

Harbor Safety Committee

of the San Francisco Bay Region

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

May 3, 2009

Department of General Services
Executive Office
P.O. Box 989052
West Sacramento, CA 95798-9052

Attention: Will Bush, Director

Subject: Fiscal Year 2008-09 Budget Change Proposal: Department of Fish and
Game Local Assistance: Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR): Issue 103:
Physical Oceanographic Real Time System (PORTS) Upgrade: \$300,000

Dear Mr. Bush:

On behalf of the Harbor Safety Committee (HSC) of the San Francisco Bay Region, I am writing to strongly urge your immediate approval of the Budget Change Proposal to upgrade the Physical Ocean Real Time System (PORTS) for the San Francisco Bay Region.

San Francisco PORTS was installed over a decade ago by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) because the accuracy of local tidal current charts could not be verified. The system provides quality-tested, real time information on tides, currents, salinity and winds essential to safe navigation. PORTS is part of a national real time information system in major U.S. harbors monitored for reliability by NOAA in Silver Spring, Maryland. To maintain quality control NOAA dictates the components of the system.

Last year, Governor Schwarzenegger recognized PORTS as an important tool in San Francisco Bay “to prevent another devastating oil spill of the magnitude we saw last fall” – referring to the Cosco Busan spill of 53,000 gallons of oil, costing \$90 million for clean up and damages. The proposed upgrade of PORTS is part of the HSC recommendations to the Governor to prevent such a spill.

We do not understand the reluctance of the Department of General Services to approve this vital upgrade, the costs of which are available in the Oil Spill Prevention and Administration Fund (OSPAF), a surcharge on oil entering the state by ship and pipeline to prevent oil spills. The PORTS upgrade targets key locations within the multiple microclimates of the Bay region. The Bay Region, the fourth busiest oil tanker trade in the U.S., has 5 refineries and more than 20 oil terminals within a span of 50 miles. Pilots

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need site-specific information for tankers en route to the Chevron Long Wharf, Richmond and along Carquinez Strait, particularly during inclement weather to navigate under several bridges. Another proposed site, Anchorage #9 is a highly used staging area for refueling operations. The Port of Oakland, an important site for proposed sensors, is a microclimate of wind forces affecting container ships. .

The Harbor Safety Committee has documented the benefit of PORTS not to only to pilots and tug masters in safely navigating the foggiest harbor in the nation, but also its use by the State Lands Commission Marine Division in determining safe oil transfers, by refueling operators, commute ferry operators, and oil spill responders. Additionally, governmental agencies, academia and recreational boaters account for the highest number of users.

The San Francisco HSC was established by the state legislature almost twenty years ago to make recommendations for safe navigation in the Bay Region. The twenty-one member committee is comprised of ship, tanker, tug and barge, and ferry operators, four Port authorities, bar pilots, Coast Guard Captain of the Port, environmental representatives, recreational boating, et al. Since 1996 the HSC has provided guidance over PORTS through public meetings. The proposed upgrade is the direct result of evaluation and specific recommendations from the Harbor Safety Committee, of critical importance to preventing vessel accidents and protecting the environment.

In conclusion, I urge you to expeditiously approve this vital upgrade of PORTS, of proven benefit with an available funding source. With only two months left in the current fiscal year and months of delay since this proposal was sent to your department, I request your earliest response. Should you have any questions, please call me at (415) 461-4566.

Sincerely,

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

cc: Harbor Safety Committee
Pete McIsaac, President, San Francisco Bar Pilots
Steve Edinger, OSPR Administrator
Assemblyman Jared Huffman

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