



Everything New Orleans

Coal export terminal again seeks permit for Plaquemines site

Andrea Shaw, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune By Andrea Shaw, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

Email the author | Follow on Twitter

on June 03, 2015 at 4:01 PM, updated June 04, 2015 at 2:55 PM

A proposed coal export terminal in **Plaquemines Parish**, halted after a judge ruled its permit was invalid, has been resubmitted to state regulators. Lanier & Associates Engineers of Baton Rouge filed the application Friday (May 29) on behalf of RAM Terminals.

In it, the consultants address concerns that were raised by Judge Kevin Conner of the 25th Judicial District in finding that the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources "**failed to fully investigate alternative sites** for the RAM Terminals project and the specific commodities that RAM Terminals intends to transport by rail in connection with the project." Lanier's 222-page **report** examines five alternate sites, explains the need for the terminal and includes a plan to address coal spills, information that was requested by the Office of Coastal Management in March after **Conner's ruling**.

RAM Terminal's initial proposal called for building a plant that would process 6 million tons of coal annually on 600 acres on the Mississippi River near Myrtle Grove. Barges and railcars would transport coal from the Illinois Basin to southern Plaquemines for mixing and storage before being shipped to Europe and Asia. The project would create 150 permanent jobs and 300 during construction.

Although consultants studied five alternate sites, at Idlewild-Oakville, at Cedar Grove and three at Braithwaite, they deemed them not feasible. A number of factors were cited, including lack of infrastructure, presence of wetlands, distance from the river and close proximity to cultural resources.

"Through this review, RAM has clearly documented that each location was compared equally and it is therefore RAM's position that the current site is least damaging, feasible alternative to satisfying the project's main objectives," the report said.

Dan Swenson, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

Environment advocates criticized **cRAM Terminal's** new request, as they did the initial one. The initial application drew

widespread opposition from West Bank residents concerned about increased rail traffic transporting uncovered coal through the communities. It also prompted calls from elected officials for the Army Corps of Engineers to revisit the project, pointing to its location adjacent to critical coastal restoration projects. The Plaquemines Parish Council rejected RAM's request for a building permit in January.

"In this latest application, RAM again fails to address the project's potential harm to Ironton, one of the

most historic communities in Plaquemines Parish, and has the audacity to ignore its effects on a major coastal restoration project," said Grace Morris, senior organizer at the Gulf Restoration Network. "The market for coal exports has disappeared, with proposed projects falling apart across the country. RAM's reliance on old economic data just doesn't justify this destructive project."

The Lanier report included reference to a Wood MacKenzie Consulting study that predicted domestic coal exports would rise during the next 20 years as foreign demand increases. It said Louisiana accounted for 20 percent of U.S. coal exports.

© 2015 NOLA.com. All rights reserved.