear that the level that they're finding in the drinking water supply is below the state's public health goal but is at about the public health goal of other states, like Massachusetts, because there's such a huge disagreement as to how much perchlorate one can tolerate before there are significant adverse effects.



Q: Is this chemical similar to, say, mercury where it builds up in the body, or is the body able to flush it out?

A: It doesn't build up over very long periods of time. What it does is it goes to the thyroid gland and interferes with the uptake of iodine that's necessary for the thyroid to function. The problem is the thyroid gland is absolutely essential for development, particularly the development of the young fetus. So the concern is

long-term ingestion, or ingestion over a short enough period of time that it interferes with thyroid function during that critical developmental period. Our problem is that it appears that the perchlorate has migrated from the Boeing site decades ago, and continues to migrate now, and that the exposures may have been very long term. People in Simi Valley were using the groundwater there exclusively for drinking water purposes in the '50s and '60s; now they mix it with blended water that comes in from outside. But therefore the concentrations may well have been much higher in the past.

Q: How has the federal government responded to this, particularly the EPA, on a national level? Is there a plan for cleanup? Because it's not just Simi Valley, it's many states that have had their groundwater contaminated.

A: I would have to say that the federal response has been nothing short of scandalous. The U.S. EPA a few years ago recommended a one part per billion level as a safe threshold – or dangerous threshold, as the case may be. But the defense department was very angry with this because of course it's the defense department that is largely responsible for perchlorate contamination nationwide. They put a great deal of pressure on EPA to back off of that standard. And in fact EPA now has. So you have a conflict between the economic interests of the defense contractors and of the defense department, and then the public health needs of the public. If they can raise the standard very high, then large amounts of the water that are contaminated with perchlorate will have no cleanup whatsoever. And the longer they can delay resolution of the issue the longer people are drinking perchlorate-contaminated water. It's essentially rocket fuel in your drinking water, and that just isn't good.

Q: Here in Southern California, aside from Simi Valley, there was also recently the discovery of perchlorate contamination near the site of a new development. Can you talk about that?

(Continued on page 4)

Los Angeles River Watershed Project Join the Streamteam!

Volunteers are needed to monitor the water quality of the Los Angeles River watershed surrounding western San Fernando Valley.

Rainwater runs off the hills and filters through the soil recharging our groundwater supplies in underground basins. Fertilizers and pesticides and other manmade chemicals often travel many miles away from their source by underground plumes of water.

The Mountains Restoration Trust received a grant from the State Water Quality Control Board to study the undeveloped areas of the Los Angeles River watershed contributing to the San Fernando Valley Groundwater Basin. MRT staff and their consultants will be conducting the watershed studies and training volunteers to test the water quality in the streams. Water testing will begin next fall and continue once a month for about seven months.

Twenty stream monitoring points will be chosen above and below development and at stream confluences along the foothills of the Santa Susana Mountains and the Santa Monica Mountains. Streamteam volunteers are trained by Heal the Bay to take water measurements and samples for lab analyses. The Streamteam will monitor the creeks once a month for thirty weeks on the 3rd weekend each month beginning in November.

Call Judy Garris, Volunteer Coordinator, at 818-346-7654.

LET'S CELEBRATE

An Ongoing Community Campaign
To Preserve and Protect Historic

Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park

Saturday, September 24, 2005
Chatsworth Park South (West end of Devonshire Blvd.)

Flag Ceremony by ECHO 10:00 AM
Blessing: Ted Garcia - Native American
Chatsworth Park Elementary School
Dick Wells, Musical Director - Simi Prez

*"Never Doubt that a small group of thoughtful
committed citizens can change the world; indeed it
is the only thing that ever has."* Margaret Mead

Sponsored by the Chatsworth Women's Club, Chatsworth Historical Society, Santa
Susana Mountain Park Assoc. and Foundation for Preservation of Santa Susana
Mountains.

For further information, call: 818-341-4582

(Continued from page 2)

A: This is also quite extraordinary. In other words, they found it in drinking water in Simi Valley, which is to the north of the Boeing facility, but to the east of the Boeing facility, in the LA County side – SSFL is on the boundary between the LA and Ventura Counties, so in the West Hills/Canoga Park/Chatsworth area there is also concern that perchlorate may have migrated. A housing development called Sterling Centex, which is only a half-mile from the Boeing border, had never been tested for any of the Boeing contaminants. After an article in the Daily News raising questions about why that had not occurred, two days later the developer sent someone out to take samples. They took samples in Dayton Creek, which drains down from one of the most contaminated areas of the Santa Susana Field Lab. And sure enough, they found perchlorate but most astonishing, these were in absolutely astronomical concentrations. And it has thrown the development into a tizzy – and I must say I have some sympathy for the developer, he was not responsible for the contamination, this is coming from his neighbor. But there has been tremendous political pressure to declare that it is not coming from Boeing, which is the only logical source. Right above this development is a place called "Happy Valley" – a terribly named place on the Santa Susana Field Lab facility – which has the worst perchlorate contamination on the property. And perchlorate was found draining into Dayton Creek and leaving the property in surface water runoff as recently as a couple of years ago.

Q: Where could it have come from in Happy Valley?

A: Well, they tested all sorts of solid rocket fuels. And then they dumped the perchlorate in the ground. And it's a very soluble material. So it dissolves in water and when it rains the rainwater carries it off the property. The developer's consultant claimed it can't be coming from Boeing and made the implication that it was due to some form of sabotage. Somehow, in the one day between the time that the Daily News article ran saying why haven't there been any tests, and the day when the tests occurred – during that one intervening day – someone got into the property and sprayed, with a little backpack sprayer, perchlorate over the stream bed. Now, based on the measurements that were made, this supposed terrorist would have had to acquire approximately one ton of perchlorate to do the spraying. And so it's rather amazing the hoops that not just the developer but the agency are going through to try to protect this perchlorate contamination by Boeing, to argue that Boeing isn't responsible. Now, I understand the incentive for it: if Boeing is responsible for it you're worried about all the other contaminants from the facility, the radioactivity, the heavy metals and so on that may also have migrated off site. But it's staggering to the local community to see these agencies that are supposed to be protecting them, the community, instead lining up so rapidly to protect this polluter.

Q: How easy is it to clean up perchlorate contamination? You said it is a very soluble material.

A: Cleanup is expensive but not terribly difficult technologically. You don't really filter it out, you use resins, ion exchange, but you basically have to take water that's contaminated and run it through

these resins. For soil, you dig up the soil and transport it as toxic waste. It's expensive, and a company like Boeing much prefers to make a few campaign contributions to get regulators to keep off their back rather than spend the money to comply with environmental laws. One little example is that the Regional Water Quality Control Board had cited Boeing about 50 times in the previous five years for violating pollution limits in terms of its discharges. About 50 times it had discharged wastes from the property with toxic materials at levels that were illegal. And the total fine that the Regional Board gave to this massive corporation was only about \$30,000. It almost cost Boeing more to process the check than to pay it. Now, since that time, to show you how effective this had been, there were approximately 20 violations that occurred in the last quarter of last year, and an additional 20 in the first quarter of this year. So instead of the \$30,000 fine having any positive effect, the rate of violations has now actually increased, and the Regional Board staff has done nothing about it, no new fines issued. So it's just always cheaper to make a campaign contribution than it is to comply with the environmental laws of the country. And yet the people who suffer, of course, are the people who are exposed to the toxins.

In closing, we don't have a website, but people might want to look at cleanuprocketdyne.org.



West Hills residents have reported major blasts occurring up at the Boeing site.

The most recent of these was reported to have occurred on May 24, 2005 at approximately 12:35 pm. This blast went on for approximately 90 seconds and consisted of a huge rust colored smoke plume. In sharing this information, it was learned that Boeing does not have a permit for blasting of any kind so it is up to local citizens to report what they see and hear. Send reporting info to blast@cleanuprocketdyne.org. Please include date, exact time, duration of event, and any additional details such as smoke, fumes, color, etc.

Editor's Note: Mitchell Englander, Councilman Greig Smith's Chief of Staff, recently stated that all activity at the site has been halted until further studies can be done. The councilman has serious concerns and wants to make sure the site is clean, as "It is of primary importance that the area be safe before houses are built and people take up residence." Mr. Smith's office has demanded that Centex work diligently on this problem. Agencies are currently examining and analyzing the soil at the site for not only perchlorate but any toxic materials. The City Environmental Affairs Dept., as well as the Environmental Protection Agency, will review the findings. "Nothing will be built at the Dayton Canyon site unless it has been given a clean bill of health."

UPCOMING LOCAL HIKES



Bring water, snack, lugsoles, hat, sunscreen.

Sundays, 9/18 & 10/16 (every 3rd Sunday) - Old Stagecoach Trail & Devil's Slide - 9:00 a.m.

Interpretative "hike into history" in the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. Hike up the Devil's Slide. Moderate 4 mi, 700' gain loop up the Stagecoach Trail. Learn about the colorful history and indigenous plants and animals. From Topanga Canyon Blvd., turn west on Devonshire St., drive into Chatsworth Park S to parking lot. Leaders: Lee Baum (818-341-1850) & Bob Galletly. (*Sierra Club - Santa Susana Mountains Task Force*)

Tuesday, 9/27 - Devils Canyon - 8:30 a.m. Easy-paced 4-1/2 mi, 300' gain nature hike through steep-sided canyon with some boulder hopping over stream. Explore mosaic of plant communities with fire recovery along upper slopes. Short stops for nature interpretations. Meet at north end of Topanga Cyn Blvd (N of 118 Fwy, L on Poema Pl to park). Wear long pants. Leaders: Judy Garris & Ramona Dunn. (*Sierra Club - San Fernando Valley/Santa Susana Mountains Task Force*)

Tuesday, 10/4 - Ahmanson Ranch Parklands - 8:30am. Enjoy our newly acquired Santa Monica Mtns Conservancy land of oaks and rolling hills. 700' gain. Meet at trailhead. Take the 101 Fwy going west, turn north. Go about 1/2 mile on Vanowen to gate on left-hand side. Park. Come & learn about the indigenous plants and animals. Leaders: Ron Ascher & Ramona Dunn. (*Sierra Club - San Fernando Valley*)

Come join us for Breakfast with the Gibbons at the Gibbon Conservation Center (a nonprofit center for the conservation, study, propagation and betterment of the highly endangered small ape, the gibbon; and for the education of the public about the plight of this fascinating primate), on Oct. 23 from 8:30 am to 12:00 noon. Admission is \$30 for 18 years and up, \$15 for age 13-17, \$10 for age 3-12, under 3 years free. Includes a continental-style buffet breakfast, silent auction, a guided tour of the Center led by Alan Mootnick, and a good chance of spectacular gibbon vocalizations. We are located in Santa Clarita, California, about an hour's drive north of LAX, off Hwy 5. For more info and to purchase tickets, visit us at www.gibboncenter.org

Annual Pioneer Day

presented by Chatsworth Historical Society
Homestead Acre, Chatsworth Park South
(west end of Devonshire St.)

Sunday, October 2

1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Chili cook-off

Bake sale

Games

Music by Dave Storm & The Thunder Creek Band

Panning for gold

Spinning and weaving

Quilt display

Petting zoo

Indian artifacts

Origami

"Chores of yore"

Lots more!

Thank you for renewing your membership:

Gail Boudreaux, Tom Siebert, Marilyn & Tom Stout, Lillian Hadaway, Charles M. Litman, Amanda Welbourn, Greg Dubiel, Jeff Pomerantz, Pat Jump, Bunny & Budd Levine, Leland Gassert, Kira Fuchs, Lorie Lussier-Lawrence, Gobind Hira, Nancy Schofield, Don & Evelyn Heim, Kyoko McKelvey (new Life Member) and Gene Clark. Susan Gerke, Newsletter Editor



Santa Susana Mountain Park Association

invites you to JOIN / RENEW (circle one).

Investing in the future of our communities and its resources is probably one of the best expenditures of our time and efforts. Return this cutoff with your contribution lend your support. Make your check payable to SSMPPA and send to SSMPPA, P.O. Box 4831, Chatsworth, CA 91313-4831.

Senior or Student (\$5.00)

Individual (\$10.00)

Family (\$15.00)

Life Member (\$100.00)

Business / Organization (\$25.00)

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Street Address: _____ E-mail: _____

City / State / Zip: _____

Special Interest / Expertise: _____

Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains

Help Save Our Local Natural Areas

on

Saturday, November 5, 2005

- Join us at Casa de Carlos from 5:30-6:30 p.m. for a "Meet & Greet" social hour
- Buy your own drinks
- Stay for a wonderful Mexican buffet dinner at \$15 per adult, \$7.50 for children under 10 years old, starting at 6:30 p.m.
- Casa de Carlos will give a percentage to FPSSM

Ask a Casa de Carlos Hostess for a flyer!



If you have any questions, please call:

- Pearl Turbush, President of FPSSM (661) 242-5506
- Nancy Razanski, Vice President of FPSSM (818) 341-3512

RSVP by October 15, 2005

Make checks payable to FPSSM

Mail to P.O. Box 4831, Chatsworth, CA 91313-4831

Thank you, Casa de Carlos, for your generous support!

FPSSM is a 501(c)(3) organization. If you are unable to attend this fundraising event and would like to give a tax-deductible donation, we would greatly appreciate it!

The purposes of the Santa Susana Mountain Park Association are the protection, preservation, restoration, and enhancement of the Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills as open space lands and wildlife corridors linking the Los Padres National Forest and San Gabriel Mountains, including the Angeles National Forest, to the Santa Monica Mountains; as habitats for plants and animals native to the Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills; as locales of unique geologic formations; as sites of ethnological, archaeological and historical interests; to provide passive recreational opportunities and environmental education opportunities; and, to support the acquisition of new public parks, open space and conservation easements, the expansion of existing parks, participate in the planning of park infrastructure and programs, and support said programs.

Santa Susana Mountain Park Association &
Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains
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