The Containerization of the Port of Long Beach and Its Economic, Socio-
Environmental Implications

Introduction

After the period of “Queen of beaches” ended during 1930 and 1945, a period where breakwaters to protect the ports had been built, the new nick name of the port of Long Beach has been known as the “King of containers” due to the fact that the port itself has transformed into a deep water port through a natural process resulting from the consequences of oil pumping businesses and mostly by a constant development efforts advocated by the local, state, and federal governments as well as parties that gain interests from the port. This transformation in the form of dredging, widening, deepening existing waterways, digging new channels, as well as building new landfill and constructing bulk-loading facilities, is fostered to accommodate the constantly enlarged shipping vessels and today’s supertankers by in the global trade both in volume and dollar amount. With the increase of modernization of the port of Long Beach, there are also some socio-economic and environmental effects resulting from the economic gain
that the port has generated. The governments at all levels play a crucial role in this transformation and the responsibility of the quality of the livelihood of the community around the port.

**Literature search on the port of Long Beach**

The port enhances most trade from the Pacific Basin, especially Pacific Southwest and the rest of the country. It represents, if combined with Los Angeles port, the number one enhancer of containerized cargo in the United States by accommodating 3.1 million TEU containers in 1987 (Feasibility Report, 1989). Major commodities passing through the port of Long Beach include Alaska crude and containerized cargo.

Because of the deficiency of the port regarding onshore facilities, an improvement plan, called “2020 Master Plan,” has been initiated to essentially deepen the existing Federal channels and dredge new channels to deal with deep-draft commercial vessels. The plan also included navigation improvements and terminal development.

In feasibility report of the plan made in 1989 by the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) the cost of the implementation of the plan was to be shared by the Federal government and non-Federal agencies. The Federal only gave full cost responsibility to providing aids to navigation (e.g. buoys, lights, markets) and to providing operation and maintenance of the general navigation and mitigation for projects of deepening less than 45 feet below mean lower low water (MLLW). For any project of more than 45 feet, the Federal agreed
only to pay half. Also, the Federal would share other costs such as the costs for Planning, engineering, and Design (PED). The government also reserves the right to regulate the use, growth, and development of harbor facilities.

The “2020 Plan” also includes a development of 2,500 acres as man-made islands and adds 39 new cargo terminals to be fully completed in the year 2020. The Army bosses in Washington, D.C. soon ordered the ACE to cut some of the project plans and to do more work on the study, which were not anticipated. This added a delay to the finalization of the feasibility report, which was then expected a one year delay. The San Pedro Peninsula Chamber of Commerce together with San Pedro Peninsula Homeowners Coalition added another preoccupation to ask for a more comprehensive harbor development plan to protect the environment and the quality of life of people living in San Pedro. The eventual authorized project plan included the widening, deepening, and dredging the Entrance channel, Los Angeles Channel, Turning Basin (inner harbor), East basin channel, West basin, East basin.