



Caring for Our Coast

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July 7, 2025

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Gary Jones, Director

SUBJECT: **URGENT RESPONSE TO A RISE IN STRANDED MARINE MAMMALS AFFECTED BY DOMOIC ACID ALONG LOS ANGELES COUNTY BEACHES, 60-DAY REPORT (ITEM 22, AGENDA OF MAY 6, 2025)**

On May 6, 2025, your Board took several actions to address a rise in stranded marine mammals along Los Angeles County (County) beaches, including authorizing the Director of the Department of Beaches and Harbors (DBH) to partially fund the Marine Mammal Care Center (MMCC) to tend to the ill animals. Your Board requested DBH to report back in 60 days with recommendations to generate revenue, including but not limited to a round-up donation program at beach concessionaires, a new parking pass program, and other initiatives to support MMCC services and marine mammal welfare in the long-term.

Your Board directed the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and DBH, in consultation with MMCC, to report back in 60 days on the development of an emergency response plan for mass-stranding and harmful algal bloom events in LA County.

Your Board also requested DBH to: a.) Lead and coordinate a regional convening within 60 days, bringing together all relevant jurisdictions and agencies along the Los Angeles County coastline – including, but not limited to, individual coastal cities, pertinent County offices, state and federal representatives and agencies, and other key stakeholders, to create a shared understanding, promote cross-agency collaboration, and identify actionable strategies and resources including but not limited to sustainable equitable funding mechanisms to mitigate the impacts of the Domoic Acid Crises; b.) Establish a schedule for a regular convening, meeting as needed, but at minimum quarterly, to monitor progress, share updates, and further coordinate ongoing response and mitigation efforts; and c.) Report back to the Board in writing with a summary report, including identified strategies, recommendations, progress, and next steps within 15 days following each convening.



Actions Taken:

Following the County's fiscal rules, DBH submitted a rush Purchase Order (PO) request to pay MMCC based on its \$100,000 quote to provide essential medical services to stranded marine mammals on County-owned and operated beaches for FY 2024-25. Based on its unique services, MMCC is the only organization authorized by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to respond to marine mammals in distress, and thus, a PO was processed based on a sole source justification. On June 15, 2025, MMCC received the full payment of \$100,000, which was funded directly from DBH's operating budget through reductions in infrastructure repairs and facility maintenance.

Currently, DBH is working to develop and enter into a funding agreement with MMCC to provide medical care for stranded marine mammals affected by the recent toxic algae bloom on beaches managed by the County, up to \$600,000. The Chief Executive Office and DBH are collaborating to identify additional one-time funding for this agreement for the 2025-26 Fiscal Year.

Based on collaborations thus far between DBH and MMCC to brainstorm potential sustainable funding sources, recommendations include, but are not limited to, collaborating with the Marina del Rey Tourism Board (MDRTB) and local Marina del Rey hotels to implement a tourism mitigation fee, whereby a \$1 per night donation is charged to guestrooms by the hotel with donations going directly to a charity or charitable organization; implementing a special beach parking pass program; increased anchorage slip fees; collaborating with beach concessionaires and other businesses for round-up campaigns to allow customers to round up their total bill to the nearest dollar, with the difference going to a designated charity or charitable organization; and allowing for ongoing payroll deductions from County employees through the County's Charitable Giving Program. DBH staff will continue to investigate the viability of implementing these recommendations to provide MMCC with sustainable funding mechanisms.

DBH also collaborated with the Center for Strategic Partnerships (Center) to collaborate with philanthropic partners to seek funding to support services provided by MMCC. Although its philanthropic partners are not environmentally based, but rather focused on children, families, and systems change, the Center recommended organizing an in-person briefing with DBH to introduce select foundations and groups to learn more about MMCC, its services, and funding needs. Continued planning is needed with the Center to coordinate the proposed briefing, whose date is to be determined.

DBH continues to collaborate with MMCC on a public education and outreach campaign. MMCC currently hosts a weekly mobile education hub at Burton W. Chace Park, staffed by trained volunteers, designed to engage the public in topics related to marine mammals, ocean conservation and actions that people can take to protect marine mammals and their ocean home. The hub helps to engage the public in community science by gathering data about pinnipeds in their environment through marine mammal monitoring, as well as

learn how they can report strandings if they see sick or injured pinniped strands. Further, DBH is working with MMCC on a signage program to inform the public on how to report marine mammal issues and best practices on sharing the shore responsibly. Aluminum signs, currently being designed by MMCC, will be fabricated and installed on existing poles along County managed beaches, which currently hold *Welcome to the Beach* signs that provide beachgoers with safety information and County ordinances. In addition, DBH and MMCC will collaborate with MDRTB and local Marina del Rey hotels on a potential outreach and educational campaign targeted at tourists.

Collaboration with OEM:

OEM, upon notification from DBH of a large, harmful, algal bloom that results in a major response from MMCC, multiple cities or other agencies having jurisdiction, shall send an agency representative to the scene. If deemed necessary, DBH may activate its department operations center, where OEM staff will support the coordination, response and recovery from the event.

DBH will evaluate the situation and, if beyond the control of the initial responders, will notify the OEM Duty Officer and collaborate. If OEM needs to respond, DBH and OEM will coordinate through the County's emergency management software system, or work within DBH's response network out of its department operation center or the Incident Command Post at the site.

Marine Mammal Regional Convening:

On Thursday, June 26, 2025, in coordination with your staff, DBH hosted the inaugural Marine Mammal Regional Convening (Convening) on a virtual platform. The Convening had a good turnout. Invitations were sent to the offices of Congressman Brad Sherman, Congressman Ted Lieu, Congresswoman Nannette Barragan, State Senator Ben Allen, Assemblymember Tina McKinnor, Assemblyman Mike Gipson, California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR), Councilmember Tim McOsler; coastal cities, including El Segundo, Hermosa Beach, Redondo Beach, Malibu, and Santa Monica; City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks; Los Angeles County Fire Department's Lifeguard Division (Lifeguards), Los Angeles County Beach Commission; California Wildlife Center (CWC), and MMCC.

MMCC provided a presentation on its efforts to maintain the health, safety, and conservation of marine mammals, as well as the effects of the Domoic Acid Crises. Other panelists, including representatives from DBH's Operational Services Division, Lifeguards, CDPR, and CWC, shared their firsthand experiences dealing with the crises along the County's coast. Following the panelist segment, participants were divided into breakout rooms to engage in smaller discussions aimed at brainstorming long-term solutions to help mitigate the impacts of the Domoic Acid Crises. Suggestions for sustainable solutions included:

- A beach safety signage program to inform the public about sick and stranded marine mammals
- Potentially start an “Adopt-a-Seal” program or similar initiative with MMCC
- Tabling opportunities for MMCC at County-sponsored events to share information and encourage donations
- Round-up donation options across various County services, including parking transactions, Dockweiler RV Park reservations, and boat slip rentals
- Signage on beach lifeguard towers with MMCC donation information
- Utilizing County vehicles for MMCC promotional messaging
- An environmental stewardship fee on Film Permits at County beaches and Marina del Rey
- Hosting a County-endorsed annual fundraising event (e.g., Coastal Cleanup Day, charity runs, or community festivals)
- A statewide fee on California Department of Fish and Wildlife-issued Fishing Licenses and vessel registrations issued by the California Department of Motor Vehicles
- Designate a limited number of premium parking spots at County beaches with higher rates, proceeds going to MMCC

We anticipate holding another meeting in September to further brainstorm on the suggestions made during the inaugural meeting and begin to assess the feasibility of implementation.

GJ:AC

c: Beach Board Deputies
Marina Board Deputies
Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors
Chief Executive Officer
Office of Emergency Management