



BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN
NUCLEAR DANGERS & A SAFE,
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Winter 2019 Newsletter

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TRUMP ADMIN & BOEING BREAK SSFL CLEANUP AGREEMENTS

Newsom & Cal EPA fight back

by Maria Caine, CBG Research Associate

2019 MARKED THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE partial meltdown at the Santa Susana Field Lab (SSFL), kept secret until Bridge the Gap revealed it 40 years ago. We have worked ever since to get the site cleaned up. A history of broken cleanup promises, unfortunately, has left the site still contaminated.

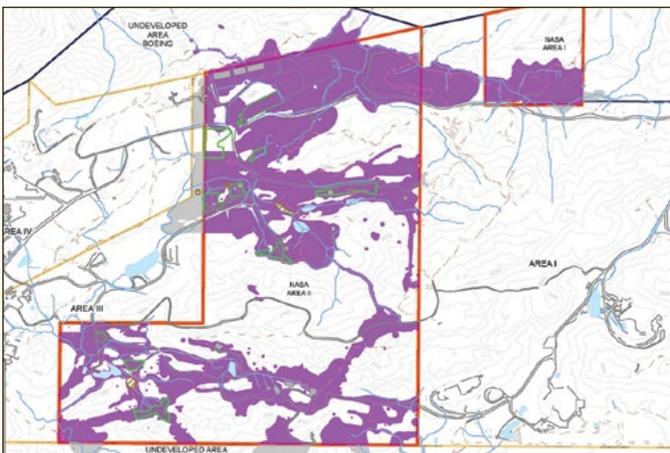
In 2010, the U.S. Department of Energy and NASA signed Administrative Orders on Consent with the state, promising a full cleanup of their portions of SSFL by 2017. Boeing signed a similar agreement in 2007. As of 2019, however, all three have continued to resist their cleanup obligations and the promised cleanups haven't even begun. The Trump Administration recently announced its intention

to ignore the legally binding agreements and leave up to 98% of the contaminated soil not cleaned up.

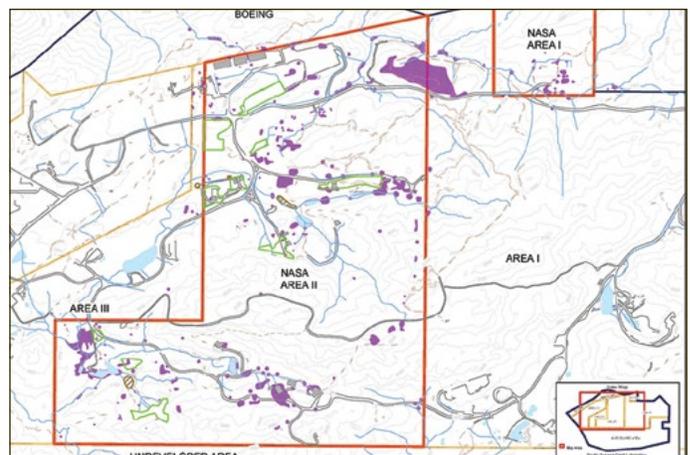
In February, CBG toured SSFL with the newly appointed Secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency, Jared Blumenfeld. We showed him the meltdown site and locations of the many other incidents that left the site heavily contaminated. Later that same day, he met with CBG and community members to hear personal accounts of those affected by the contamination at SSFL and the frustrations of those fighting for its cleanup. The day seemed to have a profound effect on Secretary Blumenfeld, who has since made clear his commitment to a full cleanup of SSFL.

"It's a complete mess," said Blumenfeld at a legislative hearing shortly thereafter.

SSFL continued on page 3



Promised cleanup (in purple)



NASA's newly proposed cleanup (in purple)

HUNTERS POINT UPDATE: FROM CLEANUP TO COVERUP

by Haakon Williams, CBG Research Associate

EVER SINCE MORE THAN eighty Navy ships heavily irradiated by nuclear weapons tests in the Pacific were brought to its shores for “decontamination” beginning in the 1940s, the low-income community of color in San Francisco known as Bayview-Hunters Point has been unfairly burdened by contamination from the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard (HPNS). The toxic legacy from this Superfund site continues to this day.

Last year, the Committee to Bridge the Gap issued a series of reports on HPNS revealing the details of a cleanup gone badly awry. We revealed that nuclear activities at HPNS were far more extensive than previously thought and had the potential to contaminate much if not all of the site; the Navy nonetheless exempted

90% of the site and 90% of the radionuclides of concern from testing; and the cleanup standards the Navy has used are decades out of date and far less protective than current EPA guidance requires. We helped disclose that the Navy’s contractor Tetra Tech was found by EPA to have falsified data at as many as 97% of survey sites at HPNS. And we have shown that plans to retest the site are as flawed as the original fabricated measurements. Our reports ignited a firestorm of media coverage in the Bay area.

In 2019, the Committee to Bridge the Gap released a major new study, “From Cleanup to Coverup,” disclosing how the U.S. Navy jettisoned its promise to clean up the contamination at HPNS and is instead merely covering much of it with thin layers of soil or

asphalt. Companion reports by Dr. William Bianchi and Dr. Howard Wilshire were released alongside the primary report, collectively demonstrating that such covers are not protective of human health. CBG’s reports received front-page coverage from the San Francisco Chronicle.

The new reports showed that such covers cannot prevent contamination from being brought back to the surface and ultimately exposing residents to radioactivity and hazardous chemicals. Covers have failed at other toxic sites around the country and are easily breached by plant roots, animals, erosion, and other processes. Furthermore, despite “institutional controls” supposedly prohibiting soil disturbing activities, the massive planned HPNS redevelopment project (the largest in San Francisco since

the 1906 earthquake) will necessarily tear up the covers and dig up the contaminated soil beneath.

At present, the cleanup of HPNS stands at a crossroads. EPA is supposed to be scrutinizing the Navy’s cleanup standards, after demanding that the Navy evaluate their protectiveness and come up with new standards if the old ones are found to not be protective. We prepared detailed technical critiques of the Navy’s claims and met with EPA to brief them on how the Navy is manipulating the numbers. We encouraged EPA to reject the Navy’s conduct and require the adoption of new cleanup standards that would truly protect the Bayview-Hunters Point community. Will EPA stand firm?

**FULL REPORTS ON HUNTERS POINT:
COMMITTEETOBRIDGETHEGAP.ORG**

SAN ONOFRE, 50 YEARS OF POWER, 500,000 YEARS OF WASTE

By Taylor Altenbern, CBG Associate Director

Every minute a nuclear reactor operates, it produces radioactive waste that will be a hazard for ten thousand generations. Although the San Onofre Nuclear Plant is now shut down, its waste remains.

On August 3rd of last year, a canister containing irradiated nuclear fuel nearly dropped eighteen feet when San Onofre personnel improperly downloaded the canister, causing it to become suspended in mid-air for forty-five minutes. It wasn’t until a whistleblower came forward at a community meeting that the public became aware of the incident. This episode increased the already pervasive mistrust towards Southern California Edison among community members,

who desperately want assurance that they are safe despite 3.6 million pounds of high level waste nearby, a mere hundred feet from the ocean and a couple of feet above groundwater.

In response, Congressman Mike Levin established a Task Force to address concerns over San Onofre’s waste, on which I serve. CBG is also preparing a series of reports addressing the various issues with San Onofre’s spent fuel and setting forth a path forward.

CBG has proposed relocation to a location nearby, higher up and further from the ocean, safer from the hazards of sea level rise, groundwater inundation, coastal erosion, saltwater corrosion, and terrorist attack, until a permanent national waste repository is established. There needs to be a scientifically rigorous new effort to identify the geological setting for such a permanent repository that produces the smallest chance of the waste leaking into the environment over the long term. And our society need to apologize to future generations for having burdened them with our poisons, and cease making any more.

Tyrone Taborn: Key 1970s CBG Figure, Receives National Science Foundation 2019 Public Service Award

by Daniel Hirsch, CBG President



WHAT FEELS LIKE A lifetime ago, a dozen inner city youth came to work at Bridge the Gap as part of a summer jobs program of the “War on Poverty.” Among them was a shy and gifted Tyrone Taborn, then in his early teens.

Tyrone came back to work with us the next summer, and then his mother (a single mom, working two jobs to support her three kids) courageously asked me if I would sign papers to become Tyrone’s guardian, in part so he could get out of the ghetto schools to which he was otherwise condemned and into an integrated one. If he didn’t, she said, she was frightened he would be caught up in the gangs and die. So I became Tyrone’s guardian, and over the next few years he basically grew up at Bridge the Gap.

He proved to have powerful leadership and organizing talents, and became a key CBG staffer. During the school desegregation crisis in LA, with adults fanning demagogic fears of students from different racial, ethnic, and economic

SSFL - CONTINUED

“The level of toxicity, the history there, when you’re on site is depressing. We need, as the State of California, to make sure the federal government does two things. One, that it does what it says it was going to do and, secondly, pays for it.”

The failure to clean up the site puts the surrounding communities at continued risk from migration of the radioactive and toxic chemical contamination. CBG recently helped reveal that the 2018 Woolsey Fire that began at SSFL subsequently resulted in 57 exceedances of safety limits for gross alpha radioactivity, dioxins, arsenic, cyanide, lead and other pollutants leaving the

site in stormwater. We also disclosed that SSFL had previously dismantled a fire station that was right next to where the fire began and torn down tanks holding 2 million gallons of water, raising questions whether the fire would have spread (it burned all the way to the ocean) had those firefighting resources remained. These stories received prominent coverage on NBC-LA and the front page of the LA Times.

Santa Susana continues to be a difficult fight. Despite the breaking of cleanup obligations by the Trump Administration and Boeing, the renewed commitment from the state is a heartening development.

backgrounds being in the same schools, Tyrone created a multi-cultural project of students across the city calming the waters and showing the immense value of learning with and from people of diversity. He ran for the LA School Board, the first student to ever do so.

After attending Cornell, he set up Career Communications Group, a national organization that has helped tens of thousands of young people get out of the ghettos and barrios and into the professions, for which he and his colleague, Dr. Eugene DeLoatch, were honored earlier this year by the National Science Foundation. He has become a national leader, helping countless people of color break through barriers, as he did.

After accepting the NSF award, Tyrone looked out across the gilded marble hall and addressed the hundreds of scientists present, almost all white, in a spellbinding speech without notes, telling them that there remained something terribly wrong in our society that so few of them looked like him, that we still have a long way to go for justice. In my entire life, I have never felt more pride.

50 YEARS - CONTINUED FROM PG. 4

Taborn makes clear, CBG has had an important influence on many in the past 50 years. Current CBG Board member and Webmaster, Anthony Zepeda, who began with CBG as a student 20 years ago, reflected on his time with CBG: “Dan taught me how to think critically. He taught me to demand accuracy and the truth and to never settle for less. This lesson has played a major role in shaping how I view the world and has helped me to be a better attorney and citizen. It is a lesson I continue to learn from and reflect upon daily.”

Recent intern, Faylenn McDonough, said, “Interning for Dan at CBG showed me what it means to persevere and continuously chip away towards the greater good of society. His willingness to share his knowledge and expertise gave me hope in the face of uncertainty.” Tessa Mykel said, “Learning from Dan helped me understand how easy speaking out actually is and how much I have to give to the world.” As Cori Strell put it, “Committee to Bridge the Gap introduced me to my personal power and responsibility.”

And Taylor Altenbern, currently CBG’s Associate Director added: “My journey with Committee to Bridge the Gap began during my second year at UC Santa Cruz. I was captured by the idea that I could affect change and mend the world through policy. As my role has transitioned from student, to Intern, to Research Associate, and finally, to Associate Director, CBG has provided a space for learning, growth, and the opportunity to affect positive social change.”

While celebrating that much has been accomplished, CBG continues the struggle to ensure a safe, sustainable future. Watch for information on upcoming events to mark CBG’s 50th Anniversary in 2020 at our website.



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CBG LOOKS TOWARD 50TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2020

The Committee to Bridge the Gap was born in 1970 in response to the War in Vietnam, which was destroying that country and tearing apart the generations in this one. When the war ended in 1975, Bridge the Gap began decades of work to restrain the nuclear threat, resulting in numerous hard-won victories, each requiring long struggles to hold powerful entities to account. CBG President Dan Hirsch had this to say: "Fifty years of fighting for peace, justice and the environment; and we are still fighting, against challenges greater than any the planet has seen before. We have a new generation helping in that fight."

CBG has played an important role in training that new generation to join the battle. Pictured above are a few of the current interns and staff. As the article on Tyrone

'50 Years' continued on page 3

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