

# Port Aransas mayor requests public meeting on proposed brine discharge

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By Dan Parker | on July 20, 2018

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Dan Parker

News editor

Here's the latest on a proposal to discharge millions of gallons of brine into Port Aransas area waters from a desalination plant that could be built on Harbor Island.

Port Aransas Mayor Charles Bujan has requested that state environmental authorities hold a public meeting on the Port of Corpus Christi Authority's application to discharge brine into the Corpus Christi Ship Channel from a desalination plant that's been proposed for construction on Harbor Island.

Bujan said he directed the request today (Friday, July 20) to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

The purpose of the meeting will be to provide an opportunity for people to submit comments and ask questions about the application, Bujan said.

There was no immediate word on when or where such a meeting might be held. (Keep watching the South Jetty for updates.)

The port is applying for a Texas Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit to discharge brine associated with a proposed desalination plant. The discharge point would be at Harbor Island, according to a port spokesman.

Bujan and others in Port Aransas have expressed concerns about the possible effects the discharge could have on the environment.

The port has applied for a permit that would authorize flow "at a volume not to exceed a daily average flow of 95,600,000 gallons per day," said a TCEQ notice of receipt of application and intent to obtain water quality permit.

The application is for a facility that would produce 50 million gallons per day at full build-out, a port spokesman said. The port is trying to find alternative water sources for port industries, and extracting fresh water from seawater at a desalination plant could help on that score, according to port officials.

A reliable water source is a critical need for port industries, and periodic droughts in South Texas pose threats to current water sources, said Charlie Zahn, chairman of the Corpus Christi Port Commission.

Port officials have said they believe the brine can be discharged in an environmentally safe way. A citizens' group, Port Aransas Conservancy, has objected to the port's plans, saying the discharge

At a Port Aransas City Council meeting on Thursday, July 19, concerns were raised also about the fact that the plant would require water intake from the channel. Council member Joan Holt, a retired marine biologist who studied larval fish for years, said care must be taken to make sure large numbers of larval sea life isn't sucked into the intake.

(A story about the desalination plant proposal is in the July 19 edition of the South Jetty, on newsstands all over Port Aransas now. It's also on the newspaper's website, [www.portasouthjetty.com](http://www.portasouthjetty.com). Further coverage on this issue will be in the July 26 issue.)

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