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Groups call on EPA to oversee Louisiana

Citing lax enforcement at the state level, local environmentalists Wednesday called on the federal government to wrest environmental oversight from the Department of Environmental Quality. The request came from a coalition of groups that included the Louisiana **Bucket Brigade** and the New Sarpy Concerned Citizens. The groups, which reiterated their criticism of the Orion refinery in New Sarpy as an offender of environmental regulations, cited a recent report by the Louisiana legislative auditor that criticized the state agency. A spokeswoman for the Environmental Protection Agency said the federal agency is proceeding with an audit of Louisiana's environmental programs that it started in October. The audit focuses in part on the state's **air** permits program.

Food distributor to keep center open

Broussard food distributor Fleming Cos. plans to keep its Louisiana center open despite the loss of nearly \$1 billion in revenue as a result of Kmart's bankruptcy. About 300 people work at Fleming's distribution facility in Broussard. Kmart is Fleming's largest customer. The retailer announced Friday that it would close 284 stores, including eight in Louisiana, as part of a bankruptcy reorganization plan. But Fleming does not plan to close any of its facilities, said Fleming spokesman Randy Hatcher. Hatcher estimates that stores Kmart will close account for about \$400 million in annual revenue for Fleming. Fleming projects that another \$500 million will be lost as shoppers shun a retailer in bankruptcy. Another \$100 million likely will be lost when the effects from a January freeze of shipments to Kmart are added in, the company said.

Brazil conference set for March 22

Two Brazilian officials will be featured speakers at the Brazil-Louisiana Business Conference March 22 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the World Trade Center's Plimsoll Club in New Orleans. Rubens Barbosa, the Brazilian ambassador to the United States; Pedro Parente, head of the energy crisis management committee and chief of staff to Brazilian

President Fernando Henrique Cardoso; and Bill Richardson, former U.S. secretary of Energy, will speak at the event. In addition to the speakers, a panel of eight executives will discuss doing business in Brazil. To register for the conference, call the World Trade Center at 529-1601, Ext. 222.

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