

**Native American Heritage Commission Sacred Lands Inventory
Santa Susana Sacred Sites and Traditional Cultural Landscape**

NAHC Site No: _____

Date Entered: _____

Site Name: The (Former) Santa Susana Field Laboratory

Counties: Ventura County

Location: Eastern Simi Hills

The nomination includes archaeology sites #s:

CA-VEN-151 through CA-VEN-161
CA-VEN-1065 through CA-VEN-1068
CA-VEN-1072 (NRHP #76000539; Listed as Sacred Land by CNAHC)
CA-VEN-1302 and CA-VEN-1303
CA-VEN-1411 through CA-VEN-1428
CA-VEN-1772 through CA-VEN-1775
CA-VEN-1800
CA-VEN-1803 through CA-VEN-1805

Plus +50 prehistoric isolated artifacts not listed here

And all recently discovered sites in Area I, Area III, and the Southern Undeveloped Area

And while not part of the sacred site listing, other historic resources also exist at the field lab, including:

The National Register Eligible Alfa Test Area
The National Register Eligible Bravo Test Area
The National Register Eligible Coca Test Area

Ownership

Area I, Area III, Area IV, the Northern Undeveloped Area, and the Southern Undeveloped Area

Owner Name: Boeing Company
Santa Susana Field Laboratory
attn: David W. Dassler
Address: 5800 Woolsey Canyon Road
Canoga Park CA 91304-1148

Area II and a small part of Area I

Owner Name: National Aeronautics and Space Administration
attn: Allen Elliott
Program Director Santa Susana Field Laboratory
Address: Marshall Space Flight Center
AS 01
Huntsville AL 35812

Headquarters: National Aeronautics and Space Administration
attn: Mr. Charles Bolden, Administrator
attn: Ms. Olga Dominguez, Assistant Administrator for Infrastructure
Administrator's Office, 9th Floor
300 E Street S.W.
Washington D.C. 20546-0001

Area IV (Managed by the United States Department of Energy)

Attn: Department of Energy
attn: John Jones
Address: 4100 Guardian Street, Suite 160
Simi Valley CA 93063

Headquarters: U.S. Department of Energy
attn: Dr. Ernest Moniz, Secretary of Energy
100 Independence Ave. SW
Washington D.C. 20585

USGS Quad Calabasas 1952/1967 Quad/Topographic map T2N R17W SBBM.
The entire SSFL area is part of the Mexican Period Rancho Simi land grant.

Sacred Site Type / Additional Features

Ethnographic information collected by J.P. Harrington 1916-1917, archaeological and archaeoastronomical studies performed from the 1950s to the 1990s, and most importantly, direct observation by contemporary Native Americans and locally knowledgeable archaeologists, shows that the entire SSFL area is a Traditional Cultural Landscape, and that it includes Sacred/Power areas and Worship/Ritual areas. The site complex present at the SSFL also includes Polychrome and Monochrome pictographs, several loci of Cupules, and a few simple Petroglyphs. The size and the depth of the midden at CA-VEN-1072, and supporting ethnographic information, show that a Village Site was present, and a careful examination of the archaeological deposit at this site would probably show that House Pits are or were present. There are numerous Rock Shelters and

occasional small Caves at the SSFL, and numerous Bedrock Mortars are also present at multiple locations. The often lush native vegetation shows that almost all of the SSFL would also have been a Collection Area. Additionally, Lithic Scatters, including especially fused shale and quartzite, are common across essentially the entire SSFL.

Documentation

Comments on the Documentation.

Until recently, the only part of the Santa Susana Field Lab which written archaeological studies were available for was the National Register of Historic Places Burro Flats Painted Cave site (CA-VEN-1072). Almost all of this information concerns the main Locus 10 panel, and most of this is description of and theories about the paintings and their interpretation. No written study of the many artifacts recovered at the site has ever been written. Available written information has recently been summarized in Knight (2012). In 1917 local Native Americans specifically mentioned the Burro Flats village to John Peabody Harrington (see Attachments 4 and 7).

Attached you will find the following:

- 1- The National Register of Historic Places application for "Burro Flats Painted Cave." The NRHP # is 76000539.
- 2- Recent Investigations at Burro Flats (CA-VEN-1072), Ventura County, California. By Albert Knight. Society for California Archaeology Newsletter 29 (5), December 1995:11-12.
- 3- CA-VEN-1072 Site Record Supplement. By CH2M Hill 2007.
- 4- Three Chumash-Style Pictograph Sites in Fernandeno Territory. By Albert Knight. Society for California Archaeology Proceedings, Volume 26, 2012.
- 5- Integrated Cultural Resource Management Plan for Santa Susana Field Laboratory Ventura County, California, January 2009-2013. Prepared by Marshall Space Flight Center. Huntsville, Alabama. Contains detailed information on Area II
- 6- A copy of the Final Report Cultural Resource Compliance and Monitoring Results for USEPA's Radiological Study of the Santa Susana Field Laboratory Area IV and Northern Buffer Zone, Ventura County, California. By John Minch and Associates, Inc. Contains detailed information on Area IV. Site Records not included.

Other important references (not included here) include:

- 7- J.P. Harrington's 1916-1917 San Fernando Valley Field notes: Fernandeno, Reel #106. See 106-117:3:1 to 106- 117:5-7, and 106- 153:6:1 to 153:6:3. Includes oldest known references to the Santa Susana Field Lab area.
- 8- The First Angelinos - The Gabrielino Indians of Los Angeles (1996 Malki Museum Press/Ballena Press), which provides a good summary of Harrington's notes on the Burro Flats area (Plate 3, pp. 38, 158-161, 166-168).
- 9- State of California Sacred Lands Nomination for the Burro Flats Painted Cave Site (CA-LAN-1072) by Charlie Cooke and Albert Knight . September 11, 2013. On file Native American Heritage Commission, Sacramento, California.

California Indian Consultant

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Chair Los Angeles/Ventura Cultural Research Alliance

Comments / Location Description

The former Santa Susana Field Lab is located on private land in the eastern Simi Hills. The main uses of the field lab were rocket engine testing and atomic energy research. Due to the sensitive and dangerous nature of the uses of the field lab, the public has been almost entirely excluded from access to the area since the late 1940s. Although there have been significant negative impacts to some areas, other areas remain in a mostly natural state. It is now known that prehistoric archaeological sites are common in almost all of the less disturbed areas (at least where recent archaeological surveys and monitoring have taken place, and shown them to be present). Reports for the archaeology in Area II, Area IV, and the Northern Undeveloped Area now exist (see Documentation, Attachments 5 and 6). A draft report for the archaeology of Area I, Area III, and the Southern Undeveloped Area, has recently been provided to the Boeing Company by the CRM firm John Minch and Associates. The report will be available sometime in early 2014.

The best known and possibly the most important location in the greater SSFL site complex is the "Burro Flats Painted Cave." It is of special interest that the "main panel" of paintings is still very bright, especially some of the red paintings. Given the freshness of many of the paintings and given the isolation of the area where the Painted Cave is located, it is likely that the "Burro Flats" site may have been one of the last, if not the last, important ceremonial site in the general region. Even so, we have no way of knowing exactly who the last of the "Old Ones" were, no way of naming the last natives- probably born in the 19th century- who continued to visit Burro Flats during the first decades of the 20th century. Perhaps it was Juan Melendrez of El Escorpion, who was one of the consultants for John Peabody Harrington, in 1917. In any event, the entire Santa Susana Field Laboratory, as well as much of the area surrounding the Field Lab, would have been utilized by the inhabitants of the Burro Flats village.

Beginning in the mid-1970s individual Native Americans were granted occasional access to the Burro Flats Painted Cave area. Access for Native Americans gradually became less restrictive during the last decade of the 20th Century. The first part of the 21st century has seen an even greater easing of access restrictions for Native Americans. All of those who have had the opportunity to visit agree that the Burro Flats Painted Cave and the surrounding Santa Susana Field Laboratory (where numerous Native American sites are now known to exist) are part of a large and important Traditional Cultural Landscape. Today, many indigenous people consider the Burro Flats Painted Cave to be a very important shrine site, and feel strongly that it and the surrounding area are important to their culture. It is for this reason that the Elder's Council of the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians has requested that the entire former Santa Susana Field Lab be described as the Santa Susana Sacred Sites and Traditional Cultural Property, by the State of California.