



DTSC Helps Debut a New High School in Salinas

Construction is underway for the Salinas Unified School District's first new high school in 21 years. It's a project that couldn't have been done without the [Department of Toxic Substances Control](#) (DTSC), which oversaw the cleanup of the former farmland the school is being built on. The school is expected to open for the 2018-19 academic year.

DTSC has the only comprehensive school environmental evaluation program in the nation. The unit ensures that prospective school sites receiving state funding are cleaned up to a level that protects students and staff who will occupy the property.

Mellan Songco is the DTSC project manager for the future school site on Rogge Road in Salinas. The property had been used for farming row crops since 1956. Sampling revealed lingering pesticides that required the removal of about seven truckloads of soil, Songco said.

The school district demolished a vacant ranch house and other structures on the property. Under DTSC oversight, crews then dug out pesticide-polluted soil and put it in dump trucks to be hauled away to a regulated landfill for disposal.

In April, the school district broke ground on the two-story, 39-acre school. Rancho San Juan will feature 49 classrooms, a gymnasium, stadium, and athletic fields, according to news reports on the ground-breaking.

This is the latest in a long line of projects for DTSC's schools' unit. Currently, the unit is working on 119 active school projects that will provide more than 3,200 classrooms for 83,000 students.

Songco said this project goes to the core of DTSC's mission: preserving public health and cleaning up polluted sites and making them productive.

Below: DTSC contractors use a excavation equipment to fill dump trucks with polluted soil to get the site ready for a new 39-acre high school.

Inset: A worker sprays water on the area to control dust.

