

May 8th, 2018

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

The Honorable Phil Murphy
Office of the Governor
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Murphy,

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 local 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 Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x), produce particulate matter, and contribute to ground level ozone and smog. Particulate matter (PM) once inhaled can affect the heart and lungs and cause serious health effects. And long-term exposure to ozone is linked to aggravation of asthma, emphysema, and chronic bronchitis, and it is likely to be one of many causes of asthma development. Long-term exposures to ozone may also be linked to permanent lung damage, such as abnormal lung development in children. 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.

The proposed power plant would operate less than two miles from an existing PSEG gas-fired power plant in neighboring Ridgefield. The Ridgefield Generating Station is currently one of the largest sources of air pollution in New Jersey. Approving a second major power plant within 2 miles of this existing plant could 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." The Plan calls on New Jersey to work with the federal government to make the Meadowlands a national park to demonstrate how properly managed natural landscapes can help mitigate the impacts of climate change. A national-park designation would also help preserve and restore the Meadowlands' natural habitats, protect nearby communities, and make it a recreational resource for the entire region. 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 these important regional planning objectives.

The sunk investment costs in a massive new source of green-house 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. 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 more heat in the atmosphere. 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 irreversibly 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 your administration's stated 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.

Governor Murphy, you campaigned on the promise of reversing years of delayed action on climate change under the Christie administration by creating a new energy master plan to achieve 100% truly clean energy for our state. The only way we can protect our communities from the worst impacts of 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 government even more urgent. We ask that you do everything in your power to protect the public health, safety and environment of our New Jersey communities by opposing the North Bergen Liberty Generating Project.

Sincerely,

Already Devalued and Devastated Homeowners of Parsippany

Bergen County Audubon Society

Bergen SWAN

Central Jersey Coalition Against Endless War

Citizens For A Clean Pompton Lakes

Citizens for Oceanfront Preservation

Citizens United for Renewable Energy (CURE)

ClimateMama

Coalition Against the Pilgrim Pipeline New Jersey

Coalition to Ban Unsafe Oil Trains

Coalition to Protect New York

Cooper River Indivisible

East Jersey Chapter Trout Unlimited

Elmirans and Friends Against Fracking

Environment New Jersey

Essex Greens Renewable Energy Campaign

Ethical Society of Bergen County

Food & Water Watch

Franciscan Response to Fracking

Genesis Farms

Hackensack Riverkeeper

Monmouth Community Climate Coalition

New Jersey Coalition for Climate Justice

New Jersey Highlands Coalition

New Jersey Sierra Club

New Jersey Tenants Organization
NJ League of Women Voters
NJ State Industrial Union Council
Northern New Jersey NOW
North Jersey Pipeline Walkers
Occupy Bergen County
Orange Residents Against Pilgrim Pipelines
People for a Healthy Environment
Resistance Cafe
Roseland Against the Compressor Station
Sane Energy Project
Sisters of Saint Dominic of Caldwell
Surfrider Foundation: Jersey Shore Chapter
Sustainable Bergen
The Climate Reality Project: Northern New Jersey Chapter
The Wei
Unitarian Congregation Princeton
UU Faith Action NJ
Voters of Watchung Hills
WATERSPIRIT