

# FOOTHILL LEADER

## JPL seeking comments on its plans

Laboratory invites public to review plans for its proposed water treatment plant.

April 22, 2006

By Tracey Laity

LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE - NASA's **Jet Propulsion Laboratory** has invited public comment on a multi-million-dollar proposal to build a new water treatment plant. Construction of the facility would help meet part of **JPL's** goal of cleaning up the local water supply.

Much of the groundwater beneath **JPL** is contaminated with volatile organic compounds and perchlorate caused by waste-disposal practices of the 1940s and '50s in which liquids were dumped into seepage pits or hosed away, NASA officials said.

These chemicals followed the land's contours, seeping downward and eastward from **JPL** into the Arroyo Seco, forcing the city of Pasadena to close four of its wells - the Arroyo Well, Well 52, the Ventura Well and Windsor Well - in 2003.

In an attempt to clear water supplies of the chemicals and prevent further contamination, NASA funded a water-treatment system at the Lincoln Avenue Water Co., in Altadena, in 2004 and built an on-site treatment plant at **JPL** last year.

Earlier this year, **JPL**, managed by the California Institute of Technology, reached an agreement with the city of Pasadena to build another water-treatment plant on the east side of the Windsor Reservoir, near the four closed wells.

It will cost NASA \$3 million to prepare the site and the nearby wells for construction and \$300 million a year to lease the high-tech equipment for decontaminating the water supply, said **Steve Slaten, NASA's remedial project manager at JPL.**

"This is a high-volume treatment plant that will treat 7,000 gallons per minute and is designed to remove all chemicals from the groundwater so that the City of Pasadena can once again supply clean drinking water to its customers," **Slaten** said. "It really is important for us to hear from the public about what they think about our plans because we are usually able to devise a better plan once we incorporate their ideas."

The high levels of volatile organic compounds, found in metal-cleaning solvents, and perchlorate, a component of rocket fuel, can have a detrimental effect on people's health, said **Slaten**, disrupting the thyroid gland and possibly also causing cancer.

NASA officials believe that these contaminants have leached deep into area soil and have not affected humans, plants or animals at surface level.

Any NASA proposal that will increase water availability is a boon for the community, said Bill Pecsí, general manager of the Foothill Municipal Water District.

"This is a milestone - it's fantastic that these two agencies have come to make this agreement, said Pecsí. "It's a good thing for the whole region, to re-establish a reliable local water supply."

The Foothill Municipal Water District imports water from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and distributes it to customers in La Cañada Flintridge, La Crescenta and Altadena. Five out of seven of its member agencies have production rights in the Raymond Basin, an area affected by the contamination, Pecsí said.

NASA's proposal was welcomed by the Arroyo Seco Foundation, a conservation group based in Pasadena, which has been campaigning for a clean-up of the water supply since high levels of perchlorate were first detected in 1997.

"We are very pleased with this proposal and are looking to move ahead," said Tim Brick, the foundation's managing director. "It's really important to get this treatment plant up and running so that we can get these wells back on line," he said.

Residents can submit written comments on the proposal to **Merrilee Fellows, NASA Groundwater Cleanup Outreach Manager, NASA Management Office, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, 180-801, 4800 Oak Grove Drive, Pasadena, CA 91109 or e-mail [watercleanup@nmo.jpl.nasa.gov](mailto:watercleanup@nmo.jpl.nasa.gov) by Friday, May 19.**