

Groups oppose Boston LNG site

AES Corp.'s plan to build a terminal on Outer Brewster Island, at the mouth of Boston Harbor, was offered as an alternative to a Fall River facility.

01:00 AM EDT on Tuesday, October 18, 2005

BY THEO EMERY
Associated Press

BOSTON -- Conservation groups joined boaters and sport fishing proponents to launch a campaign against a liquefied natural-gas terminal proposed for an island at the mouth of Boston Harbor, saying the plan would be bad for the environment and erode public access to parkland.

AES Corp. wants to build the LNG facility on Outer Brewster Island. The rocky, uninhabited islet at the eastern edge of the harbor is owned by the state but maintained by the federal government as part of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area.

"Outer Brewster is out of the question for an LNG facility," said Jay McCaffrey, director of the Massachusetts Sierra Club, who called the AES plan "a nonstarter."

"It is incompatible with the mission of the park," he said. "Our state parklands are not available and free for the taking, or to go on the auction block."

The Distrigas terminal in Everett is currently the area's only LNG facility. AES proposed the plan last month as an alternative to bringing tankers so close to downtown Boston and to a proposed facility in Fall River that has met strong public opposition. The state legislature would have to approve the proposal by a two-thirds vote.

AES spokesman Aaron Samson said the terminal wouldn't have significant environmental impact or restrict public access to the recreation area. The site would be safer than onshore facilities, he said, and would give the region a much-needed boost to its natural-gas supply.

"There's no public facilities to land a boat, there's no public facilities on the island," he said. "This is a unique place, but it's not the crown jewel of the Boston Harbor parks."

Currently, tankers traverse the busy harbor under armed escort. The biggest tankers cannot fit under the Tobin Bridge, which spans the inner harbor.

Governor Romney has called the plan "very interesting and very valid."

Senate President Robert Travaglini, who represents areas that LNG tankers currently pass near, sounded a positive note yesterday about the proposal.

"It's certainly something that would warrant my interest and attention," he said.