



For Immediate Release
April 3, 2003

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PORT AUTHORITY PARTICIPATES IN PUBLIC MEETING ON BAYPORT

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers delays final environmental impact statement

HOUSTON -- The Port of Houston Authority (PHA) will participate in a public meeting to discuss water quality issues for the proposed Bayport Terminal. Conducted by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the meeting will begin at 7 p.m. on Thursday, April 3, at the Bay Area Community Center, 5002 NASA Road 1 in Seabrook. More than 500 citizens are expected to attend and express their views of support and opposition.

“We have confidence that the on-going review process for the Bayport project will ensure that all of the public’s concerns are adequately addressed,” said Jim Edmonds, Chairman of the PHA Commission. “So far, the prevailing opinion among many experts is that Bayport is good for the region’s economic development,” Edmonds added.

According to statistics calculated by Martin Associates, the consulting firm in Lancaster, Pa., that has conducted economic impact studies for 120 ports in the U.S. and Canada, the Bayport project will generate almost 12,000 jobs in the first 10 years of operation, with an economic impact of more than \$1 billion in business revenues and more than \$40 million in tax revenues annually.

“The Port Authority continues to work with the community regarding this proposed facility,” Edmonds said. “We’ve set a new standard in the maritime industry for

environmental stewardship and community responsiveness. We remain committed to cooperating with the public, and we see this meeting as another way to educate the public on the merits of the Bayport project,” he added.

“Bayport, while being constructed in an industrial zone that abuts communities built around it, has been designed with the highest environmental standards and procedures,” Edmonds explained. “Our plans go well beyond the letter of the law, and we push to exceed standards and requirements for protecting the environment as well as responding to considerable community input. We’re very proud of our industry-leading and award-winning environmental program,” he added.

Currently, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has mandated that nearly 20 acres of jurisdictional wetlands must be replaced, and the PHA is mitigating that acreage at a three-and-a-half to one ratio. While there is some debate regarding the wetland replacement ratio, the Port is willing to comply with whatever is required should that number change. In addition, the PHA will create up to 200 acres of marshlands in Galveston Bay from dredge material.

As recently posted on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ website, the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Port of Houston’s proposed Bayport facility has been delayed a few weeks to ensure adequate review and careful deliberation. For more information, visit the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ website at: <http://www.swg.usace.army.mil/reg/pha/default.asp>.

“The PHA welcomes this decision as a way to ensure that all comments of public concern about the proposed project are addressed and considered in the final FEIS,” stated Tom Kornegay, PHA Executive Director. “The PHA supports the corps’ desire to work through all of the outstanding issues because it is essential to have a deliberative process for this proposed project.”

Thursday’s public meeting, part of the permitting process, was requested by State Rep. John Davis under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act. The Port is confident that its water quality designs will meet and in most cases exceed the mandates of this act. The PHA was the first port in the U.S. to receive ISO 14001 certification, which is the international standard for environmental management systems. This certification designates that the Port of Houston has met a series of stringent environmental requirements.

The PHA's environmental management system emphasizes waste reduction, recycling, and storm water quality. The American Association of Port Authorities also honored the PHA with its prestigious Calvin Hurst Award for outstanding achievement in developing and implementing the EMS. The PHA also was presented with the Gulf of Mexico Program's Gulf Guardian Award in recognition of demonstrated efforts to enhance natural wildlife habitats through the creation of wetlands in Galveston Bay.

"On opening day in 2005, Bayport also will be ISO 14001 compliant," Edmonds stated. "This new facility, a jewel to our economy, our environment and our community, will meet ISO 14001 standards because the Port is committed to protecting our bay, our community and all of Texas."

The Port of Houston Authority

The Port of Houston Authority owns and operates the public facilities located along the Port of Houston, the 25-mile long complex of diversified public and private facilities designed for handling general cargo, containers, grain and other dry bulk materials, project and heavy lift cargo, and other types of cargo. Each year, more than 6,600 vessels call at the port, which ranks first in the U.S. in foreign waterborne tonnage, second in overall total tonnage, and sixth largest in the world. The Port Authority plays a vital role in ensuring navigational safety along the Houston Ship Channel, which has been instrumental in Houston's development as a center of international trade. The Barbours Cut Container Terminal and Central Maintenance Facility are the first of any U.S. port facilities to develop and implement an innovative Environmental Management System that meets the rigorous standards of ISO 14001. Additionally, the port is an approved delivery point for Coffee "C" futures contracts traded on the New York Board of Trade's Coffee, Sugar & Cocoa Exchange. For more information, please visit www.portofhouston.com

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