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James Bridenstine
NASA Administrator
NASA Headquarters
300 East Street SW, Suite 5R30
Washington, D.C. 20546

Dear Administrator Bridenstine:

Thank you for this opportunity to draw your attention to an urgent request to cancel the imminent destruction of the historic Coca rocket test stands at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL), near Chatsworth, California. These test stands are close to the Burro Flats Painted Cave site, one of the most elaborate and significant prehistoric rock art sites in California. These test stands are not only a singular part of America's history of unprecedented space exploration—the first manned landing on the moon. In combination with the rock art site, they comprise the only place on earth where our modern world heritage in space converges with a prehistoric reach for the sky..

I grew up in Reseda and Woodland Hills, California, and heard the thunder of rocket engines roaring out of the northwest corner of the San Fernando Valley, saw the glow of their fire reflected off the mountains, and understood America was pioneering the Space Age in my “backyard.”

As Director of Griffith Observatory, the most visited public observatory on the planet, I have, since 1974 celebrated and promoted NASA's achievements, mission after mission. Griffith Observatory receives 1.6 million visitors each year, and our most recent effort to communicate the character, the importance, and the meaning of space exploration to the public was last July's “Golden Moon” operation, with special programming and events for each day of the *Apollo 11* expedition, from launch to landing to return. We are still presenting special programming for the other Apollo missions, as the fiftieth anniversary of each flight arrives.

In addition, for decades, on behalf of Rocketdyne, and later Boeing, I systematically monitored the astronomical performance of the Burro Flats Painted Cave site and other zones in the Burro Flats Painted Cave Complex and facilitated respectful and revelatory visits for Native Americans, rock-art specialists, professional archaeologists, and professional astronomers. My personal familiarity with the site is based on 41 visits from 1979 to the present. Shortly after the 17 January 1994 Northridge earthquake, I was asked to assess what, if any, damage the earthquake may have inflicted on the site. I have been

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deeply involved in the study of California Indian astronomical traditions since 1979, and I participated in the discovery in 1979/1980 of previously unknown interaction of winter and summer solstice sunlight with features of the Burro Flats site. I report this information only to confirm my connection with Burro Flats is neither recent nor superficial.

My publications on ancient and prehistoric astronomy and the cultural dimensions of astronomy worldwide and through time include five books, dozens of research papers, and hundreds of articles.

I have repeatedly discussed the singular and celestial character of the Burro Flats Painted Cave Complex and its relationship, through the Rocketdyne Coca test stands, to the watershed event in the history of the planet, our departure from earth and first touchdown upon another world, the moon.

In my second book, *Echoes of the Ancient Skies: The Astronomy of Lost Civilizations* (Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1983), which is still in print, I explained,

“The paintings, which record the involvement of the Chumash with the sky, are separated by just a ridge from the stands on which the huge moon-rocket and Space Shuttle engines were test fired.”

The cosmographic and astronomical pairing of the Coca test stands and the Burro Flats Painted Cave site, two extraordinary cultural resources, transforms the landscape into a remarkable and unique expression of the human bond with the celestial realm, from prehistoric California to the Space Age. For that reason, the place is irreplaceably significant in the history of space exploration, in the history of NASA, in the history of California, in American history, and in the history of the world.

The information in that last paragraph, included in a 2014 letter to the NASA Administrator, is also quoted in a 21 March 2017 letter to NASA from Members of Congress.

In that letter, Members of Congress strongly advocated comprehensive cleanup of the Santa Susana Field Laboratory and preservation of the heritage of American space flight embodied in the test stands, and they affirmed these are not conflicting goals.

Support for the preservation of the Coca Stands Test Area is also expressed by the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, the recognized Federal tribe in the region. The tribe's current position reflects recognition of the unusual value created by the presence of two remarkably close cultural assets that share a celestial theme.


Preservation of the Coca Stands Test Area is financially advantageous to the rest of clean-up mission at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory.

Preservation of the Coca Stands is consistent with agreement between NASA and the Department of Toxic Substances Control.

The co-location of the Burro Flats Painted Cave Complex and the Coca test stand is exceptional and found nowhere else on earth. Both of these monuments demonstrate our enduring and cross-cultural connection with the cosmos, from antiquity to the present. There will never be another first time to the moon, and the test stand/Burro Flats rock art pairing will never be duplicated.

Thank you considering these additional arguments of support for preservation of the Coca Stands Test Area. They are part of a message we can transmit and a gift that we can give to all of those in the future who did not have the privilege of riding with NASA as we landed on the moon and flew to all of those other worlds of the solar system.

Sincerely,



Dr. E.C. Krupp
Director