

Green Sheet

Capitola, California

Saturday, October 7, 1978

Panetta's harbor bill passes through House

Legislation authored by Rep. Leon Panetta, D-Carmel Valley, authorizing the Army Corps of Engineers to take steps to keep the Santa Cruz Harbor channel open was approved Wednesday by the House of Representatives.

The measure would also protect the taxpayers of the Santa Cruz Port District from being saddled with the cost of operating sand by-passing equipment at the harbor mouth.

Panetta's legislation would amend the 1958 law which authorized the construction of the harbor to allow the Engineers to dredge outside the entrance channel and to provide a grout filling for the existing jetties in order to reduce the sand flow into the harbor mouth.

In addition, it states that if a permanent sand bypassing unit is ever installed in the harbor, the Corps would be responsible for the full cost of operating and maintaining it.

The measure was included in a larger bill which authorizes work in a number of rivers and harbors throughout the country.

Panetta said this new language was necessary because early studies by the Corps had grossly underestimated the rate at which sand would flow into the entrance channel during

heavy storm periods.

The original legislation had provided that the Corps would reimburse the Port District for the operation of a fixed sand bypass up to a limit of \$35,000 annually. At that time, this sum was considered sufficient to cover the full cost of maintaining an open channel.

However, the \$35,000 figure was based on 1958 prices and on the district engineer's estimate of a shoaling rate of 25,000 cubic yards of sand per year. In recent years, the actual shoaling rate has approached 150,000 cubic yards per year, and the estimated annual cost of operating a permanent sand bypass is

currently between \$500,000 and \$1 million.

"It's absurd to expect the taxpayers of the Port District to pay almost \$1 million a year for errors that the Corps of Engineers made in the 1950's," Panetta said. "The original law clearly states that the Corps is responsible for maintaining an open channel at the harbor, and my legislation will insure that this responsibility is met."

The harbor is currently being kept open through a phased dredging operation funded by the Corps, and the Port District has no immediate plans to install a permanent fixed bypass facility.

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