

Queensway Bay Wood Coalition

For Immediate Release - March 3, 1998

Contact: Kim Mizrahi (310) 396-3254

Long Beach Aquarium in Rainforest Quandary

Queensway Bay could become a rainforest graveyard

Long Beach, California -- City officials here are facing the decision of a lifetime for thousands of Amazon rainforest species. A plan to build the Queensway Bay Promenade and Aquarium project using 78,000 square feet of Brazilian Ipe wood will result in the degradation of more than 3,000 acres of Amazon rainforest.

Environmentalists are opposing the use of the wood purchased by the City, claiming it is not from sustainable sources. The Queensway Bay Wood Coalition, **a coalition of environmentalists, local businesses and area citizens**, has identified two sustainable alternatives, but the city wants to begin applying the unsustainable **rainforest** wood this week to ensure the project will be ready for the summer tourism season.

"At least 70% of these rainforests where logging is initially carried out will eventually be destroyed entirely," said Dang Ngo, a biologist with the **UCLA Rainforest Action Group, a Coalition member**. "Any tourist would find this plan reprehensible."

The International Tropical Timber Organization estimates less than 0.125% of tropical logging is sustainable. This year, the Brazilian government conceded that the rate of rainforest destruction has actually accelerated in the Brazilian Amazon to **a level three times what it was in 1995**.

Under the Queensway Bay wood specifications, the suppliers are only required to provide paper documentation from Brazil's forestry department, IBAMA, to show the wood came **from an IBAMA-approved concession**. The specifications rely on third-party certifiers Mallinkrodt and Ovidio Gasparetto to **certify that the wood comes with this documentation. However, environmentalists contend that the documentation is meaningless and the laws easily skirted**.

Another member of the Coalition is Rainforest Relief, based in New York City and the group that originally found out about the use of the rainforest wood for the Queensway Bay project. "Unfortunately," said Tim Keating, an environmental scientist and the group's director, "even the Brazilian intelligence agency contends that 80% of logging **in the Brazilian Amazon** is done illegally, **outside the bounds of IBAMA concessions. Somehow, all this wood cut and purchased illegally gets exported with IBAMA certificates**. Mallinkrodt and Gasparetto are only giving the thumbs up to paperwork with IBAMA's letterhead. This has nothing to do with sustainability, and doesn't even guarantee that the wood was harvested legally."

Neither of the **two wood suppliers to Queensway Bay gets their supply from operations that follow** the sustainable harvesting process set forth by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). The FSC process is the only one endorsed by the Rainforest Action Network, Audubon Society, Sierra Club, Greenpeace, the Natural Resources Defense Counsel and the National Wildlife Federation. FSC-approved certifiers travel to extraction sites and investigate long-term harvest plans before providing certification.

Now, Long Beach officials must decide whether to stick with the original order (knowing the likelihood of **illegal logging and rainforest degradation**), or switch to FSC-certified Ipe wood or recycled plastic lumber. Plastic lumber is both more durable and fire resistant, and has a 50-year warrantee (the Ipe is warranted for 20 years). Buying FSC-certified Ipe, on the other hand, might further the incentive for companies like Timber Holdings to operate sustainably.

The project managers have received a competitive bid from an FSC-approved certified supplier, and have seen even cheaper options available in recycled plastic lumber.

Environmental groups and Long Beach-based businesses and citizens have formed the Queensway Bay Wood Coalition to mobilize opposition to the current plan. "The new Aquarium will provide environmental education to the world community," said Kim Mizrahi, **campaigner for Action Resource Center, a Coalition member group**, "but using rainforest wood contradicts this message and is totally inappropriate. City officials have said they already made a good faith effort, but they're not done yet. We must work together to ensure that this marina showcase does not become a nightmare for the rainforest."

#