

## SURF'S UP!

[Jennifer Stockdale](#) Wed. July 08

### **A storm of new breakwater reports floods the city**

These days, you can't swing a dead cat by its tail in Long Beach without hitting a breakwater study—odd, considering the overbuilt wall of rocks has just been sitting there for 60 years in the midst of much pelican poo, modulating protest and considerably sparse research.

In a single rotation, our ill-fated feline hit four separate reports related to the 2.14-mile structure, credited with turning Long Beach into the waveless septic sink it is today. (Five reports if you count *The District Weekly's* breakwater recon study drafted in our July 23, 2008, story, "[Take One! It's Free!](#)").

The reports include an official city-sponsored reconnaissance study by Moffatt & Nichol, a donated double-dish of coastal advice by retired engineer and former Marine Advisory Commission member C.P. Bud Johnson and a surfability report drafted by Surfline's very own Sean Collins. And as reported last week on LBReport.com, Congresswoman Laura Richardson has obtained a \$100,000 federal earmark from the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water, intended to pay the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to review Moffatt & Nichol's recon study—a report the city voted to pay \$100,000 for in July 2007, splitting the expense with the California Coastal Conservancy.

A review of a study? Yes. Although the Army Corps' review might seem like overkill, it's necessary to determine federal interest and participation in the next phases of breakwater reconfiguration (feasibility and pre-construction/construction). Fortunately, the Army Corps will only need \$30,000 to review the Moffatt & Nichol study, according to Tom Modica, manager of government affairs for the city manager's office. But it's good to aim high, since the earmark will likely be whittled down by the time it makes its way through the full House Appropriations Committee, the House and then the Senate.

Here's an overview of all four studies:

### **[MOFFATT & NICHOL'S LONG BEACH BREAKWATER RECON STUDY](#)**

In the works for a full year at a pretty penny, this stack of paper, the only official breakwater study, will be the city of Long Beach's breakwater bible, referenced by the Army Corps and the city for all breakwater reconfiguration decisions. All other studies are considered supplemental information.

Although Moffatt & Nichol has finished both recon study documents required by Army Corps standards—a Section 905(b) Analysis and a Project Management Plan (PMP)—the full report has not been published and will not be presented to the city council until late July, although no date has been set yet. The Section 905(b) Analysis is a fill-in-the-blank document provided by the Army Corps that will summarize the results of the study; the PMP will outline the scope of work ahead and give a cost estimate for the feasibility phase.

### **[BUD JOHNSON'S LONG WIND AND WIDE GATE](#)**

Johnson—in plain view of the Long Beach coastline most of his life—has donated two separate reports to the city regarding the breakwater complex. He published his initial 46-page study, “Environmental Impact Concerns, Long Beach Harbor,” in February 2008, releasing a condensed 12-page revision in February ’09.

The first draft offered an extensive historical explanation for the current state of San Pedro Bay, detailing how the Port of Long Beach’s Pier J expansion and the city’s Queensway Bay developments blocked circulation that existed in the ’60s, even with the breakwater in place. This version made several recommendations for reconfiguration, including creating one or several openings in the breakwater.

The second draft recommended creating “Johnson’s Gate,” or a single, 1,800-foot gap in the breakwater east of the current opening at Queens Gate. Johnson claims the new opening would allow for tidal flushing twice daily and compensate for the tidal interference caused by Pier J expansions and the Queensway Bay developments (without further jeopardizing the structures behind the breakwater or the current stakeholders). Another perk: his name gets to go down in Long Beach history on the new maps of the coast, should his idea be adopted.

Johnson’s second report, a concise 11-page document entitled “Environmental Impact Concerns, Los Angeles Harbor,” was released early last month and encourages the Port of Los Angeles to work closely with the Port of Long Beach toward breakwater efforts already underway. The document recommends the Port of LA cut a new opening in the San Pedro Breakwater segment to allow for better tidal flushing of the Cabrillo Beach and inner harbor areas. Johnson also thinks the Army Corps will look kindly on the joint efforts of both ports and will be more likely to acknowledge federal interest for breakwater reconfiguration in both areas.

### **SURFLINE’S LONG BEACH BREAKWATER SURF REPORT**

Seal Beach native and 50-year surfing veteran Sean Collins is the founder of Surfline, one of the world’s leading surf forecasters. Now in its 25th year of business, the company has contracts with the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Navy, various weather channels and reaches millions of surfers. Surfline’s report, released at the end of June, states that Long Beach could be one hell of a surf spot—should the breakwater be completely removed. It’s sexy.

The Long Beach chapter of Surfrider Foundation contracted Collins for \$1,000 to outline what the surf climate of Long Beach would be like without a breakwater. In a 25-page document entitled “Surfline’s Long Beach Breakwater Surf Report,” Collins (who was contacted by Moffatt & Nichol during its recon research to retrieve figures on the number of surfers and other beachgoers Long Beach could potentially gain by an active beach) notes that 394,200 surfers would visit Long Beach annually during the allowable morning surf hours. If they only had a wave.

The figure is based on methodology invented by Collins, including a Surfability Index and a Surfer’s Analysis, comparing detailed findings across five years at nearby Seal Beach and Bolsa Chica Beach; it does not factor in how many other people would visit the beach for different water recreation.

Collins also has the gumption to say what even the Army Corps has been dancing around for six decades: the Long Beach Breakwater is causing the erosion problems on the peninsula—a problem that costs Long Beach’s tax payers upward of \$500,000 annually.

“The Long Beach Breakwater prevents that natural ebb and flow of wave action to balance the sand transport along the beach, which significantly contributes to the erosion along the peninsula,” the report states. “There is strong evidence that removal of the Long Beach Breakwater would improve long term erosion by allowing more equally balanced wave action along the beach.”

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