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TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78744

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## TPWD BIOLOGISTS OPPOSE FORMOSA DISCHARGE PERMIT

AUSTIN--Biologists in the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's resource protection division oppose the current version of a proposed permit that would allow Formosa Plastics to introduce copper and other contaminants into Lavaca Bay on the Texas Gulf Coast.

TPWD is participating in a public hearing on the permit that began Nov. 23 and will continue at 9 a.m. on Dec. 7 at the Texas Water Commission office in Austin. A TWC hearing examiner is hearing testimony from TPWD and TWC staff, the Sierra Club, Formosa Plastics and other interested parties.

"The proposed discharge is located in a shallow, poorly flushed area and will likely result in the Texas Department of Health permanently closing another part of the bay to oystering," said Dr. Larry McKinney, TPWD resource protection director.

The Lavaca Bay area includes numerous oyster reefs that have been historically productive. Commercial and recreational use of the bay's fisheries already have been restricted because of elevated fecal coliform levels from sewage discharge.

"Further environmental degradation of the bay because of the proposed discharge will result in more economic hardships for the people in the area that depend on commercial and recreational use of the bay," McKinney said.

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Lavaca Bay already is an environmentally stressed system. A substantial portion of the bay has been closed to the taking of fish and crabs because of mercury contamination from another source.

The proposed discharge site is in shallow waters of upper Lavaca Bay near Point Comfort. TPWD biologists believe the discharge permit as currently proposed should be denied and that Formosa should redirect its discharge permit application to better, alternative sites, such as the open Gulf or Matagorda Bay. These sites are available and will not cause the closure of active oyster reefs.

The TWC hearing examiner will consider all testimony from the hearing and will make a recommendation to the Water Commission, which ultimately will decide whether to grant the permit.

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**SPECIALIST NEEDED TO HELP PLAN FISHERIES CENTER**

AUSTIN--The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's inland fisheries branch is looking for someone to work with the Fishery Center Project Committee in developing an outline for displays and other items to go into the new freshwater fisheries center to be built in Athens.

The center will contain a Texas Freshwater Fishing Museum and Hall of Fame in addition to a hatchery.

"We are looking to hire someone who can work with a committee of experts from across Texas to develop concepts for displays, aquaria or other memorabilia that may be contained in the facility, then go out and procure the material," said Phil Durocher, TPWD inland fisheries branch chief. "We plan to hire the best architectural design and engineering firms in the country to build this facility. We have to have a theme for the museum and hall of fame and have a plan for what's going in them before we hire anyone to design the facility," he said.

The department is looking for someone who may have experience designing and directing museums and who also knows about the history of fishing and aquatic resources in Texas. It would also be helpful if marketing and education experience were also included.