

April 30th, 2019

Organizational Sign on Letter:
Oppose the Meadowlands Fracked Gas Power Plant

Bergen County Board of Chosen Freeholders
One Bergen County Plaza
Hackensack, NJ 07601-7076

Dear Freeholders,

The undersigned organizations write to you today in opposition to the North Bergen Liberty Generating Project, a 1200-megawatt gas-fired power plant proposed in the North Bergen Meadowlands to deliver power to New York City. The plant would expose Bergen County residents and the environment to toxic air pollutants, put public health at risk, damage a crucial ecological resource, and halt progress on the region's clean energy and climate mitigation objectives. We urge you to join us in opposing this ill-conceived project.

Gas-fired power plants pose numerous risks to human and environmental health in the region. Natural gas power plants emit many pollutants including carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides, particulate matter, volatile organics and contribute to ground level ozone and smog. Particulate matter (PM) once inhaled can affect the heart and lungs and cause serious health effects. Exposure to ozone is linked to aggravation of asthma, emphysema, and chronic bronchitis. Long-term exposures to ozone is also linked to asthma, permanent lung damage (such as abnormal lung development in children) and premature death. Bergen County is already rated 'F' by the American Lung Association for its ozone levels. Building this plant will only make the situation worse. And Bergen County leads the state in the number of people with pediatric/adult asthma, COPD, lung cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes, all diseases affected by air pollution. People most at risk from breathing air containing ozone include people with asthma, children, older adults, and people who are active outdoors, especially outdoor workers. Studies have proven that older residents suffer premature death rates from ozone and other air pollutants.

The proposed power plant would operate only 1 mile away from an existing PSEG gas-fired power plant in neighboring Ridgefield Park. The Ridgefield Generating Station is currently one of the largest sources of air pollution in New Jersey. A second major power plant in this densely populated region would create serious cumulative public health and environmental impacts for the surrounding communities, including and especially low income and communities of color. New Jersey already suffers from some of the worst air pollution in the nation, and the Liberty Generating Project would only exacerbate this severe and costly problem.

Constructing and operating a massive new power plant in the region also risks further damage to the surrounding wetlands ecosystem. Wetlands serve many functions benefiting the human and natural environment: they are a natural filtration system, purifying the water we drink and use in daily life. They also preserve biodiversity by hosting a number of plant and animal species, and they play a crucial role in flood mitigation by absorbing storm waters, protecting residential communities in nearby flood zones. The construction of and pollution from the proposed plant could affect water flows, quantity, or quality, thereby harming the delicate animal and plant habitats in the wetlands and undermining their critical hydrological functions. Any damage to vegetation or soil from heavy machinery could also reduce the water retention capacity of the wetlands and increase runoff.

In November of 2017, The Regional Plan Association (RPA), the nearly 100-year old research, planning and advocacy organization focused on improving the tri-state area's prosperity, infrastructure, sustainability and quality of life, released its Fourth Regional Plan to help elected officials, policymakers, and advocates plan for the region's future. The Plan found that "of all the places in the tri-state region challenged by increased flooding from climate change, the New Jersey Meadowlands is at greatest risk." It also concluded that "The Meadowlands are also likely to be one of the first places to be permanently

inundated from sea-level rise." Approving a new, long term power plant in the region would create both known and unknown risks associated with increased flooding and sea level rise predicted in the region, and runs counter to important regional planning objectives.

The sunk investment costs in a massive new source of greenhouse gas emissions also discourages investments in clean, renewable energy, and magnifies demand for natural gas, encouraging more fracking, pipelines and the associated leaks of the potent greenhouse gas methane. This plant has the potential to increase total New Jersey greenhouse gas levels by 2 to 3 percent and the percent of greenhouse gases from electric production by 20 percent. Moreover, natural gas power plants are long-lived assets. The gas power plants lock in fossil fuel dependence and environmental damage for decades to come. The average New Jersey gas-fired power plants went online 23 years ago and 13 percent of the state's gas plants went online more than 40 years ago.

Methane emissions from gas power plants alone may be considerably higher than thought. A 2017 study found that gas-fired power plants released more than 20 times more methane than the facilities estimated; and, the greenhouse gas footprint of natural gas is actually worse than coal and oil because methane traps 86 times more heat in the atmosphere than CO₂ over a 20 year period. Building natural gas power plants will further accelerate greenhouse gas emissions that would warm the planet more than 2° Celsius, a threshold that scientists fear could cause irreversible destructive climate change.

The future of energy jobs in New Jersey lies in clean, renewable power like solar and wind energy, as well as in energy efficiency manufacturing and installation. Approving this project would represent a huge step backwards from New Jersey's goal of achieving 100% clean renewable energy for New Jersey. Oil and gas jobs are dangerous, unstable and unsustainable. While the fossil fuel industry claims that shifting to renewable energy would cost jobs and hurt the economy, the reality is that twice as many New Jerseyans already work in the renewable energy and energy efficiency sectors (over 41,000 jobs) than in fossil fuels (almost 19,000 jobs), according to Department of Energy data. Shifting to 100 percent renewable energy like wind and solar and investing in energy efficiency upgrades would supercharge the clean energy sector and provide even more jobs. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, solar installers and wind turbine technicians are among the top two fastest-growing occupations in the country. Transitioning to renewable energy protects the environment, curbs climate change, and provides safer employment for our workers.

The only way we can protect our Bergen County communities from the worst impacts of fossil fuel pollution and climate change is by stopping the expansion of all new fossil fuel infrastructure projects, and mandating an aggressive and equitable transition to 100% renewable energy. The Trump administration's environmental deregulation continues to set us back, making strong action from our state and local governments even more urgent. We ask that you do everything in your power to protect the public health, safety and environment of our Bergen County communities by opposing the North Bergen Liberty Generating Project.

Sincerely,

Ted Glick, President and Steering Committee Member of 350 NJ-R
Don Torino, President of Bergen County Audubon Society
Lori Charkey, President of Bergen SWAN
Georgina Shanley, Founder of Citizens United for Renewable Energy (CURE)
Harriet Shugarman, Executive Director of ClimateMama
Patricia Miller, Climate Reality Project Leader
Ken Dolsky, Organizer, Coalition Against The Pilgrim Pipelines NJ
Diane Scarangella, President of Displaced Homemakers Network of NJ, Inc
Richard E. Malizia, Sr., Conservation Chair of East Jersey Chapter Trout Unlimited
Doug O'Malley, Director of Environment New Jersey
Steve Sullam, Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County
Matt Smith, Senior Organizer, Food & Water Watch
Jackie Schramm, Chairperson of Franciscan Response to Fracking
Sister Miriam MacGillis, President of Genesis Farms
Janet Glass, Coordinator of Green Faith Central Bergen Circle
Captain Bill Sheehan, Founder and Executive Director, Hackensack Riverkeeper
Bari-Lynne Schwartz, Co-Vice President for Advocacy and Education of National Council of Jewish Women Bergen County Section
Paula Rogovin, Cofounder of Coalition to Ban Unsafe Oil Trains
Maria Santiago-Valentín, Founder of New Jersey Coalition for Climate Justice
Elliott Ruga, Policy Director, New Jersey Highlands Coalition
Jeff Tittel, Director of The New Jersey Sierra Club
Matt Shapiro, Presidents, New Jersey Tenants Organization
Jesse Burns, Executive Director, New Jersey League of Women Voters
Paul Kaufman, New Jersey Social Action Committee of Temple Emeth
Carol E Gay, President, New Jersey Industrial Union Council
Diane Scarangella, President of Northern New Jersey NOW
Diane L Wexler, Co-founder of North Jersey Pipeline Walkers
Sally Jane Gellert, Member of Occupy Bergen County
Doug Couchon, Co-founder of People for a Healthy Environment
Diane Scarangella, Founder of the Resistance Cafe
Catherine Brienza, President of RidgewoodJOLT
Jaklin Girgis, Founder of Sustainable Bergen
Leigh Garofalow, Founding Member of The Climate Reality Project: Northern New Jersey Chapter
Kimi Wei, CEO of The Wei
Nancy Griffeth, Chair of UU Faith Action NJ Environmental Justice Committee
Sr. Suzanne Golas, csjp, Founder and Director of WATERSPIRIT