



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**OSCAR PEÑA, VENTURA PORT DISTRICT GENERAL MANAGER,
ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT AFTER 20 YEARS OF SERVICE**

VENTURA, CA – After serving a distinguished career with the Ventura Port District in Ventura, California, General Manager, Oscar F. Peña will officially retire April 30, 2019. Peña has been at the helm of Ventura Harbor for 20 years.

Peña administers the management, leasing and dredging for the 274-acre mixed use recreation and commercial harbor under the direction of a five member Board of Port Commissioners. The Ventura Harbor encompasses 100 plus tenants that provide a myriad of services to residents, boaters, fisherman, and visitors.

Today, the Ventura Port District employs 35 full-time employees and generates \$8 million in annual revenue to the Port District. Ventura Port District Board Chairman Chris Stephens says, “Under Peña’s leadership the Port District has grown into an economically diverse and fiscally sound community asset in which the City can be proud.”

A Ventura resident for 27 years, Peña cites several key accomplishments during his 20-year employment. With Peña at the helm, the commercial fishing industry in the harbor now houses more than forty purse seine vessels which export California Market Squid to a global market. This commercial fishing industry creates 215 jobs in the Ventura region and can generate approximately \$20 million annually into the Ventura County economy.

Ventura Council Member Cheryl Heitmann shares “As the City’s liaison to the Port District for many years, Mr. Peña has established effective working relationships with public agencies, the private sector and tenants throughout the harbor.”

Most notably, Peña negotiated a new 50-year ground lease in early 2000 with Portside Ventura Harbor, a waterfront development with a 300-unit residential complex, 20,000 square feet of visitor serving commercial space, a park for the public and a recreational marina.

Michael Sondermann, President of Sondermann Enterprises Inc. and Partner of Portside Ventura comments, "I'm grateful for the collaborative efforts Mr. Peña delivered over the last 20 years to bring Portside Ventura Harbor to fruition. His knowledge of how complicated private-public-partnerships work was instrumental in getting Portside to the finish line."

As a former commercial real estate executive in the private sector for 20 years, Peña contracted with the Port District to provide property management and leasing services at Ventura Harbor Village in 1992. He implemented an aggressive marketing strategy which improved occupancy levels from an initial 60 percent in 1992 to nearly 96 percent today. These key initiatives have contributed significantly to attracting more visitors to the seaside destination.

After seven years of providing property management and leasing services to the District, the Ventura Port District hired Peña as the new General Manager of Ventura Harbor in July 1999 where he is credited with contributing to the Port District's long-term economic vitality. "In his role as General Manager, Peña has significantly transformed the financial health and resilience of the Port District," notes past member and Board Chair of the Ventura Port District, Ed McCombs. "Mr. Peña has led the Port District from bankruptcy to its current solid financial state, positioning the Ventura Harbor as a major asset of the City."

In 2001, he encouraged Island Packers, the primary concessionaire to the Channel Islands National Park, to relocate their business to a more prominent location, significantly enhancing the visibility and charters to the Channel Islands National Park. In 2006, Peña invited and negotiated a new Ventura Harbor Village lease with popular Santa Barbara restaurant, Brophy Bros. Seafood Restaurant & Clam Bar.

"I've greatly enjoyed working with tenants in the harbor and a dedicated staff that has contributed to the District's success over the years. Needless to say, many volunteer board members have provided the leadership needed to make the Ventura Harbor what it is today," states Peña.

During his career at the Port District, Peña has been extremely active in the community as a member of the Ventura Chamber of Commerce Board, serving on the Executive Committee. A champion for Ventura tourism for the past 20 years, Peña served as Ventura Visitors & Convention Bureau's Chair and board member with a focus on increasing tourism revenue.

Under a new short-term agreement, Peña's expertise will be utilized as the Business Operations Manager for the Port District, where he will oversee real estate transactions and special projects until a complete transition is made.

Upon retirement, Peña will focus on rebuilding his home which was destroyed in the Thomas Fire and remain active in the community organizations. He also plans to spend more time with his wife and three daughters and looks forward to traveling.

Brian Pendleton, currently the Deputy General Manager for the Ventura Port District, has been appointed at the April 18th Board of Commissioners Meeting pending negotiation and a contract approval, as the next General Manager for the Ventura Port District. For more information on Ventura Port District, please visit VenturaHarbor.com.

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