

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY BOARD AGENDA LETTER



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
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Agenda Number:

Prepared on: March 6, 2003
Department Name: Planning & Development
Department No.: 053
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TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Dianne Meester, Interim Director
Planning & Development

STAFF

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SUBJECT: Fisheries Enhancement Fund's Safety Equipment Reimbursement Program

Recommendation(s):

- A. Approve \$20,000 from the Fisheries Enhancement Fund (FEF) to reimburse those commercial fishers who demonstrate that they have purchased specified safety equipment for their fishing vessels.
- B. Direct staff to solicit eligible fishers for reimbursements as described below.

Alignment with Board Strategic Plan:

The recommendations align with Goal No. 2. A Safe and Healthy Community in Which to Live, Work, and Visit.

Executive Summary and Discussion:

Fisheries Enhancement Fund. Santa Barbara County established the Fisheries Enhancement Fund (FEF) in the mid-1980s as a permit condition on major offshore oil and gas projects. FEF helps to mitigate impacts to the local commercial fishing industry, particularly preclusion from certain traditional fishing grounds, caused by offshore oil development. The permit conditions require subject offshore oil and gas projects to contribute to the fund; the County then funds projects that enhance local fisheries and local commercial fishing. The four offshore oil and gas projects that have contributed to FEF include Santa Ynez Unit Project, Point Arguello Project, Gaviota Terminal, and Point Pedernales Project.

Reimbursement for Safety Equipment. Reimbursing fishers for purchasing safety equipment has ranked overwhelmingly as the first choice by fishers who responded to surveys in both 1997 and 1999. In response, the County has implemented this program twice in the past: \$20,000 in 1997 and \$25,000 in 2001. The program reimburses fishers for purchasing specific safety items: new Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons - EPIRBs, EPIRB batteries, a new life raft, or repacking an existing life raft, inflatable buoyant apparatus, immersion suits, and pack of flares.

Staff would implement this program as it did in the past, by: dispersing reimbursements on a first-come, first-serve basis; verifying via tax returns that more than 50% of their income comes from commercial fishing; and receiving a receipt of the item(s) purchased. Staff will reimburse purchases from January 1, 2003 forward. A boat owner/lessee can receive up to \$500.

The Technical Review Panel, a three-member panel representing the local commercial fishing industry, the offshore petroleum industry, and Planning & Development, recommends the Board of Supervisors approve this program and directs the Energy Division to commence as described above. This program aids commercial fishers affected by oil development, improving their overall safety, particularly the safety of those who must travel further to fish due to oil development.

Mandates and Service Levels:

FEF provides indirect mitigation to the local commercial fishing industry from offshore oil and gas development impacts. There are no changes in service level as a result of this reimbursement program.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts: No facilities impacts are anticipated, nor does this project impact the General Fund. The Fisheries Enhancement Fund is funded by major oil and gas projects to mitigate impacts to the commercial fishing industry. Staff costs to administer this program will be offset by interest accrued to the Fisheries Enhancement Fund. The \$20,000 for the reimbursement program would be expended from Fund #0061, Department #053, Program #5090. The FEF program is part of the mitigation program within the Energy Division Cost Center on page D-276 in the Planning & Development Department's section of the County's FY 2002-03 Budget.

Special Instructions:

Planning & Development, Energy Division, will administer the program.

Concurrence: None.