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| Corpus Christi: Port Seeks Permit for Desalination Plant

Corpus Christi- Port Seeks Permit for Desalination Plant

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by Adolfo Pesquera

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The proposed Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System would provide for the discharge of pre-treatment system water and reverse osmosis reject water. This is a preliminary step in the early planning phase for a new desalination plant.

The port authority submitted its application to TCEQ on March 7, according to TCEQ records, but the commission to not issue its public notice until May 7. The authority's application states the port authority "will own a seawater desalination facility" that will discharge a volume not to exceed 19.1 million gallons per day.

The facility will be located off La Quinta Road, two miles southeast of the intersection of La Quinta Road and US. Highway 181 in Gregory in San Patricio County on land owned by the port authority. The project site is adjacent to an \$11 billion liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant that is currently being constructed by Bechtel.

"The discharge route will be from the plant site to La Quinta Channel in Corpus Christi Bay," the TCEQ notice states.

TCEQ determined that the application is administratively complete and will conduct a technical review. Once that is complete, TCEQ "may prepare a draft permit and will issue a preliminary decision on the application."

The notice of a Preliminary Decision will set in motion a deadline for submitting public comment. Anyone that puts themselves on the TCEQ mailing list for the application will receive a notice about submitting public comment for Permit No. WQ0005254000.

Once the technical review and comment period has reached its conclusion, the TCEQ executive director will forward the application to the TCEQ Commissioners for their consideration at a scheduled Commission meeting.

Construction, New



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The Port of Corpus Christi Authority controls a large area of land that extends between the towns of Portland and Gregory to the northeast to Corpus Christi Bay on the south end. Image: Google Maps/Graphics by Adolfo Pesquera.

According to a **Caller-Times** report, the port authority does not intend to build a desalination plant. Rather, it is acting as a facilitator for a third party, in the event an entity such as one of the local county commissioners courts (San Patricio or Nueces), or the City of Corpus Christi should decide to build one.

However, a Texas Tribune report claimed the proposed facility would be constructed by the port authority. In addition, Texas Tribune emphasized the plant would be feasible only for industrial uses, and noted it would be located near the San Patricio Municipal Water District, "where the water can be further treated to become drinkable, said Sarah Garza, director of environmental planning and compliance for the Port of Corpus Christi."

No cost estimate has yet been given for this project.

The port authority was already collaborating on a desalination plant project. **M&G USA Corp.**, a port tenant, was constructing a seawater desalination plant of similar size.

According to a 2016 loan application submitted to the Texas Water Development Board, the port authority wanted almost \$59 million to design, permit and construct an underground water distribution



one now under construction, a 10 million gallon per day seawater desalination plant located at the M&G Plastics Plant, making it a 20 MGD (plant)," the port authority told TWDB.

The port authority had anticipated that excess capacity from the plant could be sold to industry to provide adequate water supply for industrial operations and prevent curtailment during periods of drought.

M&G, however, filed for bankruptcy in 2017 and the project was stalled. The port authority bid on the project on behalf of the city of Corpus Christi, but was outbid by another venture.