Port of San Diego Responds to Community Input—Adds Environmental Justice to 50-Year Vision

Environmental Health Coalition says Port's reconsideration means a commitment to healthy communities for everyone

SAN DIEGO, July 8, 2014—Today, residents of Barrio Logan, National City, and other communities in San Diego joined Environmental Health Coalition in thanking the Port of San Diego Board of Commissioners for officially addressing clean air, healthy communities and environmental justice as guiding principles in the Port's draft 50-year vision plan. Residents say the draft vision plan that emerged in June failed to adequately commit to the community's requests for environmental justice. The Board of Commissioners took action today to close this gap and commit to environmental justice for the next 50 years.

Through a series of public input workshops and surveys to develop the plan, residents continually stressed the importance of the following priorities:

- Environmental justice
- Clean air for all communities
- Access to a healthy bay
- Protection of natural resources

San Diego Councilmember David Alvarez, who represents many of the communities addressing the Commission today, strongly supported reconsideration and the inclusion of environmental justice in the vision. "I empathize with the Port Commissioners in grappling with these important issues," Alvarez said. "I'm grateful that they listened to residents in crafting a principle that will bring environmental justice to neighborhoods where it has long been absent."

As a result of community persistence, the "guiding principle" discussed and approved in draft form by the board today reads, "Promote clean air, healthy communities, and environmental justice: Seek to achieve environmental justice, which shall be defined as working to reduce the cumulative health burdens on neighboring communities and ensure fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes in developing, adopting, implementing and enforcing environmental laws, regulations and policies."

"Our community is glad the Port listened to the priorities expressed by the public and has plans to address the issues faced by neighborhoods like mine," said Margarita Garcia, resident of National City. "We deal with the pollution impacts of operations along the Port, yet don't have access to the benefits like access to the waterfront and clean air."

Port staff will incorporate the direction given by the board today into the final draft version of the Vision Plan Guiding Principles, which will be considered by the board for final adoption at its monthly meeting on August 12. The Vision will guide the Port's next phase of its multi-year "integrated planning" effort to update its Master Plan.

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