3 Reasons Why La. Will Get ‘Superport’ Listed

By P. J. Mills

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Although he said the death of Sen. Allen J. Ellender will "hurt" Louisiana's chances to get a superport, the man leading the effort gave three reasons why the state would get the deep water port.

P. J. Mills, who is Gov. Edwards' choice as executive director of a superport commission, said Sen. Ellender was "lending a tremendous hand in Washington—opening a lot of doors for us."

"His passing will be greatly felt by us, as well as by others," the former state legislator from Shreveport told participants at the State Planning Conference this morning.

Speaking at the Prince Murat shortly before noon today, Mills told the group that the Louisiana delegation was possibly the "best briefed" in Washington on information about the superport, and that it is "very helpful" in aiding in the state's efforts to obtain a deepwater port in the Gulf of Mexico.

Three reasons, he said, why the state would get the port are the Mississippi River, the fact that Louisiana originates the only 40-inch oil pipeline in middle America, and strong leadership from the state and from the delegation in Washington, as well as "strong interest, and backing of the people of Louisiana."

River a Factor

The Mississippi River has prompted several governors from states in the central portion of the country to endorse Louisiana as the state they would like to see having the superport, he said.

These governors support Louisiana because the Mississippi is a main line of transportation from their states to the Gulf, and from the Gulf to their states, Mills said.

The pipeline stretched from Convent to Detroit, Mich., and is the only 40-inch pipeline in the middle section of the country, Mills told the group. These two reasons, plus strong support of the state's government officials and citizens will give the state the superport, he said.

Corps of Engineers officials have said they will make a recommendation as to where the deepwater facility in the Gulf should be placed before July of next year. Two superports are planned for the East Coast, and one for the Gulf.

One of Louisiana's rivals for the facility is Texas — a state Mills was ahead in the race before Edwards was elected governor. But, he said, since the new administration formed a nonpaid ad hoc committee to attempt to get the port for the state, Louisiana is now leading in the superport race.

Next step in the organization of efforts to gain the port will be a formal government-affiliated commission (authorized by the legislature) consisting of nine persons — six from the public service districts, two from a panel of names submitted by the state's three leading ports (New Orleans, Baton Rouge and Lake Charles) and one appointed at large.

Edwards has recommended that Mills be executive director of the commission, which now has its headquarters in the International Trade Mart Building in New Orleans.

Gillis Long, a former U.S. representative from Alexandria, headed the state's efforts to get the port in initial phases of the project.

A First in U.S.

Once created, a state agency for the superport (Deep Draft Harbor and Terminal Authority, or, "Superport Authority") would be the first in the United States, another plus for Louisiana, Mills said.

He emphasized that initial efforts have been aimed at calculating environmental impact, and that coastal fishing industries and others with coastal interests have been involved "from the beginning" in the planning.

"I am a strong believer that we can progress, and preserve," Mills said.

One of the nine-member commission must be a recognized environmentalist, he said.

Working on this and other aspects of the project are Gulf South Research Institute, the Port of Greater New Orleans, and LSU, through its Sea Grant Institution programs and the Coastal Studies Institute.

He said the superport would be the largest public works project ever undertaken in Louisiana.

Up to this point, Mills said, superport efforts have been financed by private interests, businesses and some individuals.