

# Harbor Safety Committee

of the San Francisco Bay Region

*Mandated by the California Oil Spill  
Prevention and Response Act of 1990*

July 13, 2007

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
235 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515-0508

RE: Request for NOAA Appropriation of Operation and Maintenance Costs for the Physical Ocean Real Time System (PORTS) for the Nation's Harbors and Waterways

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

On behalf of the Harbor Safety Committee of the San Francisco Bay Region, I urge your support for \$3.5 million in full funding through the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science for the national operation and maintenance costs associated with the Physical Oceanographic Real Time System (PORTS) through NOAA. The California State Legislature established Harbor Safety Committees seventeen years ago in response to the catastrophic Alaskan oil spill to promote harbor safety in our five main harbors by preventing maritime accidents. The San Francisco twenty-member committee is comprised of representatives of the port authorities, the maritime community, labor, recreational boaters, ferry operators, an environmental organization, the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, the Coast Guard et al.

PORTS provides real time tide, current and wind data vitally important in San Francisco Bay with its microclimates of weather, fog and water movement. Mariners utilize this real time data to provide safe navigation in the fourth busiest harbor in the United States. During the rainy season, pilots guiding oil tankers in Carquinez Strait rely on PORTS when they find that tide tables—based on twenty-two year averages—are inaccurate due to heavy storm runoff.

Beginning in the late 1990s, NOAA installed some 13 PORTS throughout the country, including a demonstration system in San Francisco Bay in 1996 that is used by a wide variety of the maritime community and academia. However, the San Francisco PORTS has struggled to remain on-line and partially shut down due to the lack of a dedicated source of funds for operation and maintenance. Various grants have kept this system afloat. The system in Delaware shut down

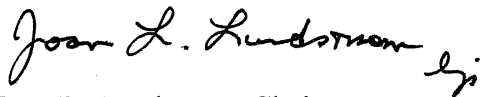
temporarily for the same reasons – no dedicated funding and a broad range of users. The Port of New York and New Jersey struggles each year to find local funding to keep the system operational. The Mississippi Port Authority for the lower Mississippi does not have funding to support continuing operations of a proposed system. Thus you can see that the funding problem is not limited to San Francisco Bay, but rather affects harbors and waterways throughout the country.

The PORTS program is an important navigational safety tool in the San Francisco Bay complex, which extends to the Ports of Sacramento and Stockton. Our region has a tremendously diverse mix of vessel traffic: chemical and oil tankers, container ships and car carriers, cruise ships, tugs and barges, commute and tourist ferries, fishing boats, recreational craft including kayaks, and the Coast Guard. PORTS data assist vessel operators in making intelligent decisions to avoid groundings and collisions, increasing traffic-handling capabilities and safety. Preventing vessel accidents that might result in oil spill pollution, PORTS further enhances protection of significant natural Bay resources that are of national and state importance. In addition, NOAA utilizes PORTS for its own weather service and for tracking oil spills should one occur.

For these reasons, the Harbor Safety Committee urges your support to fully fund the operation and maintenance of PORTS for the nation. This appropriation of \$3.5 million is needed in addition to the funding necessary for NOAA to administer the PORTS program and validate PORTS data.

Thank you for your support in this important matter. Should you want further information regarding PORTS, please contact me at (415) 461-4566.

Sincerely,



Joan L. Lundstrom, Chair  
Harbor Safety Committee of the  
San Francisco Bay Region

cc: Harbor Safety Committee of the San Francisco Bay Region  
San Francisco Marine Exchange, Lynn Korwatch, Executive Director  
State Office of Spill Prevention and Response, Lisa Curtis, Administrator  
Humboldt Bay Harbor Safety Committee, David Hull, Chair  
Los Angeles/Long Beach Harbor Safety Committee, Capt. John Strong, Chair  
Port Hueneme Harbor Safety Committee, Capt. Andrew Harvey, Chair  
San Diego Harbor Safety Committee, Capt. Debra Marks, Chair