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March 13, 2003

To: Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, Chair  
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Supervisor Don Knabe  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: David E. Janssen  
Chief Administrative Officer

**MOTION TO SUPPORT AB 120 (WYLAND), APPROPRIATING \$1.1 MILLION TO ERADICATE CAULERPA TAXIFOLIA FROM THE AGUA HEDIONDA LAGOON (ITEM NO. 8, AGENDA OF MARCH 18, 2003)**

Item No. 8 on the March 18, 2003 Agenda is a motion by Supervisor Knabe that the Board support AB 120 (Wyland), which would appropriate \$1.1 million from Proposition 50 bond funds to address the problem of Caulerpa taxifolia, and instructing the Chief Administrative Officer to send a letter to Governor Davis and the County's Legislative Delegation urging their support and early enactment of AB 120.

AB 120 cites the invasive nature of Caulerpa taxifolia and the fact that it has been found in two Southern California locations—the Agua Hedionda Lagoon in San Diego County, and Huntington Harbor in Orange County. The bill would appropriate \$1.1 million for a grant to the Southern California Caulerpa Action Team (SCCAT) to eradicate Caulerpa taxifolia from the Agua Hedionda Lagoon. SCCAT's members include the Regional Water Quality Control Board, the Department of Fish and Game, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Agua Hedionda Lagoon Foundation, and Cabrillo Power. The bill may have to be amended, directing the grant to another agency, as SCCAT may not have legal authority to accept a grant or expend funds.

Caulerpa taxifolia is a variety of seaweed that was used as a decorative aquarium plant. It was first found in the Mediterranean Sea in 1984. By 2001, it had infested 30,000 acres of sea floor in Spain, France, Italy, Croatia, and Tunisia. These infestations have had significant impacts on tourism, commercial and recreational fishing. The import and interstate transport of Caulerpa taxifolia has been banned since 1999 by the Federal Noxious Weed Act. In September 2001, the Governor signed AB 1334 (Harman), which prohibits the possession, sale, and transport of the plant throughout California.

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After the discovery of *Caulerpa taxifolia* in the Agua Hedionda Lagoon in 2000, efforts began to survey and eradicate the infestation. Although there are no human health risks, the plant displaces native sea grasses and kills marine organisms that live on the seafloor. There are no native animals that eat *Caulerpa taxifolia*, as it has a toxin that deters animal contact. According to survey data, the infestation in the Agua Hedionda Lagoon has been reduced from 11,300 square feet in the summer of 2000, to 4 square feet in the summer of 2002, and zero square feet in the fall of 2002. However, surveys must be conducted on a quarterly basis for at least three years to ensure that there is no recurrence. The Department of Fish and Game reports that the \$1.1 million is needed to continue the surveying effort and to immediately eradicate any new infestations that are found.

Fortunately, surveys of Marina del Rey, the Ballona Lagoon, and King Harbor in Redondo Beach, discovered no evidence of *Caulerpa taxifolia*. However, the Department of Beaches and Harbors reports that there is a real concern that this very invasive plant could be easily spread to Los Angeles County, if it is not completely eradicated in San Diego and Orange Counties. **Therefore, the Department recommends support of AB 120, and we concur.**

According to the author's staff, AB 120 has received formal letters of support from the Cities of Carlsbad and Encinitas, the Agua Hedionda Foundation, the Environmental Performance Institute, and CalCoast. We have also been told that the California Marine Affairs and Navigation Conference (C-MANC), to which the County belongs, is concerned about the potential spread of *Caulerpa taxifolia*, and that it will consider taking a position in support of AB 120 at its next board of directors' meeting. There is no known opposition to AB 120.

AB 120 was introduced on January 14, 2003. It was amended to correct a drafting error on March 10, 2003, and was re-referred to the Assembly Committee on Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials on March 11, 2003. No hearing date has been set.

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MAL:DRS:ib

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors  
County Counsel  
Legislative Strategist