



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, LOS ANGELES DISTRICT
60 SOUTH CALIFORNIA STREET, SUITE 201
VENTURA, CALIFORNIA 93001-2598

January 15, 2020

SUBJECT: Request for Resolution to Continue Processing Permit Application

Brian Pendleton
Ventura Port District
Ventura, California 93001

Dear Mr. Pendleton:

This letter concerns your Department of the Army Permit application (Corps File No. SPL-2017-00093-BLR) which proposes to construct a 2,000 acre aquaculture facility in navigable waters outside state boundaries (in Federal waters) in association with the Ventura Shellfish Enterprise Project. The project would be located offshore from the Ventura Harbor, near the city and county of Ventura, CA (latitude: 34.241891, longitude: -119.292983).

In response to our 30 day public notice (dated August 27, 2019) the Corps received a letter from the Ventura County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) dated September 16, 2019. You provided a response to all the substantive public notice comment letters on November 15, 2019. Within the combined response you included a general response (response B2-1) as well as a separate letter addressing LAFCO's concerns from your special counsel (DeeAnne Gillick, letter dated November 15, 2019). The Corps Regulatory Division Chief (David Castanon), the Ventura team lead (Antal Szijj) and the senior project manager (Theresa Stevens) also met with you, your special counsel (Robert Smith), and your consultant (Laurie Monarres) on November 19, 2019 to discuss the proposed project, remaining issues, and a potential path forward. Prior to this meeting, Dr. Stevens had discussed concerns about issues raised by LAFCO with Ms. Monarres, and stated that review of the matter by Corps Office of Counsel would be requested. Also prior to this meeting, Mr. Smith conducted a phone conference with Corps Staff Counsel (Tiffany Troxel) on October 28, 2019. During this phone conference it was acknowledged that resolution of this matter via the state legislature or state Attorney General may be required.

In response to our public notice, the Corps also received a letter from the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) dated November 1, 2019, which requested that a navigational risk assessment be completed prior to the Corps final action on the project. Due to the Corps statutory authority under section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act (33 U.S.C. 403) to evaluate impacts on navigation associated with structures and work in navigable waters and the recognized expertise of the USCG on navigation issues, the Corps needs at least a draft navigational risk assessment to be completed and submitted to the U.S. Coast Guard. Without this important information documenting the potential impacts to navigation, we cannot complete our required public interest evaluation. Because navigation is central to our review of your application, it would not be a

good use of our limited staff resources to continue processing your application without at least a draft of the navigational risk assessment.

Although you have provided to us the letters, legal opinions and legal citations regarding the claims made by LAFCO, it remains unclear whether the Ventura Port District has the authority under state law to construct permanent structures in navigable waters outside state boundaries as would be required for the proposed Ventura Shellfish Enterprise project.

Therefore, I have made a preliminary determination that in order to continue processing your permit application, the above draft navigational risk assessment and documented resolution of your dispute with LAFCO must be provided. Documentation from LAFCO, the LAFCO Board or a higher level state entity that the dispute has been resolved would be sufficient for the Corps to continue processing your application.

The Corps respectfully requests resolution of these matters in the next 30 days. If the requested information cannot be submitted within 30 days, the Corps will withdraw your permit application. When you do provide the requested information, the Corps will resume review of your previously submitted permit application.

If you have any questions, you may contact me at (805) 585-2148 or aaron.o.allen@usace.army.mil or Theresa Stevens, Ph.D. at (805) 585-2146 or via e-mail at theresa.stevens@usace.army.mil.

Sincerely,

Aaron O. Allen, Ph.D.
Chief, North Coast Branch
Regulatory Division

Cc: Kai Luoma, Executive Director, Ventura County Local Agency Formation Commission
Lieutenant Commander Isaac Mahar, U.S. Coast Guard District 11 Waterways Management,
Los Angeles-Long Beach