



EMA REFUSES CLAXTON BAY PORT CEC

After intense investigation, the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) has issued a Notice of Refusal to the National Energy Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (NEC) for the establishment of a Port, Causeway, Turning Basin and Navigation Channel at Claxton Bay.

The EMA has refused to grant a Certificate of Environmental Clearance (CEC) for the application (CEC 1761/2007) which sought to carry out Activities 12, 13 and 34 under the CEC (Designated Activities) Order (as amended). These included land reclamation, coastal or offshore construction or modification and dredging activities, and the establishment of infrastructure for marine transportation respectively.

Despite requests for clarification and additional information, the NEC inadequately addressed significant issues such as the fragmentation of the mangroves and its resulting impact to the ecosystem, the potential negative effects on the fisheries resources in the area, the associated impact on community livelihoods and the disposal of a significant amount of dredge spoil in an area of intense line and trawl activity.

The NEC also did not provide a re-evaluation of the impact factors in relation to the seagrass beds and fish stocks. According to EMA's CEO, Dr. Joth Singh, "This re-evaluation is critical in terms of assigning appropriate mitigation measures and strategies. If potential negative impacts are not assessed accurately, there is a serious challenge in determining mitigation measures."

The refusal was also informed by the expected negative impact to the mullet fishing activity, which is concentrated in the Claxton Bay area. Dr. Singh reiterated, “There is a concern, not only with the loss of access to fishermen dependent on this fishery and other fisheries in the area, but also with the long-term degradation of mullet and other fish stocks dependent on the integrity of the local ecosystem.”

The existing seagrass beds, mangroves and major commercial fisheries (including shrimp and crab) and their overall productivity will be negatively impacted with minimal direct mitigation for these impacts and potential losses. In addition, while the NEC has proposed measures to compensate for this impact, the EMA had concerns with the suitability and practicability of these measures.

Although, the NEC held Public Consultations with relevant stakeholders as required by the EMA, it was clear that the fishermen who would be affected, were not receptive to NEC’s proposals. These proposals addressed issues for retraining and retooling in anticipation of exploiting alternative fisheries in the Gulf of Paria as another measure for compensation of the impact to the mullet fishery.

The NEC also neglected to provide a detailed assessment of the proposed location for disposal of dredged material, as requested by the EMA.

Courtesy the Environmental Management Authority

10/02/2011