



Maintenance Dredging and Eelgrass in Newport Beach: Challenges and Solutions

Presented by

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Project Goals



- Develop a more effective, useful maintenance dredging permit approach
- Implement an ecosystem-based approach for eelgrass management

Lower Newport Bay



The Need for Maintenance Dredging



WRA, Inc., October 2013



What is an RGP?

- Regional General Permits (RGPs) “are developed to avoid unnecessary regulatory control over activities that do not justify individual control or which are adequately regulated by another agency”
(33 CFR 320.1(a)(3))

Harbor Commission Dredging Subcommittee

- Key members
 - The public, including private residents and business owners
 - Consultants
 - Harbor Commission staff
- Forming approach for new and better RGP 54



RGP 54 Elements and Rationale for Change

	Existing RGP 54	New RGP 54
Annual maximum volume	20,000 cy	75,000 cy
Individual project volume limit	1,000 cy	8,000 cy
Maximum dredge depth	Maximum of -7 feet MLLW plus 1 foot of overdredge	Maximum of -10 feet MLLW plus 2 feet of overdredge (1 paid and 1 unpaid; based on authorized depth of harbor)
Sediment testing	Periodic baywide characterization (5 years)	Periodic baywide characterization (5 years)
Eelgrass	No impacts allowed	Impacts permitted and will be mitigated pursuant to the CEMP or Newport-specific Plan

Notes:

CEMP = California Eelgrass Mitigation Policy

cy = cubic yard

MLLW = mean lower low water



Eelgrass

- Nursery for juvenile fish species
- Supports both commercial and recreational fisheries
- Habitat for fish and bird foraging ground
- Minimizes and slows coastal erosion
- Two species: one shallow water and one deep water



EcoMarine, 2012

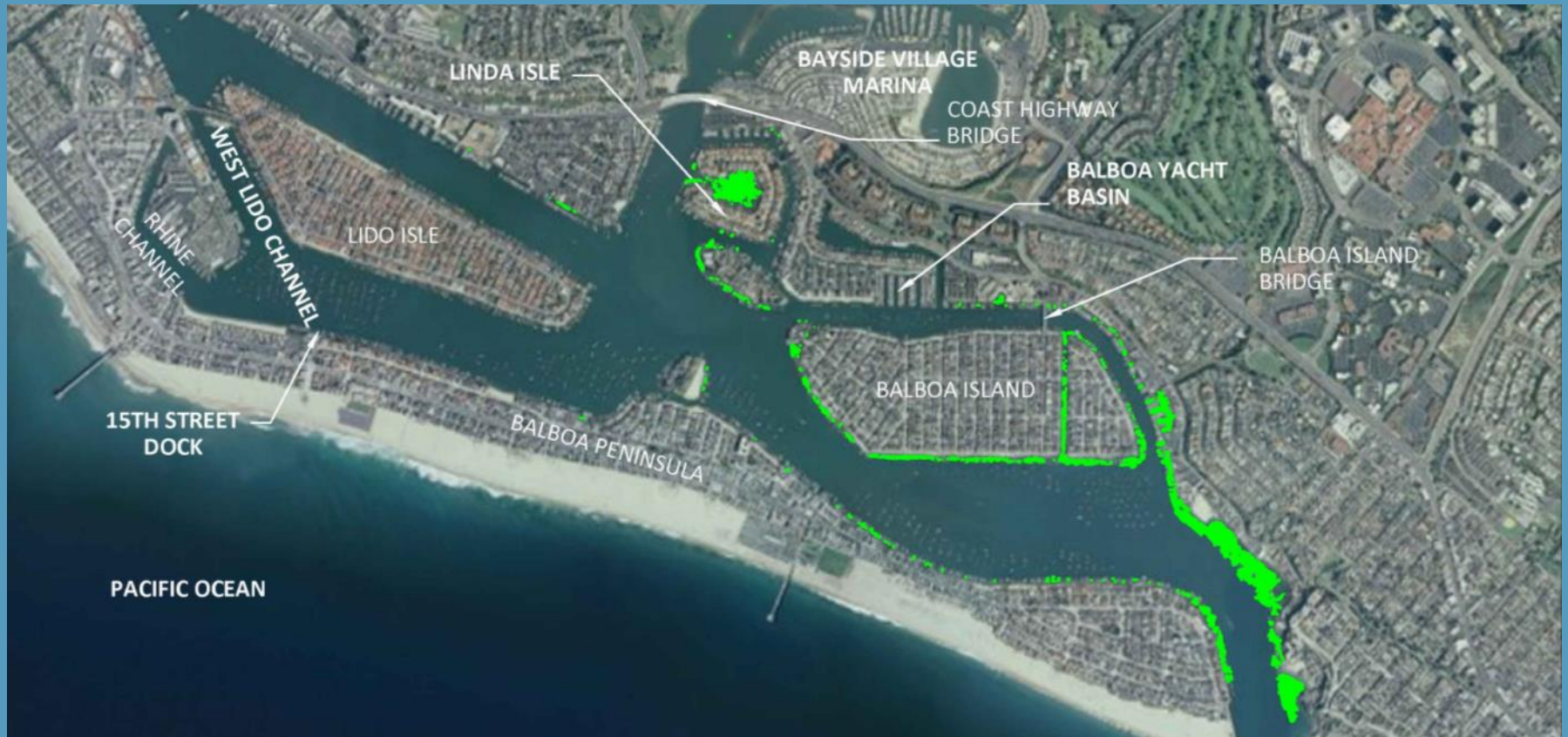
Eelgrass Regulatory Requirements

- Eelgrass is considered a sensitive resource by state and federal agencies
- Federal agencies are required to consult with National Marine Fisheries Service on all actions or proposed actions authorized, funded, or undertaken by the agencies that could adversely affect eelgrass
- Mitigation requirements per the California Eelgrass Mitigation Policy: project-specific mitigation required at a 1.38:1 ratio

Goals of the Newport-specific Plan

- Protect and promote eelgrass habitat on a harbor-wide basis
- Establish thresholds for total eelgrass population (based on biannual surveys)
- Allow temporary impacts to eelgrass from maintenance dredging
- Reduce burden for individual mitigation

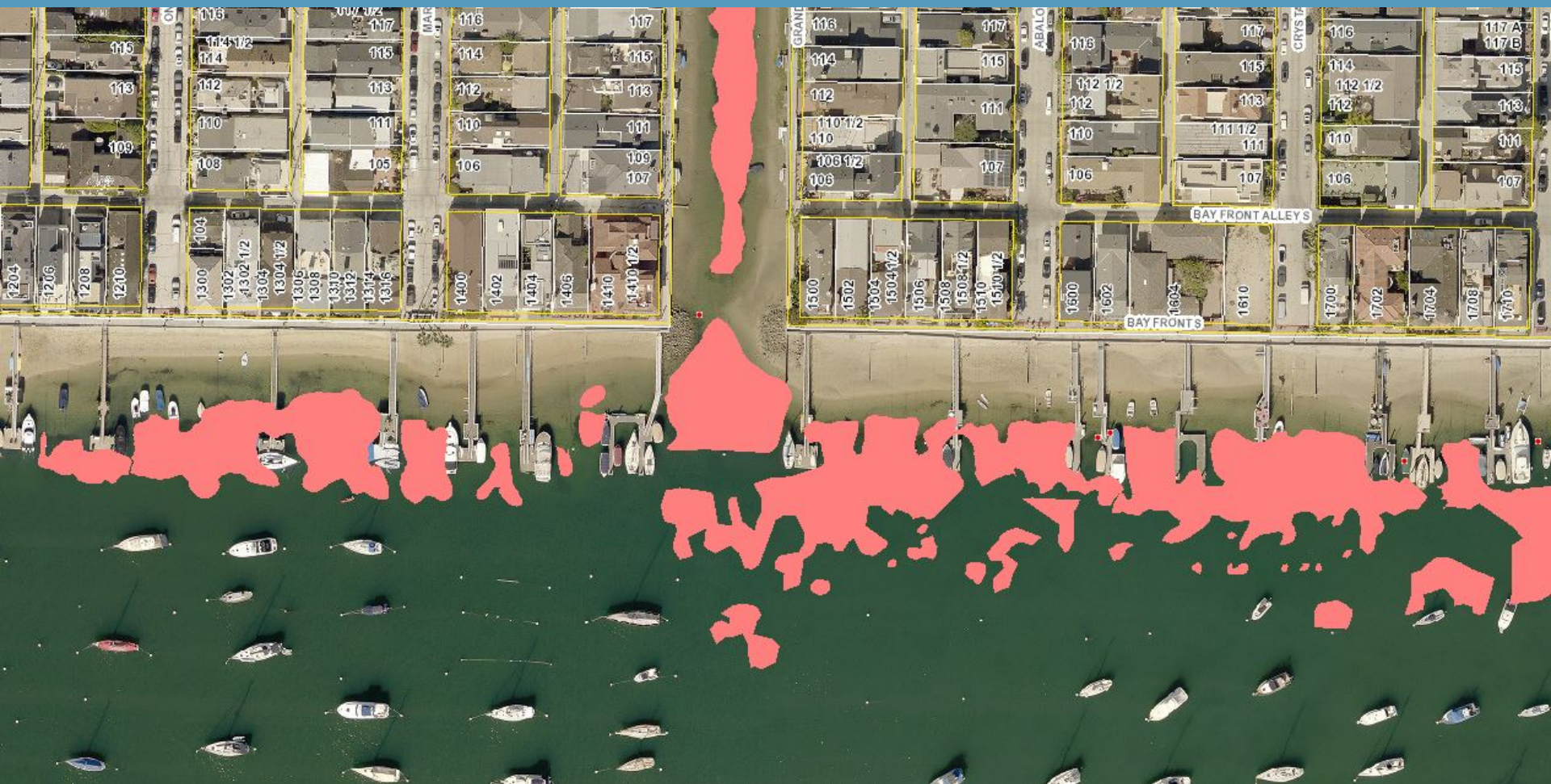
Biannual Surveys



Biannual Surveys – Distribution



Biannual Surveys – Distribution

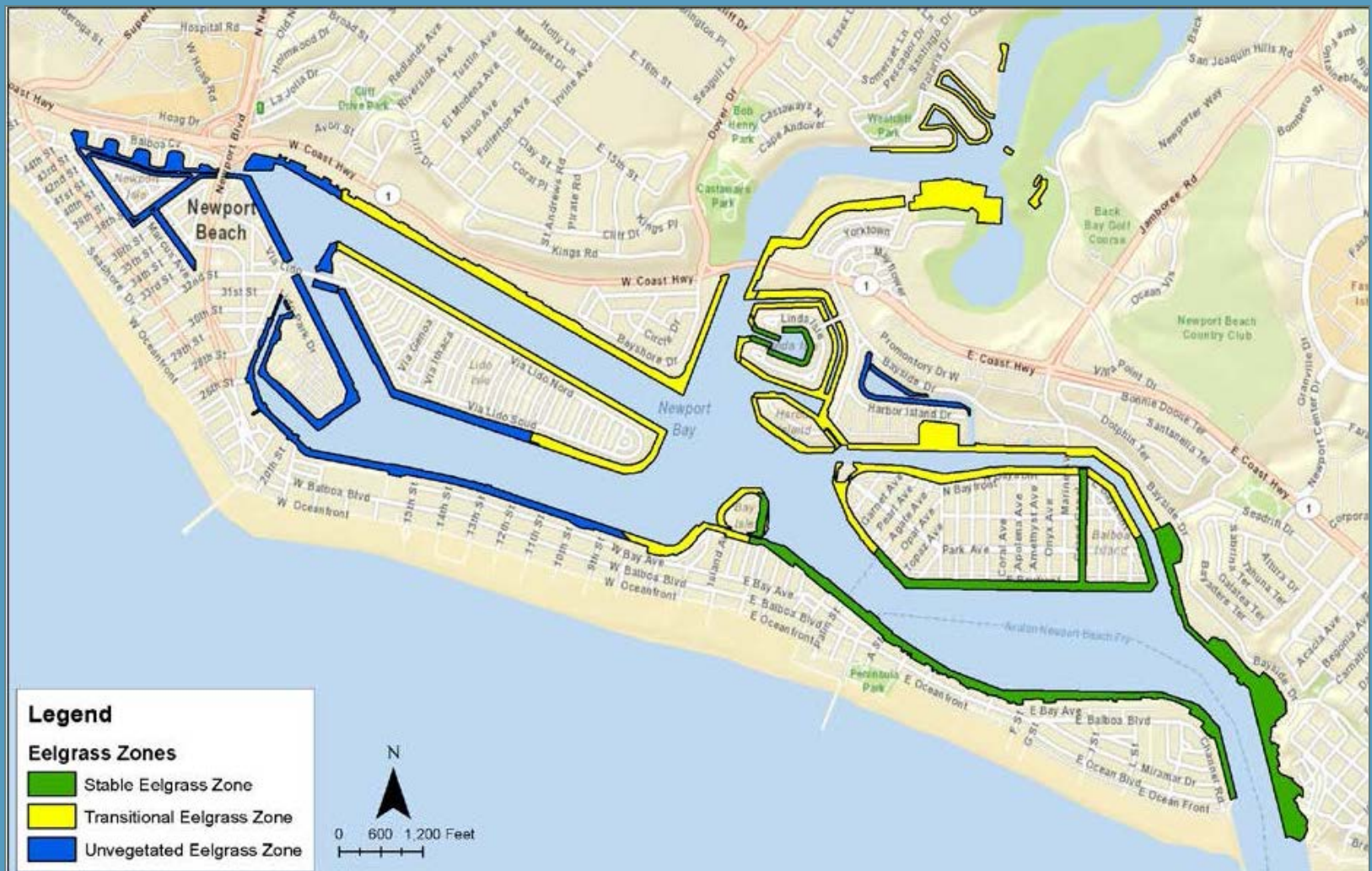


Biannual Surveys – Results

Survey Years	Area Sampled and Observed
2003 – 2004	24.51 acres
2006 – 2007	18.87 acres
2009 – 2010	16.2 acres
2012 – 2014	22.76 acres



Eelgrass Management Zones



2013 – 2014 Biannual Eelgrass Survey Data

Tier	Stable Zone	Transitional Zone
Tier I	≥ 16.8 acres in extent 0.84-acre maximum impact	≥ 3.8 acres in extent 0.19-acre maximum impact
Tier II	Extent between 15.8 and 16.8 acres 0.5-acre maximum impact	Extent between 2.5 and 3.8 acres 0.11-acre maximum impact
Tier III	< 15.8 acres in extent Impacts allowed with CEMP Mitigation	< 2.5 acres in extent Impacts allowed with CEMP Mitigation

Note:

CEMP = California Eelgrass Mitigation Policy



Mitigation Responsibility

- Educate property owners
- Contribute to Coastkeeper
- Provide applicant-responsible measures
- Conduct biannual surveys

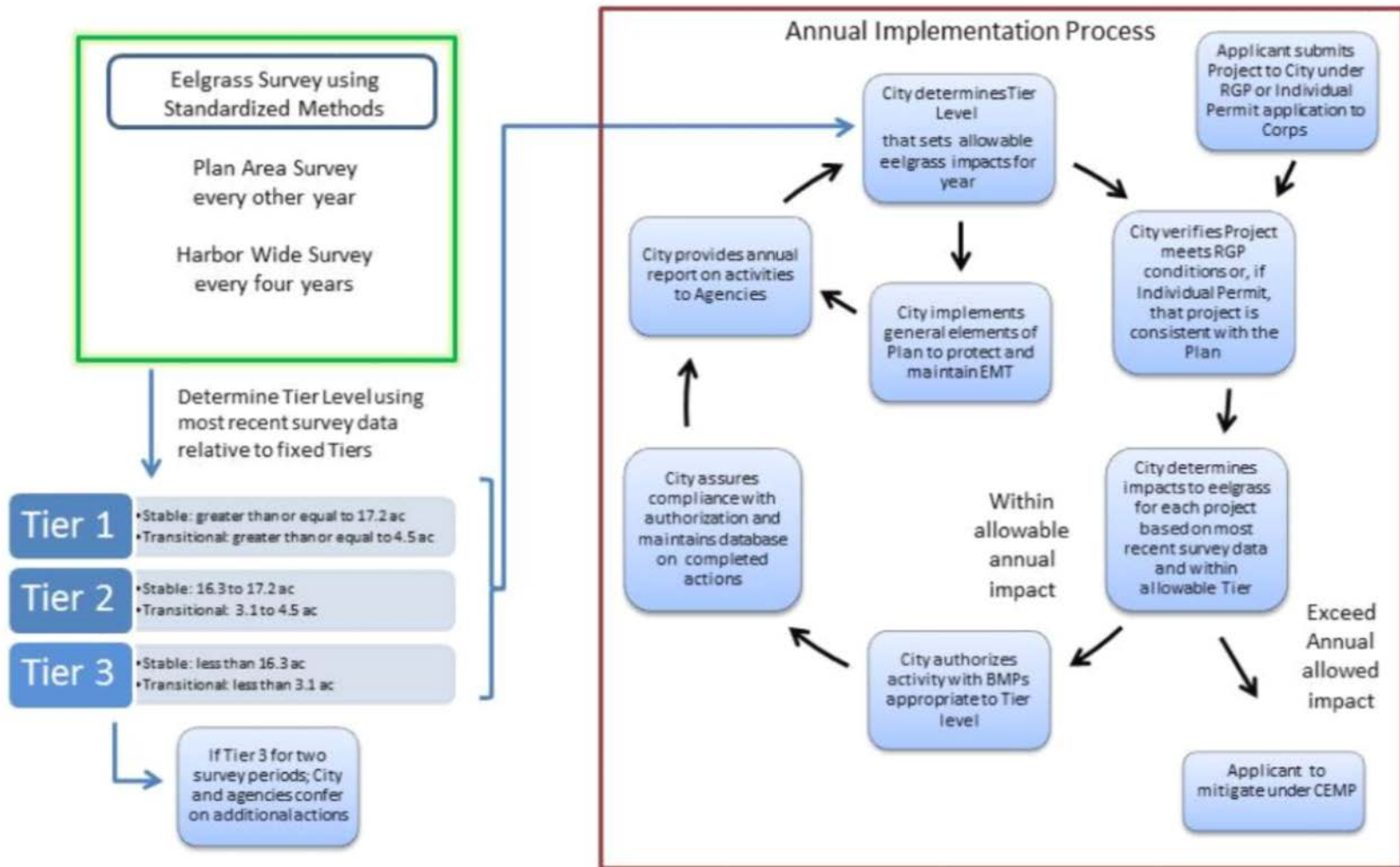


Buoy-deployed seed bags



Transplanting eelgrass restoration frames

Process



Regulatory Status

- California Coastal Commission
 - Commission recommended approval in June 2015
 - Coastal Development Permit anticipated shortly
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 - Permit anticipated shortly
- Regional Water Quality Control Board
 - 401 Water Quality Certification issued in July 2014

Summary

- Once implemented and approved, the new RGP 54 and the Newport-specific Eelgrass Plan will allow the following key activities:
 - Maintenance dredging to -10 feet MLLW (plus 2 feet of overdepth)
 - Cumulative annual dredging limit up to 75,000 cy
 - Maximum 8,000 cy per project limit
 - Temporary impacts to eelgrass as a percentage of current population in the harbor

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Questions

