Maritime Partners News Release

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For immediate release

Vessel safety measure installed in Los Angeles/Long Beach Harbor complex

An oceanographic information system that will help prevent maritime accidents and oil spills in the Los Angeles/Long Beach (LA/LB) Harbor complex has recently been brought online.

This Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System (PORTS) installation, which collects, processes and disseminates data on environmental conditions, will assist pilots of large commercial vessels in making sound navigational decisions and avoiding vessel groundings.

In the LA/LB Harbor complex, PORTS gathers:

- wind speed and direction at four locations in the Port of Los Angeles (POLA), and at three locations in the Port of Long Beach (POLB);
- atmospheric and water temperatures, and barometric pressure in the POLA;
- current speed and direction, and swell height and direction at Queen's Gate in the POLB;
- tidal height in the POLA.

Sensors transmit readings every six minutes, and this raw data is immediately available for display at the port pilot stations. The data is simultaneously sent to the Data Acquisition System (DAS), located at the Marine Exchange of LA/LB Harbor. There it is processed and relayed to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Ocean

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Service's (NOS) Continuous Operational Real-Time Monitoring System (CORMS), in Silver Spring, Maryland. CORMS is a fully-staffed computer system that performs quality assurance/ quality control (QA/QC) verifications of PORTS data, 24 hours-a-day, seven days-a-week. Data passing QA/QC validation is posted on the NOAA/NOS PORTS website. Data that *doesn't* pass QA/QC will *not* be posted, and an investigation will begin to locate and correct the source of faulty data. The time necessary for posting valid data, from its transmission by an environmental sensor to its appearance on the website, is estimated to be only four minutes, making it truly a *Real-Time System*.

The installation of PORTS was made possible by a grant from the California Department of Fish and Game's Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) through its Maritime Partnership Initiatives (MPI) program. This program provided one-time grants in each of California's five major commercial harbors for the improvement of navigational safety and prevention of marine oil spills. Through Harbor Safety Committees in each of the major harbors, the OSPR formed partnerships with key local maritime interests to determine the best possible use for available MPI grant funds. Funding for the MPI grants came as proceeds from a major OSPR case settlement.

In the LA/LB Harbor complex, a partnership of the POLA, POLB, Marine Exchange of LA/LB Harbor, NOAA/NOS and OSPR used approximately $220,000 of MPI grant funds to purchase and install PORTS. Relying heavily on the expertise and experience of NOAA/NOS, the partners set the scope, functional requirements, general design and budget for PORTS based on the commercial pilots' information needs, available grants funds, existing port infrastructure, and the costs to operate and maintain the system.

PORTS information is available to all mariners, businesses, government agencies and the general public, on the Internet, at http://www.co-ops.nos.noaa.gov/d_ports.html.

Wood's Hole Group, a PORTS-experienced private contractor (located in Massachusetts, but not associated with the renown oceanographic institution), delivered, installed and tested most of the system. NOAA/NOS delivered, installed and tested the DAS, and conducted spot inspections of other PORTS component installations. The POLA, POLB and Marine Exchange of LA/LB Harbor assisted in the PORTS installation where possible by providing local expertise, boats, divers, and other personnel and equipment.

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The MPI grant is contingent upon the POLA and POLB repairing, operating and maintaining PORTS to NOAA/NOS's specifications for the next five years. The estimated annual operations and maintenance costs are approximately $13,000 for the POLA, and $22,000 for the POLB. The disparity is due largely to the Queen's Gate current/swell meter, which is very costly to maintain. Unscheduled repair and replacement of malfunctioning equipment will be an additional expense. As an in-kind expense, the Marine Exchange of LA/LB Harbor will assume the responsibility of acting as the single point of contact for ongoing PORTS operations.

NOAA/NOS will pay for the dedicated commercial data line that connects the DAS with CORMS (estimate annual cost is $6,000); QA/QC of PORTS data and all costs associated with the operation and maintenance of CORMS; posting of valid data; design, operation and maintenance of the PORTS website; professional oversight of the system's operation, maintenance, repair and any future expansion; and technical assistance provided to the LA/LB PORTS partners. NOAA/NOS also accepts legal liability for all data posted on the PORTS website (http://www.co-ops.nos.noaa.gov/d_ports.html).

Data on swell height and direction at Queen's Gate do not currently appear on the website, but are expected to be available later this year.

The LA/LB Harbor PORTS project is a prime example of the effectiveness of public/private partnerships and what can be achieved through the cooperation of people with diverse interests who share a positive, purposeful goal. Each partner's contributions have been an essential component in the realization of this project, which benefits the environment, the local maritime community and the State of California.