State's Legislature Support Of Superport Said Mandatory

By F. E. SHEPHERD

The chairman of Gov.-elect Edwin Edwards' Superport Task Force said here today funding and legal support for the project from the legislature in May is mandatory.

Former U.S. Rep. Gillis Long told the Coastal and Marine Resources Study Commission meeting at LSU that it is imperative the 1972 legislature create a legally-constituted authority to carry on the work of the task force.

Long said in a prepared talk that legislation for a Superport Authority will be introduced, but warned that the state must come up with money to finance continued studies and planning for the offshore facility to handle the super ships of the future—deep-draft ships which cannot navigate the shallow draft river ports.

He said his committee to date has been financed to the tune of $160,000 by private and interested groups, but that he legislature must come up with sufficient funds to complete the study.

He did not state a figure.

but other sources said the budget requested would be in the neighborhood of a half-million dollars.

The commission, headed by Dr. Lyle St. Amant of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, was created by legislative act to study problems associated with production and maintenance of coastal natural resources. The commission is under mandate to report to the governor and the legislature in September, 1973.

It is mostly concerned with the effect of coastal activities on the environment.

Economy Hinges on Project

Long told the group that the future economy of the state probably hinges on the superport project. He noted that Louisiana has permitted most of its natural gas to be exported and that it is exhausting its crude oil reservoirs, and pointed out that the future economy of the state may depend on oil imports through superports.

He said, "In the haste to reap instant benefits from the oil and gas of our state, we gave it away as surely as Manhattan Island was traded for beads. We squandered our inheritance."

He said Louisiana must be certain that it does not repeat "the disastrous mistakes of our recent history." He told the commission, "We must be satisfied that we are not, once again, trading our tomorrows for today."

He said it is imperative that Louisiana prepare itself to win the race among Atlantic and Gulf Coast states for one of three superports reportedly being considered in studies by the federal government.

He said the superport represents "the potential for a new beginning for the people of Louisiana and it exceeds anything we have had the courage to dream about."

Long said unless a way can be found to locate a superport within the state's three-mile limit in the Gulf of Mexico, it is almost a certainty that the federal government will dictate the location of such a facility, which in its initial phases will be an oil terminal for the unloading and loading of superships.

He said that for this reason is imperative that Louisiana pursue its superport project and have it ready when the final decision is made on a location. He said the ideal position for the state would be for all plans and design be prepared by 1976.

Earlier he had said that a 1980 deadline for completing the superport and putting it into operation had been moved up by his task force to 1976. However, he admitted that this did not appear feasible in the light of Corps Engineers statements that it may not have its final report on the superport race and the feasibility of the project until possibly 1974.

Long said it is imperative that all segments of the state's population be present at a Corps of Engineers hearing on the superport project at New Orleans April 19. He said at a hearing yesterday at Mobile the governor, legislators and many others showed up to testify.

He said he will attempt to get the Louisiana Congressional delegation, Gov. McKeithen, Edwards and state legislators to attend the New Orleans meeting.

Long said there is a vital need for the superport to handle tankers such as a quarter-mile-long ship now on the drawing board. He said this ship could require a 102-foot draft and that only a superport offshore could handle this type of vessel.