

SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO HARBOR, CALIF.

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LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR

TRANSMITTING

A REPORT FROM THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS ON PRELIMINARY  
EXAMINATION AND SURVEY OF SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO  
HARBOR, CALIF., AND ENTRANCE THERETO

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FEBRUARY 11, 1926.—Referred to the Committee on Rivers and Harbors and  
ordered to be printed

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WAR DEPARTMENT,  
*Washington, February 10, 1926.*

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

MY DEAR MR. SPEAKER: I am transmitting herewith a report, dated the 8th instant, from the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, on preliminary examination and survey of South San Francisco Harbor, Calif., and entrance thereto, authorized by the river and harbor act approved September 22, 1922, together with accompanying papers.<sup>1</sup>

Sincerely yours,

DWIGHT F. DAVIS,  
*Secretary of War.*

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WAR DEPARTMENT,  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,  
*Washington, February 8, 1926.*

Subject: Preliminary examination and survey of South San Francisco Harbor, Calif.

To: The Secretary of War.

1. I submit, for transmission to Congress, my report on preliminary examination and survey of South San Francisco Harbor, Calif., and entrance thereto, authorized by the river and harbor act approved September 22, 1922, together with accompanying papers.

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<sup>1</sup>Only report of Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors printed in this connection

2. The harbor of South San Francisco is located at Point San Bruno, on the western shore of San Francisco Bay, about 11 miles south of the Ferry Building, San Francisco. It is not under improvement by the United States. Local interests, in 1891, dredged a channel 18 feet deep at low water and 200 feet wide, from deep water in the bay to and along the southerly side of Point San Bruno, using the material for land reclamation, and constructed wharves and a ferry slip. This channel has been redredged twice, the last time in 1919, but deterioration is very rapid; the controlling depth at the time of the survey was 6.5 feet. San Francisco Bay, except for a shoal about 4 miles long opposite Point San Bruno, over which there is a channel 26 feet deep and 1,500 feet or more wide, has depths in excess of 30 feet from Goat Island to Dumbarton Point. Local interests desire a channel 30 feet deep at mean lower low water, from that depth in the bay to the water front of South San Francisco, and a channel 30 feet deep across the shoal to connect the deep water areas to the north and south. The range of tide between mean lower low water and mean higher high water is about 6.5 feet.

3. South San Francisco has developed along industrial lines, and is claimed to offer the most suitable location for expansion of San Francisco's manufacturing business. It is also claimed that additional terminals will soon be required to relieve the congestion at the port of San Francisco, and that the creation of terminals at South San Francisco would meet these needs. The several industries located on the water front of South San Francisco handled by water a total of 150,000 tons of commerce in 1922 and 120,000 in 1923, the principal items being paint and its raw materials and fuel oil. Receipts and shipments by rail at South San Francisco totaled 550,000 tons in 1923, of which 88,000 tons moved to or from the main water front of San Francisco. Interested parties state that deep-water facilities would result in increased movements by water and the development of new industries.

4. The district engineer, who is also the division engineer, has given thorough study to the possible methods of improvement to meet the needs of commerce, and submits estimates for a number of different projects. His investigations convince him that economy of maintenance would necessitate the construction of a dike on the southerly side of the channel, extending from the shore at least out to the 6-foot contour of depth, and possibly a second dike on the northerly side. The following are typical estimates:

(a) For a 30-foot channel to South San Francisco, 500 feet wide in section A, 300 feet wide in sections C and D, without a turning basin, having a creosoted timber dike on the south side of the channel extending to the 6-foot contour, \$1,128,000 for first cost and \$115,100 for annual maintenance.

(b) For a channel 500 feet wide and 30 feet deep connecting deep water in the upper and lower sections of the bay, \$107,000 for first cost and \$10,700 for annual maintenance. Of this first cost, \$51,000 would be for section A, which would also be a part of the project for a channel to South San Francisco; the remainder, \$56,000, is for section B, and would be additional to such a project.

No definite information was presented tending to show extensive prospective industrial expansion or other pressing needs for a deep channel to South San Francisco or through the shoal in the bay,

and the district engineer is unable to find that sufficient general benefits would result to justify the large expense involved. He considers that if the work be undertaken it should be at the expense of the locality.

5. These reports have been referred, as required by law, to the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, and attention is invited to its report herewith, agreeing with the district engineer that improvement by the United States is not now justified.

6. After due consideration of the above-mentioned reports, I concur in the views of the district engineer and the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors. The business now moving by water to and from South San Francisco is of a nature adequately served by lighters or barges. Large-scale industrial development of the locality is conceivable, requiring a channel depth sufficient for coastwise or possibly foreign vessels. At present, however, there is little indication of any immediate and substantial benefits from the proposed improvement, except such as would accrue to the owners of undeveloped water-front land; nor have there been any definite offers of cooperation in the first cost of the work and in terminal development. Necessity for greater depth over the shoal in the bay is not apparent; there already exists a practicable channel with a controlling depth of 26 feet at mean lower low water, sufficient, with the tidal range available at this point, for most ocean carriers. I, therefore, report that the improvement of South San Francisco Harbor, Calif., and entrance thereto, is not deemed advisable at the present time.

7. Submission of this report has been delayed to give local interests opportunity to present further information favorable to the improvement. No data have been submitted sufficiently convincing to justify modification of the conclusions set forth above.

H. TAYLOR,  
*Major General, Chief of Engineers.*

## REPORT OF THE BOARD OF ENGINEERS FOR RIVERS AND HARBORS

## SYLLABUS

The Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors concurs with the district engineer in the opinion that South San Francisco Harbor and entrance thereto are not worthy of improvement by the United States at the present time.

[Second indorsement]

BOARD OF ENGINEERS FOR RIVERS AND HARBORS,  
*Washington, D. C., June 17, 1924.*

The CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, UNITED STATES ARMY:

1. The following is in review of the reports on preliminary examination and survey of South San Francisco Harbor, Calif., and entrance thereto, authorized by the river and harbor act approved September 22, 1922.

2. That part of San Francisco Bay lying south of Oakland and Goat Island has a natural channel with depths in excess of 30 feet to a point about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles south of Hunters Point. Thence for a distance of about 4 miles there is a shoal with natural depths of at least 26 feet over a width of 1,500 feet or more. South of this shoal a channel 30 to 50 feet in depth continues down the bay to the vicinity of Dumbarton Point. The municipality of South San Francisco lies on the western shore of the bay, about opposite the middle point of the shoal, and about 3 miles in a straight line from the 30-foot depth to the north. Local interests many years ago dredged a channel 18 feet deep at low water and 200 feet wide from the southern shore of a promontory known as Point San Bruno, straight east to that depth in the bay. The developed water front of South San Francisco lies along this channel which has been irregularly maintained and now has a limiting low-water depth of about  $6\frac{1}{2}$  feet. Along the shore south of Point San Bruno is an extensive area of tidal flats. The range of tide between mean lower low water and mean higher high water is 6.3 feet. On the improved water front of South San Francisco are located several industries, including the W. P. Fulton Co., paint manufacturers, the Sleiger Terra Cotta Co., the Western Meat Co., and the Growers' Rice Milling Co.

3. Local interests have submitted requests for two improvements: First, for a channel 30 feet deep from that depth in the bay to the water front of South San Francisco. This would be provided by the channels designated on the attached map as sections A, C, and D. Second, for a channel 30 feet deep, across the shoal in the bay referred to above, connecting natural deep water in the upper and lower sections of the bay. This would be provided by section B in conjunction with section A.

4. The total receipts and shipments by rail pertaining to South San Francisco during 1923, amounted to 550,000 tons, of which 88,000 tons moved to or from the main San Francisco water front for transshipment. With the shoal channel available, the water-borne commerce amounted to 150,000 tons in 1922 and 120,000 tons in 1923, the major items being paint materials and products and fuel oil. It is contended that a dependable deep-water channel would result in increased traffic and in a saving in freight rates amounting to about \$100,000 annually. It is claimed also that new industries

will be attracted to the locality, as suitable factory sites are not available at reasonable cost along the San Francisco shore.

5. The district engineer submits estimates for a number of alternative projects. For any channel to South San Francisco he considers that, for economy of maintenance, it would be necessary to construct a dike on the southern side of the channel from the shore at least out to the 6-foot contour, and possibly a second dike on the northerly side; otherwise, the tidal currents sweeping across the improved channel would rapidly fill it in. The following are estimates for characteristic channels:

(a) For a 30-foot channel to South San Francisco, 500 feet wide in section A, 300 feet wide in sections C and D, without a turning basin but with a creosoted timber dike on the south side of the channel extending to the 6-foot contour, \$1,128,000 for first cost and \$115,100 for annual maintenance.

(b) For a channel over the same route 24 feet deep with the same widths, including a turning basin 800 by 1,000 feet and the dike, \$886,000 for first cost and \$74,000 for annual maintenance.

(c) For a channel 500 feet wide and 30 feet deep connecting deep water in the upper and lower sections of the bay, \$107,000 for the first cost and \$10,700 for annual maintenance. Of this first cost, \$51,000 would be for section A, which would also be a part of project for a channel to South San Francisco; the remainder, \$56,000 is for section B and would be additional to such a project.

6. After a careful study of the existing and prospective commerce, the district engineer, who is also the division engineer, is unable to find that sufficient general benefit would result to justify improvement at the expense of the United States. The present business appears to be served with reasonable adequacy by the barge movements to and from San Francisco. Definite information was not obtainable covering the establishment of new industries or extension of old plants which might make large water shipments. The district engineer therefore concludes that the provision of any improved channel is not now justified. He expresses the opinion that as the improvement would be of local rather than general benefit, the work if undertaken should be at the expense of the locality.

7. Interested parties were informed of the tenor of the district engineer's report, and given an opportunity to submit their views. As a result a public hearing was held by the board, at which considerable information was submitted. Careful consideration has been given thereto.

8. The improved water front of South San Francisco is now principally in the hands of industrial interests. These handle a considerable commerce by water, which is, however, restricted by existing depths to barge movements. From the nature and magnitude of the industries it appears improbable that the provision of deep water would sufficiently increase their water-borne commerce to warrant the large cost of the improvement. Claims for deeper water must accordingly be based primarily upon future developments.

9. The greater part of the undeveloped land along the bay in the vicinity of Point San Bruno is owned by a land improvement company. The representative of this company, at the hearing before the board, submitted plans showing a quite extensive terminal develop-

ment along the south side of channel D, and on the easterly shore of Point San Bruno. The plans appear to be tentative, but the claim is made that congestion at the port of San Francisco is such that additional terminals will soon be required; that these can not be provided along the water front of San Francisco proper; that if they are not, the city of San Francisco may lose commerce to Oakland or other points in the bay; that, further, there is a feeling locally that the city or the commercial interests of the city, should have terminals of their own, distinct from the present terminals which are under the control of a State commission, and that the creation of terminals at South San Francisco would meet these needs. The board is inclined to consider these arguments either insufficiently proved or not germane to the discussion. No adequate evidence was submitted that San Francisco's terminals were seriously congested, or that it would be impracticable to extend them to meet the need of the immediate future. From a national viewpoint the ports on San Francisco Bay must be considered as a unit, and, for the shipper in the interior it is of little moment over what particular terminal he obtains service, provided it be adequate and satisfactory. Moreover, assuming that the city of San Francisco desired to establish its own terminals, it is not clear how under existing law this could be done at South San Francisco, which is a separate municipality. It would, of course, be possible for private interests of the former city to finance a terminal development at the latter, but there would be no essential connection between such a development and the municipality of San Francisco; it would simply be an additional terminal on San Francisco Bay.

10. It is likely that future developments at this point will be primarily industrial rather than terminal. If these occur on a large enough scale they might attract coastwise or even foreign vessels which would require deeper channels. At present, however, such a growth is uncertain. It is likely that the provision of deep water would favor it, but the principal beneficiaries would be the interests which are now holding for disposal many hundreds of acres of undeveloped land. It seems probable that the increase in value of this land, resulting from a deep channel, would be considerably in excess of the entire cost of the proposed project. It is not the policy of the Government to spend large sums where the principal immediate result is an increment in land values, and where the future development can not be adequately predicted.

11. A channel across the shoal in South San Francisco Bay, following sections A and B, would provide a 30-foot depth into the southern part of the bay. It has been claimed that this would stimulate industrial and terminal development along the adjacent water fronts. None has, however, thus far been undertaken on a large scale, although there at present exists a channel over the shoal more than 1,500 feet wide and 26 feet deep, which with a range of tide of 6 feet is ample for a great majority of ocean-going vessels. The only development contemplated, of which anything definite could be learned, was a cement company in the vicinity of Redwood. and there is no evidence that it would need a greater depth in the main channel of the bay than now exists, as its shipments are expected to be in-part cargoes.

12. In view of these facts and in the absence of sufficient evidence that the proposed work is now required, the board concurs with the

district engineer that expensive channel development by the Federal Government is not justified. It therefore recommends that no improvement of South San Francisco Harbor, Calif., and entrance thereto, be undertaken by the United States at the present time.

13. In compliance with law, the board reports that there are no questions of terminal facilities, waterpower, or other subjects which could be coordinated with the project proposed in such manner as to render the improvement advisable in the interests of commerce and navigation.

For the board:

H. C. NEWCOMER,  
*Senior Member Present.*

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