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## **Feds and state criticize proposed gas terminal off coast near Malibu**

**Editor's note: Eighteen months ago, an Australian energy conglomerate announced it had picked the offshore shelf near Malibu as the site for a floating receiving station for liquefied natural gas imports. If built, the LNG terminal would be permanently anchored 13.8 miles from Malibu's west end. Some Californians have voiced support for the project and the energy it would import. But many serious**

**predictions of negative impacts-related to safety, terrorism and aesthetics-have been placed in a public comments file in Washington. Two weeks ago, The Malibu Times reported about federal warnings of severe seismic and ocean-floor dangers to the proposed LNG plant. This is another in a series of reports examining claims made by project proponents and opponents.**

**By Hans Laetz/Special to The Malibu Times  
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The National Park Service and California State Parks are criticizing a proposed offshore energy terminal planned for the Malibu coast. BHP Billiton's Cabrillo Port concept is categorized as potentially dangerous to humans and a potential killer of sea birds by the government agencies.

One of the reports notes that industrial lighting at the proposed floating liquefied natural gas terminal, to be located 13.8 miles off the coast from Leo Carrillo State Beach, would be visible on the shoreline. Other critics say the bright industrial lights would cause a glow on the horizon that would be visible from every Malibu home, obscured only on the foggiest of nights.

The Park Service also cites safety deficiencies at the proposed Cabrillo Port, the name chosen by BHP Billiton for its proposed LNG receiving terminal and regasification plant.

The parks agency complains that the environmental impact report does not

even show the adjacent Channel Islands National Park on its maps.

"The boundaries of Channel Islands National Park should be clearly delineated on all maps and figures," wrote park superintendent Russell E. Galipeau Jr. "The document identifies impacts to visitors to the park and to park resources, but the document fails to identify the park.

"If you do not have access to this information, we will be glad to provide it to you [BHP Billiton]," the parks chief offers.

Kathi Hann, spokeswoman for BHP Billiton, said the EIR and maps were not drawn up by the energy company, but were an independent assessment written by a consulting firm called Energy and Environment Inc. That company has a \$1.56 million contract from the U.S. Coast Guard and California State Lands Commission to analyze the BHP Billiton application.

But much of the information in the environmental consultant's report is based on data supplied by BHP Billiton in its original application, Hann acknowledged.

"We're in the middle on this, because we didn't write the EIR," Hann told The Malibu Times in a telephone interview Monday, after being asked to respond to the government reports' criticisms. "All we are going to be able to do is look at the additional questions raised and then answer those questions."

Hann said numerous specific questions from the government agencies are in the process of being replied to by BHP Billiton, as well a new list of safety and environmental concerns raised by the Coast Guard this year. But the company would not release that new list of safety questions as "that is a Coast Guard matter," she said.

In documents filed last spring, the state Department of Fish and Game's objections to the project's current design included worries that the LNG tankers could collide with the many ships that pass next to the site traveling between Asia and the Los Angeles and Long Beach harbors.

The state has asked the port operators to be required to extend government-controlled ship lanes some 50 miles out from the ports to Anacapa Island, and to only allow cargo ships to pass each other near the LNG terminal, one at a time under the radio direction of port controllers.

Currently, cargo ships have two uncontrolled 5-mile-wide shipping lanes between Los Angeles and Point Conception. The state says it is worried that LNG tankers crossing those heavily used shipping lanes could collide with fast-moving freighters.

A review of maps in the EIR shows they do not show nearby boundaries for the Channel Islands National Park, or the offshore city boundary for Malibu, which lies 11.5 miles north of the proposed regasification platform.

In a related complaint, the Environmental Defense Council in Washington said the maps do not show that the Cabrillo Port site is within the Park Service's proposed expansion of the Channel Island National Marine Sanctuary, which has been under study since it was first proposed in 2000.

Hann said the Malibu boundary omission does not mean the company is ignoring Malibu, which is the nearest local entity to the proposed LNG site. "The pipelines from Cabrillo Port will landfall at Ventura County," she told The Malibu Times in an e-mail response to written questions. "Additional onshore pipeline infrastructure will traverse through Ventura County, from Ormond Beach (near Oxnard) to Somis (north of Camarillo), and in Los Angeles County near the City of Santa Clarita.

"No pipelines will impact Malibu," she continued, "but the natural gas received offshore from Cabrillo Port will benefit the entire Southern California Region."

The Park Service comments allege that a lack of emergency plans in case of an industrial accident, ship collision or terrorist attack is a deficiency.

"The document lacks a detailed analysis of environmental impacts resulting from an emergency situation, such as an uncontrolled release of LNG or other fuels or substances used on site," Channel Islands National Park Superintendent Russell Galipeau wrote.

He also criticized the oil company for "placing a significant amount of faith in the use of permitting requirements, safety procedures, and best operating practices" to avoid catastrophic failure of the facility, which some critics say could saturate Malibu and Santa Monica Bay with combustible natural gas if the highly pressurized regasification units, tanks and pipes were to fail.

The BHP Billiton spokeswoman had no comment on that federal official's conclusion. Hann said that all concerns brought up by government agencies and private citizens will be addressed by the company as it replies to queries from the consultants writing the EIR.

The federal park service also criticizes BHP Billiton for repeatedly understating the aesthetic effect of the floating 11-story-high tanks, and 2-mile clear zone, to be placed off Point Mugu, about 20 miles from Anacapa Island. The floating terminal and unloading ships would be plainly visible from the island, the Park Service says, but is not accurately shown in illustrations in the EIR.

"Currently, there are no man-made permanent structures when looking south from the island," Galipeau wrote. "This would clearly be a visual intrusion."

As for wildlife, the state says Cabrillo Port's lights would attract and kill marine birds that look for food at night. An endangered variety of murrelets (diving sea birds) and other night-feeding birds are known to fly into bright lights, such as those envisioned for the LNG terminal.

The state's wildlife expert wrote that the BHP Billiton plan underestimates the lighting issue, as it [BHP] says the lights will not be bright, but admits that they will be visible from land 13.8 miles distant. "We believe that

although the lighting may be minimized, there is still the potential for these species to be impacted," wrote Sandra C. Morey.

The National Park Service and state wildlife department comments were filed with the U.S. Department of Transportation in Washington last spring. An extensive Internet search has not revealed any news media coverage or other reaction to them.