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## Offshore oil terminal given federal approval

United Press International  
HOUSTON — More than a decade's work in trying to get permits and backers to build an oil terminal off the Texas coast may be nearing conclusion, even though the original sponsors have long since gone.

Texas Offshore Port Inc. has been approved to build the tanker-unloading terminal off Freeport and appears on the brink of succeeding where its forerunners — Seadock Inc. and the Texas Deepwater Port Authority — failed in the past 10 years.

"I think these people are serious this time," said George Pierides, engineer in the Federal Ports Division of the Department of Transportation. "They see the need for bringing in their own oil."

Transportation Secretary Drew Lewis Monday approved a license Monday that would allow TOP to build the \$191 million, 500,000-barrel-a-day terminal in 71 feet of water, 12 miles south of Freeport. TOP, a consortium of oil and

petrochemical companies, now has the option of accepting or rejecting the license depending on whether it is satisfied with conditions imposed by the government.

TOP President Charles Brace — who believes offshore ports are needed for tankers which are too big for onshore ports and who foresees oil importation continuing for decades — was optimistic but cautious.

"We may or may not be on the verge of succeeding," Brace said. "All we have now is a license, the terms of which seem to be better than we've ever seen before (in Texas)."

He said the new license has a more limited expansion clause, limiting federal ability to force enlargement of the terminal, and a more favorable open ownership clause, allowing closing of the TOP club when financing is finished.

Brace said that proceeding with the 18-month construction project, now aiming for completion in

1984, depends on the world supply, the ability to arrange financing and decisions by the companies involved in the consortium.

Two earlier attempts to put together a Texas offshore port — essentially the end of an underwater pipeline that can be used to unload oil tankers offshore — failed. Louisiana currently has the nation's only such facility.

Seadock tried to build a terminal 26 miles off Freeport in the early 1970s but gave up after overseas sources of oil became uncertain and investors began backing out. The Texas Deepwater Port Authority in 1978 revived Seadock's plans but also failed because private companies refused to sign user agreements committing them to pump so much oil through the pipeline or pay the difference.

Pierides said TDDPA financing legislation, which is still on the Texas lawbooks, might provide an avenue for financing the pipeline.

## Surplus power may light Texas

United Press International  
KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Surplus electricity from Tennessee Valley Authority's nuclear plants may be lighting homes in Texas if an agreement can be worked out for sale of the power, officials say.

Preliminary talks are under way on the possible sale of surplus electricity from the seven-state federal utility to Houston Power & Light, officials of the Texas company said Tuesday.

Sale of the power would be a plus in favor of completing at least a part of TVA's nuclear construction program, the largest in the nation.

TVA has dramatically reduced the building project because of projections showing the utility is building too much power for a declining demand.

The agency had originally planned seven plants and 17 nuclear reactors, but has scaled down the program because of a drop in electric consumption, rising costs and projections showing much of the atomic-produced power would not be needed.

At today's estimates, it would cost \$31 billion to complete all 17 reactors.

The Phipps Bend Nuclear Plant near Surgoinsville, Tenn., was deferred by TVA during the summer and three other atomic reactors were put on hold because of the projections. In 1979, TVA defer-

red four of the reactor units because the utility was building much more power for the expected demand in the late 1980s and 1990s.

Utility officials have indicated that if demand continues to drop, another nuclear plant, Yellow Creek in Mississippi, will have to be mothballed. But TVA officials stress no decision has been made on deferral of the plant.

Jim Parsons, a spokesman for HLP, said Houston's power system, which serves about 1 million customers, is based 90 percent on natural gas-fired turbines and coal-fired units. Both are expensive in comparison to nuclear power. He said the utility is building additional generating units, but would not have enough power in the 1980s.

"If we can buy it cheaper than we can build it, then certainly that would be attractive to us," Parsons said.

TVA officials confirmed the talks with the utility but declined to give other details. A TVA spokesman would not reveal how much power the agency is trying to sell to HLP.

TVA spokesman Carl Crawford indicated a kilowatt of electricity from one of TVA's nuclear plants presently costs about nine-tenths of a cent to generate, while natural gas and coal ranges from about 2.5 cents to 6 cents per kilowatt.

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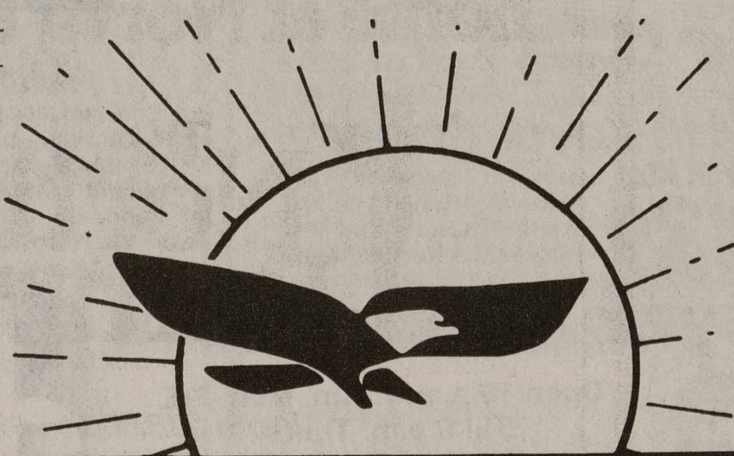
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