

## **South Bay LNG proposal stirs up critics over planned site**

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The builders of the ocean terminal will need to placate lots of people.

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A proposal for a liquefied natural gas terminal off the coast of Los Angeles International Airport has generated dozens of letters from residents, local leaders and government agencies as regulators begin an extensive environmental review.

Santa Monica-based Woodside Natural Gas is one of a handful of companies pursuing LNG terminals along the California coast to satisfy growing energy demands.

LNG is natural gas supercooled to minus 260 degrees Fahrenheit and turned into a liquid for overseas transport. By then, its volume has shrunk so much it can occupy a space 600 times smaller than it would in a gaseous state.

Woodside, an affiliate of an Australian energy company, wants to transport LNG to shore through a pair of buoys in 3,000-foot-deep waters beyond the Santa Monica Bay.

The offshore terminal would sit roughly 27 miles from Dockweiler State Beach, 18 miles off Catalina Island and 23 miles off the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

Tankers carrying LNG would connect to specially equipped Woodside ships designed to convert the liquid to a gas with a forced-air vaporization system. The ships would link to the buoys, where the gas would be transported to shore through a pair of 24-inch diameter pipes.

The company first presented its plans at an open house in September, launching the start of a regulatory review by the city of Los Angeles and Coast Guard and Maritime Administration.

Commenters had until Oct. 31 to suggest issues for inclusion in a draft environmental report.

Letters made available through the federal docket management system cover a range of issues, including potential effects on marine ecosystems and coastal habitats, on beachgoers, and on local schools.

The state Department of Fish and Game requested that analysts consider hard-bottom ocean habitats, sea birds and marine mammals that could be affected by construction, vessel traffic, and potential spills, among other topics.

Onshore work will need to be timed to avoid the breeding seasons for California least terns and western snowy plovers - which run from roughly March to September - and federally listed flora and fauna would need to be protected, the letter states.

Los Angeles City Councilman Bill Rosendahl, who represents Westchester and Playa del Rey, has also voiced concerns about protected species, noting the location of an El Segundo blue butterfly habitat south of where the onshore construction would occur.

Additionally, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration asked for an analysis of whether white abalone would be present along the ocean pipeline route.

When the pipes reach the shore, plans call for them to run underground through a vacant section of airport dunes and eventually link up to a transfer facility on 96th Street and tie into existing gas lines.

For that reason, Los Angeles Unified School District has weighed in, requesting that environmental documents consider 16 existing schools and five proposed new schools within 1,500 feet of the pipeline route.

The Department of the Navy has also expressed concerns about Woodside's three ship-to-ship transfer locations, where tankers carrying LNG would meet the company's regassification carriers. The proposed sites are in or around an area for Navy training exercises.

But the letter also states that "with appropriate restrictions and business rules, rotating between the three (ship-to-ship transfer sites) may prove acceptable."

Woodside spokesman Michael Hinrichs said officials hope to have permits in hand by the end of 2009.

That would allow roughly three years for construction of the regassification ships, allowing for the first LNG delivery in 2012 or 2013.

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