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Calais LNG files papers for terminal

Project at Red Beach to cost up to \$1 billion

By **Sharon Kiley Mack**
 BDN Staff

CALAIS, Maine — Calais LNG has filed a formal application with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to construct and operate a natural gas pipeline and import terminal.

The project, estimated to cost \$800 million to \$1 billion, is proposed for the Red Beach section of Calais, south of the city, on a 330-acre site that features 2,800 feet of shoreline along the deep-water banks of the St. Croix River and Passamaquoddy Bay. Construction is proposed to be completed in 2014.

The application was filed Dec. 18 and posted to the FERC Web site on Dec. 23.

Art Gelber, development director for Calais LNG, said from Houston on Tuesday that the company has been working since September 2007 to get to this point.

"We have already been through the [FERC] pre-filing process," Gelber said. "A tremendous amount of work has already been done."

Gelber said more than 80 scientists have conducted resource and environmental studies, including studies of lobster populations where the facility will be located.

"We have found nothing that would prevent us from moving forward," he said.

The Calais LNG facility would feature:

- A pier with berthing for one LNG vessel.
- Two 160,000-cubic-meter, full-containment LNG storage tanks, with potential expansion for a third tank.
- LNG receiving facility.
- Send-out plant and ancillary features.
- A 20.5-mile natural gas pipeline connecting the facility to the Maritimes & Northeast Pipeline.

Gelber said the construction of the pipeline and facility could provide 600 to 1,000 jobs. Once the project is up and running, excluding maritime jobs such as tugboats, 50 to 80 full-time jobs will be created.

"This is a shot in the arm for Washington County, especially at this time," he said. "We would add both jobs and value to the local tax base."

Two other LNG projects, in addition to Calais LNG's, have been proposed in the area.

Down East LNG has plans for a terminal at Mill Cove in Robbinston, and last year received a draft environmental impact statement from FERC, which company officials described as a "major step forward" in the approval of the project.

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Quoddy Bay LNG, based in Oklahoma, in 2008 withdrew applications for state and federal permits to build a terminal at Pleasant Point. Company officials last summer told the Bangor Daily News they believed the project was still viable.

Robert Godfrey, a founding member of Save Passamaquoddy Bay, a group dedicated to preventing LNG terminals from locating in the area, said thousands of area people oppose LNG facilities that use Passamaquoddy Bay.

"All of these LNG projects violate the LNG industry's own best practices," Godfrey said Monday. "Those practices say facilities should not be located where vapors could affect civilians. The shipping route here puts thousands of people in direct hazard zones."

"None of these projects have any probability of success," Godfrey said, because Canada so far opposes LNG tankers passing through Head Harbor Passage to sites in Maine.

Leaders in Maine and New Brunswick remain deadlocked over the issue.

During a meeting in New Brunswick in September, the New England governors and premiers of eastern Canadian provinces discussed ways to work more cooperatively to turn the region into an energy powerhouse, but New Brunswick Premier Shawn Graham soon afterward reiterated his government's opposition to allowing LNG tankers through Head Harbor Passage.

"The province's position remains unequivocal: We oppose the proposed locating of an LNG terminal in Passamaquoddy Bay because of its impacts on New Brunswick," Graham wrote in a commentary published in the Telegraph-Journal newspaper in Saint John, New Brunswick.

"Our environment would be negatively affected, the tourism and environment-based economy of the region would suffer, and the safety and security of the region could be compromised."

Gov. John Baldacci's office disagrees with some of Graham's comments and points to the safe passage of more than 100 large cargo ships that transit the passage annually.

Gelber said there are two next steps for the Calais LNG project, which include receiving data requests from FERC and holding technical conferences on the engineering of the facility.

"We should also submit our Maine applications within the next 30 days," he said. Maine applications must go to the Maine Department of Environmental Protection and the State Planning Office, which is coordinating the application process.

"Maine's process is thorough and robust," he said.

The entire FERC application can be seen at www.ferc.gov/industries/lng/indus-act/terminals/exist-prop-lng.asp.

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