



By: *Gordon Feller*

Pushing Back in US - LNG Terminal Development Projects in The Gulf of Mexico



The Biden Administration has announced a pause on the consideration of new liquefied natural gas (LNG) export terminals. This **decision** is aimed at evaluating the impacts of LNG exports on energy costs, US energy security, and global climate change.

The Administration's decision to pause the consideration of new billion-dollar LNG export terminals is part of a broader effort to reassess the country's energy policies in light of climate change concerns. The administration aims to ensure that the LNG project approval process takes into account their potential impact on energy costs, national security, and the environment.

The pause will allow officials to update the way the US Department of Energy analyzes LNG proposals to ensure that they do not weaken security, undermine the economy, or harm the environment.

The administration's move has been praised by environmental groups and is seen as a significant step in addressing the climate crisis.

The decision to delay consideration of LNG export terminals is a complex one, as it is aligned with climate concerns and the need to evaluate both the environmental and economic impacts of such projects.

The Administration's action has been met with both praise and criticism, reflecting the ongoing debate surrounding the expansion of LNG infrastructure.

The future of LNG development in the US

A large and growing network of US-based environmental organizations see it as a positive step towards addressing the climate crisis. However, it has also sparked criticism from some industry stakeholders who argue that it could hinder LNG infrastructure development, and reduce the associated economic benefits.

The Administration's decision reflects the ongoing tension between the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the desire to support domestic energy production and export. It also underscores the complex trade-offs involved in shaping energy policy in a way that is both economically viable and environmentally sustainable.

The outcome of this review process will be significant for the future of LNG development in the US, and it is likely to remain a topic of debate among policymakers, industry representatives, and environmental advocates.

At the micro-level, critics focus on the local pollution effects of LNG terminals

The **debate** surrounding LNG terminals has intensified in recent years, as environmental organizations, research institutes, and concerned citizens challenge the expansion of these facilities.

Their arguments, presented in various forums ranging from public opinion to courtrooms and government halls, highlight both micro-level and macro-level concerns about the environmental and health impacts of LNG.

At the micro-level, critics focus on the local pollution effects of LNG terminals, emphasizing the harm to wildlife, fragile ecosystems, and surrounding lands and bodies of water.

They point to the release of contaminants into the airshed, highlighting the immediate threats to human and environmental health in the vicinity of these facilities.

The Say No To LNG Campaign

On a macro-level, opponents of LNG draw on extensive scientific research to underscore the broader consequences of fossil fuel production and consumption. They highlight the role of LNG in contributing to greenhouse gas

emissions, particularly methane, throughout its lifecycle.

Methane leakage, a byproduct of the LNG process, exacerbates climate change and poses indirect health risks through its impact on agricultural productivity, ozone formation, and air quality.

The **Say No To LNG Campaign**, along with other environmental organizations, has been at the forefront of advocating against LNG expansion. Their efforts include collaborations with research institutes and health associations to raise awareness about the health impacts of LNG and to challenge the narrative of LNG as a "green" fossil fuel.

The campaign has scrutinized projects such as the Tilbury Island LNG expansion in Canada, highlighting the health risks associated with upstream activities and methane emissions.

The Say No To LNG Campaign emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to decarbonization

Critics also raise concerns about the influence of fossil fuel lobbying on government policy, citing instances where industry demands have shaped U.S. energy policy, including measures to boost LNG infrastructure and exports in response to geopolitical events.

They argue that prioritizing LNG expansion undermines efforts to address climate change and environmental justice, calling for a shift towards renewable energy and a rapid phaseout of fossil fuels.

The Say No To LNG Campaign emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to decarbonization. They advocate for solutions that go beyond fuel alternatives, to include operational and efficiency measures.

They call for a just and equitable transition away from fossil fuels, highlighting the urgency of addressing both the climate crisis and public health emergencies exacerbated by

port pollution.

The potential impacts of LNG terminals on endangered species, such as the ocelot in Texas, further underscore the ecological risks associated with LNG expansion. Conservation efforts to protect critical habitats and promote connectivity between fragmented landscapes are crucial for the survival of these species.

Arguments against LNG terminals

Environmental organizations have joined forces with university-based research institutes, and even some corporates, to present arguments against LNG terminals. Their view, which is gaining more credibility with each new battle over such facilities, is that these terminals pose a serious threat to the environment, and will adversely impact both humans and natural systems.

Two major types of arguments are made by them in various venues: the court of public opinion, in actual courtrooms, and in the halls of local/state government officials, as well in Washington, DC to both the US Congress and to Federal agencies.

Scientific research studies have found that methane leaks into the atmosphere at every stage of the LNG process

The micro-level argument which LNG critics make is centered, geographically, on the local pollution impacts on wildlife and fragile ecosystems. This includes harmful effect on the underlying and nearby lands; the despoiling of bodies of water; and the contaminants released into airshed.

Their macro-level arguments are based on long-term and extensive scientific research which documents the detrimental effects of producing and burning fossil fuels. The planet's rapidly warming ecosystems are damaged by the emissions.

Scientific research studies have found that methane leaks into the atmosphere at every stage of the LNG process, including from a terminal facility.

Methane risks

Although methane is not directly unsafe for human health, its indirect impacts through LNG are associated with detrimental effects on health connected with agricultural productivity, ozone, and climate change.

Methane participates in the formation of tropospheric ozone (O₃), which is a climate pollutant that is a primary component of smog. Methane is also connected with surface ozone, an air pollutant that damages human health, ecosystems, and crops.

Methane is a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change. It is also a respiratory irritant that can cause health problems, including:

Headaches

Dizziness

Nausea

Vomiting

Loss of coordination

Impaired judgment

Increased breathing rate

Loss of consciousness

In severe cases, methane exposure can lead to death. Those exposed to methane at work, especially as in the oil and gas industry, are at increased risk of health problems.

However, even people who are not directly exposed to methane can be affected by its health impacts. For example, methane contributes to ground-level ozone, which is a major air pollutant that can cause respiratory

problems.

Geopolitical benefits

The organizations which are fighting against LNG argue that the risks for humans associated with LNG start at and around the drilling sites with higher concentrations of hazardous pollutants, including nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, radon, benzene, heavy metals, and radioactive materials.

However, LNG's proponents argue that LNG exports have geopolitical benefits, including reducing dependence on Russian gas, support allied nations, and balancing trade deficits.



At the center of the debates about the future of LNG terminals in the US are broader concerns about climate change, public health, and environmental justice

These advocates highlight the economic importance of LNG projects, emphasizing the billions of dollars invested and LNG's role in meeting current global energy demand.

At the center of these debates about the future of LNG terminals in the US are broader concerns about climate change, public health, and environmental justice.

As the world faces increasing pressure to transition away from fossil fuels, the decisions made regarding LNG infrastructure will have far-reaching implications for the planet and future generations.

Balancing economic interests with

environmental and health considerations remains a central challenge for policymakers and society at large.

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