

P M A A W E E K L Y REVIEW

FERC Expedites Reviews of LNG Export Projects ***House Passes Bill to Expedite Approval for LNG Applications***

Last Friday, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issued updated schedules for the environmental review of twelve liquified natural gas (LNG) export projects, six of which are in the state of Texas. Many of these environmental reviews can take several months to complete, which has drawn criticism. FERC has been facing a backlog of permit applications, with some project approvals being delayed up to a year and a half.

FERC says it has sped up the timeline for environmental review by making several bureaucratic changes, including the hiring of an outside contractor to assist FERC staff, and reaching an agreement with the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) to work together on the review of LNG projects. In a statement, FERC Chairman Kevin McIntyre said that the "commission has made significant strides in streamlining our regulatory processes to adapt to the increasing number, and greater complexity, of the LNG applications we have received," McIntyre further stated that "these process improvements have shortened projected environmental schedules in some cases by 9 to 12 months."

Additionally, on Thursday, the House passed H.R. 4606, the "Ensuring Small Scale LNG Certainty and Access Act," by a vote of 260-146. 223 Republicans and 37 Democrats voted for the bill, while 3 Republicans and 143 Democrats voted against the bill.

Introduced by Rep. Bill Johnson (R-OH) in December of last year, H.R. 4606 expedites the approval process for applications to import and export small quantities of natural gas that qualify for a categorical exclusion under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Specifically, the legislation would require the Department of Energy (DOE) to approve any application to export or import less than 0.14 billion cubic feet of natural gas per day to or from any country with which the U.S. does not have an applicable free trade agreement.