September 28, 2023

Re: Hydrogen-ready LNG is a dangerous distraction

Secretary Granholm,

The emergence of the US as the world’s leading LNG exporter undermines the Biden Administration’s commitment to global climate leadership, domestic climate goals, and environmental justice. The runaway growth of LNG export infrastructure is expanding and worsening fossil fuel sacrifice zones and putting a 1.5 degree world out of reach. The Department of Energy (DOE) must protect communities and our climate against industry efforts to expedite and greenwash the buildout of LNG exports.

When the Group of Seven (G7) met in May, it opened a dangerous new front in the industry-led campaign to greenwash LNG. The final communique alleged that new LNG infrastructure could avoid carbon lock-in effects “...by ensuring that projects are integrated into national strategies for the development of low-carbon and renewable hydrogen.” This commitment to so-called “hydrogen ready LNG” is a dangerous distraction that the DOE should decline to support in any form.

The biggest risk of federal hydrogen investments is that they will prolong the life of fossil fuel assets while locking-in, or even increasing, our unsustainably high level of emissions. This is undeniably true of hydrogen-ready LNG. The term itself is a misnomer, as even proposed ‘hydrogen ready’ terminals would require significant and expensive repurposing to handle either liquid hydrogen or ammonia. Both liquid hydrogen and ammonia have different temperature, pressure, safety, and infrastructure material requirements than LNG, and even once transported to a terminal, would require extensive additional steps to convert and transport the hydrogen to its destination consumer.

Billions of federal dollars are at the DOE’s disposal for hydrogen investments, including $8 billion under the hydrogen hub program. It is deeply concerning that the DOE publicly declared in October 2022 that hydrogen liquefaction and exports were eligible “connective infrastructure” under the program. It is equally concerning that some of the largest fossil fuel corporations in the country are among the current finalists — including LNG producers with explicit ambitions to pair hydrogen and LNG exports.

The Gulf Coast is once again ground zero for fossil fuel projects that endanger public health and community wellbeing. Sempra Infrastructure is a partner in multiple finalist hub proposals and intends to “aggressively explore” how to connect hydrogen exports with their LNG terminals in Port Arthur, TX and Cameron, LA. The leading US LNG exporter, Cheniere, has separately expressed interest in hydrogen exports, specifically naming its ability to utilize LNG market access and infrastructure. These LNG majors must not receive social license or subsidies from the DOE for their greenwashing bait-and switch.

Every dollar counts when it comes to government investment to tackle climate change, and DOE cannot afford to overlook the risks of misspent billions in the Regional Clean Hydrogen
Hubs and other programs. Fossil fuel interests, eager to co-opt clean hydrogen funding and subsidize the lock-in of decades of expanded LNG production, must receive no help from taxpayers.

Respectfully,

350 Bay Area Action
350.org
Accelerate Neighborhood Climate Action
Alliance for Affordable Energy
Bold Alliance

Businesses for a Livable Climate
Call to Action Colorado
CatholicNetwork US
Center for International Environmental Law
Center for Oil and Gas Organizing

Chispa LCV
Climate Investigations Center
Climate Justice Alliance
Colorado Businesses for a Livable Climate
Community for Sustainable Energy

Earth Action, Inc.
Eco-Justice Collaborative
Food & Water Watch
For a Better Bayou
Friends of the Earth US

Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance
Green House Connection Center
Healthy Gulf
Indivisible Ambassadors
Institute for Policy Studies Climate Policy
Program

Interstate 70 Citizens Advisory Group
Larimer Alliance for Health, Safety, & Environment
League of Conservation Voters
Littleton Business Alliance

Louisiana Bucket Brigade
Mayfair Park Association Board
Mental Health & Inclusion Ministries
Montbello Neighborhood Improvement Association
North Range Concerned Citizens

Oil Change International
Our Sacred Earth
Private Equity Stakeholder Project
Public Citizen
RapidShift Network

Rise to Thrive
Save the Environmental Protection Agency
Science and Environmental Health Network
Sierra Club
Southwest Organization for Sustainability

SouthWings
Spirit of the Sun
Sunrise New Orleans
System Change Not Climate Change
Texas Campaign for the Environment

Turtle Island Restoration Network
Unite North Metro Denver
Wall of Women
Western Slope Businesses for a Livable Climate
Womxn from the Mountain

Working for Racial Equity
Zero Hour