

LNG Community Awareness Workshop
February 2, 2005

Closing Comments by invited public panelist Clifford A. Goudey
Massachusetts Institute of Technology Sea Grant College Program

I want to thank the Department of Transportation Office of Pipeline Safety for inviting me here today to offer a perspective on the current status of the public's informational needs associated with LNG terminal siting. I also appreciate the opportunity to offer a first reaction to the new LNG-related outreach initiatives presented here today.

Though I am an Engineer, I bring no particular expertise in cryogenic fuels. My less-than-complete knowledge of LNG comes from a relatively brief, but intense self-education on the topic, particularly as it relates to several proposed terminals in New England. Today I am here representing the MIT Sea Grant College Program, one of thirty such programs in each of the nation's coastal states, with a mission to confront challenging coastal issues for the betterment of society and the marine environment.

The coastal zone is no stranger to user conflicts. My personal experience is more typically related to fisheries or aquaculture matters and in my experience, even a seemingly innocuous item such as a salmon pen or a scallop dredge can generate tremendous controversy among coastal stakeholders. Coastal residents are used to potential activities being considered for the coastal zone seeing lots of review and, in some cases, being rejected. It should be no surprise to anyone that something as significant as an LNG import terminal, no matter how thoughtfully sited, would become a catalyst for opposition.

Today, I have tried to react in a way that represents the public's take to your planned initiatives. I hope my comments have been useful and received in the way they were intended.

Now, continuing that theme, I hope I can convey to you the depth and the basis of feelings that can build when a community learns they are being asked to host an LNG terminal. You must realize that most people do not share your vision and simply see a significant loss to themselves in return for some intangible benefit to society that they may not fully understand, let alone value.

Why, for example, would a town in coastal Maine want to put its economy and way of life at risk when not one town resident is a direct user of gas? Indeed, in Maine, where less than 2% of the population has access to natural gas, few residents have much interest in bearing the burden of southern New England's imported energy needs.

I have listened carefully today for the convincing argument that might justify the current number of LNG import terminals proposed for North America. That need was not articulated. By contrast, we heard that North America's 20-year projected LNG demands could be met by seven to nine new or expanded facilities. We have further learned that thirteen projects have already been approved. While it may be important for the marketplace function, how much

easier would the financing of those permitted projects be if they didn't have to look behind them at the 41 redundant projects poised on the drawing board? Is it time to call an end to the land-based LNG terminal gold rush and declare the winners?

Today I heard public objections to specific LNG terminals projects characterized as some form of national neurosis. Such a statement by a high-level agency official does not sit well with the public. You need to understand that the public has a different standard on what is an acceptable risk compared to those in industry or those tasked with ensuring the flow of our nations energy.

The public is not prepared to dismiss worst-case scenarios just because an expert panel judges them non-credible. Were the events of 9/11 judged credible on September 10th? Was the runway accident mentioned by Deputy Director Kramer a credible event? In America, incredible things happen every day.

Project proponents must realize that the Internet has changed their traditional ability to maintain control over information. Today it is way too easy to get caught in a lie or in attempts to mask the truth by clever semantics. The public deserves more credit for their interest in understanding the realities of LNG and their ability to build information well beyond what is doled out by proponents, the press, or government Web sites. Dismissing the obvious hazards associated with transporting and storing vast quantities of LNG is an easy way to lose one's credibility.

You have complained about the unfair newspaper headlines about your industry. The opponents of many projects often see the reverse. Regardless, the important point is that when the public now sees the letters "LNG" you have their attention. You should not think that your message must be confined to 5-second sound bites. A fully informed public is capable of making the right decision. But when that informed decision has been made, both industry and the government should respect it.