

VENTURA SHELLFISH ENTERPRISE SITE SELECTION

**By Oscar Peña, General Manager
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On September 12, 2018 at 7:00PM the Ventura Port District Board of Port Commissioners will convene in Open Session at the Four Points Sheraton Ballroom, 1050 Schooner Drive, for its Regular Meeting.

One of the items on the agenda of special interest to the public is the Ventura Shellfish Enterprise (VSE) Site Selection Process. The Board of Port Commissioners will receive an Informational Report on the proposed site in federal waters approximately 3.53 miles from shore, northwest of the Ventura Harbor in the Santa Barbara Channel.

District staff and Seth J. Theuerkauf, Ph.D. with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) will provide the Board of Port Commissioners with information about two alternatives for site selection in federal waters. [Click here](#) to review this agenda item.

The public is invited to receive information on the Ventura Shellfish Enterprise site selection process and provide public comment.

VSE Project Description

The project consists of twenty 100-acre plots (total of 2,000 acres) located in open federal waters of the Santa Barbara Channel northwest of Ventura Harbor. The closest distance from the growing area to the City of Ventura city limit is 4.5 miles and approximately 4 miles from the Ventura Harbor. The sites will be used for growing the Mediterranean mussel (*Mytilus galloprovincialis*) via submerged long lines.

VSE Site Selection

The project was initially proposed to be located in waters of the State of California, i.e., within the 3-mile limit. The Ventura Port District, in collaboration with its key participants undertook extensive site selection public outreach that culminated in the decision to instead locate the project in federal waters so as to minimize conflicts with commercial halibut trawlers based in Ventura and Santa Barbara Harbors. NOAA's National Ocean Service staff undertook a second siting study focused on federal waters proximate to Ventura Harbor.

The siting analysis represents an objective, data-driven approach to identify the locations within federal waters with the highest compatibility with the proposed project. The results of this siting analysis identify two alternative sites proximate to Ventura Harbor given equal consideration of existing use conflicts, including:

- Existing vessel traffic corridors,
- Oil and gas production,

- Commercial fishing (specifically trawl and squid fisheries), and
- Obstructions, including submerged cables and wrecks.

VSE Project Purpose

Objectives of the proposed project are:

1. To increase the supply of safe, sustainably produced, and locally grown shellfish;
2. To enhance and sustain Ventura Harbor as a major west coast fishing port and support the local economy;
3. To provide economies of scale, pre-approved growing areas, and technical support to include small local producers who would not otherwise be able to participate in shellfish aquaculture;
4. To provide an entitlement and permitting template for aquaculture projects state-wide;
5. To enhance public knowledge and understanding of sustainable shellfish farming practices and promote community collaboration;
6. To advance scientific knowledge and state of the art aquaculture practices through research and innovation.

VSE Project Operation/Cultivation Methods

The mussels will be grown and harvested by grower/producers under individual sub-permits (or other form of agreement) with VPD that incorporate all project permit conditions and Best Management Practices. All grower/producers will be required to land their mussels at Ventura Harbor.

VSE Organization and Governance

Ventura Port District proposes to make mussel growing areas available to a variety of grower/producers, anticipated to include existing commercial fishermen, existing commercial shellfish businesses, and startups that otherwise would be disinclined to embark on the lengthy and expensive mandatory regulatory pathway.

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