

MINUTE ITEM

This Calendar Item No. C68 was approved as Minute Item No. 68 by the California State Lands Commission by a vote of 2 to 9 at its 12-08-05 meeting.

CALENDAR ITEM
C68

A	Statewide	12/08/05 C2005-041 W 9016
S		A. Abeleda, D. Brown D. Dudak

REQUEST AUTHORITY FOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER TO EXECUTE AGREEMENT WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA TO STUDY NATURAL OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS SEEPS AND INVESTIGATE POSSIBLE METHODS OF CONTAINMENT

PARTY:

California State Lands Commission
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BACKGROUND:

State Lands Commission staff for many years have investigated various seeps of oil and gas occurrences on State tidelands in conjunction with university and private researchers who were active in studying the cause and effects of oil in the marine environment. In the 1970's, the Commission was authorized to prepare a report on the research and investigation.

§ Section 6226(a) of the Public Resources Code requires the State Lands Commission to: conduct research and investigations into natural seeps of hydrocarbon products occurring on tide and submerged lands as shown below:

- (1) Determination of the magnitude and extent of contamination.*
- (2) Identification of the sources of the pollution.*
- (3) Documentation of the geophysical aspects of active seepage zones.*
- (4) Examination of the cause and effect relationship between offshore oil sources and marine pollution.*

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(5) Methods of reducing, mitigating, or eliminating pollution from such leaks.

New research was contracted by CSLC and cooperatively through state and federal Sea Grant research programs. The report was submitted to the Legislature in 1977.

Results compiled in the report indicated more than 2000 seepage zones with the most widespread seepage along the northernmost part of the Santa Barbara Channel. The areal extent of seepage was found to have decreased over a 30 year period in some areas, while it increased in others. New seep activity was noted near Platform Holly where a vigorous seep became active in 1973 and remains active today. The total volume of seepage for the Santa Barbara Channel was estimated at 40 to 670 barrels per day. It was concluded that a high band of seismicity coincides with the southern extent of the coastal Santa Barbara oil and tar seep province.

The Mineral Resources Management Division of CSLC continued its seep monitoring program into the early 1990's when fiscal restraints and reduction of staff curtailed the program. Current ongoing studies by the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) and others indicate that seep emissions have been underestimated in the past. New technology has been instrumental in these findings and may provide possibilities for additional remediation or containment.

PROPOSED ACTIVITY:

A comprehensive study of natural seepage along the Southern California coastline will serve to identify and examine its actual economic, aesthetic, and ecological impact upon the environment. Two state departments, the California Department of Conservation and California Coast Commission have provided letters of support and cooperation for the continuation of the monitoring of seafloor seeps.

Staff proposes to contract with the Marine Science Institute at UCSB to study and monitor seeps within State tidelands in order to develop effective containment and recovery programs. The study will require an exhaustive survey of geological conditions and extensive measurement/mapping strategies to quantify the causes and effects of natural seepage. Contract shall not exceed \$200,000 over a two year period. Funding has been included in the Commission's budget for this purpose.

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:

1. Pursuant to the Commission's delegation of authority and the State CEQA Guidelines [Title 14, California Code of Regulations, section 15060(c)(3)], the staff has determined that this activity is not subject to the provisions of the

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CEQA because it is not a "project" as defined by the CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines.

Authority: Public Resources Code section 21065 and Title 14, California Code of Regulations, sections 15060 (c)(3) and 15378.

STATUTORY AND OTHER REFERENCES:

- A. Public Resources Code Section 6106 (Delegation to execute written instruments)
- B. Public Contract Code Section 10340
- C. State Administrative Manual Section 1200
- D. State Contracting Manual (rev 10/05)

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE COMMISSION:

- 1. FIND THAT THESE ACTIVITIES ARE EXEMPT FROM THE REQUIREMENTS OF CEQA PURSUANT TO 14 CAL CODE REGS. 15060(c)(3) BECAUSE THESE ACTIVITIES ARE NOT PROJECTS AS DEFINED BY PUBLIC RESOURCES CODE SECTION 21065 AND 14 CAL CODE REGS. 15378.
- 2. AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER OR HIS DESIGNEE TO EXECUTE CONTRACT WITH UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA, IN ACCORDANCE WITH STATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES, TO CONDUCT STUDY OF OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS SEEPS AND INVESTIGATE POSSIBLE MEANS OF CONTAINMENT.