

# [***Environmentalists protest as Biden administration approves huge oil export terminal off Texas coast***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BSD-HRV1-DYMD-62G6-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

WASHINGTON — In a move that environmentalists called a betrayal, the Biden administration has approved the construction of a deepwater oil export terminal off the [*Texas*](https://apnews.com/hub/texas) coast that would be the largest of its kind in the United States.

The Sea Port Oil Terminal being developed off Freeport, Texas, will be able to load two supertankers at once, with an export capacity of 2 million barrels of crude oil per day. The $1.8 billion project by Houston-based Enterprise Products Partners received a deepwater port license from the Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration this week, the final step in a five-year federal review.

Environmentalists denounced the license approval, saying it contradicted President Joe Biden's [*climate agenda*](https://apnews.com/article/biden-climate-health-tax-law-economy-inflation-f112d7c78abaa724d22964317d213deb) and would lead to “disastrous” planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions, equivalent to nearly 90 coal-fired power plants. The action could jeopardize Biden's support from environmental allies and young voters already disenchanted by the Democratic administration's approval last year of the massive [*Willow oil project in Alaska*](https://apnews.com/article/alaska-oil-biden-willow-drilling-climate-24f135580259b9f9b245383dba921fe7).

“Nothing about this project is in alignment with President Biden’s climate and environmental justice goals,'' said Kelsey Crane, senior policy advocate at Earthworks, an environmental group that has long opposed the export terminal.

“The communities that will be impacted by (the oil terminal) have once again been ignored and will be forced to live with the threat of more oil spills, explosions and pollution,'' Crane said. "The best way to protect the public and the climate from the harms of oil is to keep it in the ground.”

In a statement after the license was approved, the Maritime Administration said the project meets a number of congressionally mandated requirements, including extensive environmental reviews and a federal determination that the port's operation is in the national interest.

“While the Biden-Harris administration is accelerating America’s transition to a clean energy future, action is also being taken to manage the transition in the near term,'' said the agency, which is nicknamed MARAD.

The administration's multiyear review included consultation with at least 20 federal, state and local agencies, MARAD said. The agency ultimately determined that the project would have no significant effect on the production or consumption of U.S. crude oil.

“Although the (greenhouse gas) emissions associated with the upstream production and downstream end use of the crude oil to be exported from the project may represent a significant amount of GHG emissions, these emissions largely already occur as part of the U.S. crude oil supply chain,'' the agency said in an email to The Associated Press. “Therefore, the project itself is likely to have minimal effect on the current GHG emissions associated with the overall U.S. crude oil supply chain.''

Environmental groups scoffed at that claim.

“The Biden administration must stop flip-flopping on fossil fuels,'' said Cassidy DiPaola of Fossil Free Media, a nonprofit group that opposes the use of fossil fuels such as oil, coal and natural gas.

“Approving the Sea Port Oil Terminal after pausing LNG exports is not just bad news for our climate, it’s incoherent ***politics***,'' DiPaola said. Biden “can’t claim to be a climate leader one day and then turn around and grant a massive handout to the oil industry the next. It’s time for President Biden to listen to the overwhelming majority of voters who want to see a shift away from fossil fuels, not a doubling down on dirty and deadly energy projects.''

DiPaola was referring to the administration's January announcement that it is [*delaying consideration of new natural gas export terminals*](https://apnews.com/article/lng-exports-biden-europe-climate-russia-3c2bfd853c0d53531a677b142b009dbc) in the United States, even as [*gas shipments to Europe and Asia have soared*](https://apnews.com/article/biden-british-politics-united-states-europe-climate-and-environment-13ba11cb978180731a636d57a35dc4a9) since Russia invaded Ukraine.

The decision, announced at the start of the 2024 presidential election year, aligned the Democratic president with environmentalists who fear the huge increase in exports of liquefied natural gas, or LNG, is locking in potentially catastrophic planet-warming emissions even as Biden has [*pledged to cut climate pollution in half by 2030*](https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-climate-change-science-climate-environment-and-nature-bdcf107d1fd146c2136f132b9fd13861).

Industry groups and Republicans have condemned the pause, saying LNG exports stabilize global energy markets, support thousands of American jobs and reduce global greenhouse emissions by transitioning countries away from coal, a far dirtier fossil fuel.

Enterprise CEO Jim Teague hailed the oil project's approval. The terminal will provide “a more environmentally friendly, safe, efficient and cost-effective way to deliver crude oil to global markets,'' he said in a statement.

The project will include two pipelines to carry crude from shore to the deepwater port, reducing the need for ship-to-ship transfers of oil. The terminal is expected to begin operations by 2027.

Since the project was first submitted for federal review in 2019, “Enterprise has worked diligently with various federal, state and local authorities, and participated in multiple public meetings that have allowed individuals and stakeholder groups to learn about the project and provide their comments,'' including some studies that have been translated into Spanish and Vietnamese, the company said in a statement. More than half of Freeport's 10,600 residents are Hispanic, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, hailed the license approval as “a major victory for Texas’s energy industry" and said the Biden administration had delayed the Sea Port terminal and other projects for years.

“After tireless work by my office and many others to secure this deepwater port license, I’m thrilled that we’re helping bring more jobs to Texas and greater energy security to America and our allies,'' Cruz said in a statement. “That this victory was delayed by years of needless bureaucratic dithering shows why we need broader permitting reform in this country.''

The oil export facility, one of several license applications under federal review, is located 30 miles offshore of Brazoria County, Texas, in the Gulf of Mexico.

The license approval followed a ruling by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals last week dismissing claims by environmental groups that federal agencies had failed to uphold federal environmental laws in their review of the project.

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