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**OPINION**

## Broadwater's Terminal Plan

November 5, 2006

The Coast Guard's review of Broadwater Energy's proposal to moor a gargantuan liquefied natural gas terminal in the middle of Long Island Sound concludes that the project could be done if Broadwater takes steps to "responsibly manage risks to navigation safety and security." Days later, officials for Broadwater, a joint venture of TransCanada Corp. and Shell, issue assurances that they always meant to provide security without burdening state or local taxpayers.

The problem is that Broadwater and the Coast Guard define the issues of security and cost too narrowly.

Broadwater's proposal would increase the region's dependence on foreign sources of fuel. How does that strengthen national security? In addition, natural gas already accounts for too large a share of the Northeast's fuel supplies, making the region vulnerable to the whims of the global market. Expanding that dependence on natural gas for heating and generating electricity will increase the region's exposure to volatile energy prices and

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threaten its long-term economic stability.

Broadwater's bid to maintain the energy status quo would have the added effect of undermining efforts at conservation, the best and most direct path to long-term economic security and cleaner air.

Broadwater submitted its application under the Energy Independence

Act of 2005. The law gives the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission authority to override states in deciding the location of such energy facilities. At 1,200 feet long and 180 feet wide, this terminal will be bigger than the Queen Mary 2. If approved, it will serve as a symbol of the federal government's willingness to trample states' rights for short-sighted energy policies.

It would also set an ugly precedent for the further industrialization of a national treasure. Long Island Sound, the country's second-largest estuary, has been the focus of years of efforts (and billions of dollars) at environmental cleanup and reclamation.

Finally, it seems that every day, the body of scientific evidence linking fossil-fuel consumption and deforestation to global warming grows. A report released recently by the British government on the economics of climate change warned that, barring an international commitment to cutting fossil-fuel consumption, the world could face a decline in productivity on a scale not witnessed since the Great Depression.

The threat to our globe is real. The question before us - now - is whether to continue blindly following the status quo to disaster or to push for change.

The Coast Guard concludes the Broadwater project can be done in a way that minimizes its hazards to public safety and navigation. But such conclusions don't address the broader question of whether this should be done; whether, as a matter of national energy policy, Broadwater is in the region's best long-term economic and environmental interests.

It's not.

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