

An article by reporter Jill Cowan in the Daily Pilot highlights the completion of the Lower Bay (Newport Harbor) dredging.

As I stated in the article, it was a "long, hard road to complete the big dredge." The assistance of our federal and state partners helped achieve a breakthrough.

There are few ways state and federal government dollars come directly back into our community. The Upper Newport Bay restoration project received \$50 million in federal and state funds for completion prior to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers considering work on the Lower Bay. City Manager Dave Kiff and I went to Washington, D.C., to make the case for completion of the Upper Bay project.

The \$17.3 million in federal funds so noted by Cowan came from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

The Upper Bay project was already an authorized and signed federal project whose work was performed by a private-sector contractor contributing to state and local job creation and tax revenues. Had the project not received ARRA funds, the federal government was prepared to pull the plug on the project and deem it "partially complete." The County of Orange, under the leadership of our local supervisor, John Moorlach, did an outstanding job as lead agency on the Upper Bay project.

Following completion of the Upper Bay project, the idea was to shift momentum to the Lower Bay. Easier said than done.

For more than 50 years, the dredging of Newport Harbor languished. The project failed to advance beyond the redline for funding. To begin this project, both political support (elected representatives) and agency support is necessary.

The federal government thinks about wars, Social Security, major national issues. Newport

Beach is not on its radar screen, but fortunately we are a community of self-starters. A major reason for our historical failure was the absence of a convincing case to the Feds. I worked to develop a message that would help lift this project up the federal priority list. Kiff and I made several trips to Washington, D.C., and shared with U.S. representatives and brass at the Corps of Engineers, why this project had merit:

1.) Have a U.S. Coast Guard station.

2.) Gateway to the Pacific Ocean.

3.) Part of a state system of harbors.

4.) Balances regional recreational load.

5.) An environmental clean up.

6.) It's a federal and local partnership. The City Council unanimously supported investment in this economic, environmental and recreation asset. Cost-sharing required a certain openness and flexibility on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' part.

Members of the congressional delegation consistently supportive of Newport Bay include Sen. Dianne Feinstein, and Reps. Ed Royce (R-Fullerton), Ken Calvert (R-Corona) and Loretta Sanchez (D-Garden Grove). The project made it above the cutline into the president's budget. This allowed the project to begin. City funds kept the project going to completion.

During the implementation phase, the project encountered issues that required the intervention of a congressional representative. The office of **Rep. John Campbell** (R-Irvine) stepped up and applied heavy pressure to keep federal agencies moving on the project. Of special note, is the work done by Danica Dawson of his staff. Thank you to our U.S. representatives for making Newport Harbor a better-functioning resource.

The steady hand of the Corps of Engineers, the private-sector company performing the work, and the city's Public Works Department Harbor Resources Division's daily coordination of the contractors' work with local harbor activities is appreciated.

The magnitude of funding necessary to meet Newport Bay's future needs is substantial. We will continue to work with our state and federal partners. We must also work to better position ourselves to meet future maintenance needs of the bay. To that end, Councilman Mike Henn offered his leadership to form a fund that sets aside city dollars for bay projects.

The glorious bay defines what is extraordinary and special about Newport Beach. In the midst of budget cuts and political upheaval where people may feel uncertain about their future, as a community we can engage in conversation about the funding of future bay maintenance as it connects us as a society for the common good.

In light of this accomplishment, this a good time to reflect not only on our short falls, but on the gains in bay maintenance that we have made — repairing docks, habitat restoration — and also to recognize the work, with the help of those like our Orange County congressional delegation, that still needs to be done — fortifying walls and bulkheads — both as individuals and as a community.