

The Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board Can Help Clean Up SSFL by Ventura County Supervisor Linda Parks, February 2022

We count on the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board (LARWQCB) to protect our water and waterways, one of the most important issues of our time. In their consideration of waste discharge requirements for Boeing's Santa Susana Field Lab (SSFL), it is also our health that is at stake.

There was a partial core melt down of a nuclear power plant at the Santa Susana Field Lab, making it one of the most toxic sites in the nation. The water contamination posed by SSFL is unique, with hundreds of toxic compounds including radionuclides. This is not a typical wastewater or industrial discharger. The approach the LARWQCB takes with SSFL must reflect this unique situation, the severe toxicity of contamination, and the episodic and irregular releases to water and waterways.

There is no other agency that has the focused and independent role of the LARWQCB in protecting water and by doing so protecting human health and the environment. Nor is there another agency that has the staffing, expertise, and enforcement authority to effectively assure this protection. Their independence is particularly important when proponents for cleanup are not only fighting to remove all the harmful contaminants from the site, but also against regulatory capture by Boeing.

Strong oversight and enforcement is essential to protect people. With each passing day that the highly toxic contaminants at SSFL remain unabated, our public's health is put at risk. The sooner it is fully cleaned of toxic contamination, the sooner we can be sure that SSFL will no longer pose a risk to public health or cause cancer, including to children. It is indisputable, health-damaging toxic and radiological material are transported by storm, wind, and wildfires. It is critical that an abundance of monitoring occur to safeguard the public, and that fines for violations are levied, not waived.

Proponents of cleanup ask that the LARWQCB increase, not reduce, their monitoring and enforcement for additional contaminants of concern, particularly those recommended in the Reasonable Potential Analysis. It is entirely possible that contaminants that were not found during one time period or in one location will nonetheless be found in the future. We have seen this before where SSFL pollutants were unearthed by erosion in adjacent Sage Ranch.

We are also concerned that the confidential negotiations between the LARWQCB, Department of Toxic Substances Control and Boeing leaves out the voice of the public. Representatives for residents who stand to be impacted by changes in cleanup requirements deserve a seat at that table. Many are frustrated by the failure to clean up SSFL as well as decisions that favor the polluter at the expense of the public's health. We ask that monitoring is not reduced and that there be no relaxation of numeric standards. Overall, LARWQCB should operate with a great abundance of caution with regard to this very high-risk site.