

Summary of Port of Redwood City Meetings Washington Week 2006

This year's Port of Redwood City Washington week condensed a week's worth of meetings into two very busy but very productive days on Capitol Hill and at the Federal agencies. Tremendous progress was made on the pursuit of funding for Bair Island restoration and the essential maintenance dredging of the Redwood City Navigation Channel. In fact, we believe, following these meetings, that the level of support for a very significant sum of federal funds (\$6 million) to initiate Bair Island restoration and to conduct the maintenance dredging, is at unprecedented levels. This bodes well for keeping the channel dredged as close as the full authorized depth as possible, which is essential to maximize the tonnage flowing through the port. As tonnage keeps flowing at record levels, the recognition by the Corps of Engineers Headquarters for the need of annual maintenance dredging and for channel deepening was gratifying. The Chief of Navigation, in fact, suggested that as long as the District and Headquarters were aware of the actual new tonnage figures, the port would be elevated to a higher priority for dredging funds nationally.

It is clear that Congressional support both from both California Senators, as well as Congresswoman Eshoo and Congressman Lantos for the Port and for Bair Island restoration is secure.

While Congress and the President attempt to grapple with record Federal deficit spending by reducing funding for domestic programs such as navigation and environmental projects, we are optimistic that our funding requests will be successful. The visit of Commissioners Dodge and Garcia, and Mike, were extremely helpful in briefing key decision makers at the Federal agencies, and on Capitol Hill on the status of the projects and specific needs. These briefings and interactions, described below, have led to our current optimistic view for the upcoming legislative session of Congress.

Meeting w/ Chris Thompson, Office of Sen. Feinstein

Chris handles appropriations requests for Sen. Feinstein. We explained the need for dredging in FY-07 and how the dredged material may be used to restore Bair Island. Chris seemed very interested (perhaps more interested than usual), and was familiar with the Bair Island project. We mentioned the possibility of two requests for funding -- \$6 million for the Corps to conduct dredging and Bair Island site preparation, and \$3 million for Fish & Wildlife to undertake other restoration activities. Chris confirmed that obtaining funds in the F&W budget was extremely difficult, and seemed to suggest that obtaining Corps funding would be less challenging. He asked how we would proceed if an amount less than \$6 million was obtained, and we affirmed that any funding would be useful,

and that if we could get close to the \$6 million mark, there might be other ways to fill the gap.

Meeting with Jenny Quick and Jeff Rosato, Office of Sen. Boxer

Jenny and Jeff both handle appropriations requests for Sen. Boxer. Jeff also handles environmental issues, and is the person with whom the group met in 2005. Jeff was very familiar with the Bair Island project, and pleased to hear that the dredged material had already been tested and found suitable for use at Bair Island. We also discussed the WRDA provision that Sen. Boxer was able to get into the Senate WRDA bill, authorizing the Corps to dredge Redwood City Navigation Channel on an annual basis. This provision is not in the House WRDA bill and will thus be a subject of debate during the House-Senate Conference, once the Senate finally passes the bill. Jeff affirmed that his boss will do all she can to keep this provision in the bill that is ultimately enacted into law.

Meeting with Ron Grimes, Office of Rep. Lantos

Ron handles transportation and appropriations issues for Rep. Lantos, and also serves as Legislative Director. Ellen Johnck of Bay Planning Coalition arranged this meeting to discuss the need for funding for the Bair Island project. Ron was familiar with the project and assured the group that Rep. Lantos would sign the letter to appropriators in support of our two Bair Island funding requests. We also briefly discussed the plans for ferry service to Redwood City, as Ron was actively involved in obtaining funding for the Oyster Point service.

Meeting with Steve Stockton, Barry Holliday, Kenneth Zwickl and Mark Pointen, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Steve Stockton, the new Deputy Director for Civil Works, has replaced Rob Vining as the highest ranking civilian at the Corps. Barry is Chief of Navigation projects and Ken serves on the South Pacific Division Regional Integration Team – the key point person for all Congressional requests relating to the Port of Redwood City. This was an extremely productive meeting. Barry revealed that the Waterborne Statistics, which are used by the Corps and OMB to prioritize projects, showed the Port had NO tonnage in 2005. He urged the Port to work with the District to assure that this number is corrected ASAP. When Mike showed Barry the latest cargo numbers, Barry was visibly impressed, and said that the current cargo tonnage moves the Port out of the “low use” category, which will help immensely in obtaining dredging money. He suggested that the Port meet with the Corps District right away to update the tonnage numbers and to request the Corps to conduct a 5-year estimate of Federal funding needs for both maintenance dredging and the deepening project. Ken confirmed that he is the person that appropriations staff will contact about our appropriations requests. He also urged us to meet with the District folks to make sure they give

him all the right talking points for our project. Attached is an email to Joel Pliskin at the District summarizing the issues discussed with Corps HQ and requesting a meeting for Mike this week.

Meeting with Bill Hartwig, and Chris Pease, US Fish & Wildlife Service

Bill Hartwig is the Director of the National Wildlife Refuge System and Chris Pease is the Chief of the Wildlife Resources Branch. Mr. Hartwig had very little time to spend with us as he was heading up to testify on Capitol Hill. He stated that although Bair Island is an important project for the agency, it is really the District F&W offices that take the lead in such projects, and that they have sufficient autonomy to get them done without much input or direction from F&W HQ. Neither Hartwig nor Pease had heard from anyone else other than the Port on this particular project.

Short Sea Shipping Meeting with Michael Gordon, Maritime Administration and Paul Bea, Short Sea Shipping Council

This was an interesting discussion of what short sea shipping opportunities are currently being pursued and what the role of the Federal government ought to be in stimulating short sea shipping. Right now, other than some government financing programs, there are few Federal incentives to encourage increased short sea shipping options. There are, in fact, a few Federal disincentives, including the Jones Act and Harbor Maintenance Tax. It was clear that this Administration is unlikely to do much to stimulate short sea shipping, and that any innovations will need to come from private industry.

Meeting with Steve Keenan, Office of Rep. Eshoo

Steve handles transportation and appropriations requests for Rep. Eshoo, and also serves as Legislative Director. We started the meeting by offering our enthusiastic thanks to Steve for his strong support on the Bair Island project and related dredging request. Mike provided Steve with updated cargo numbers that we had shared with the Corps. We encouraged Steve to work with the Corps' Legal office to ensure that the Report language we proposed, authorizing the Corps to use Operation & Maintenance funding to prepare the Inner Bair Island disposal site, will provide the authorizing needed by the Corps. We also talked about the need for obtaining some funding for the deepening study, emphasizing that any amount of funding will help us to get this project into the President's budget request for FY-08 as an "ongoing" project.

Meeting with Ryan Seiger and Geoff Bowman, House Transportation & Infrastructure Subcommittee on Water Resources & Environment

Ryan and Geoff handle Corps projects in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) for the Democratic and Republic Committees members. Both were

sympathetic to our desire to give the Administration direction to dredge Redwood City Navigation Channel on an annual basis. However, they confirmed that the House Committee members on both sides of the aisle are reluctant to a) tell the Corps how to do their job, and b) tell the Corps that they may do something they clearly already have the authority to do without legislation. They said they have received several similar requests, all apparently suggested by the Corps itself. They recognize that funding is a problem, but don't want to be in the business of telling the Corps how to prioritize the funding they do get. Staff did not, however, speculate as to what would happen in Conference if the Senate conferees feel strongly about keeping the Redwood City provision.

Meeting with Roger Cockrell, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy & Water

We have met with Roger, who handles Corps funding requests for all Democratic Members, in past years. He started by telling us about the 300+ authorized navigation projects that did not received funding in the President's FY-07 budget. He wanted us to know we're in good company. But he was very impressed with the cargo tonnage numbers and encouraged us to get them to the Corps so that we increase our chances of being in future budget request, and thus not reliant on an appropriations "add." He was unfamiliar with the Bair Island project and the nexus with our dredging request, so this meeting was important to assure that the Appropriations Committee gives appropriate consideration of our \$6 million request.

Meeting with Rep. Anna Eshoo

Unfortunately, due to the fact that Rep. Eshoo was giving remarks on the House Floor at the very time we were scheduled to meet with her, we were unable to meet with the Congresswoman personally. We had a very brief follow up meeting in the Capitol with Steve Keenan, offering us an opportunity to update him on our meetings since visiting with him the day before.