Two La. ports vying to build ‘mini-refineries’

By DAVE MILNER
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ABBEVILLE — The Port of Vermilion and the Port of Iberia are among three finalists for a $150 million Arco construction module project.

The project, which Atlantic Richfield Companies designed for use at its Northern Alaska Oil and Gas Drilling and Production Operation at Prudhomme Bay, will involve $150 million in labor and construction over 30 months.

The third finalist is Freeport, Texas, which also is situated on the Gulf Coast.

Arco called the administrators of the three finalist ports on Wednesday, officials said.

Thirty site proposals were submitted to the California-based company, from which the three finalists were chosen. Officials predict that the project could employ as many as 800 to 900 full-time workers, and as many as 1,100 at peak construction times.

“It’s a great honor and reflects well on the port’s structure in Louisiana that two could be selected from this state,” said Jay Campbell, director of the Port of Vermilion.

“It’s our version of the Super Bowl, World Series and NBA finals,” said John Oubre, director of the Port of Iberia.

Campbell said his proposal took five months to prepare.

Oubre said that the construction modules built at the chosen port site will be “mini-refineries” to be used in the discovery, development and processing of oil and gas at Prudhomme Bay in Alaska.

Contractors handling the project for Arco will tour the finalist sites, and will make a final decision sometime this fall. Actual construction could begin as early as Spring 1992.

Oubre said his port already has participated in a major construction project.

“We have already completed a similar construction project back in 1986, involving the Sohio Co.,” Oubre said. “This project, undertaken in 1984 and completed in 1986, should demonstrate to Arco the Port of Iberia’s experience in handling such major projects.”

The only disadvantage he sees is that the Sohio infrastructure is occupied by five companies that are leasing space at the port. Freeport already has an infrastructure, and with access to deep water channels in the gulf, could give the two Louisiana ports some stiff competition, Oubre said.

Campbell and Oubre said they have asked Gov. Buddy Roemer for assistance in the way of emergency funds and financial incentives to entice Arco to choose one of the state’s ports for the project.