PURPOSE:
The purpose of this public bulletin is to notify the Trade Community within the Los Angeles/Long Beach (LA/LB) Seaport of implementation of the Advanced Qualified Unloading Approval (AQUA) Lane program. AQUA Lane is a privilege granted by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to sea carriers and terminal operators which allows for qualified, low-risk, vessels to begin cargo operations prior to CBP meeting the vessel.

BACKGROUND:
Vessel agents are required to email CBP Form 3171 (Application-Permit-Special-License-Unloading-Overtime Services), which serves as advanced notice of arrival, to LALB-VESSEL-OPS@cbp.dhs.gov forty-eight (48) hours prior to vessel arrival.

Twenty-four (24) hours prior to vessel arrival, vessel agents must contact Vessel Operations at (562) 366-3200 to schedule a CBP boarding team to meet the vessel upon arrival and conduct CBP formalities. Cargo operations are generally not allowed to commence until Customs formalities have been completed.

Implementation of AQUA Lane:
Effective Thursday, September 15, 2016, vessel agents may request AQUA Lane privileges for qualified vessels arriving at eligible terminals. The CBP boarding team and completion of CBP formalities and inspections can be scheduled at a later time subsequent to vessel arrival.

AQUA Lane was developed to provide an expedited vessel clearance procedure to sea carriers actively participating in Customs-Trade Partnership against Terrorism (C-TPAT) that qualify under a set of predetermined mandates that will give the carrier the ability to immediately unload or load merchandise upon arrival in the United States.

To receive AQUA Lane privileges, the following requirements must be met:

- Certified partner in C-TPAT (carrier and terminal location)
- Compliant with Importer Security Filing (ISF)
- Compliant with Agriculture requirements to include all required certificates*
- Crew members must remain onboard until formal CBP processing
- All containers must be delivered to a C-TPAT terminal operator
*Note: If a vessel is considered to be high risk for agriculture or any other security concerns, AQUA Lane privileges will be denied.

To Request AQUA Lane Privileges:
Vessel agents may request AQUA Lane privileges by completing section 9, box 5 on the CBP Form 3171 by adding “AQUA Lane Requested” for each voyage.

CBP will review the request and provide final approval or denial via email.

AQUA Lane, a joint partnership between CBP/C-TPAT, sea carriers and world trade associations will benefit all partners, as it will enhance CBP’s utilization of resources and facilitate increased partnership in securing the overall supply chain.

Should you have any further questions, please contact the Chief CBP Officer for Vessel Operations at (562) 366-3200 or by email at LALB-VESSEL-OPS@cbp.dhs.gov.

Sincerely,

Carlos C. Martel
Port Director
Los Angeles/Long Beach Seaport
AQUA Lane Frequently Asked Questions

1. Q: What is AQUA Lane?
   
   A: AQUA Lane stands for Advanced Qualified Unloading Approval. It allows low risk Sea Carriers in the C-TPAT program to formally unload their cargo prior to CBP meeting the vessel. Please note that AQUA Lane requests must be made for each arrival, there are no blanket approvals for AQUA Lane.

   Note: AQUA Lane clearance will not be approved for vessels and cargo that endanger the national security and/or national economic security of the United States. If a vessel is considered to be high-risk for agricultural quarantine issues, AQUA Lane privileges will not be granted. Examples of high risk agricultural quarantine issues include, but are not limited to: vessels arriving from a high risk country during high risk season for Asian gypsy moth (AGM), fumigation required upon arrival for Khapra beetle infestation, garbage violation vessels, etc.

2. Q: Who can participate in the AQUA Lane pilot?
   
   A: Sea carriers who are in the C-TPAT program who have been validated and are in good standing at the time of unloading.

3. Q: What are the procedures an arriving vessel must follow to request AQUA lane privileges from CBP in the U.S. port of arrival?
   
   A: The following procedures must be followed to request AQUA Lane privileges:

   1. To request AQUA Lane privileges, vessel agents must complete and submit an Application-Permit-Special-License-Unloading-Overtime Services (CBP Form 3171) with the Notice of Arrival for every unloading.

   2. Section 9, Box “5” must state “AQUA Lane requested”

   3. CBP will review the request and provide notification back to the Vessel Agent letting them know if their request for AQUA Lane privileges have been approved or denied.

4. Q: What are the restrictions if my vessel is approved for AQUA Lane?
   
   A: The following is not permitted until formal CBP processing has been completed:

   - Crewmembers sign-on or sign-off
   - Visitors
   - Vendors
   - Bunkers, Surveyors, Provisions, Cold Iron/shore power *

   * If required prior to formal CBP processing, your request must be submitted and approved utilizing the Special Request form.
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5. **Q:** Must the Terminal Operator be in C-TPAT to receive this benefit?
   
   **A:** Yes. The Terminal Operator and the Sea Carrier must both be in good standing and validated to receive AQUA Lane benefits. Additionally, containers must be delivered directly to a validated terminal operator in good standing in the C-TPAT program.

6. **Q:** Why should C-TPAT sea carriers participate with the AQUA Lane process?
   
   **A:** It is a voluntary clearance for C-TPAT sea carriers who can save time and money by taking part in the AQUA Lane privilege. It allows CBP to lessen the congestion of seaport facilities making it easier to align CBP resources towards high risk threats and facilitate low risk carriers.

7. **Q:** What are the benefits of participating in the AQUA Lane?
   
   **A:** Cargo can now be discharged timely assuring that goods are afforded their best opportunity for an on time departure to final destination by making scheduled truck or rail connections.

   Vessels upon arrival can commence cargo operations immediately upon arrival, complete cargo operations and depart on time, which avoids the need to speed up to make next port berthing connections, thus avoid wasting 100’s of tons of expensive fuel and moreover avoiding hundreds of tons of exhaust gas emissions assuring minimal impact to the environment.

8. **Q:** If I am suspended from the C-TPAT program will I still be able to unlade in advance with AQUA Lane?
   
   **A:** No. A suspended company MUST be in good standing in the C-TPAT program at the time of unlading to receive AQUA Lane benefits.