# Comments Pan Ocean Gas Terminal Planned for NJ, NY

WAYNE PARRY, Associated Press

(AP) — Public comments on a proposal to build a liquefied natural gas terminal off the New Jersey and New York coasts are running 1,000-to-1 against the plan.

The deadline for comments on the proposed Port Ambrose project was ending Thursday night, with only about a dozen supportive comments to federal regulators out of more than 10,000 received by afternoon.

Environmentalists say the terminal's purpose is to export natural gas obtained by hydraulic fracturing in Pennsylvania, which they say puts vast water supplies at risk of contamination. But the company behind it says the terminal — to be located 17 miles off Jones Beach, N.Y., and 24 miles off Long Branch, N.J. — is designed to import natural gas and stabilize prices in the New York metro area, particularly during winter.

Jim Lovgren, president of Fishermen's Co-Op Dock in Point Pleasant Beach, has been in business since 1952, shipping $5 million to $10 million worth of seafood a year.

"Since our inception, we have had to deal with government-permitted dumping of sewerage sludge, toxic dredge spoils, burning barges and the wreckage of pilings and old docks, acid wastes, and even old military ordinance, all in our fishing grounds," he wrote in comments to the U.S. Maritime Administration. "The utter carelessness of these operations are now, with hindsight, unbelievable. Our industry has been fighting for 30 years to stop the madness and total disregard of our ocean's environment, and the marine species we rely on to feed the American public."

He called it "appalling" that the project has been re-submitted even after New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie vetoed the idea because he thought it was too risky to the state's crucial tourism and fishing industries.

Roger Whelan, CEO of Liberty Natural Gas, which wants to build and operate the project, said most of the opposition comes from people who are against hydraulic fracturing, and he portrayed his project as an alternative to that technology.

"We offer New York a reasonable and safe alternative" to fracking, he told The Associated Press. "Through Port Ambrose we can ship a traditional natural gas supply directly to the heart of the market on a flexible basis without threat to the local environment."

He has described Port Ambrose as an import-only facility, built to withstand hurricanes but with the ability to disconnect from its pipeline and head out to sea to

avoid a major storm.

But Bruce Ferguson of Catskill Citizens for Safe Energy, which opposes high volume fracking in New York, suspects Port Ambrose will be used for export.

"The project sponsor and the Maritime Administration insist that Port Ambrose will only be used to import liquid natural gas from abroad, but that doesn't make any economic sense," he said. "Foreign gas companies are unlikely to ship LNG to the United States facility, since natural gas prices are three to five times higher in Europe and Asia. I have no doubt that if Port Ambrose is built, it will be used to export fracked gas overseas."

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