

# Atlanticville

Eatontown • Long Branch • Monmouth Beach • Ocean Township • West Long Branch

[http://atl.gmnews.com/news/2010-06-03/Front\\_Page/Environmental\\_groups\\_oppose\\_power\\_plant.html](http://atl.gmnews.com/news/2010-06-03/Front_Page/Environmental_groups_oppose_power_plant.html)

## Environmental groups oppose power plant

PurGen official says plant would be clean, safe

BY ANDREW DAVISON Staff Writer

Local environmental groups are trying to block a proposal for a power plant that would include a 100-mile-long underwater pipeline transporting pressurized liquid carbon dioxide around Sandy Hook, through Raritan Bay and along the coast of New Jersey.

Led by the New Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club, the groups sponsored a panel discussion on May 24 to share their concerns over the PurGen One power plant proposed in Linden, which would pipe the carbon dioxide byproduct under the ocean floor.

“That’s one of the reasons why we’re here, because it’s going to go past Monmouth County on its way out,” Jeff Tittel, director of the New Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club, said during a panel discussion of the PurGen proposal held at the Unitarian Universalist Meetinghouse in Lincroft.

Sponsors included the New Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club, Clean Ocean Action, Monmouth County Friends of Clearwater, Surfrider Foundation, NY/NJ Baykeeper, and the American Littoral Society.

Heather Saffert, principal scientist at Clean Ocean Action, based at Sandy Hook, detailed some of her concerns specifically regarding the pipeline, which would cross the Raritan Bay and continue along the coastline.

Saffert expressed concerns about sea floor disturbance along the length of Pur- Gen’s 2-foot-wide pipeline.

“It would ... be a huge benthic disturbance. We have all sorts of important creatures in the Raritan and Sandy Hook bays and down along the seashore, from horseshoe crabs to surf clams,” she said.

She cited 300 species of fish, 350 species of birds, over 20 species of whales and dolphins and sea turtles that would all be at risk.

Additionally, she added that the pipeline would run through surf clam habitat, whale and sea turtle migration areas and important fish nursery areas.

She also worries that the pipeline, which must be buried 3 feet deep per state regulations, may not stay buried, exposing it to damage and possible leaks.

“We know the area off Sandy Hook is a very physically dynamic area. Is PurGen going to come out and make sure that it stays buried?”

However, according to the PurGen website, the burial of the pipeline is a short-term disturbance that would not significantly impact the environment.

The website explains that to diminish carbon dioxide emissions, the plant would capture 90 percent of the released carbon dioxide, a byproduct of the electricity-producing process, and store it miles under the ocean off Atlantic City through a process called Carbon Capture and Sequestration (CCS).

The power plant would not burn coal, but would convert the coal to a synthetic gas and remove sulfur and mercury from the gas prior to any combustion, the website states.

“The remaining (mostly hydrogen) gas will be used to produce hydrogen commodities and to power a combined cycle power plant.”

Tim Bauer, PurGen project manager with SCS Energy, Bedford, Mass., emphasized that PurGen would not be a coal-fired plant.

“One of the keys to this is that it’s a hydrogen fired power plant, not a coal-fired power plant. We have a gasifier that takes coal and makes hydrogen, and the hydrogen is what we burn in the power plant ... and that’s why it’s so clean,” he said.

“The misconception, unfortunately, is that it’s a coal-fired power plant, and it is not. I think that’s where the pollution image comes from,” he continued.

Bauer said PurGen employees and federal authorities would monitor the pipeline, which would be 1-inch-thick steel and encased in concrete. He added that in some places, like shipping lanes, the pipeline could be buried as deep as 70 to 80 feet.

An electronic device inside the pipeline would inspect the structure’s integrity as frequently as required by the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), Bauer said.

“We will continually examine the pipeline for corrosion and cracking,” he said.

Saffert also questioned the efficacy of the pipeline’s safety measures.

“Will [the safety valves] work any better than BP’s [British Petroleum] to control the CO2 release?”

Saffert is also not convinced that CCS is a safe or effective method of emission reduction.

She cited the potential risk of a highenergy release blowout and the current limitations in our ability to monitor leaks.

According to Saffert, the technology is not available to monitor small-scale leaks, and the technology to monitor large leaks harms marine life.

Environmental groups also fear the plant would worsen the already polluted air quality in densely populated New Jersey and New York, whose air quality fails to meet minimum health standards. However, Bauer emphasized the clean nature of the plant.

“Given the CCS, this will be the cleanest plant in New Jersey. We will have lower emissions than a natural gas plant. We will meet all of the required emission levels of the DEP; we have to, to get our permits,” he said adding that there would be no soot output.

“There is particulate output,” Bauer said, “... at the level of a natural gas plant, not the level of a coal plant, so there is not a soot problem, there is not a sulfur problem.”

Bauer also said the plant would have a positive \$9.3 billion impact on Union County over 40 years, create jobs and lower power prices.

Tittel questioned the taxpayer cost and efficiency of the plant.

“It’s really a national issue, and what makes it so critical is the timing. Right now, Congress is discussing a climate bill and stimulus funding.”

Tittel said he is concerned that the construction of this plant would lead to a federal funding shift toward fossil fuels and away from green initiatives.

However, Bauer said SCS Energy would privately raise all of the capital for the plant.

“This project works economically on its own, and it fits the Obama administration’s future energy plans in that it’s CCS that will lower the carbon footprint of New Jersey,” said Bauer

Bauer also said that SCS Energy would accept economic development funds if they became available.

Tittel said that he thought the funding for the plant could be used more efficiently for renewable energy.

“If you think about the \$7 billion a facility like this is going to end up costing, for that kind of money you could put solar on every roof in Monmouth County and generate four times more

electricity. For that \$7 billion you could generate about 2,200-2,300 megawatts of offshore wind [power],” said Tittel.

According to Laura Tracey-Coll, also of the Sierra Club, almost half of the energy produced would be used to power the plant.

“It is inefficient when you consider that 300 megawatts of the 750 megawatts of the energy, 40 percent, will be used just to run the plant.”

The plant would consume 7,000 pounds of coal a day, 2.55 million tons per year, said Coll.

According to Tittel, PurGen is the only proposed plant of its kind on the coast, and the largest.

Tittel said he believes laws already exist that could block the plant’s construction.

“We have laws in place that we think can stop this, under the Coastal Zone Management Act and CAFRA [Costal Area Facility Review Act], but we need the governor to actually change the rules to prevent it,” said Tittel.

Tittel and Grace Sica, outreach coordinator for the New Jersey chapter of the Sierra Club, encouraged residents to send postcards to Gov. Chris Christie to encourage his opposition of the project.

Bauer said his company did not expect such a negative public reaction.

“We are quite frankly very surprised at the reaction to our plant. We believe that we are doing the right thing,” he said.

But for Tittel, the plant represents a frightening precedent.

“We’re really here tonight because of what this means, not just for the future of New Jersey, but the future of this country and in a lot of ways, the planet.

“If we allow plants to go forward that are nothing but frauds and a waste of money, then we are never going to get a real climate bill and we’re never going to get ourselves off fossil fuels, and we’re never going to move our society and our planet forward,” said Tittel.

PurGen expects a draft Environmental Impact Statement for the project to be filed with the Minerals Management Service (MMS) of the Department of the Interior in 2011 and, if approved, construction to begin in 2012.

More information can be found at [www.purgenone.com](http://www.purgenone.com) and [stoppurgencoalplant.org](http://stoppurgencoalplant.org).