FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Landmark Environmental Justice Nonprofit and Mitigation Fund, Up to $50 Million, Approved Unanimously by Board of Harbor Commissioners

Los Angeles – On October 26, 2010, the Los Angeles Board of Harbor Commissioners approved a landmark agreement to establish the Port Community Mitigation Trust Fund. The Board voted unanimously to create a new nonprofit which will distribute up to $50 million dollars set aside from revenue generated by Port growth and related operations. The new nonprofit and fund will provide urgently needed community mitigation from Port pollution and Port-related operations to the neighboring communities of Wilmington and San Pedro. The mitigation dollars were committed after a coalition of 17 environmental, community, and labor groups and individuals intervened in the expansion of the TraPac container area in 2007.

Public Counsel led a team of attorneys representing the coalition in negotiations with the Port to establish the Trust fund and nonprofit. “Today was a historic moment for the environmental, racial, and economic justice movements. The TraPac agreement will clean up pollution in local communities while also promoting the development of jobs related to the Port. This nonprofit will have a larger ripple effect that changes the way the Port of Los Angeles does business, and we applaud the Board for its decision,” said Serena W. Lin, staff attorney with Public Counsel.

The coalition includes the Natural Resources Defense Council, Coalition for a Safe Environment, Communities for a Better Environment, Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy, Coalition for Clean Air, Harbor Watts Economic Development Corporation, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Sierra Club, and local San Pedro and Wilmington residents, among others. In addition to Public Counsel, coalition interests were represented by Mission Infrastructure, Tal Finney of Dongell, Lawrence, Finney, LLP, and Joseph Burton.

The nonprofit and the fund were part of a settlement brokered by Councilwoman Janice Hahn and developed by Executive Director of the Port, Dr. Geraldine Knatz, in 2008. The settlement allowed a disputed Port expansion of the TraPac container area to clear environmental review. In exchange, the Port agreed to set aside funds in connection with Port growth to pay for school air filtration systems, health care clinics, job training centers, among other mitigation projects.

The collaborative effort was supported by key figures including Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and the California Community Foundation. The City Attorney formally approved the innovative agreement reached yesterday.

“Port residents are routinely exposed to high levels of pollution that can lead to asthma attacks or an elevated risk of developing cancer. Protecting the health of local residents is of paramount importance, and this fund seeks to ensure residents are protected from any additional pollution and other impacts produced by Port operations,” said Adrian Martinez of Natural Resources Defense Council.

“The coalition members and the Board of Harbor Commissioners have put in thousands of hours over the past three years to shepherd this agreement through. Today is only the beginning, and we are all excited to see the first mitigation projects get funding.” said Ms. Lin.