

Article From Associated Press:

LNG Sites Divide Coastal Regions

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Associated Press

WASHINGTON - In the battle over liquefied natural gas terminals, it's one New England coastal community against the other, Gloucester vs. Providence.

Determined to fight the proposed LNG tank expansion in Providence, Rhode Island officials are quick to point north to Gloucester, where two companies have proposed an offshore facility.

"Seems like the best hope is the new offshore proposal in Gloucester," U.S. Sen. Lincoln Chafee, R-R.I., told federal regulators during a recent meeting.

But in Gloucester, where opposition is already growing, Mayor John Bell has a curt response to his Rhode Island neighbors.

"Good try," Bell said. "But it's not going to solve the problem." "It's just going to transfer the problem to another coastal community. The ports should be working together, not working against each other."

In fact, the offshore LNG proposals — one also for Long Island Sound off the Connecticut shoreline — aren't an easy substitute for onshore facilities, such as those proposed for Providence and Fall River.

"There are certain aspects of onshore facilities that offshore facilities have a hard time duplicating," said J. Mark Robinson, director of energy projects for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission during a meeting with Rhode Island officials.

That view irks Rhode Island officials who say they believe FERC sees KeySpan's plan to expand the existing waterfront terminal at Providence's Fields Point as the easy way out.

"Been told that it's not viable to go offshore," said Rhode Island Attorney General Patrick Lynch. "I don't agree with that."

But an offshore docking facility in Gloucester would bring tankers into waters where fishermen have been making a living for nearly 400 years. These days, as many as 150 vessels fish for lobster and groundfish in the 10 square miles just southeast of Gloucester.

The Rhode Islanders probably mean no harm, said U.S. Rep. John Tierney, D-Salem. adding, "They mean only good things for Rhode Island. But we have to determine what the energy need is for this region and what is the best fuel to meet that need."

He and Bell said they are unhappy that Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney has indicated initial support for the offshore proposals and said they are trying to convince him to veto any Gloucester project.