

[Environmental Coalition Sends Key Climate Reports for Federal Review of Proposed LNG Export Terminal on Chesapeake Bay](#)

First-of-its-kind facility on east coast would hurt Chesapeake and hasten nearby fracking—impacts exacerbated with climate change

Washington, D.C.--(ENEWSPP)--July 9, 2013. A coalition of local, regional, and national groups [sent a letter](#) to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) today underscoring further scientific evidence that supports their opposition to the proposed Dominion Cove Point LNG export terminal on the Chesapeake Bay. The letter alerts FERC to the latest hurricane forecast from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), revealing that the area will be subject to increasingly strong storms this season. In another report sent to FERC, a panel of 21 scientists commissioned by Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley predicts rising seas of more than 2 feet along the state's shoreline in the next 40 years—and perhaps nearly 6 feet by the end of the century. An additional report on climate adaptation prepared by the IPIECA, a global oil and gas industry association, highlights the growing consensus that industry must address and respond to climate change in planning infrastructure projects.



Tropical storm Hanna over Chesapeake Bay in 2008. (John H. Gray)

In May, the coalition—Sierra Club, Patuxent Riverkeeper, Potomac Riverkeeper, Shenandoah Riverkeeper, Lower Susquehanna Riverkeeper—filed [public comments](#) and a [motion to intervene](#) in the proceedings to FERC, calling on the agency to conduct a thorough environmental review of the proposed Dominion Cove Point LNG facility. Represented by Earthjustice, the groups are objecting to the environmental impacts posed by the terminal located in Lusby, MD, and argue that development of the facility would result in major damage to the Chesapeake Bay, coastal forests, and the local economy, which currently support more than a trillion dollars in economic activity from the seafood and tourism industries.

“In addition to hurting the Bay’s economy and ecology, increasing air pollution, and accelerating fracking and drilling in neighboring states, these new findings show that FERC must also factor in forecasted climate change impacts in their environmental review of the proposed LNG project, said Sierra Club Beyond Natural Gas Campaign Director Deb Nardone. “The reports we sent FERC shed a very reliable and extremely critical light on the serious risks that the facility poses to the surrounding areas.”

Major concerns about the proposed facility include a substantial increase in ship traffic of huge—and potentially explosive—LNG tankers on the Bay and to Cove Point, as well as the risks posed by dumping billions of gallons of ballast water into this large and complex estuary, made up of a network of rivers, wetlands, and forests. Predicted severe weather and rising seas add to these concerns.



Chesapeake Bay at Calvert Cliffs State Park, Lusby, MD. ([Adam Fagen](#))

The NOAA Hurricane Report finds there is a “significant likelihood” that the Atlantic Coast can expect higher-than-average storm activity for the six-month hurricane season beginning June 1, 2013, due in part to above-average sea surface temperatures in the Atlantic Ocean. In particular, NOAA is predicting a 70 percent likelihood that the 2013 Atlantic Hurricane Season will produce “13–20 named storms, of which 7–11 are expected to become hurricanes, and 3–6 are expected to become major hurricanes.” These ranges far exceed the seasonal averages recorded over the last 30 years.

The June 2013 Maryland Sea-Level Report estimates that sea-levels in Maryland could rise by up to 2.1 feet by 2050, and up to 5.7 feet by 2100, and that the height of storm surges in the Chesapeake Bay would increase as the Bay deepens due to sea-level rise.

Each of these reports confirms the likelihood of more frequent hurricanes and heightened storm surges from rising sea levels. Taken together, they are a powerful statement about the significant negative impacts on the project that could easily occur from the effects of climate change.



Chesapeake Bay. (Forsaken Fotos / Flickr)

“Any breach at the LNG facility or the shipwreck of a vessel carrying LNG could have catastrophic consequences for the surrounding communities, public health and the environment, and these risks should be carefully evaluated and disclosed,” said Patuxent Riverkeeper Frederick Tutman. “We have recently witnessed several hurricanes systems of unprecedented proportions causing unprecedented damages, and we do not wish to pit an already ill-advised facility against the power of even more and stronger hurricanes.” Indeed, in recent East Coast weather systems, Superstorm Sandy destroyed approximately 300,000 housing units, left two million customers without power, caused an estimated \$42 billion of damage in New York State alone, and was responsible for 60 deaths. And in 2011, Tropical Storm Irene caused an estimated \$15.8 billion in damages, multiple deaths, and disabled a nuclear power plant in Maryland.

“None of the concerns we raise are far-fetched. Upcoming storms could easily inflict comparable damage to the area around the project,” said Earthjustice associate attorney Jocelyn D’Ambrosio. “It is clear looking at the Dominion project’s location on the Chesapeake Bay that any complete FERC evaluation must include the potential impacts climate change could have on the facility and associated shipping activities.”

The groups maintain that FERC must assess the location and design of the LNG terminal in light of the susceptibility of the low-lying and subsiding areas of the Chesapeake Bay to flooding and erosion. Dominion’s plans also should include measures to prepare for higher-intensity rain events predicted in the Hurricane Report. In addition, associated ship traffic should be reviewed in light of higher wind and storm activities that could cause LNG ship accidents.

Background

The proposed terminal will be the first LNG export facility in the east coast, providing foreign markets with access to natural gas from the Marcellus Shale, which lies beneath New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, western Maryland, Shenandoah Valley Virginia, and West Virginia. Demands for natural gas exports will mean more dangerous fracking in these states, as well as more pollution of the communities' air and water and destruction of their land.

The project will require construction of an additional compressor station in the Elklick Diabase Flatwoods Conservation site, which is home to rare species of plants, animals and migratory birds. It also will require a huge construction site on the Patuxent River next to the historic Solomons Island, known for its beautiful waterfront.

Once in full operation, Dominion Cove Point will emit thousands of tons of dangerous air pollutants and millions of tons of greenhouse gases that will only add to increased climate disruption.

Source: earthjustice.org