

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

45 FREMONT, SUITE 2000  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105-2219  
VOICE (415) 904-5200  
FAX (415) 904-5400  
TDD (415) 597-5885

**W-23b**

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TO: Coastal Commissioners and Interested Public

FROM: Susan Hansch, Chief Deputy Director  
Sarah Christie, Legislative Coordinator  
Alfred Wanger, Deputy Director

SUBJECT: WEB STREAMING STATUS REPORT FOR 2007

CONTENTS: This report is provided in response to Commissioners' request for information on public use of the Commission's internet web streaming program. It includes both a summary of usage data available through September, 2007, as well as issues associated with continued provision of the service.

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**BACKGROUND**

The strength of California's coastal protection program is directly linked to citizen involvement, education, and participation. Internet web streaming is an essential tool for participatory decision-making in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

In fiscal year (FY) 2006-07, the Governor approved a \$100,000 augmentation to the Commission's budget to establish a web-casting pilot project that would allow the Commission to carry out one year of live video web streaming of Coastal Commission meetings to broaden transparency and public participation. Following a competitive bidding and selection process, the Commission awarded a one-year contract to AGP Video Productions Inc.<sup>1</sup> in January 2007 for \$160,000. AGP began web streaming Commission meetings in February 2007. (View archived meeting footage at [www.cal-span.org](http://www.cal-span.org) or [www.coastal.ca.gov](http://www.coastal.ca.gov))

The contract allows public and private stakeholders to watch and/or listen, live, via the internet, to the Commission's monthly meetings from any location with internet access. The public can also view past meetings, which are archived on the website. An advanced indexing system allows viewers to go directly to items of interest, skip to the final vote or view the staff report.

In FY 2007-08, the Governor approved a permanent augmentation of \$150,000 to the Commission's budget for continuation of the program. While this augmentation will provide for the program in coming years, under the existing contract it also means the program will operate with an annual \$10,000 shortage that the Commission will need to absorb. Staff is working with the contractor to identify and implement cost savings for subsequent contract negotiations.

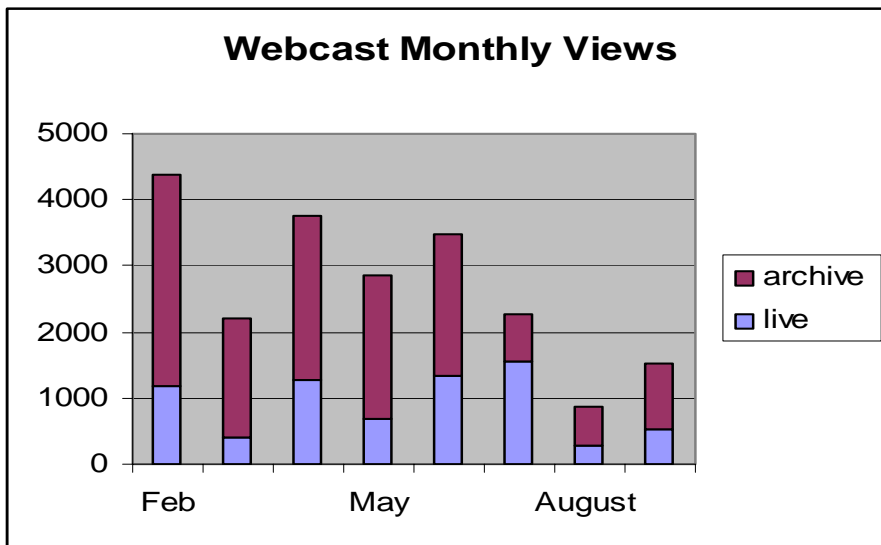
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<sup>1</sup> AGP Video Productions has also been awarded live video web streaming contracts by other state agencies. They are: Departments of California Transportation, Fish and Game Commission, Ocean Protection Council, MLPA Initiative Blue Ribbon Task Force, and the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, to name a few.

## **PRELIMINARY DATA**

To date, eight Commission meetings have been live web streamed and video archived on the web. Viewers can watch the Commission meetings over the internet in real time, or they can log on at any time after the meeting has concluded for the day and view “archived” video footage. There is no question that this service has become an important resource for applicants, members of the public, legislative, agency and local government staff and the media. Meetings are now accessible to viewers around the state and beyond who lack the resources to attend monthly meetings, but nonetheless have an interest in following the Commission’s actions.

The graph below differentiates between live “hits” and archived “hits.” For the purpose of documenting general public use of the internet service/site, both types of usages have been combined and totaled by meeting month below. According to data collected by AGP<sup>2</sup>, the website received:



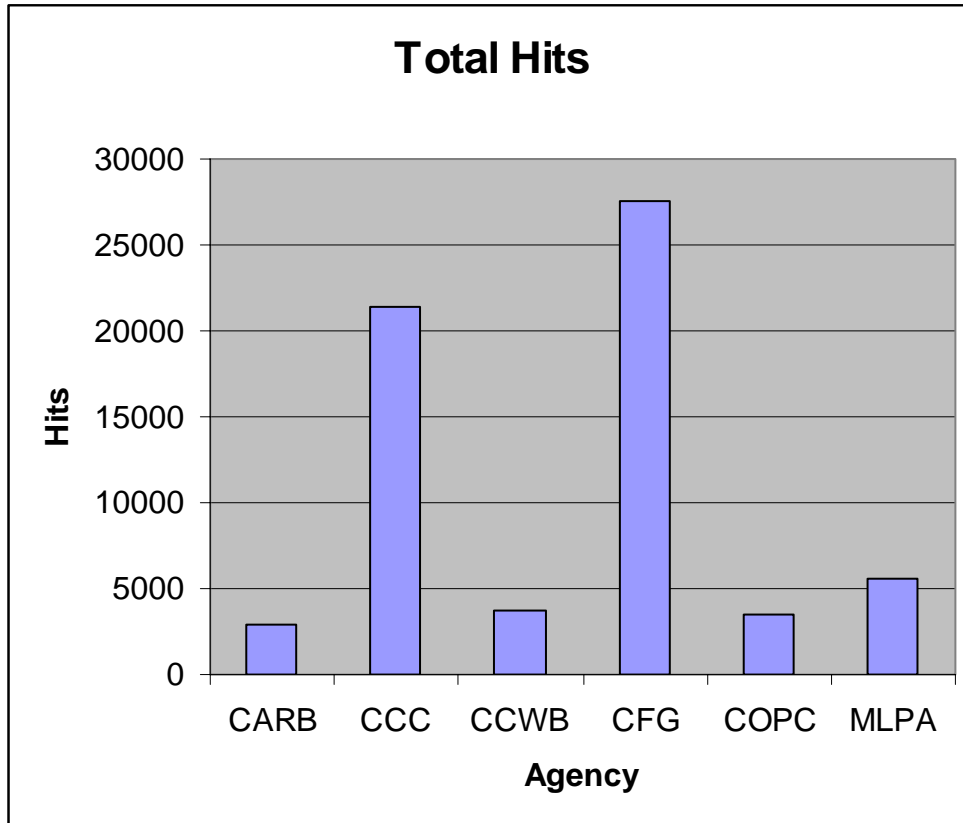
- 4,373 “hits” for the February meeting
- 2,208 “hits” for the March meeting
- 3,768 “hits” for the April meeting.
- 2,850 “hits” for the May meeting
- 3,491 “hits: for the June meeting
- 2,276 “hits” for the July meeting
- 880 “hits” for the August meeting
- 1,518 “hits” for the September meeting
- 21,364 “hits” total though the September meeting
- Peak day was April 12, 2007. Over 2,327 “hits” to view the hearing on BHP Billiton Offshore LNG Proposal.

## **COMPARISON WITH OTHER AGENCIES**

While Coastal Commission web streaming began in February of 2007, other public agencies have been providing this service for varying lengths of time. In addition to numerous local City Council, County Board of Supervisors and Special District meetings throughout the State that are currently being web streamed, the State

<sup>2</sup> Note that exact numbers will change as the public continues to access video archives

Water Resources Control Board, the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, the Fish and Game Commission, the Ocean Protection Council, Integrated Waste Management Board, and several Blue Ribbon Task Force meetings are also regularly web streamed. As the most recently “on line” state agency, the Coastal Commission has the fewest number of meetings to tally (8 total). Even so, it has generated more viewership than the RWQCB, CARB, MLPA, OPC and others, even though those agencies have been “on line” for several years. The following state agency comparisons are in total number of “hits” generated over the entire term of internet availability.



AGENCY	TOTAL HITS
• California Air Resources Board, since December, 2006	2,954
• Coastal Commission, since February, 2007	21,364
• Central Coast RWQCB, since 1998	3,713
• Fish and Game Commission, since August, 2001	27,593
• Ocean Protection Council, since June, 2005	3,539
• Marine Life Protection Act Task Force	5,574

The only agency that has generated more total hits than the Coastal Commission, is the Fish and Game Commission, which has been on line since 2004, with 27,593 hits. Even so, in three years it has generated roughly 6,000 more hits than the Coastal Commission has generated in only 8 months. Under the current trend, the Coastal Commission will likely surpass the F&G Commission total viewership by the end of the year.

**TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The Commission continues to receive comments and questions about the program from members of the public. The majority of the communications to date have been positive, and have included constructive suggestions regarding potential improvements to the service, which are being addressed by the contractor in order to maximize its accessibility and usefulness to the public.

With diminished travel funds limiting the number of staff that can attend Commission meetings, present staff reports, and respond to Commission discussion items, one of the greatest direct benefits to the Commission is the ability of staff to view meetings remotely. This allows staff to listen to concerns and questions raised by Commissioners and the public, track Commission actions, and better respond to direction.

Ironically, the Commission's existing IT infrastructure is not sufficient to allow Commission staff in the San Francisco and District offices to view meetings live over our network. Our current network capacity (bandwidth) cannot accommodate the increased load of web stream viewing beyond one or two connections. If even a single staff person in each of the six offices were to log on to the webcast from their desks, it would overload the Commission's network, and would completely disrupt the entire internal computer network and all business operations. To avoid this, District Offices are asked to provide a single computer in a central location for staff to watch specific hearing items of interest. Additional measures have been undertaken to provide alternate external internet connectivity to allow District staff to access the webcasts.

Commission staff has been working with the state's Department of Technology Services (DTS) to resolve these infrastructure problems. DTS staff has recommended a series of necessary infrastructure upgrades; however, the Commission's current budget is insufficient to accommodate the resulting increased annual operating costs (currently estimated as an additional \$55,000 per year). Commission staff is seeking additional funding to cover this recommended upgrade. In the meantime, Commission staff will continue to seek alternative means to provide access to the webcasts to all our District offices.