

Redesigned LNG terminal proposed

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MOBILE, Ala. - The first public meeting for a proposed "closed loop" liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility was held Wednesday night in Mobile.

The meeting, held at the Arthur R. Outlaw Mobile Convention Center, was to allow the public to voice any concerns they may have to the Coast Guard and view documents on the proposed Bienville Offshore Energy Terminal.

Houston based TORP Technology went back to the drawing board on the design after meeting stiff opposition to their initial "open loop" plan. TORP CEO Joe Berno said that tens of thousands of man hours and redesign went into the new proposal.

"Ultimately, we were able to come back with a closed loop design which required a complete redesign of the support facility and the technologies involved. About the only consistent component is the HiLoad docking system itself," said Berno.

Liquefied natural gas is shipped at extremely cold temperatures and requires warming to be returned to a gaseous form. The proposed facility would primarily use warm air rather than millions of gallons of sea water for this process.

Casi Callaway of Mobile Baykeeper said their group has given the green light.

"There are air emissions. There are minimal water discharges but when you compare 130 million gallons of ocean water a day being used through this facility to the minuscule amount there will be now, really, our concerns have been alleviated," said Callaway.

The floating facility would be located 63 miles off of Dauphin Island in over 400 ft. of water. But the really big number is \$20 million, the annual dollars TORP expects the facility to contribute to the Mobile area.

"We would directly hire about 57 employees to work on our facilities, Our vessels offshore and in addition to that, there would be other employment opportunities for service companies or companies that are providing materials and supplies to us," said Berno.

While this proposal is much more widely accepted than the open loop system, there are those who are still on the fence.

Chester McConnell represents the 800 members of the Mobile Audubon Society.

“While this is good for the short term, in providing gas for the short term, we hope that it’s not going to interfere with the direction that we need to go in supporting wind and solar and other types of energy,” McConnell said.

There will be one more open public hearing when the final proposal is released in early January.

Anyone who would like input on the proposal can do so online until December 20. Go to www.regulations.gov and reference docket number USCG-2006-24644.