

Channel Islands Neighborhood Council

Channel Islands Harbor, Oxnard, CA



For Immediate Release

February 14, 2020

CHANNEL ISLAND HARBOR WATER QUALITY UPDATE

There have been two recent stories (Ormond Beach Power Plant and Lake Erie in Ohio) in the Ventura Star that were related to the water quality issues in the Channel Island Harbor.

Since there are 19 more power plants like the Mandalay and Ormond Beach scheduled for closure in California, these recent articles raise the question if the federal, state, county and local agencies involved in such decisions have thoroughly planned for the effects of such plant closings. We are concerned because they **did not study and plan well** for the closing of the Mandalay Power Generating Station (MPGS) in Oxnard. The consequences of their lack of post-close analysis and planning for the Channel Island Harbor led to significant negative environmental damage to the Channel Island Harbor, marine life, and the harbor's residents, businesses, and visitors.

Background:

A massive algae bloom occurred in the Oxnard Channel Islands Harbor (CIH) in June 2018. The bloom was followed by widespread depleted oxygen, presumably related to bacterial decomposition of dying algae and animals killed by the growing anoxia. The bloom and subsequent event appear to have been related to changes in circulation in CIH in response to the decommissioning of the Mandalay Power Generating Station on March 29, 2018.

Without the plant's cooling pumps moving the water back to the ocean at the north end of the Edison Canal, we face a formidable array of pollutants flowing back into our fragile harbor. Those pollutants include agricultural field nutrients and toxins, municipal storm sewer waste, residential and commercial waste, marina fuel docks, marina pump out stations, and oil field waste and contaminants.

The erosion of water quality conditions in the Channel Islands Harbor, since the decommissioning of the Mandalay Power Plant, has mobilized the City and Channel Islands Neighborhood Council (CINC) with its volunteer Marine Advisory Committee (MAC) to study and identify possible solutions and funding sources for mitigation projects. Working with Cal State Channel Island's School of Environmental Science and volunteers from the local neighborhood, MAC developed a Water Quality Monitoring Program

intended to build the dataset necessary to determine if the harbor water is meeting the water quality objectives pertaining to Recreational (REC-1) and Aquatic Life Use (MAR, WILD, RARE) beneficial uses specified in the Los Angeles Basin Plan.

CINC and its MAC is a volunteer neighborhood organization recognized by the City of Oxnard. They represent 1,900 homes in the Channel Islands Harbor (CIH) communities north of the Channel Islands Blvd. bridge. Those communities include Mandalay Bay, Seabridge, Westport, and Harbour Island. The environmental and political problems our communities now face also affect several restaurants, multiple retail businesses, 3 yacht clubs, 2,500 boat slips, a kiddie beach, and thousands of visitors to the harbor each year.

Additionally, CINC and its MAC volunteer committee members have been collecting data to confirm water quality issues and have been aggressively educating the key stake holders and governing bodies about this environmental crisis and future needs. Part of the education is how their decisions can lead to serious negative unintended environmental problems that the harbor is now facing.

Formal presentations have been made to all stakeholder, including: the City of Oxnard (Mayor, City Council, City Manager, City Staff), the Channel Island Harbor Director, County of Ventura Supervisor John Zaragoza , LA Regional Water Quality Control Board, California Coastal Commission, Ventura County Agricultural Irrigated Lands Group, GenOn (current owner of the Mandalay Power Plant), Centerpoint Energy (owner of the Edison Canal), staff of Diane Feinstein (US Senator) staff of Hannah Beth Jackson (CA State Senator), staff of Julia Brownley (US Congressperson) and Monique Limon (CA State Assembly representative). **They acknowledge we have a serious environmental problem, but no one wants to take responsibility or offer potential solutions. They have all advised it could take up to 10 years for a solution to be selected and implemented. The harbor does not have 10 years before we face a crisis such a major fish-kill. The time to act is now.**

CINC is also trying to schedule meetings with our US Senator Kamala Harris and the balance of the Ventura County Board of Supervisors members. We requested letters of support and anticipate receiving letters of support from many of those listed above. As of today, we have received a letter of support from Oxnard's Mayor Flynn.

We are searching for partners with sophisticated quantitative methods to study these problems and design an engineered solution that satisfies all stakeholders and public interests. We recently submitted a proposal to UCSB's Bren School of Environmental Science and Management requesting their assistance to help CINC to:

- evaluate multiple conceptual solutions
- develop a plan to implement them
- help present the proposed solutions to the many decision makers whose approval we need to move forward.

UCSB Bren's work is rooted in the premise that while technology solutions to many environmental problems already exist, political and social solutions are still missing. With

that premise in mind, they are training graduate students to use sophisticated quantitative methods to study problems at the nexus of public opinion, political behavior, and public policy. UCSB's Bren School of Environmental Science and Management will make their decision to make Channel Islands Harbor one of their study projects in late March 2020.



With 19 more power plants like the Mandalay power plant scheduled for closure in California, we are hopeful that motivated organizations like UCSB's Bren School, Cal State Channel Island's School of Environmental Science, and other agencies involved in joint projects with CINC, can develop plans to avoid significant unplanned negative environmental consequences from poorly studied and potential politically motivated decisions.

CINC is a dedicated solution-oriented group looking to produce meaningful solutions for its environmental problems. We are looking for collaborative efforts to yield specific policy and management recommendations that could be submitted to the regulatory bodies to secure support and funding for an effective and timely solution.

If any organization is interested in joining CINC in its efforts to protect the environment in the Channel Island Harbor and other California locations with power plants scheduled to be closed, we will share the environmental issues our harbor faces and also give you a personal tour of the harbor to see the issues first hand.

AS A FOOTNOTE, THIS PAST WEEKEND'S KING TIDES MOVED SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF POLLUTED WATER AND TRASH FROM THE EDISON CANAL INTO THE CHANNEL ISLAND HARBOR.

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