

**VENTURA PORT DISTRICT
BOARD COMMUNICATION**

STANDARD AGENDA ITEM 1
Meeting Date: October 7, 2026

TO: Board of Port Commissioners
FROM: Brian D. Pendleton, General Manager
Todd Mitchell, Deputy General Manager
SUBJECT: Bait Pen Feasibility Study

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Port Commissioners receive a presentation on the outcome of a Bait Pen Feasibility Study prepared for Ventura Harbor.

SUMMARY:

On November 12, 2025, the Board of Port Commissioners approved the Parcels 20 and 14 Redevelopment Project, following approvals by the City of Ventura and the California Coastal Commission. The developer at that time and the new Master Lessee of the parcel requested that the redevelopment project not be obligated to include live bait pens as a project condition. That request was discussed and public comments were received. The project was approved without the requirement for live bait pens to be a part of the redeveloped project but did allow for them.

Staff retained consulting firm Kimley-Horn to evaluate several locations within Ventura Harbor for the feasibility of live bait pens, the report for which is attached and will be presented to the Board.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- 1) Maintain a safe, navigable, and resilient harbor.
- 2) Advance the harbor's vibrant, working waterfront in support of commercial and recreational fishing and boating.
- 7) Provide high-quality Harbor and coastal visitor-serving amenities, services, facilities and infrastructure.

5-YEAR OBJECTIVES:

- F) Support current and future commercial fishing and sustainable aquaculture industries. Maintain and improve working waterfront facilities and infrastructure.
 - 2) Continue improvements of District's Working Waterfront infrastructure.
- M) Collaborate with Master Tenants and National Park Service to plan, improve, and develop the Harbor in a financially and environmentally sustainable way.
 - 1) Engagement and support of Master Tenants for successful business operations at the Harbor.
 - 2) Evaluate opportunities for Parcel Development.

BACKGROUND:

The Parcels 20 and 14 Redevelopment Project received approval from the City of Ventura on April 25, 2024, followed by the California Coastal Commission on July 9, 2025.

The Coastal Commission staff expressed concern about the limited number of small boat slips, defined as slips for vessels 36 feet or shorter. However, they acknowledged that the 2023 Project included slips for recreational sport fishing boats, which enhance public access to the ocean. Additionally, the inclusion of dry boat storage was recognized as a more affordable alternative to in-water slips. To address the Commission's concerns, DMH agreed to a modest increase in the number of small boat slips.

In response to public feedback regarding navigational safety, DMH revised the configuration of the easternmost dock. The dock's length was reduced, and the distance between it and the Portside dock system was increased to 220 feet. This change resulted in a smaller marina footprint and the

removal of live bait wells in use by recreational sport fishing operations and other recreational fishers within the harbor.

During the Board's consideration of the project in the fall of 2025, the business entities and members of the public that purchase live bait shared their concerns that a lack of access to live bait will be a detriment to their operations and to recreational fishing.

In response to Board direction at the time of the project review, staff assessed the live bait operations through discussions with both Derecktor Marine Holdings (the previous master tenant) and Argo-Suntex (the current master tenant), the sport fishing subtenant, and the subtenant's bait supplier. The latter two both expressed interest in continuing and expanding live bait services for the sport fishing industry and public.

STUDYING ALTERNATIVES FOR LIVE BAIT PENS

Although bait wells are not part of the approved Parcel 20 marina redesign project design, they are a permitted use and may be incorporated in the marina. Their inclusion would not constitute a change from existing conditions, as bait wells are already present at the site. If a floating bait barge were moored within the marina, Staff do not believe any additional permits would be required, however if bait wells were made a permanent dock structural component, additional permits will be necessary.

However, as the Master Tenant has expressed their desire not to incorporate this, Staff internally contemplated a number of alternative solutions for bait pens, including floating bait barges and standalone bait docks.

The Village Marina is currently at full capacity with a waitlist of commercial vessels and has been asked to accommodate additional vessels from the Port of Hueneme's commercial fleet when the Commercial Fish Modernization project is completed. Other potential locations south of the Village Marina would place bait operations further from the public launch ramp and sport fishing fleet, increasing vessel traffic in the inner Harbor.

Staff believe that integrating bait wells proximate to the harbor entrance remains the safest and most prudent approach, however it was clear that outside expertise would be required to properly evaluate all of the options.

Therefore, Staff retained engineering firm Kimley-Horn, as the lead engineer Jerry Holcomb assisted the harbor with studies of inner harbor navigation issues and as Mr. Holcomb has also designed live bait wells for other harbors.

FEASIBILITY STUDY & OUTCOME

Kimley-Horn has completed a study that evaluated 7 locations generally proximate to the harbor entrance:

1. Launch Ramp Basin - attached or near the launch ramp dock.
2. Launch Ramp Basin - attached or near the Portside dock system
3. Kinship Marina - attached or near the future Kinship marina dock system
4. Main Channel - south of entrance, at or near the NPS dock system
5. Main Channel - near the Harbortown Point marina
6. Turning Basin - south end near the revetment
7. Turning Basin - attached or near the District Long Dock

(See Attachment 1 for map of locations).

The study evaluated each location based on 10 criteria:

1. Navigational clearance
2. Water depth
3. Water quality & circulation
4. Environmental resources
5. Wildlife & Public Nuisance
6. Adjacent Land & Water Use
7. Vendor Access & Operations
8. Regulatory & Permitting
9. Financial & Revenue
10. Storm & Wave Exposure

Based on the evaluation criteria, only 2 of the 7 locations were deemed preferable (locations 3 and 5), one deemed conditional, and one deemed not preferable. 3 locations were deemed not feasible. A table with the findings is included in Attachment 2.

LOCATIONS 3 & 5

Locations 3 (Kinship Marina - attached or near the future Kinship marina dock system) and 5 (Main Channel - near the Harbortown Point marina) both were identified as being preferable for the evaluation criteria.

Location 3 does occupy an end-tie slip but otherwise best satisfies the other criteria. As the pens could be attached directly to the dock system and the activity is permitted, this option would be the lowest cost.

Location 5 would require additional permitting and may require minor relocation of a US Coast Guard buoy. It may also require more proactive management (particularly regarding wildlife) since it would likely not be directly attached to a staffed marina. These factors would have additional financial implications for construction and operation.

While locations 2 and 4 are also feasible, they have additional limitations and there is no advantage to either location over Locations 3 or 5.

Live bait operators seeking opportunities at Location 3 should discuss them directly with the District's master tenant who operates Kinship Marina. All subleases are subject to District approval. Live Bait operators seeking opportunities at Site 5 should discuss them directly with the District consistent with the District's leasing policy for operator(s) seeking to entitle, engineer, permit, construct, install, and operate the bait pens through a lease agreement.

FISCAL IMPACTS:

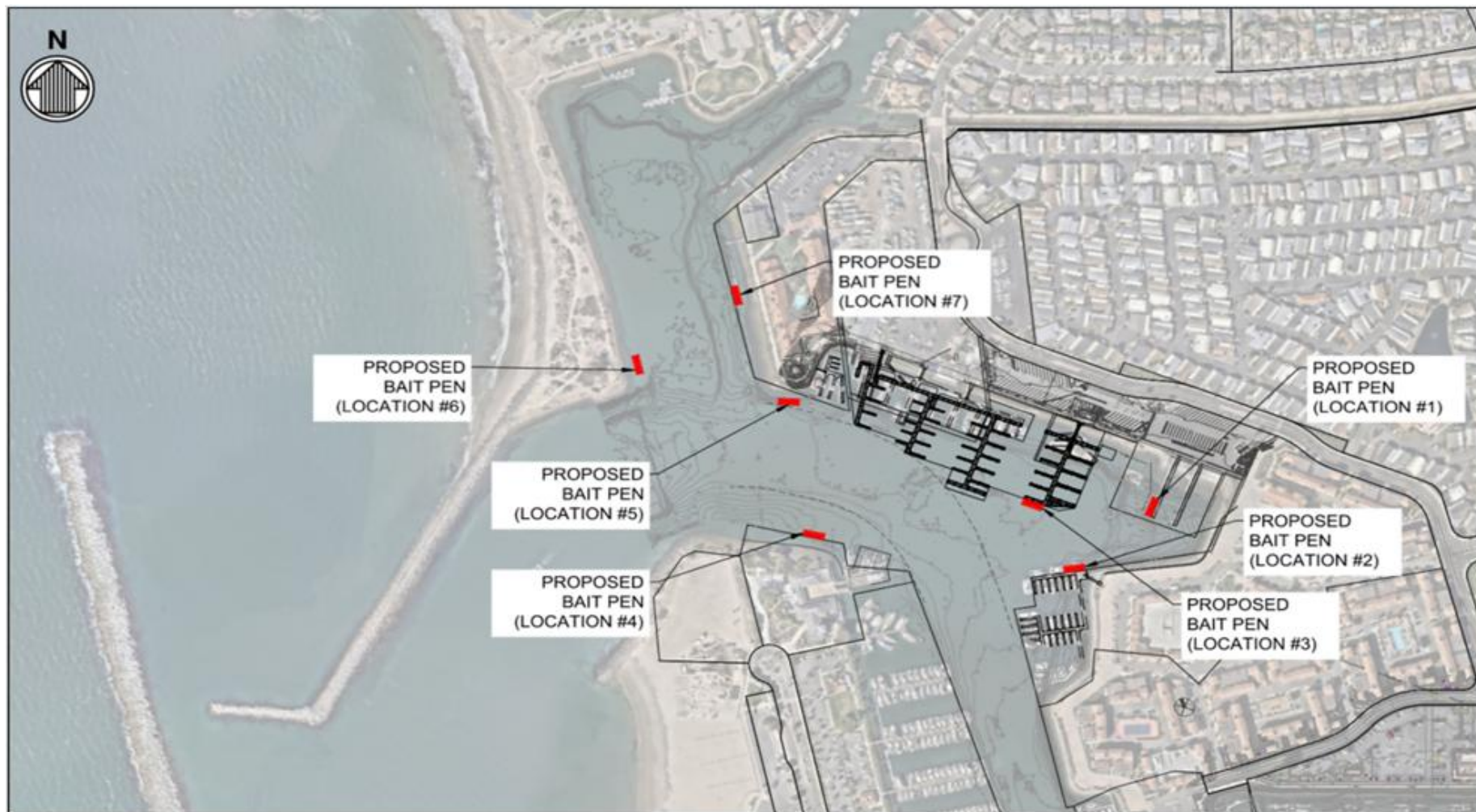
The District engaged Kimley-Horn under a professional services agreement to conduct the feasibility study for the live bait pens in the amount not to exceed \$25,000. At the time of this report, approximately 50% of the contract value has been expended.

It is the General Manager's recommendation that all further costs to entitle, engineer, permit, construct, install, and operate the bait pens for Location 5 be borne by the operator.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment 1 – Map of Bait Pen Candidate Locations Studied
- Attachment 2 – Summary of Evaluation
- Attachment 3 – Why Locations #3 and #5 are Recommended

Attachment 1 – Map of Bait Pen Candidate Locations Studied



Attachment 2 – Summary of Evaluation

Summary Evaluation

All seven locations

Loc.	Location	Clear Width	Depth	Required	Result	Recommendation
#1	Launch Ramp Basin – attached or near the launch ramp dock	199.7 ft	< –10 ft	204 ft	FAIL	Not feasible
#2	Launch Ramp Basin – attached or near the Portside dock system	182.9 ft	–10 to –12 ft	183 ft	MARGINAL	Not preferred
#3	Kinship Marina – attached or near the future Kinship marina dock system	205.9 ft	–12 ft	183 ft	PASS	Preferred
#4	Main Channel – south of entrance, at or near the NPS dock system	407.4 ft	–15 ft	343 ft	MARGINAL	Not preferred
#5	Main Channel – near the Harbortown Point marina	358.5 ft	–14 ft	343 ft	PASS	Preferred
#6	Turning Basin – south end near the revetment	320.8 ft	–13 ft	343 ft	FAIL	Not feasible
#7	Turning Basin – attached or near the District Long Dock	343.5 ft	< –10 ft	343 ft	MARGINAL	Not feasible

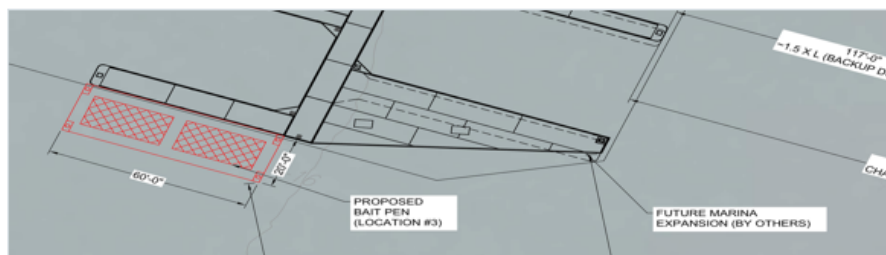
Attachment 3 - Why Locations #3 and #5 are Recommended

Why Locations #3 and #5

Recommended for advancement

LOCATION #3

Kinship Marina — End-Tie



- 205.9 ft clear — 22.9 ft above minimum
- Adequate depth at -12 ft MLLW
- Shares marina utilities, gangway and mooring
- Lowest capital cost of the alternatives

Trade-off: Will require approval by Kinship Marina and displaces a few outboard slips.

LOCATION #5

Main Channel — Harbortown Point



- 358.5 ft clear — 15.5 ft above minimum
- Adequate depth at -14 ft MLLW
- Best tidal flushing for bait viability
- No conflict with NPS dock or residences

Trade-off: Needs permitting, possible USCG buoy move, and its own on-site management. Additional wildlife will be present at unoccupied locations.

BOTH MEET ALL CLEARANCE AND DEPTH CRITERIA WITH OPERATIONAL ADVANTAGES