

Millions in cleanup bill

Los Angeles Daily News Thursday, May 26, 2005 by Lisa Friedman, Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON -- Southern California would get millions of dollars in environmental cleanup and restoration funding under a bill headed to the U.S. Senate.

The \$29.7 billion appropriations bill approved Tuesday for federal energy and water programs includes \$9 million to continue removing radioactive waste from the soil at Rocketdyne's Santa Susana Field Laboratory in the Simi Hills. That's the amount President George W. Bush requested in his budget proposal, and about half of what the cleanup effort received last year.

"I know we hope to see an increase in '07," said Mike Lopez, the Department of Energy's project manager for Rocketdyne, adding, "What people need to keep in mind is that (the Department of Energy) is committed to cleaning up the site."

In addition to the Rocketdyne funding, Rep. Elton Gallegly, R-Thousand Oaks, also secured \$1.1 million to continue studying the feasibility of removing Matilija Dam and restoring ecological conditions for endangered fish in the Ventura River; and \$2.5 million for the Calleguas Municipal Water District recycling project.

The measure also would include money to help restore a tributary that runs through the Sepulveda Basin, and to rehabilitate the Tujunga Wash; to study ways to improve water quality and mitigate flooding at the Sun Valley watershed; and to dredge the main channel of Los Angeles Harbor to enable bigger ships to enter the port.

Melanie Winter, founder and director of The River Project, said she hopes to see full restoration of the tributary that runs through the Sepulveda Basin.

Noting that more than 10,000 people a day visit the basin, Winter said, "Only a fraction of the people who go there are even cognizant that the rivers and creeks are there."

The bill also included some nonwater projects, including \$500,000 to fund a pediatric cancer research project at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles.