



# THE PORT of Port Lavaca - Point Comfort

CALHOUN PORT AUTHORITY

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April 19, 2006

## Plan Being Developed for Beneficial Use of Dredge Material

### Third In A Series

The proposed deepening and widening of the Matagorda Ship Channel will create a once in a lifetime opportunity for Calhoun County.

The Calhoun Port Authority has proposed deepening the channel from 36 feet to 42-44 feet. The proposed project dimensions will produce about 45 million cubic yards of brand new sand and clay material that can be put to use in ways that benefit the environment and the community.

These beneficial uses may include protecting shorelines from erosion, a priority that has been identified by the community, creating new shallow water marsh areas near the ship channel, nourishing beach areas, creating new rookery islands, and using material as cover to accelerate the natural recovery process within the Alcoa/Lavaca Bay Superfund Site.

Mark Mazoch of URS, the port's project manager, said one of the most important elements of the planning process is to propose where to put the material that would be generated by project construction and long-term maintenance. In addition to determining where the new dredge material will be placed, the final dredge material management plan must show how material generated by 50 years of channel maintenance dredging will be managed.

The plan is being drafted by the Calhoun Port Authority's project team and a Dredge Material Management Plan Beneficial Use Workgroup that has been meeting regularly since February. The workgroup is made up of representatives of the state and federal agencies that have a review and coordination responsibility under federal law.

**Port Authority Board Members:** Paul R. Blasingim, *Board Chairman*; Roger G. Martinez, *Board Secretary*; H. C. Wehmeyer, Jr.; Leo J. Kainer; J. C. Melcher Jr.; Shields A. Holladay, Sr.

**Executive Staff:** Robert H. Van Borssum, PPM<sup>®</sup>, *Port Director*; Wanda Roberts, *Port Counsel*

Workgroup participants include the Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Texas Parks & Wildlife, Texas General Land Office and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality as well as a local representative of the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

The workgroup has considered several material placement and beneficial use concepts. These elements include creation of marsh wetlands, aquatic and marine habitat enhancement, shoreline protection, Gulf beach and bay shoreline nourishment, terrestrial habitats, and enhanced natural recovery of impacted sediments.

The project team has prepared detailed maps which reflect the extensive data collection and surveys that have been done to delineate existing features such as estuarine marsh, shrub wetlands, flats, submerged vegetation, oyster reefs and critical habitat. The maps also detail areas of historic shoreline erosion, existing Corps placement areas, pipelines, wellheads, water depths and land features.

Workgroup members spent April 5 touring Lavaca and Matagorda Bays by boat, giving them the opportunity to see local conditions and discuss opportunities to beneficially use dredge material particularly for shoreline protections and marsh creation.

Natural resource agency representatives have indicated that the final plan should maximize beneficial uses, should concentrate on existing placement areas, and should have the smallest acreage footprint possible.

Mazoch said the planning process presents a real opportunity to address some of the changes that have taken place around Matagorda Bay over the years. Aerial photos and surveys indicate that more than 1,200 acres of land have been lost since 1930 in the area within five miles of the channel. About 5,000 acres of tidal marsh in the Matagorda Bay System has been lost in the past 150 years. Persistent shoreline erosion threatens the hundreds of acres of estuarine marsh and submerged aquatic vegetation around the bay.

During a Corps of Engineers scoping meeting in 2004 several members of the public identified shoreline protection as a major issue relating to Matagorda Ship Channel improvements.

Various draft dredge material management plans have been developed and reviewed by the workgroup. The latest draft considers the construction of a series of placement areas

between the ship channel and the shoreline between Alamo Beach and Port O'Connor. New protected marsh areas would be created which would provide protection for the shoreline. On the north side of the channel there would be a series of marsh areas and islands, including new bird habitat islands. In Lavaca Bay near Alcoa, consideration is being given to material being used to enhance the natural recovery of the bay. Additional material would be placed on the Gulf beach just south of the channel jetties to provide beach and dune nourishment.

Maintenance material from the portion of the channel extending into the Gulf would be placed in an existing deepwater placement area on the south side of the channel.

The workgroup will continue to refine ideas, all of which will be subject to economic feasibility and environmental acceptability. Once the plan is developed it will become part of the overall project proposal that will be carefully studied during the upcoming project Environmental Impact Study process.

Mazoch said the public is encouraged to learn more about beneficial uses and dredge material management during an Open House at 5 p.m. Tuesday at the Bauer Community Center.

Port representatives have been working with land owners and others to answer their questions about the channel improvement project. The public is encouraged to submit their ideas for beneficial uses that could be considered in the planning process. Suggestions and comments should be submitted to Port Director Robert H. Van Borssum at P.O. Box 397, Point Comfort, Tx 77978, or by email to: rhvb@portofplpc.com.