

CITY & STATE

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Groups urge EPA to halt Formosa

By **ROBERT CULLICK**
Houston Chronicle Austin Bureau

AUSTIN — Environmental groups accused Formosa Plastics Corp. of filling protected wetlands on the Texas Gulf Coast and asked the company to halt construction of its \$1.5 billion chemical plant.

Texans United and the Calhoun County Resource Watch also said Formosa's expansion in Point Comfort, on Lavaca Bay, threatens endangered species. The groups asked the Environmental Protec-

tion Agency to shut down the construction pending an investigation.

"The bottom line is that we feel environmental compliance at the Formosa Plastics plant and expansion to be in such disarray that only by stopping construction can Formosa correct the current problems," said attorney James Blackburn.

The groups, which have hired Blackburn to sue regulating agencies and Formosa if construction continues, want Formosa to complete a full study of environmental impacts of the plant's construction

and several federal actions that facilitate that construction. The EPA plans to make its decision in late November.

The agency's regional office also is considering fining Formosa a record \$8.3 million for pollution violations.

While its fines and wastewater discharge permit remain unsettled, Formosa is moving ahead with construction of its plant. It has committed \$200 million and spent \$165 million, said Formosa spokesman Joe Wyatt.

Wyatt said the company will not halt construction because it has violated no state or federal laws.

He said the areas disturbed were designated as wetlands by federal agencies, but those areas did not include vegetation typical of wetlands and were designated only by lines on a map.

"A map is a map," Wyatt said. "It is only a guidepost. There may be something there. You have to look at the site to determine whether or not it is wetlands."

Wyatt also said Formosa did not

seek federal permission to disturb the designated area before proceeding with construction.

"We didn't think it was necessary," he said.

Wetlands are protected by the federal government because they provide habitat for wildlife.

"We had an outside team to look at this before construction began," Wyatt said. "They (PILCO & Associates) saw no difference in the vegetation of the uplands and the wetlands."

Resource Watch plans suit to halt work at Formosa

Oct 24, 1990

Port Lavaca Woup

POINT COMFORT — Calhoun County Resource Watch and Texas United officially announced today plans to sue under the Clean Water Act, National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act to stop Formosa Plastic's Point Comfort expansion.

The two groups jointly held a conference at 10:30 this morning at Point Comfort City Hall before area news media and Houston, Victoria and Corpus Christi television stations.

The two groups filed letters today to tell Formosa of their plans to sue unless Formosa suspends further construction on the Formosa expansion. Among these letters is a 60 day notice of intent to sue.

At this meeting, the two groups alleged deplorable state of environmental compliance at the Formosa plant in Point Comfort.

James B. Blackburn Jr., attorney for both groups, said he

could not believe that a major industrial operation in the United States today could make so many mistakes and omissions regarding environmental compliance and still be in business.

Blackburn told Burley Melton, Formosa Point Comfort environmental compliance officer, that his groups believe that Formosa Plastics Corporation has violated the Clean Water Act, 33 U. S. C. Section (See SUE, Page 2)

Extended Voting

Tues., Oct. 23, 1990

IN PERSON 59

BY MAIL 3

TOTAL 305