

# Malibu mayor will ask city to fight LNG plant

**Mayor Andy Stern will ask the city council to kick in \$50,000 to fight a liquefied natural gas terminal proposed off the Malibu coast. Also, a fifth LNG plant is planned near Malibu.**

**By Hans Laetz / Special to The Malibu Times**

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With a decision on a proposed offshore liquefied natural gas terminal due this summer, Malibu's mayor said he wants the city to kick in \$50,000 to the legal fight against the proposed BHP Billiton LNG ship near the city's northern end.

Mayor Andy Stern said last week he will ask the city council to help fund a Santa Barbara advocacy group that is hiring lawyers and technical experts to challenge "Cabrillo Port," the proposed 14-story-high set of LNG tanks, boilers and related facilities aboard a permanently anchored ship off the coast of Malibu and Oxnard.

"We will dedicate any and all resources to fight these developments on our coastline, including filing enough lawsuits to tie up the Billiton project forever," Stern said. "If they look at our history they will see that we are not shy about filing suits."

Stern originally said the city council will vote on his request this week, but now says the matter will have to be considered after it can be written up for the agenda in early May. But in the meantime, Stern is urging Malibu residents to turn out en masse at an environmental hearing on the proposal April 18 at Malibu High School.

For its part, Billiton is spending \$1.8 million lobbying in Sacramento, and another large amount campaigning in Southern California. The firm has sent e-mails to Ventura-area businesses, offering to pay for employee pizza parties where Billiton officials will campaign for the project.

Advertisements featuring the company's president, Renee Klimczak, have been purchased in newspapers, including The Malibu Times. The company is also advertising on Ventura radio stations.

In an interview, Klimczak said the Australian company wants to be a good neighbor to Malibu, and contends the ship will be barely visible on the horizon and then only on clear days. She said Billiton is committed to offsetting and reducing coastal smog emissions as much as possible, as it brings California the natural gas its economy and people need.

Last week, the Oxnard Chamber of Commerce endorsed the Billiton plan. Several conservative legislators have also said they favor it, and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has indicated the Billiton plan is preferable to other LNG proposals in California.

The fight against Billiton puts longtime adversaries on the same side: Malibu activist

Ozzie Silna is leading the opposition along with Stern. Silna and Malibu leaders clashed bitterly over coastal protection and development plans in years past.

Silna said he would help run advertisements and mailers aimed at turning out Malibu and Ventura County residents at public hearings on the project.

"This is going to be our first major outreach in Malibu," Silna said.

Opposition to the Malibu LNG terminal is being coordinated by Susan Jordan, executive director of Californians Coastal Protection Network, which has hired the Environmental Defense Center at a cost of more than \$200,000. EDC, a nonprofit environmental organization, will analyze the scientific, engineering and legal findings of the second version of the LNG project's environmental impact report.

Jordan met last week to plot tactics with activists from the Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, Surfrider Foundation, Heal The Bay and activists from Ventura County.

"The public hasn't yet understood that this project is a big factory ship that will be anchored right off of Malibu," Jordan said. "Malibu has so far been able to keep its coastline free of industrial development, but those days may be near an end.

An EDC attorney said the analysis of Billiton's project shows major violations of state and federal environmental laws that could derail the project.

"It seems that Malibu is finally waking up to this project's impact in their coast," said EDC attorney Linda Krop after last week's meeting.

"We're getting phone calls and letters from Malibu now that people realize this ship could actually appear some day soon on the horizon."

Krop said EDC has hired air pollution experts who will testify that the Billiton project analysis underestimates the amount of smog that would be generated from the LNG station as large amounts of natural gas are burned on board the ship to boil the minus 260-degree LNG into natural gas.

"There is also quite a thermal effect on the ocean, and the view impact on Malibu and two adjacent parks will be quite significant," Krop said.

Ventura LNG Task Force chairman Trevor Smith welcomed Malibu's participation in the anti-LNG fight.

"I think maybe some people in Malibu have thought they didn't have to worry about LNG because this plan is so ridiculous," he said. "Now that it might actually get built, people are taking notice."

The April 18 public hearing is limited by law to testimony about the adequacy of the environmental impact report, a 2,500-page document released two weeks ago after an earlier attempt was rejected due to incomplete plans. But local LNG activists said they plan to use the event to rally forces against the overall Billiton plan.

## **5th terminal proposed near Malibu**

The Malibu-Billiton fight is gearing up at the same time that a small Texas gas company announced it is looking at Santa Monica Bay and the San Pedro Channel as possible sites for what could be California's fifth LNG terminal. Tidelands Oil & Gas Corp. said it plans to meet with LNG opponents to design what its consultant said "would be the greenest, least objectionable plant possible."

David Maul has been hired by Tidelands to meet with local officials in what he said is an effort to avoid the missteps made by Billiton and other companies. Maul resigned last year as the director of the California Energy Department's natural gas office.

The company is not going to make plans on where to put its Pacific Coast floating LNG terminal until it talks to coastal residents and agencies, Maul said.

"They believe it is important to seek input from key stakeholders and design a project that avoids as many of the objections (to other LNG terminals) as possible," Maul said.

The former state official said the controversy over the Billiton proposal near Malibu has not gone unnoticed.

"I don't think it is our intention to go up and compete with BHP on that one," Maul said.

The Tidelands proposal is actually the fifth proposed for California, but the third that could be visible from Malibu. In addition to the Billiton proposal, Woodside Petroleum has just proposed a terminal 22 miles southeast of Point Dume. Crystal Energy has a long-standing proposal to convert an offshore oil platform near Oxnard into an LNG terminal, and a subsidiary of Mitsubishi wants to place a terminal on land near downtown Long Beach.

Energy companies are betting that LNG terminals, which can cost upward of \$600 million each, will allow California to join the world LNG market. Many oil-producing countries such as Qatar, Russia and Australia are sitting on massive natural gas deposits, but are unable to beat domestic U.S. gas, which is delivered via pipeline.

Complicating matters is the state of Alaska is planning a natural gas line to deliver gas from the North Slope to the lower 48 States. And some experts say the existing natural gas supplies in the U.S. and Canada are more than sufficient for future needs.