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From: Campos, Alicia@Energy
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Subject: 12-AFC-03 Redondo Beach Energy Project - Public Comment from Galen Hunter, dated January 28, 2013 - Please Docket and Post to the Web

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California Energy Commission

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JAN. 30 2013

From: Galen Hunter [<mailto:hunter@oldsaltlake.org>]
Sent: Monday, January 28, 2013 6:00 PM
To: Kelly, Patricia@Energy
Cc: Energy - Public Adviser's Office
Subject: Comment on "RBEP 5.3 Cultural Resources", Redondo Beach Energy Project (12-AFC-03)

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Comments on the data adequacy of Application for Certification for Redondo Beach Energy Project (12-AFC-03)

Patricia -

For the last three years I've studied and documented the natural history and archaeology of the waterfront area on the southwest coast of the Santa Monica Bay from the bluffs at Malaga Cove north to the Old Salt Lake. My interest is to try and salvage culture by leveraging a combination of techniques in environmental studies, history, field work and web development.

I'm thinking I'll make the AES Cultural Resources Assessment ("RBEP 5.3 Cultural Resources") a project. Write it up as yet another instance of my thesis - that this waterfront area is an incredibly remarkable example of the well-known relationship between human complexity and ecological/historical footprint.

There are a bunch of factual errors and critical mistakes in this AES Cultural Resources Assessment.

Perhaps the less critical of all the factual errors and mistakes in the assessment is the description of the history of the Old Salt Lake.

The section in the assessment on the significance of and what happened to the Old Salt Lake and the salt works is very inadequate, to say the least.

What follows is text in the AES Cultural Resources Assessment about the history of the site. Then my comment write up, followed by my suggestion about what is missing to remedy the data inadequacy of the description of the history of the Old Salt Lake.

Regards,
Galen Hunter
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[excerpt from Old Salt Lake section]

“New Liverpool Salt Company Competition from the Liverpool SaltWorks, located at the Salton Sea, eventually forced Allenson and Johnson to sell their salt company. The railway had not been established in this part of the coast, and it was costly to transport goods by wagon; the Liverpool SaltWorks could transport their merchandise far more effectively by train and could reach greater markets. Francis Mellus, who purchased the Pacific SaltWorks from Allenson and Johnson, was later bought out by the Liverpool SaltWorks in 1881—who, in turn, shut down the Pacific Salt Works altogether (Gnerre, 2010). The land that was formerly the Pacific Salt Works remained largely in disuse and finally, in 1924, the abandoned structures were torn down (Gnerre, 2010).”

First of all, it was Henry, not Francis Mellus.

Some historical studies say it was “Francis” Mellus who owned the Salt Works after the original organizers. Other studies say it was “Henry” Mellus.

The pattern of the discrepancy is – older and/or first hand historical studies cite Henry - and the more recent ones cite Francis.

I may have identified the reason. James M. Guinn in his classic 1907 work “Las Salinas (The Salt Pits)”, happens to incorrectly cite Francis Mellus instead of his brother Henry. “In 1858 Johnson & Allanson sold the salt works to Francis Mellus” and most of the historical studies since have been simply citing what Guinn wrote.

It’s easy to understand the mix up. Francis and Henry were brothers, they married sisters, Henry died in 1860, etc. Also, Guinn was very prolific. He wrote volumes of work. He was a great historian of Southern California and published a massive amount of information. His work “Las Salinas” is invaluable for knowing about the history of the Old Salt Lake. However, looks like he simply got one minor detail wrong and people have been repeating it since.

One of the more conclusive documents showing it was Henry who owned the Pacific Salt Works Company is the statement of facts in the 1879 CA Supreme Court Case, Haverstick v. Trudel:

"Henry Mellus died intestate, in the county of Los Angeles, on the 26th day of December, 1860, leaving as his heirs, his widow, Anita F. Mellus, and six children. One of the children, Henry Mellus, Jr., died May, 1871. The widow was appointed administratrix of the estate, but, prior to November 30, 1861, she married the defendant Trudel, and on the last-named day the defendant became administrator. The mother, Mrs. Trudel, and the five surviving children, were the plaintiffs in this suit. The complaint averred that the deceased, at the time of his death, owned eleven hundred and forty-four of the twelve hundred shares of the capital stock of the Pacific Salt Works Company, a corporation, and that the stock came into the hands of defendant, as administrator, and that the defendant, as administrator, on the 19th day of July, 1862, ..."

OK, so it was Henry Mellus, not Francis Mellus who owned the Pacific Salt Works Company.

The rest of that AES text has so many factual errors, it’s not even productive to try and do a point by point correction. An entire new narrative is required.

So, here’s a rough bit of narrative about the significance of and what happened to the Old Salt Lake and the salt works. The next to last paragraphs are based on new historical data I’m currently finding bits and pieces of that needs to be verified by examining the land records.

_____ conventional historical wisdom _____

Once the Americans commercialized the site each act there (with one notable exception by Henry Mellus) involved increasing complexity. The first instance of increasing complexity began when American merchants Johnson & Allanson organized the Pacific Salt Works Company there on December 15, 1854. They utilized state-of-the art boilers to accelerate the evaporation process and increase production.

In 1859, the salt works company under the original organizers went bankrupt. Production of salt continued under the management of the works by Ariel M. Hazard. During the months of August and September in 1859, "47,500 pounds of solar and lake salt" was delivered to the new owner Henry Mellus.

Henry Mellus, who was born in Boston, Mass. in 1816, obtained ownership of the salt works from Johnson & Allanson during the works bankruptcy proceedings. Mellus continued its operations, though he ended the use of boilers and concentrated production using the solar evaporation technique. His action ending the use of the boilers is the one exception to the pattern of ever increasing complexity at the Old Salt Lake site.

In December of 1860, Mellus died without a will and also while in office as Mayor of Los Angeles. His wife Anita Johnson (born in Sonora, Mexico ca. 1828) became administrator of Henry's estate. Anita re-married the well-connected French Canadian John B. Trudell in 1861 and they continued production at the salt works and Henry Mellus's idea of sole use of the solar evaporation technique. In 1879 four hundred and fifty tons were produced. The extracted salt was taken to Los Angeles from the works on the wagon trail called the Salt Road and prepared for market in the Trudell-owned salt mill. The Trudell's were well known for producing salt of all grades for Los Angeles County.

_____ emerging narrative based on new research _____

Around 1887/88 Anita's children sold the Old Salt Lake site to the Redondo Beach Company. I suspect with the condition to maintain a salt works on the site.

In 1897, the Redondo Beach Company leased the site to a Mark Lewis of Los Angeles who updated the old salt works facility and began producing salt again under the name "Redondo Salt Works".

Also, by the way, in 1897, a fellow named Lindsey started a small electricity generating facility near the northeast shore of the salt lake and contracted with the City of Redondo Beach to supply the City with electricity.

Also, since 1888 through 1900, the Redondo Beach Company (at this point called the Redondo Improvement Company) had been supplying the residents and businesses of the now incorporated City of Redondo Beach with fresh water - by continuously pumping of fresh water from the wells immediately surrounding the salt lake.

In 1901, the Redondo Salt Works is suddenly gone from the scene. I suspect because the Old Salt Lake was no longer functioning, as it had for thousands of years, due to over pumping of the native aquifers. The Redondo Beach Company leases the Old Salt Lake site to the New Liverpool Salt Company (a Salt Trust) who, for a number of reasons, had no intention of maintaining the salt works in Redondo. This lease had an option to buy - and the lease had the condition to maintain the salt works. In 1902, when the Salt Trust exercised the option to buy the site, the attorney hired by the Redondo Improvement Company to complete the deed transfer - forgot to include the condition in the sale deed to maintain the salt works on the site. Salt works gone.

This would be the time to obtain and scrutinize all the early land records for this site and get the history right. I will certainly update my interpretation of the history of the site accordingly as I find more data. The missing data is the land records. As far as I can tell, nobody has bothered to examine the early land records. Seems to me, these records should be a part of any adequate cultural assessment of the place.