

### LNG as bad for climate as coal over next 20 years — report

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Last month, climate concerns killed a \$7 billion deal between French utility Engie SA and Houston-based NextDecade Corp. NextDecade's proposed Rio Grande LNG project is pictured here in a visual representation. Rio Grande LNG

Projected increases in U.S. exports of liquefied natural gas are likely incompatible with a world where global temperature rise is held to 1.5 degrees Celsius, according to a new report from the Natural Resources Defense Council released today.

Expanding U.S. LNG exports would only increase global dependence on fossil fuels, the **report** said, and comes at the expense of "already feasible and cost-competitive cleaner energy technologies."

It adds that although the greenhouse gas emissions from U.S. LNG are lower than coal over a 100-year time span, the fact that methane has a more immediate climate impact than carbon dioxide means the "near-term" climate effect of LNG over the next 20 years is "close to that of coal."

The report clashes with members of Congress and industry who argue that U.S. LNG exports are cleaner than alternatives from other countries and who say LNG serves as a complement to renewables sources of energy.

It also highlights the pressure on President-elect Joe Biden to flesh out plans for LNG and natural gas generally. Supporters of increased LNG restrictions often note that last month, French concerns over the methane emissions footprint of U.S. natural gas quashed a \$7 billion deal to export LNG sourced from West Texas — a move that generated pushback from the departments of Energy and State.

Biden's campaign energy [plan](#) does not go into detail about U.S. LNG exports but says his administration will require "aggressive methane pollution limits for new and existing oil and gas operations." Other Biden proposals would require public companies to "disclose climate risks and the greenhouse gas emissions in their operations and supply chains," according to his platform.

If a Biden administration does implement stronger standards around gases like methane, that could signal to other countries that U.S. gas is adequately regulated, according to some analysts ([Energywire](#), Nov. 4). A spokesperson for the Biden transition team did not return a request for comment.

According to NRDC's report, emissions from the U.S. LNG industry over the next decade would tack on up to 213 million metric tons annually in greenhouse gases, or the "amount equivalent to what would be produced by adding 28 [million] to 45 million more fossil-fueled cars to U.S. roads."

"Much of LNG's sizable climate impact comes from methane leaks that occur throughout the production, processing, and transport of the gas," the report said. The analysis added that the long life span of LNG infrastructure "locks in" fossil fuels instead of clean energy and that methane leaks "can eliminate any climate benefit even if LNG is used to replace coal."

## **Industry pushes back**

Yet Charlie Riedl, executive director at the Center for Liquefied Natural Gas, which represents the industry, pushed back on the characterization that LNG exports are out of step with global climate targets and said natural gas — on top of its benefits domestically — is critical to replacing dirtier fuels in emerging countries.

Riedl said he wouldn't be surprised to see the Biden administration reverse some of President Trump's environmental rollbacks, but he said the LNG industry is already working to "proactively address" questions around methane to assuage concerns that potential buyers have expressed.

"It's probably less about the requirements, because industry has recognized that the rest of the world isn't sleeping on this and that the rest of the world is ... paying attention to what the United States is doing," he said.

Still, the potential return of tighter regulations under Biden is beneficial to the LNG sector, Riedl said, especially considering that some LNG facilities have licensing agreements out to 2050.

Dustin Meyer, director of natural gas market development at the American Petroleum Institute, said in a statement that the organization is "hopeful" the Biden administration recognizes the importance of LNG exports from "an environmental and energy security perspective."

Other analysts also say Biden's approach to foreign policy could prove lucrative for U.S. LNG ([\*Energywire\*](#), Oct. 30).

However, Han Chen, manager for energy policy in the international program of NRDC, said the Biden administration should be clear "from the get-go" that there's no place for LNG in Biden's proposed Clean Energy Export and Climate Investment Initiative.

"Our report shows that life-cycle greenhouse gas emissions for solar power are less than 7% of LNG emissions; emissions for wind power are even lower, less than 2%," Chen said in an email.

Chen also said DOE and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission should immediately return to quantifying and considering the life-cycle emissions linked to LNG projects and "develop a climate test for measuring the significance of those emissions."

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