



Ventura Port District Commissioners Grant New 5-Year Lease to Coastal Marine Biolabs

Located in Ventura Harbor, Coastal Marine Biolabs (CMB) is a nonprofit organization that offers innovative, research-based science education programs to high school educators and students, both locally and nationally.

Recognizing the many benefits that CMB brings to Ventura Harbor, the Ventura Port District Board of Port Commissioners granted CMB a new five-year lease, which extends from June 1, 2014, through May 31, 2019. The lease coincides with a five-year, \$1.2 million Science Education Partnership Award that CMB received from the National Institutes of Health to engage high school students in cutting-edge neuroscience research centered on spinal cord “hard-wiring.”

“Over the long term, we seek to build upon the early successes of CMB and help establish Ventura Harbor as a world-class center of excellence for science research and education,” said Dr. Ralph Imondi, one of CMB’s scientific directors.

“Great harbors support game-changing research and education,” said Ventura Port District Commissioner Everard Ashworth. “The Port District, the commissioners, and the Harbor staff recognize that CMB will allow the Harbor to continue to enrich Ventura on multiple levels.”



CMB assembled its state-of-the-art biosciences laboratory at Ventura Harbor in early 2007 and began accepting students in summer 2008. In 2011, the organization received a nearly \$1 million education innovation award from the National Science Foundation to launch the Barcoding Life's Matrix program. The three-year effort involves students in a global scientific initiative to catalog biodiversity using a DNA barcode system.

According to Dr. Linda Santschi, CMB's co-founder and scientific co-director, "High school students are contributing genetic data to the International Barcode of Life project, one of the most significant biodiversity initiatives ever undertaken. As part of this landmark effort, students have already initiated a DNA-based inventory of species diversity in the Channel Islands National Park, the first of its kind in any U.S. national park."

To broaden its impact, the Barcoding Life's Matrix program also engages science teachers, who receive in-depth training and cutting-edge instructional resources to implement the project in their own classrooms and labs. Teachers and students from the Ventura Unified School District were the first to adopt the project, which has expanded to schools in 75 California cities and nearly 20 states.

Many Harbor businesses and restaurants benefit from CMB's presence and programs. Between March 2011 and March 2014, CMB contributed nearly \$200,000 to Ventura Harbor businesses, including hotels, boat operations and restaurants. The Port District receives a proportion of these revenues through its lease agreements with the businesses.

"As part of the new lease agreement, CMB will collaborate with the Port District on a number of education-centered Harbor enhancement projects, including a proposed native California shellfish hatchery in Ventura Harbor," Ashworth said. CMB and the Port District also aim to create new inroads for the public to explore the area's natural beauty by creating a nature trail linking the Harbor with the surrounding beach and wetlands areas. For more information visit www.coastalmarinebiolabs.org.