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PLANT SITE MAY RECEIVE REHABILITATION

BY B.J. CORBITT

State and federal authorities are looking at the former LCP chemical plant site and wondering how to go about undoing the impact of past industrial activity there. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are collectively conducting a Natural Resource Damage Assessment at the former plant site on Ross Road.

Part of that process includes requesting ideas for restoration projects from the public. Ideas can come from governmental agencies, advocacy groups, corporations, nonprofit organizations and individuals.

The projects will be intended to make the public and environment whole for injuries that may have occurred as a result of contamination from the site, according to Tom Moore of the NOAA Restoration Center.

The site was home to various industries from the 1920s until 1994 including an oil refinery, an electric power plant, a facility for manufacturing and distributing paint, and a chlor-alkali plant that manufactured chlorine, caustic soda, and hydrogen. Surveys of the site by the state Environmental Protection Division and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have revealed elevated levels of mercury, lead, and polychlorinated biphenols at the plant site and in nearby water and organic life.

Examples of the types of work of considered under such land rehabilitation processes are restoring or creating natural wildlife habitats, enhancing public access to resources like fishing piers and boat ramps, educational and enforcement activities, and the granting of land and development rights. At one time a company that dismantles Navy ships considered the site and its dock but did not get environmental clearance to locate there.

Daniel Parshley, Project Manager with the Glynn Environmental Coalition, said the environmental advocacy group has already submitted roughly 14 potential restoration projects related to the site. Some of the proposed projects would benefit nearby wildlife like otters, manatees, and small sealife, Parshley said, while others would benefit the area's citizenry by helping to control flooding in the future.

Parshley characterized settling on restoration projects as an important positive step in putting the environmental harm traced back to the site's industrial history in the past. "It's part of the healing process as we move forward," he said.