Dredging Permit Fight Lost By Sierra Club

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Environmentalists lost Monday in their bid to force the Superior Oil Co. to build a board road instead of dredging a 3,870-foot canal through the Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge in Cameron parish.

After hearing a challenge from the Sierra club, the Louisiana Coastal Commission voted 10-3 to uphold the dredging permit approved Nov. 13 by Secretary Frank Ashby Jr. of the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources.

The Sierra Club maintained a board road would have been the most practical, less environmentally disturbing way for the oil company to get its people in and out of a drilling site.

A simple majority of 12 votes were needed to block the dredging, but only 13 commissioners attended the day-long hearing.

One of the DNR’s coastal zone analysts testified that the dredging permit violates 22 coastal zone regulations, while officials who support the decision testified it was less damaging than alternate methods.

The analyst, Darryl Clark of the DNR Coastal Section, testified that the dredging permit violates 22 coastal zone regulations, “12 in a major way.”

Clark said recommended a board road, but was advised not to take the matter to Ashby because the ultimate responsibility belonged to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, which controls the refuge.

Clark said W&F officials issued conflicting recommendations favoring both the canal and board road.