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## **ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCIES GIVE BAYPORT GREEN LIGHT**

HOUSTON – The Port of Houston Authority and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) have signed a memorandum of agreement on PHA’s plan to preserve coastal prairie habitat as part of the development of the proposed Bayport Container and Cruise Terminal. Specifically, the PHA will preserve 456 acres along the lower part of the San Jacinto River and 500 acres on the Katy Prairie. In their MOA, PHA and TPWD indicate that this additional preservation of valuable habitat completes a package that compensates for the impacts from the proposed terminal facilities.

“Developing a mitigation plan has been a difficult and lengthy task, but we believe the plans for Bayport are better because of this process,” stated Jim Edmonds, PHA commission chairman. “The Port Authority’s Bayport plan reflects the highest environmental standards and procedures, exceeding both the letter and the spirit of the law as we balance economic progress with environmental stewardship.”

Additionally, written statements on PHA’s coastal prairie preservation plan were recently submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers by three other agencies that had previously raised concerns about the environmental impacts of the proposed Bayport project. The statements from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality generally conclude that the PHA’s plan adequately addresses their concerns and establishes appropriate conditions that should be included in a permit for Bayport. The Corps is expected to consider the TPWD agreement, the written statements from the other agencies, and several public comments as it finalizes its Record of Decision (ROD) on the Bayport permit application.

The Corps released its Bayport FEIS (final environmental impact statement) on May 16, opening an initial public comment period that closed on July 16. In August, the Corps issued a new public notice with a 30-day public comment period on the coastal prairie preservation components of PHA’s mitigation plan. The second public comment period closed September 12. The Corps’ ROD and permit decision are expected to be announced in October.

In addition to coastal prairie preservation, PHA’s design for the Bayport facility includes several other mitigation measures to compensate for environmental impacts. For example, the use of clean fuel and clean engine technology will help reduce air emissions. PHA’s existing container facility at Barbours Cut recently completed an initiative to convert 28 rubber-tired gantry cranes and 25 yard tractors to

Purinox, a diesel emulsion fuel that produces significantly lower levels of air emissions. The initiative was funded by \$212,000 in grants awarded to PHA by the Texas Emissions Reduction Program (TERP). Previous tests of Purinox on Barbours Cut equipment engines have resulted in a 25 percent reduction in nitrogen oxide (NOx) levels and a 30 percent reduction in particulate matter. Air emissions reduction, solid waste recycling, and storm water quality improvement are the key objectives of PHA's environmental management system (EMS). Last year, Barbours Cut and PHA's central maintenance facility became the first of any U.S. port facilities to implement an EMS that meets the rigorous standards of ISO 14001, the global standard for environmental excellence. PHA is committed to meeting ISO 14001 standards upon the completion and opening of the Bayport facility.

Another mitigation measure planned for the Bayport facility is a three-mile long buffer zone around the facility that will include a landscaped sight and sound berm that will be 20 feet tall. The buffer zone also includes part of an extensive storm water collection system that will protect Galveston Bay. Lighting systems designed to use black light poles and specially designed fixtures will limit night-time impacts at the facility. PHA's Bayport plan also involves jurisdictional wetland replacement at a ratio of more than three to one to increase the habitats available for fish, waterfowl and other coastal wildlife. Furthermore, the beneficial use of dredged material will create an additional 200 acres of inter-tidal marsh.

"The Port Authority has drawn on expertise developed in other ports around the world to make the proposed Bayport facility environmentally sound," Edmonds said. "We will continue to review our development plans as new environmental technologies and techniques evolve."

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*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](http://www.portofhouston.com)*