

Coalition For A Safe Environment

History

(2001 - 2011)

The Coalition For A Safe Environmental is a community based non-profit environmental justice, social justice, public health and public safety advocacy organization. The Coalition For A Safe Environment (CFASE) was established in Wilmington, California, USA by Jesse N. Marquez a lifetime Wilmington resident and community activist.

In March of 2001 Jesse N. Marquez attended a Port of Los Angeles public meeting at the Wil-Hall Park Auditorium in Wilmington that was being conducted by a contracted Public Relations company who presented information on a new proposed Port of Los Angeles Wilmington community project to build a wall on C Street. The wall would be 20' tall and 1.4 miles long to separate the port business and freight transportation activities from the Wilmington residential area bordering the port. The PR firm stated that the reasons were to prevent port trucks from taking short cuts through the residential community and to also be a sound barrier to stop some of the port truck traffic noise.

During the project presentation the PR representative mentioned that the Port of Los Angeles was going to expand 2X and 3X during the next 20-25 years. When residents asked for more information about the ports expansion the PR firm said that they did not know any more information. Most of the residents became upset because port truck traffic congestion impacts on Wilmington and the harbor area have been getting worse every year.

Jesse N. Marquez was one of those irate residents and asked the PR firm if they could hold another meeting in April and bring some Port of Los Angeles officials so that they could answer some of their questions. In April 2001 another community meeting was held at the park auditorium and several port officials came. The port staff introduced themselves and then asked for people to raise their hand, state who they were and to ask their question.

Jesse N. Marquez raised his hand and asked if the port was going to build anything on the other side of the wall in the next 5-10 years? The port representative stated yes, the port was planning to build a new 6-lane truck highway, move the port railroad tracks further north into Wilmington and the bordering TraPac Container Terminal was going to expand further north into Wilmington.

For a minute there was dead silence in the room and then Jesse yelled out, "hell no over my dead body, if anyone wants to form a committee to fight the Port future projects meet me in the back of the room after the meeting." After the meeting numerous Wilmington residents met in the back of the auditorium and

Jesse said everyone was invited to meet at his house on Saturday in his backyard to create a committee.

So in April 2001 the Wilmington Coalition was formed to fight all Port of Los Angeles projects. At first everyone including family told the Wilmington Coalition that we were all crazy and that it would be impossible to take-on the # 1 largest Port in the United States, the City of Los Angeles and the strongest political union the Longshoremen. Jesse N. Marquez volunteered to the chairman of the committee.

Our humble answer was, "yes because our children's and communities future depended on us." The odds were million-to-one against us. We had no knowledge of ports and their business operations. As we began to organize no Wilmington community organization would support us except one the Wilmington Citizens Committee. The Wilmington Citizens Committee under the leadership of Skip Baldwin and Lucy Mejia were the only ones to step up with their members to support us. No elected official would support us, no governmental agency would support us and no union would support us.

But that did not stop us. We continued to organize Wilmington residents to support us and soon we had more than 100 members. Our biggest challenge was to learn more about the Port of Los Angeles and what was the process for approving new projects.

In 2002 we decided that we needed to be a more formal non-profit organization with officers and we changed our name to the Coalition For A Safe Environment (CFASE). For the first 7-8 years the CFASE office was where ever Jesse N Marquez lived.

As we held our meetings members began to ask if the port air pollution was causing any of our family's public health problems. Almost every member stated that they had children with asthma or had family with asthma. So we began to research the relationship of port air pollution impacts on public health and were shockingly surprised as to what we were discovering.

Members also asked, "What about all the oil refineries in Wilmington?" We see large black smoke clouds coming out of them all the time, our community's air stinks with terrible petroleum gas odors 24/7? Sometimes we get sick, our eyes and lungs are burning. So CFASE began to expand our community based research only to discover that oil refineries, our elected officials and governmental regulatory agencies were all lying to us and covering up the truth about industries air pollution impacts on our health.

Over time we learned about CEQA the California Environmental Quality Act and NEPA the National Environmental Policy Act. These were the two major environmental laws that governed how port and oil refinery projects were approved. We learned how to research and prepare our written public comments and began to challenge every Port of Los Angeles and Port of Long Beach project.

In a short time we became the Twin Ports worst nightmare. We then came up with a brilliant idea. Why don't we create our own Wilmington waterfront development proposal? We got a Los Angeles and Long Beach Harbors map from the Automobile Club and bought a bottle of white-out. We then made a close-up copy of the Wilmington community bordering the Port of Los Angeles and whited out all the Port of LA owned waterfront property from the Los Angeles Harbor Freeway to the city of Long Beach border.

We then sent out our members to talk to their family, neighbors and Wilmington residents about what would they like to have there on the waterfront property. After a few months all the empty waterfront property areas were filed in.

Wilmington Residents wanted: a new large green recreational park, more soccer fields, a man-made tropical lake for swimming, a girl's gym, new library for the south end of Wilmington, eliminating a port parking lot and restoring wetlands, an ocean water cleaning filtration system, expanding Banning's Landing, a nice vista point of the harbor, community waterfront recreational use, community special event areas, a nice seafood restaurant like Port's O Call in San Pedro, new commercial and retail shops. By 2005 we were winning the hearts and souls of most Wilmington residents.

The year 2001 had also now become an important historical year in the Ports and Goods Movement Environmental Justice Revolution in Los Angeles, Long Beach and California.

Homeowners in San Pedro had become increasingly unhappy with the Port of Los Angeles's unrestricted and unmitigated expansion and created two new organizations, the San Pedro & Peninsula Homeowners Coalition and San Pedro & Peninsula Homeowners United. These two community organizations filed a CEQA environmental lawsuit against the Port of Los Angeles over the new proposed China Shipping Terminal Project. After a two year battle in court the Port of Los Angeles and City of Los Angeles were found guilty of failing to comply with CEQA requirements. The Port of LA was so arrogant they did not even prepare an Environmental Impact Report for the project claiming it was allowed under two previous EIR's, even though the China Shipping Terminal Project was never mentioned in the two previous EIR's.

The China Shipping Project Court Settlement included many significant new public interest and environmental mitigation measures. The China Shipping Terminal would be the first to have Electric Shorepower for ships to plug-in and emit no pollution, \$ 10 million was allocated for diesel trucks to be retrofitted with PM Traps to capture exhaust and \$ 50 million would go for San Pedro and Wilmington community mitigation projects. The first approved Wilmington mitigation project would be a \$ 3.1 million Wilmington Youth Sailing Program.

In 1999 another harbor community rebellious movement had started, San Pedro and Wilmington residents wanted to secede from the city of Los Angeles and form their own new city. After a two year battle, victory was soon to happen with a

measure being placed on the ballot 2002 for a vote with San Fernando Valley also wanting to secede from Los Angeles.

Prior to the vote the harbor communities had to meet and select a new city name for the city and residents had to be nominated for the new city council. Jesse N. Marquez announced his candidacy to run for city council from Wilmington. Soon after the Los Angeles City Mayor with his corrupt band of political cronies intervened and LAFLA the agency handling the succession application announced that it would not place the measure on the ballot because it needed to conduct additional investigation. Los Angeles had relentlessly tried to disqualify the new city from getting on the ballot. This in essence stopped and killed the new city vote from happening. However, this left the city of Los Angeles and Port of Los Angeles nervous over the new found political strength of San Pedro and Wilmington. The city had to do something to mend relations.

Under the direction of Mayor James Hahn the Port of Los Angeles establishes the Port Community Advisory Committee (PCAC) in 2001. CFASE submitted its application to be a member and was also recommended by Councilwoman Janice Hahn but was not selected by the Port of Los Angeles. However, the Wilmington Citizens Committee appointed Jesse N. Marquez to be their representative on PCAC. Over the years PCAC made over 100 recommendations to the Port of Los Angeles Board of Harbor Commissioners and over 80% were adopted. In 2013 the Port of Los Angeles Board of Harbor Commissioners unexpectedly disbands and ends the Port Community Advisory Committee without harbor community endorsement.

In 2001 East Los Angeles and Commerce, Angelo Logan a community resident creates Eastyard Communities for Environmental Justice to fight the Union Pacific Railroad and BNSF Railroad train-container intermodal facilities. The primary reasons were because of the increasing truck traffic congestion and air pollution impacts on local residents. The Alameda Corridor trains and thousands of trucks daily were traveling from the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to these railroad yards.

Andrea Hricko from the USC Keck School of Medicine and Director of Community Outreach and Engagement began to contact community organizations to offer public health research information regarding ports and freight transportation air pollution impacts on public health. Andrea convened the first community summit in Long Beach to discuss air pollution impacts on public health and invited community organizations to speak on their Environment Justice Advocacy work and to meet each other.

The Sierra Club Palos Verdes South Bay Group Chapter under the leadership of Tom Politeo created the Harbor Vision Taskforce with the purpose to bring together Long Beach, Wilmington and San Pedro environmental community leaders to fight environmental impacts from the ports and freight transportation. Jesse N. Marquez was a co-chair of this group and became a Sierra Club member.

One of CFASE's new priorities was to learn how to write grants to raise money to support our organization and environmental justice community advocacy work. Since we had no experience in writing grants our first grant applications were all rejected. Finally we were successful and the Liberty Hill Foundation was the first to give us a small grant to support our work and has been a supporting foundation ever since.

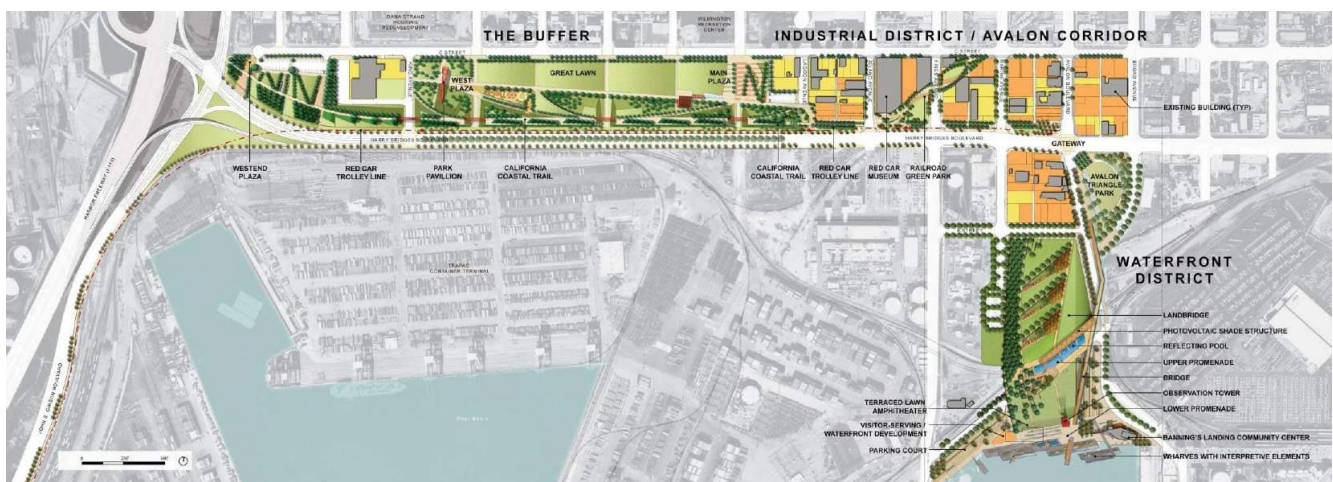
Soon the Wilmington Coalition became friends with numerous other environmental and public health organizations in Los Angeles and in California.

In 2004 the Coalition For A Safe Environment published one of its first and most important public documents, a "Port Communities Bill of Rights." No other port community had ever written such an important document and public declaration

In 2005, Port of Los Angeles representatives met with Jesse N. Marquez to discuss a Wilmington Waterfront Development Proposal. The discussion began with them acknowledging that the Wilmington Coalitions Waterfront Development Proposal had gained a lot of support from Wilmington residents and now some elected officials including the new Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

The Port of Los Angeles now had a non-negotiable offer. The Port would not give-up all the waterfront property from the LA Harbor Freeway to Long Beach. But they would give-up 94 acres of waterfront land from the Los Angeles Harbor Freeway east to Avalon Blvd. and south to the Banning's Landing Community Center at the waterfront. They would build a 30-acre greenspace community park as the first phase. Jesse N. Marquez called a meeting with members who agreed to accept the proposal.

On January 5, 2006, the Port of Los Angeles Board of Harbor Commissioners approved the Wilmington Waterfront Development Proposal.



Wilmington Waterfront Development Master Plan

The new \$ 55 million community waterfront park construction project begins in 2009 and on Saturday June 4, 2011 the new Wilmington Waterfront Park opened along Harry Bridges Road bordering the TraPac Container Terminal at the Port of Los Angeles. The park is a large green open space with community special event

areas, walking trails, port viewpoints, picnic areas, a children's playground, water fountains and water cannons play area, colorful pedestrian bridges, soccer field areas, bike trails and bike racks. The south side of the park is a landscaped berm that rises to a height of 17' with scenic walkways. CFASE agreed to the berm design concept after the devastation 2007 Indonesian Tsunami and refer to the berm as our Wilmington Community Tsunami Protection Wall. It may not stop a Tsunami wave but might give Wilmington residents some extra time to evacuate.



Wilmington Waterfront Park

In 2020 construction will begin on Phase II of the new Wilmington Waterfront Promenade which greatly expands the Wilmington's Banning's Landing Community Center.



Wilmington Waterfront Promenade

On July 2, 2007 the Port of Los Angeles files and announces the Berth 136-147 TraPac Container Terminal Project Draft EIR/EIS (Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement). An EIS is a federal NEPA requirement when a project will involve ocean water ways and is administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE). The USACOE has historically been only a port project rubber stamping organization and they have never opposed a port project and have never cared about mitigating environmental justice community project impacts. The TraPac Container Terminal northern boundary is adjacent to Wilmington residential areas.

The purpose of the \$ 1.5 billion TraPac Project was to expand the terminal by 67 acres at the northern boundary. The project also included a 30 acre buffer across the street from the northern boundary of TraPac which was the future Wilmington Waterfront Park as mitigation. While this may seem wonderful, there were actually ulterior motives for this. You see, by including the 30 acre buffer the Port was manipulating the community to not oppose the TraPac Container Terminal Expansion Project. The Port could have also presented the park as a separate project with no strings attached.

It was soon discovered that the TraPac Container Terminal Project EIR/EIS had too many unacceptable inadequacies and the Coalition For A Safe Environment immediately took the position of opposing the project even with the potential of losing the future Wilmington Waterfront Park land. Over the next several months numerous residents and organization had meetings organizing to fight the TraPac Project. A community war raged-on against the Port of LA TraPac Container Terminal Project and hundreds of people showed up at the ports public meetings opposing the project.

On November 29, 2007 the Port of Los Angeles Board of Harbor Commissioners voted to approve the TraPac Container Terminal Project Final EIR/EIS. An important thing to also know is that all Board of Harbor Commissioners are appointed by the city mayor. On December 14, 2007 a coalition of harbor residents, environmental justice, environmental, labor, economic development and community groups filed an appeal with the Los Angeles City Council to reverse the decision of the Port of Los Angeles Board of Harbor Commissioners. The coalition also announced its intent to file environmental lawsuits against the port and city if necessary.

In April 2008 after failing to reach an acceptable agreement and the community is ready to walk-out of the discussions with the Port Los Angeles, city Councilwoman Janice Hahn is notified and she leaves a city council meeting in session in downtown LA to join the delicate negotiations in San Pedro. Councilwoman Janice Hahn was able to help broker a new agreement to avoid environmental lawsuits against the city and port.

On April 2, 2008 The TraPac Memorandum of Understanding (TraPac MOU) was signed by 17 environmental justice, community, homeowner, public health and labor advocates. This group included the Coalition for a Safe Environment, San Pedro Peninsula Homeowners Coalition, Sierra Club Harbor Vision Task Force,

Kathleen Woodfield, Chuck Hart, American Lung Association, Change to Win, Coalition for Clean Air, Communities for a Better Environment, Communities for Clean Ports, Earth Day LA, Environmental Priorities Network, Harbor-Watts EDC, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy, Physicians for Social Responsibility and Natural Resources Defense Council.

On April 3, 2008 the Port of Los Angeles Board of Harbor Commissioners approve the TraPac MOU and the creation of the Port Community Mitigation Trust Fund (PCMTF) to be operated by a Non-profit entity who would oversee port project grant mitigation.

The TraPac MOU also included a suite of new first time Environmental Justice Community Mitigation Measures. It created a \$ 12,040,000 mitigation fund with \$ 6 million being designated for installing air purification systems in all of Wilmington and San Pedro Elementary Schools which has been completed. Another \$ 5,240,000 would be allocated for community mitigation projects. Mitigation funds would be collected from a container tariff of \$ 2.00 per TEU and if the port expansion continues a \$3.50 per TEU tariff would be imposed. A TEU refers to a 20' container.

In addition, the MOU requires two new studies to be performed, an Off-Port Land Use Impact Study and a Wilmington-San Pedro Wetlands Restoration Study. Funds can also be used for residential sound mitigation, local health clinic public health support services, local job development training, wildlife conservation and preservation and other environmental and public safety related projects. A comprehensive four series of reports Wilmington and San Pedro Community Noise Study has also been completed in the years 2012-2016.

On May 31, 2011 the Harbor Community Benefit Foundation is created to administer the Port Community Mitigation Trust Fund. Jesse N. Marquez from Wilmington and Kathleen Woodfield from San Pedro are appointed to the Board of Directors as the first community resident members. New Board members included Michele Prichard Director of the Environmental Health & Justice Program at the Liberty Hill Foundation, Sean B. Hecht, Professor at UCLA School of Law, Sylvia Prieto Area Health Officer at the County of Los Angeles Dept. of Public Health, Peter Peyton member of the International Longshore & Warehouse Union (ILWU) and Vice President of ILWU Local 63, and Jim Sadd, Professor Environmental Science at Occidental College.

The Harbor Community Benefit Foundation is still successfully operating and new board members are selected and appointed as old member term out of office.