

## **Southern Louisiana Regional Portfields Initiative: Project Updates**

**Priority Project Selection:** Since the initiation of the Southern Louisiana Portfields Initiative, each of the partner ports established one to three priority projects. The projects range from brownfields redevelopment to dredging to infrastructure expansion. In July, 2006, the Portfields partners convened to discuss the proposals, with an eye towards moving forward with at least one project in each port. Projects were selected based on the opportunity for synergy among partners, as well as the availability of financial and technical assistance opportunities. Information on recent progress on selected projects is noted below in the updates for each port. Although these priority projects are the focus of current efforts, the ports are still pursuing additional projects identified through the Portfields Initiative.

### Selected Projects:

Port of Greater Baton Rouge:	Harbor maintenance dredging
Port of New Orleans:	Riverfront property inventory, assessment and acquisition
Port Fourchon:	Airport pump station and Expansion of the Maritime Forest
St. Bernard Port, Terminal, & Harbor District:	Sewage system improvements
Port of South Louisiana:	Closure of wastewater ponds

### Regional Updates:

#### **Ports Association of Louisiana (PAL):**

The Ports Association of Louisiana (PAL) has received preliminary approval for funding for a Strategic Business Plan for the Ports of Louisiana. The purpose of the plan is to “clearly define the role of Louisiana’s ports in the local, regional and international marketplace and to position the state’s ports to most efficiently and effectively affect the state economy, the national economy, and the international marketplace in a positive and beneficial manner.” The business plan will include background and inventory on current conditions, a market and economic analysis, and strategies to position the ports to positively affect the state’s economy toward higher skill, higher wage jobs, and increased private sector investment. The Economic Development Agency (EDA) has given preliminary approval for a \$430K grant, while the Louisiana Department of Economic Development (LDED) is providing \$200K, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) is providing \$65K, and PAL is providing \$35K in matching funds. Total funding for the PAL Strategic Business Plan is \$730K. Justin Ferrell of Louisiana Sea Grant worked closely with PAL, EDA and state partners on this initiative.

## **Homeland Security Grants:**

In FY07, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) awarded over \$12 million to ports in Louisiana. This included approximately \$9 million to the Port of New Orleans, \$2 million to the Port of South Louisiana, \$1.6 million to the Port of Greater Baton Rouge, and \$110K to the Plaquemines Port Harbor and Terminal District. Although the FY07 funding levels were down from FY06 (LA Ports received over \$23 million in FY06), the region was still very successful in competing nationally for these port security funds.

## **New Local Liaisons**

Jo-Anna Jones, Brownfields Coordinator, with the South Central Planning & Development Commission, is the new Portfields liaison to the Port of South Louisiana and Port Fourchon. Jo-Anna can be contacted at [jones@scpd.org](mailto:jones@scpd.org). Lenise Lyons with the Baton Rouge City-Parish Planning Commission is the new liaison to the Port of Greater Baton Rouge. Lenise can be contacted at [llyons@brgov.com](mailto:llyons@brgov.com).

## Port Updates:

### **Port of New Orleans:**

Catherine Dunn of the Port of New Orleans (PONO) met with Karen Peycke (EPA Region 6), and Nathan Champagne (Brownfields Coordinator, City of New Orleans) on January 30, 2007. Patricia Overmeyer (EPA Headquarters) joined the meeting via conference call. At that time, the port indicated that site assessments were planned for the Market, Celeste and Orange Street Warf properties, using Targeting Brownfields Assessment funds from EPA Region 6. The assessments were delayed a few months due to the need to settle some outstanding FEMA issues related to the treatment and demolition of sheds that were damaged by fires at the properties. The Port plans to transfer the Market, Celeste and Orange Street Wharf properties to the Trust for Public Land after demolition, treatment and repairs of the properties are completed. An additional site assessment at the Todd Shipyard was delayed because there is a FEMA site located on the property. An assessment of the Bollinger Shipyard property also was delayed due to the need for the port to resolve an insurance issue at the property.

In May 2007, the City of New Orleans was awarded a \$1 million brownfields revolving loan fund grant from U.S. EPA.

### **Port of Greater Baton Rouge:**

Beth Hughes, Justin Farrell, and Karen St.Cyr of the Port of Greater Baton Rouge (POGBR) met with EPA, NOAA and USACE on February 1, 2007, to review the status of on-going projects. The POGBR received a cost estimate from the USACE for the dredging of the Baton Rouge Harbor. The estimate included costs associated with options for dredging to several different depths across a 2.5 mile reach. The cost estimate did not include costs associated with testing or beneficial reuse of dredge spoil. The

POGBR intends to request an appropriation for the dredging from its Congressional delegation and is currently considering approaching the USACE regarding the development of a feasibility study on options for beneficial reuse of dredge materials from the harbor.

The POGBR is working with several partners on a port-wide cleanup, greening, and landscape improvement program. Partners for this effort include Baton Rouge Green, East Baton Rouge Planning Commission, Dow Corning, and the city of Port Allen. The Port continues to look for additional partners to assist with these efforts. Port officials explained that the directional interpretive signage has not yet been advanced over initial efforts in conjunction with the USACE Port Allen locks. Port officials said that the Port needs the USACE to support the signage effort. In addition, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is an obstacle to the Port's ability to pursue the signage project. Port officials asked NOAA and EPA to assist them in identifying the best officials to approach at the FHWA for assistance in discussing jurisdiction over the areas requiring signage and for potential funding assistance for the project.

The POGBR has also been considering inventorying and assessing property along the Mississippi River to support port expansion. Generally, the POGBR is interested in identifying stigmatized riverfront properties for acquisition, assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment. Since initiating the effort through the Portfields Initiative, one site that was investigated for acquisition, i.e. the Kaiser site, was sold to private developers.

The POGBR did not submit an application for an EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant for the current fiscal year (FY07). The community outreach requirements were too challenging for the POGBR to take on this year. The POGBR intends to initiate community outreach efforts prior to the release of next year's application guidance to ensure that it is eligible for a grant in the next fiscal year. The POGBR remains interested in pursuing brownfields monies to assist in the development of an inventory of riverfront properties prime for redevelopment, as well as monies that could be used to conduct pre-acquisition Phase I environmental assessments.

The Port decided not to apply for a grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to assist in funding the Sewage and Sanitary Discharge Collection System Engineering & Design project. The project, which proposed converting 11 existing mechanical sewage treatment units to lift stations, was deemed to be too expensive to garner EDA funding support.

The Container-on-Barge Efficiency & Market Linkage Whitepaper project was determined to be a low priority for the POGBR at present. Although the Inland River Marine Terminal (IRMT) has been used as a staging area for a lot of cargo, no one is presently operating the terminal barge service and the port's efforts have been shifted to resuming service at the IRMT.

**Port Fourchon:**

The Port, in conjunction with the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, received funding to expand the Maritime Ridge through the NOAA Fisheries Community-based Habitat Restoration Program. NOAA headquarters staff facilitated several conference calls between Port Fourchon and NOAA National Marine Fisheries staff in Baton Rouge. A \$50,000 grant through the NOAA Community-based restoration program and Louisiana Department of Natural Resources partnership was awarded in August 2006 to the Barataria Terrebonne National Estuary Program to continue construction and planting of the Port Fourchon Maritime Ridge Project.

**Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO):**

The Regional Planning Commission (RPC) and the Port determined that the Johns Manville project was not viable.

**St. Bernard Port, Harbor, & Terminal District:**

The RPC staff met with the Economic Development Agency (EDA) and the Port regarding applying for EDA funding to connect the Port industrial park to the Parish sewer system to replace the various package plants and attract new businesses to the area. The Port is working with the Parish for a joint application, in accordance with the recommendation from EDA. The RPC is also working with the Port on their stormwater retention pond dredging project, and generated a draft proposal to LA Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) to apply for the Targeted Brownfields Assessment program to assess the sludge deposited by the storm. The Port recently hired a grant writer who is coming up to speed on these projects. The RPC will be working with the grant writer to assist with these and other funding opportunities for the Port's Portfields projects.

**Port of South Louisiana:**

The Port of South Louisiana (POSL) is looking at alternatives for the closure of wastewater ponds. The Port is assessing both "clean" close and "dirty" close options for the Globalplex ponds. Initial funding for the project was dedicated to hiring an engineering consultant to conduct technical analyses on pond contents. The Port of South Louisiana entered the Globalplex waste ponds in the Louisiana State Voluntary Remediation Program. The Port's preference is to clean close the ponds to allow for unrestricted use of the 11 acre property for future development. However, the dirty closure option is less expensive. The Port is working with EDA, Delta Regional Authority, LED, Capital Outlay and private parties to work out funding options for the project. The Port also is looking for interested tenants for the property.

The Port initiated efforts to establish a partnership between the Port and the Regional Airport Authority. The partnership potentially could undertake joint projects including analyzing options for using rail connections on the Globalplex pond site to ease traffic congestion and reduce truck emissions.