

Statement of Dr. Robert A. Corrigan  
President, San Francisco State University

Before the U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Resources  
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans  
October 3, 2002

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the importance of the former National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) land conveyance to the California State University Board of Trustees on behalf of the Romberg Tiburon Center (RTC) and San Francisco State University. And thank you to Mrs. Woolsey and Mr. Miller for introducing this legislation on our behalf.

The Romberg Tiburon Center is an off-campus marine laboratory operated by San Francisco State University (SFSU). It lies outside the town of Tiburon, California, on the shores of San Francisco Bay. It is the only academic research facility located on the Bay, which is one of the largest and most complex estuarine environments in the United States. The Center's research scientists train and support students in their laboratories, out in the field, and through collaborations with fellow scientists at universities, institutions, and environmental agencies throughout the world.

At the same time, the Center's scientists conduct basic and applied research on what has been called "the marine web of life," ranging from microbes to mammals, and dealing with such subjects as environmental adaptation, the impact of biological toxins, the effects of nonnative creatures brought into the Bay from other parts of the world, and forces that threaten the globe's depleted fisheries. Over \$4.5 million in federal and state grants are awarded to the scientists at RTC annually in support of this cutting-edge and globally relevant research.

Some of the Center's research highlights include creating the first authoritative guide on wetland restoration; providing some of the first scientific testimony on the effects of freshwater diversion in the San Francisco Bay; conducting ground-breaking studies on how nutrients cycle through the oceans, affecting biological life and mediating the processes that lead to global warming; developing recommendations for oil spill cleanups now in use by U.S. Coast Guard and other agencies; and studying the long-term effects of farmland runoff (including agricultural toxins) on the San Francisco Bay.

The research conducted at the Romberg Tiburon Center has contributed significantly to the existing body of knowledge on estuarine environments and has been published in a variety of highly prestigious scientific journals and texts. RTC is known throughout the national and international academic community as a major center for scientific research, much of which is applicable to coastal and estuarine systems worldwide, especially as the impact of human activity continues to increase.

For the past 24 years, San Francisco State University and the National Marine Fisheries Service have worked together on this 34-acre, bayside site. The Romberg Tiburon Center occupies 23 acres of this parcel, a site that was conveyed to the University through a public benefit conveyance in 1978 for use as an environmental research station. The National Marine Fisheries Service occupied the remaining 11 acres from 1970 until just last year, when the agency relocated to Santa Cruz, California. All of the parcels comprising this property are interlocked, as you can see from the maps provided, so for the past 25 years

NOAA and RTC have shared access to roads, parking, and the boat launch. Additionally, after the National Marine Fisheries Service relocated to another site, RTC applied for a lease permit from NOAA to utilize that property until the federal excess property disposal process was triggered. The Center received that permit in October 2001.

Let me now give a brief history of the site: It first came into use in 1877, when a packing plant to dry, process and ship codfish was constructed there. In 1904, the Navy purchased the property for use as a Navy ship coaling station. During construction of the Golden Gate Bridge in the 1930's, the Roebling's Sons Company used the north warehouse to reel cables for the bridge.

From 1931 to 1940, the Navy loaned the base to the state of California, which established its first nautical training school (later to become the California Maritime Academy). With the outbreak of World War II, the U.S. Government re-appropriated the site for use by the Navy, and the Maritime Academy relocated to its present site near Vallejo.

During World War II, the Tiburon facility was used for the construction of anti-submarine and anti-torpedo nets. This Navy Net Depot was active until 1958, when its operation was terminated and the property was transferred from the Navy to the Department of Commerce. In the 1960's, the property became the National Marine Fisheries Service's Southwest Fisheries Center, and in 1973, NMFS consolidated its operations to 11 acres of the parcel. In 1977, San Francisco State University submitted a proposal to develop a field station and marine laboratory dedicated to the study of San Francisco Bay, and the following year, the Romberg Tiburon Center was established on the remaining 23 acres.

I would like to emphasize how much the University has enjoyed and benefited from our relationship with NOAA and the National Marine Fisheries Service. Our organizations have operated with a shared purpose to improve the life of the San Francisco Bay through research and education, and have complemented each other's mission throughout the years. We have had an excellent experience in working together, and we fully expect to continue collaborating with these agencies long into the future.

This conveyance will support the mission of the Romberg Tiburon Center in many ways. First and foremost, the Center is committed to environmentally preserving and restoring the site, as it is one of the few remaining bay front sites. RTC is dedicated to working on-site as a keeper of the health and educator for the understanding of the bay.

Because this site has been used for marine research purposes since 1961, we feel that it is wholly appropriate for San Francisco State University to maintain that proud tradition. The Romberg Tiburon Center has developed a long-term Vision Plan to enhance its educational and research programs. Use of the additional property would provide critically needed research and educational space, and would provide opportunities for more on-site training, research and collaborations with other agencies and organizations. Because the National Marine Fisheries Service had been using its buildings for research on fish and other marine-related topics, the Romberg Tiburon Center is able to make use of those buildings in their current configuration for our research and teaching. All of the proposed activities in the Vision Plan are a realization of the goals consistent with our current mission and are compatible with NOAA's continued access to, and use of, their retained property, building 86. Initial uses of the property will include live animal aquaria and ship operations

Another long-term – and very exciting -- commitment that RTC is making to research on the Bay is the

pending designation of the San Francisco Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. (NERR) This federal-state partnership, administered by NOAA, involves eight state and local agencies, including the California State Lands Commission, Department of Water Resources, California Department of Parks and Recreation, East Bay Regional Parks District, Coastal Commission, BCDC, the Solano Land Trust, and Rush Ranch. The mission of the NERR is preserving bay front and waterfront natural lands that present research opportunities. Thus, the establishment of the San Francisco Bay NERR will not only coordinate bay research, but will enable us to attract further research money. It will promote partnership activities among these agencies in their efforts to restore degraded habitats, manage resources effectively, and increase public knowledge and good stewardship of these waters. The Romberg Tiburon Center will be the headquarters for this National Estuarine Research Reserve, working closely with three other sites in Marin and Contra Costa Counties. The San Francisco Bay NERR will have several educational and research staff, so additional space is needed to accommodate this program. This Research Reserve is likely to be designated by NOAA in late 2002 or early 2003.

To answer the remainder of the committee's specific questions, I am attaching a fuller history of the Tiburon site, which details all of the previous owners of the property and their uses of the site. As you can see, the federal government has been the landlord since 1904, and to our knowledge there are no title disputes concerning the 11-acre NOAA parcels. With respect to encumbrances or liabilities associated with the NMFS parcels, it is my understanding that NOAA has drafted a preliminary surplus property report which states that there are no known major hazardous or toxic materials or waste sites on the property. I am attaching a copy of this document, which is titled "Final phase II Environmental Site Assessment Report." It was prepared for NOAA by Tetra Tech, EM, Inc., in August 2001.

Once again, I thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, for giving consideration to this important legislation that will greatly enhance the activities of the Romberg Tiburon Center, and in turn the health of the San Francisco Bay and other vital marine environments worldwide. I would be happy to answer any questions.

#### List of Romberg Tiburon Center partner organizations

Bodega Marine Laboratory  
California Institute of Technology  
California State University, Long Beach  
Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute  
Moss Landing Marine Laboratory  
National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
Naval Postgraduate School  
NOAA/Pacific Marine Environmental Lab  
Point Reyes Bird Observatory  
San Francisco Estuary Institute  
Scripps Institute of Oceanography  
Stanford University  
University of California, Davis  
University of California, Los Angeles  
University of California, Santa Cruz  
University of Georgia  
University of Southern California

University of Washington  
University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh  
US Geological Survey, Menlo Park  
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution