

Broadwater meets state energy need

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While top state officials and local shoreline communities oppose construction of a liquefied natural gas terminal in Long Island Sound, state energy policy decisions and growing energy demand point to the need for the terminal.

A shortage of modern power plants is driving up the cost of electricity. Because of state pollution regulations, large, new plants run on natural gas.

In March, the state's Energy Advisory Board recommended that Connecticut increase the region's supply of natural gas to meet the growing need for power.

The Department of Public Utility Control has approved contracts totaling \$300 million to encourage the construction of four power plants. The largest of the plants, proposed for Middletown, would generate enough electricity for 550,000 homes. It would use natural gas.

The terminal in the middle of the Sound proposed by Broadwater Energy would convert tanker shipments of liquefied natural gas to vapor that would then travel through a new pipeline along 21 miles of the Sound's floor to connect with an existing pipeline.

Broadwater estimates that 20 percent to 25 percent of the gas would go to Connecticut, the rest to Long Island and New York City.

The objections to the plant have focused on safety, environmental impact and a commercial use of the Sound.

The pipeline's trench should be filled after the pipe is laid to reduce any potential damage to the Sound's bottom.

The terminal's isolation — nine miles from East Haven, 11 from Long Island — eliminates the risk to populated areas. In the 45 years of LNG tanker shipments, there have been eight instances of LNG spills out of 33,000 voyages. There have been no fires.

Broadwater will provide the security for the terminal and the tankers.

While the safety zone around the terminal would amount to 1.48 square miles, that is only 0.12 percent of the Sound's area.

The Sound is already heavily traveled by oil tankers, construction vessels and fishing boats as well as recreational craft. Some 450 foreign-flagged ships visit ports on the Sound annually. Also, 4,000 to 7,000 domestic commercial ships cross the Sound each year, according to the Coast Guard.

Just like the submarines from the Groton Navy base, LNG tankers would require their own safety zones while traveling in the Sound.

The LNG terminal, although large, would be barely visible from the East Haven shore, appearing no bigger than a paper clip held at arm's length, according to an environmental impact statement by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

Other LNG terminals proposed in New England will serve local markets, including Boston, not Connecticut.

The Broadwater terminal would add 1 billion cubic feet a day of natural gas to the region's energy supply. That additional natural gas is needed to meet demand and dampen the rise in the cost of electricity.