



**FOR IMMEDIATE
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Spillman's Island Analysis Raises More Questions

A new study by the Galveston Bay Conservation and Preservation Association (GBCPA) raises substantial doubts about claims by the Port of Houston Authority that Spillman's Island is too expensive to develop for a container port. GBCPA's analysis indicates that the island is predominantly fast land and development should be much less expensive than indicated by the Port.

Only about 10 percent of the surface of Spillman's Island shows a significant thickness of soft sediment, according to the new analysis of the characteristics of this site--a potential alternative to Bayport for building a mega-container terminal. The rest of the island has not been subjected to major loading of dredge spoil

"This casts doubt over the Port of Houston Authority's claim that stabilizing Spillman's Island would be prohibitively expensive," said Katie Chimenti, vice chair of GBCPA, which has led the challenge against the Bayport location. "It appears that over most of the island, site preparation would be relatively straightforward," she said.

Consulting geomorphologist Dr. Justin Wilkinson conducted the study for GBCPA, based mainly on aerial and space photographs spanning 30 years. Spillman's Island is a natural island, approximately triangular in shape. It lies beside the Houston Ship Channel between the container terminal at Barbour's Cut and the Fred Hartmann Bridge connecting La Porte and Baytown. The foot of the bridge is at the north end of the island.

Wilkinson notes that sediment cones presumed to be centers of spoil disposal from ship channel dredging covered less than 5 percent of the island in 1970. The appearance of most of the island was consistent with that of neighboring vegetated land.

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By 2000 sediment cones covered closer to 10 percent of the island surface, and much of the rest showed a pale layer of sediment outflow. Direct visual observations in 2003 revealed water on lower portions of the island, impounded by the perimeter levees. Spoil disposal pipes were in place

Wilkinson concludes although the cones are some 23 feet high in places, they drop off sharply to the low central island surface, and he estimates levee thickness at only about 20 feet. Thus the area of thicker sediment is small. By preventing rapid drainage of rainwater and water in the dredge slurry pumped onto the island, the cones and levees have created the water bodies visible at low points of the terrain.

"The outflow of fine material from the spoil deltas appears to occupy much of the island, but is probably only a few feet thick at maximum," said Wilkinson in his report. "Although it might appear to occupy much of the island, it is probably only a few feet thick at maximum."

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Earlier, Edmonson also compared costs at Spillman's Island with cost factors unique to Bayport, where additional transportation infrastructure for both road and rail service to a new port would add expenses of some \$209 million. Both the Edmonson studies can be seen at <http://www.gbcpa.org/publications.htm>

Wilkinson noted that simple techniques such as surveying, seismic tests, and auguring or backhoe trenching would immediately indicate the exact depth of spoil at different points on Spillman's Island. Such data are not included in Port analysis of this site as a potential alternative to Bayport.

"This is a notable omission," said Chimenti. "Spillman's Island could take advantage of road and rail infrastructure already in place to serve Barbour's Cut, avoiding some of the extra costs that would apply at Bayport. And the new geomorphological analysis clearly underscores that this site has not been given full and sufficient consideration."

To obtain the Technical Report
Observations on the Topography and Conditions
at Spillman's Island, Houston Ship Channel
Please use the following hyperlink to GBCPA website
http://www.gbcpa.org/Publications/Spillman's_Geomorphology.pdf
For a full list of website publication
please visit the GBCPA website at
<http://www.gbcpa.org/publications.htm>

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