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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Opposition to Exxon-SABIC Ethane Cracker, Petrochemical Buildout in Coastal Bend Grows Ahead of Permit Hearing

AUSTIN, TX – Leaders and community members from seven local and national environmental organizations gather together on the start of a contested case hearing addressing an air pollution permit that would authorize construction of a large new plastics manufacturing petrochemical plant near Corpus Christi, Texas. The permit is being sought by ExxonMobil and its partner, the Saudi Arabian petrochemical company SABIC. The groups oppose the approval of the application on concerns regarding public health and environmental sustainability. Sierra Club and Texas Campaign for the Environment won standing to challenge the air pollution permit in September 2018.

If built, the Exxon-SABIC plant (also called an ethane cracker) would sit amidst the cities of Gregory and Portland, near the local high school, middle school and an elementary school, and produce a variety of natural gas-derived chemicals including polyethylene, the most basic plastic all of it intended for international markets. The permit would allow the release of many air pollutants, including particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, organic compounds, ethylene oxide, sulfuric acid, hazardous air pollutants, and greenhouse gases.

The contested case hearing began today at 9am.

Groups from Austin, Houston, and the Coastal Bend held a press conference in Austin on the first day of the contested case hearing on the proposed Exxon/SABIC ethane cracker near Portland, Texas.

WHO: Dewey Magee - Resident of Portland, TX
Errol Summerlin - Resident of Portland, TX, with Coastal Alliance to Protect the Environment and Portland Citizens United
Reggie James - Director, Sierra Club's Lone Star Chapter
Ilan Levin - Attorney, Environmental Integrity Project
Rosanne Barone - Houston Program Director, Texas Campaign for the Environment
Priscilla Villa - South Texas Organizer, Earthworks
Yvette Arellano - Policy Research and Grassroots Advocate, Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services

WHEN: 1:00pm
Thursday, January 24, 2019

WHERE: Outside the William P Clements Jr. Building, 300 W 15th St, Austin, TX 78701 (The Contested Case Hearing will be in the building Jan. 24, 25 & 28)

"Exxon has come to Portland with the promise of being good neighbors and providing jobs and income for our community. But in reality, they've gotten millions of dollars in tax breaks while the local taxpayers make up the difference. The original numbers of estimated jobs has already plummeted – did they forget to mention half the construction jobs would be overseas? They said they would put up air pollution monitors – where are they? They said they would only be doing "dirt work" until the permits are completed, but there are buildings and infrastructure being erected all around us. Everything they have said has been skewed. It is no wonder we have trouble trusting them. By their own permit submissions, they want to be allowed to pump tons of toxins into the local air and water, which doesn't even account for any slip ups. Baytown near Houston is a glaring example of Exxon's real world record, mistake after mistake, called to the carpet by environmental groups, not the state regulators. All of this so the world can have more plastic. Thank you, but no thank you."

- *Dewey Magee, Resident of Portland, TX*

"Exxon chose to locate where they shouldn't have. They chose to locate where the complex and all of its operational components will have a devastating impact on our environment and public health. They chose a location that will cause the most disruption to the communities of Gregory and Portland, including a massive plant, an enormous heavy haul road, a 1,000 car railyard, a terminal at La Quinta Channel, and its end product of polyethylene pellets that will forever alter our communities and the fragile ecological balance between growth and our environment. This is not to supply energy for our cars or to heat our homes, but to manufacture the small plastic pellets that they will load on rail cars, transport to the west coast, and ship to China and East Asia so those nations can melt them down and send plastic products to a "growing middle class in developing third world countries because the market in the U.S is saturated with these plastics", according to their own presentation to the Coastal Bend Bays Foundation.

- *Errol Summerlin, Coastal Alliance to Protect Our Environment, Resident of Portland, TX*

"The fight over this plant and the other petrochemical plants on the drawing boards requires vigorous opposition at all levels. I am so glad that we are joined today by activists from the Coastal Bend, from Houston and from Central Texas who are working night and day to push back on the public health and environmental impacts of this unprecedented petrochemical and plastics build-out that, if left unchecked, will plague our communities for generations to come."

- *Ilan Levin, Attorney, Environmental Integrity Project*

"This cracker isn't meant to fulfill an energy need for the US – it's to create the feedstocks for more and more plastic goods. Even petrochemical companies themselves, including ExxonMobil, are developing a plan to reduce plastic waste in the environment. But a more effective solution would be to stop producing so much single-use and unrecyclable plastic in the first place. The biggest problem with these facilities is how they impact the communities around them. Residents of Houston know too well the smells, sights, and sound of 24-hours-a-day petrochemical processing. We want to make sure residents of Portland, Gregory, and Corpus Christi, TX, do not have to be exposed to the same pollution and negative health effects as well. This application should be denied, and at the very least strengthened to protect public health."

- *Rosanne Barone, Houston Program Director, Texas Campaign for the Environment*

"Sierra Club intervened because without public participation in the permitting process, the TCEQ would impose only the bare minimum air pollution controls. We seek the least emissions possible from this plant using the best available control measures possible not only to protect residents from harm, but to set the highest bar for the industries that will follow."

- *Reggie James, Director, Sierra Club Lone Star Chapter*

"Petrochemical ethane crackers like the Exxon-SABIC aren't serving public demand or the public good. The oil and gas industry foresees decreasing oil and gas demand, and to make up the difference big oil is investing \$300 billion in plastics production infrastructure in Texas, Louisiana, and Appalachia. Companies like Exxon and Shell intend these facilities to increase global dependency on plastics for decades, worsening our plastics pollution problem and creating an ongoing need for more oil and gas."

- *Priscilla Villa, South Texas Organizer, Earthworks*

"We understood that more expansion meant ethylene crackers and LNG terminals, but now we understand that in a major economic pivot, the oil and gas industry is shifting from traditional energy production into new forms of petroleum utilization. The world is changing and for the first time oil and gas is on the outside looking in as industry looks to aggressively expand into new petroleum-based products - mainly plastic. As that transition begins in Gregory, Houston and Gulf Coast communities are set to face the brunt of these aggressive expansion projects. Plastic is the new frontier, and the safety of our public health is at stake."

- *Yvette Arellano, Policy Research and Grassroots Advocate, Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services*

"Exxon has proven itself to be a bad environmental neighbor, as evidenced by the 2017 ruling by the federal courts that it pay nearly \$20 million in fines for releasing more than 8 million pounds of hazardous chemicals in the Baytown, Texas region. The people of Portland, TX, realize this. Their duly elected City Council voted unanimously against the plant proposed for their area. We are ashamed that the City of Corpus Christi has eagerly agreed to provide water for the Exxon-SABIC plant, betraying their neighbors in Portland. We urge the administrative law judge to recommend rejection of this permit as harmful to the health and well-being the people of the Coastal Bend region."

- *Jim Klein, Chair, Clean Economy Coalition, opposes the proposed plant but was not in attendance at the event*