



No Port, Southport files complaint against Army Corps study

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Opponents of a massive cargo terminal at Southport have filed a complaint challenging the conclusions of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers study recommending that state and federal officials move forward with a feasibility study.

The nonprofit No Port, Southport claims the port inflated the economic benefits of a proposed international port according to a complaint filed Monday with the Corps of Engineers' inspector general.

The group says the corps' analysis is based on the “capture” of container traffic from other Atlantic coast ports. Inclusion of captured economic benefits is prohibited by section 904 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986, according to the complaint.

“Without consideration of captured benefits, the analysis would not find a surplus of benefits over costs,” writes retired Col. Albert Willis, a member of the No Port, Southport steering committee. Willis filed the complaint on behalf of No Port, Southport.

The group wants the corps to withdraw its report and remove the captured economic data from its analysis.

Karen Fox, a spokeswoman for the N.C. State Ports Authority, would not comment on the draft report or the complaint but said the ports authority was pleased the process is continuing.

Telephone calls to the corps were not returned.

“What is especially troubling is that the Wilmington District is using this badly flawed report to induce the State of North Carolina to provide a commitment to go forward with the project,” said Mike Rice, a No Port, Southport steering committee member.

The \$96,000 reconnaissance study completed by the corps is only the first step in the port's lengthy approval process.

Dee Freeman, secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, is reviewing the report and speaking with Gov. Beverly Perdue to determine if the state will be the nonfederal sponsor of the feasibility study, said Jamie Kritzer, a spokesman for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Kritzer said there is no timetable for the department or Perdue to make a decision. If North Carolina decides to sponsor the study, it will split costs with the federal government. The feasibility study will cost approximately \$10 million.