

May 31, 2006

To: San Francisco Harbor Safety Committee
From: Joan Lundstrom, Chair and Marc Bayer, Chair PORTS Work Group

Proposed Additional Harbor Safety Plan Recommendation to Support PORTS
(Physical Ocean Real Time System) in San Francisco Bay

Background:

For several years the San Francisco Harbor Safety Committee (HSC) has struggled to secure permanent funding for the Physical Ocean Real Time System (PORTS) in San Francisco Bay to provide real time tide, current, and wind data to the maritime community. The San Francisco Harbor Safety Plan (pg. 160) states:

“II.2. The Harbor Safety Committee urges that the OSPR Administrator support P.O.R.T.S. as a high priority and that OSPR continue to seek and allocate funds to maintain the system. The Committee recommends that the Marine Exchange of the San Francisco Bay Region continue to operate, maintain and support the uses of the P.O.R.T.S. program.”

Because PORTS lacks a designated funding source, the system began shutting down beginning September, 2005 with final shut down anticipated by the end of 2005. However, through vigorous efforts by the HSC, additional funding for operation and maintenance was secured from OSPR and Boating and Waterways for another two to three years. The HSC committed to reanalyze the existing system to become more responsive and effective and to renew its efforts to gain permanent funding within the next few years.

Recently, the other four California Harbor Safety Committee, having expressed interest in PORTS for all the harbors, met at OSPR in Sacramento for a first-time review of the various harbor systems for tide, current and wind measurement. All agreed on the proven value of PORTS to our harbors, particularly during storms which buffet the Coast. There was consensus to work together to have a statewide uniform PORTS system certified by NOAA, to have permanent financing by the state of California, and to be have administrative oversight by OSPR.

For the Harbor Safety Committees have a strong, united position, the San Diego, Los Angeles/Long Beach, and Humboldt Bay HSC's are now incorporating similar language in their updated Harbor Safety Plans. We recommend that San Francisco HSC do the same.

Proposal: Add the following recommendation to the San Francisco Safety Plan:

“II.3. The Harbor Safety Committee recommends that a statewide uniform system of PORTS, certified by NOAA, be established in California waters.

PORTS should be permanently financed by the State of California and/or NOAA as there is broad public benefit in terms of marine safety, protecting the environment, use by recreational boaters, academia, and preventing oil spills in California waters. Safety of navigation in our harbors is highly dependent upon real time tidal, current, and wind information. OSPR, as an agency, should continue its oversight role.”