



DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

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August 27, 2004

Dr. James H. Butler
Strategic Planning Office
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Room 15755
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear Dr. Butler:

The Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) is the state authority which promotes the safe transit of commercial shipping off California's coast and in her harbors. One of the many facets of our program is the support and management of Harbor Safety Committees in California's five major ports.

In the late 1990s, OSPR, in partnership with the San Francisco (SF) Harbor Safety Committee (HSC), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the SF Marine Exchange, and the California Department of Boating and Waterways, funded the SF Bay Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System (PORTS) demonstration project. OSPR's original commitment to fund a one-year demonstration phase was extended to three years, terminating in 1999 at a cost of approximately \$603,000. OSPR could not continue to fund SF PORTS indefinitely.

Since then, SF PORTS has struggled to remain on-line. On occasion it has been partially shut down, and has even been faced with going completely off-line due to lack of operations and maintenance (O&M) funding. It has been kept afloat with small, one-time O&M grants from the California Department of Boating & Waterways and with a grant from a local environmental enhancement trust fund. There is, however, no source of steady funding to ensure that SF PORTS operates at peak effectiveness on a continual basis. Allowing this important system to fall from service would be a detriment to safe navigation on SF Bay.

Attempting to secure local O&M funding for SF PORTS has been a particularly challenging undertaking. Unlike the other PORTS-equipped California harbor (Los Angeles/Long Beach), SF Bay has major reaches of water outside the jurisdiction of any port authority which are traversed by large commercial vessels. Port authorities are reluctant to fund the O&M of sensors which are located outside their boundaries. They look to state and federal authorities for such funding. In light of California's current

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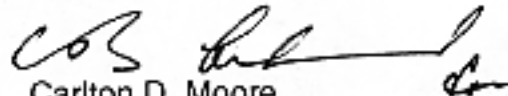
budget difficulties, there is little chance that SF PORTS could receive an ongoing appropriation from the state general fund.

Elsewhere in California, in 2001 OSPR expended approximately \$233,000 to establish PORTS in Los Angeles/Long Beach (LA/LB) Harbor. Coming from a case settlement, these state funds were nonrecurring. This required OSPR to negotiate an O&M funding commitment from the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach in order to keep LA/LB PORTS operational. While LA/LB PORTS has a more stable source of O&M funding than does SF PORTS, it is OSPR's position that the public would be best served if all PORTSs were consistently funded from a single, stable, federal source.

You will be receiving requests from the SF HSC and the SF Bar Pilots to include PORTS development and O&M funding in NOAA's 2005-2011 strategic plan. OSPR agrees with the findings of both parties in that PORTS enhances navigational safety, environmental protection and the efficiency of commercial shipping. PORTS also provides thousands of recreational boaters with useful information on environmental conditions. Additionally, OSPR and other agency personnel use SF PORTS data, especially in the Carquinez Straight area, in the tactical planning of responses to oil spills.

For all of these reasons, OSPR strongly endorses the SF HSC's and SF Bar Pilots' request to include funding for the development and O&M of PORTS in NOAA's 2005-2011 strategic plan. Thank you for this opportunity to comment. If I can be of any assistance in this matter, please do not hesitate to write or call at the letterhead address or telephone number.

Sincerely,



Carlton D. Moore
Administrator
Office of Spill Prevention and Response

cc: Captain Peter McIsaac
President
San Francisco Bar Pilots

Ms. Joan Lundstrom
Chair
San Francisco Harbor Safety Committee