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Chilly New England Braces for Rolling Blackouts

HOLYOKE, Massachusetts, January 16, 2004 (ENS) - People across the Northeast are turning up the heat to stave off bitter cold temperatures and chilly winds spread over the region by an Arctic airmass. To prevent power failures, ISO New England Inc., operator of the region's bulk electric power grid, is requesting that electric customers across New England take voluntary steps to conserve electricity until 9:00 pm tonight.

But at the same time, ISO New England says it is preparing for rotating blackouts, as regional electricity demand is expected to set a new winter peak. "Rotating blackouts would only be implemented under extreme circumstances, such as the unforeseen loss of a large generating unit or transmission line," the power operator said.

ISO New England says the severe weather conditions have created very high demand for natural gas, which has impacted a large number of gas-fired power plants operating in the region.

Citing the duration of the cold weather and constraints on generation, ISO New England is taking precautionary measures to maintain the integrity of the bulk power system.

ISO New England is asking consumers to turn off unneeded lights, especially holiday lighting, and appliances. Turn off unnecessary office equipment when leaving work, and defer laundry and other household chores requiring electricity until 9:00 pm or later, the power operator asks.

ISO New England Inc. is the not-for-profit corporation responsible for the day-to-day reliable operation of New England's bulk generation and transmission systems with an installed capacity of approximately 32,000 megawatts.

In addition to operating the bulk power grid, ISO New England is the administrator of the region's wholesale electricity marketplace and the Open Access Transmission Tariff on behalf of the New England Power Pool.

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ExxonMobil LNG Terminals Planned for Gulf Coast

IRVING, Texas, January 16, 2004 (ENS) - Construction of a \$600 million liquefied natural gas (LNG) receiving terminal near Corpus Christi on the Gulf Coast of Texas was formally announced Thursday by Exxon Mobil affiliate company, Vista del Sol LNG Terminal LP. Plans call for the terminal to process LNG imported from Qatar for distribution throughout Texas and the United States.

LNG is natural gas that has been cooled and condensed so it can be transported.



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In October, Exxon Mobil Corporation and Qatar Petroleum announced a Heads of Agreement to supply 15.6 million tons a year of LNG from Qatar to the United States for an expected period of 25 years.

Texas Governor Rick Perry, Consul General of the State of Qatar Mohamed Al-Hayki, local business and government officials, and representatives of ExxonMobil today attended the news conference announcing the terminal.

"Texas and the United States need secure supplies of natural gas to attract industries, assure development and to continue the strong economic growth we're experiencing in our state and throughout the nation," said Governor Perry.

The proposed project is planned for a location near Corpus Christi in San Patricio County about two miles west of Ingleside. The Port of Corpus Christi Board of Commissioners has voted unanimously to support the project.

The gas will be extracted from Qatar's large North field. The project is the largest LNG import project that has been announced for supplying natural gas to the United States.

The terminals will employ ExxonMobil's patented modular tanks that the company says provide a high degree of safety. The inner, nickel/steel, and the outer, reinforced, prestressed concrete tanks of the modular storage system are liquid and gas tight, and independently capable of containing the stored LNG, the company said in a statement.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission announced on December 22, 2003, that Corpus Christi LNG, LP filed an application seeking authorization to site, construct and operate the LNG terminal. In a related application, Cheniere Corpus Christi Pipeline Company is seeking authorization to construct and operate a 24 mile pipeline and related facilities to transport natural gas.

The Vista del Sol terminal is part of an overall Exxon Mobil plan to develop several LNG terminals along the U.S. Gulf Coast. In November, the company via another affiliate, Golden Pass LNG Terminal LP, announced a similar LNG terminal for another Texas site, Sabine Pass, located 10 miles south of Port Arthur.

The terminals are expected to take about three years to build, and to be operational by 2008-2009, each to have a processing capacity of one billion cubic feet per day of LNG.

In June 2003, Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham warned that total natural gas demand is projected to grow 50 percent over the next 25 years, but U.S. supplies are not equal to the demand.

The environmental impact of the terminals is open to public comment. For details of how to access the relevant documents, visit:
<http://www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/EPA-IMPACT/2004/January/Day-12/i014.htm>

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New Hampshire Waste Oil Superfund Site Gets \$48 Million

PLAISTOW, New Hampshire, January 16, 2004 (ENS) - A \$48 million cleanup plan for restoration of the Beede Waste Oil Superfund site in Plaistow, New Hampshire was announced Tuesday by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) New England office. The Beede site is located in a residential Plaistow neighborhood that is served entirely by private drinking water supply wells.

From the 1920s through August 1994, the Beede Waste Oil facility was

used for waste oil storage and recycling. Waste oil was stored in an unlined lagoon, several underground and multiple above ground storage tanks, but it seeped out. The facility became a Superfund site in December 1996.

Soil on the 39 acre site is contaminated with various chemicals, including polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and lead. Soil deeper than 10 feet also contains volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Groundwater at the site is contaminated primarily with VOCs.

Drinking water supply wells serving two dozen families were found to be contaminated with volatile organic compounds. The water serving those families is now being treated before use.

Ira Leighton, deputy regional administrator of EPA's New England office, said, "Through the cooperation of potentially responsible parties, this plan will transform the barren waste oil site into a productive residential and recreational area, improve the quality of Kelley Brook and the surrounding wetlands, and restore this important aquifer to drinking water standards for area residents."

The cleanup plan addresses all remaining contamination at the site including soil, sediment, groundwater and surface water.

The cleanup plan includes these major components:

- Completion of the ongoing removal of PCB-contaminated oil product from the water table.
- Excavation and off-site disposal of contaminated soil to a depth of 10 feet, including various contaminated soil piles, soil from a former landfill area and sediment from a former oil seepage area along Kelley Brook, all totaling approximately 80,000 cubic yards.
- In-place treatment of soil greater than 10 feet deep to remove VOCs through vacuum extraction.
- Construction of an on-site extraction and treatment system to remove contaminants from the groundwater aquifer.
- Continued monitoring of the water quality in area drinking water supply wells.
- Implementation of a long-term groundwater monitoring program to evaluate the effectiveness of the remedy.
- Implementation of a long-term surface water and sediment monitoring program to evaluate the effectiveness of the remedy on Kelley Brook.
- Establishment of permanent activity and use restrictions to prevent the excavation of soil deeper than 10 feet beneath the ground surface.
- Establishment of a groundwater management zone, in accordance with New Hampshire law, to ensure no one uses untreated groundwater until the aquifer is restored.

The cleanup plan, called a Record of Decision, builds on nine years of environmental studies and follows interim cleanup measures already completed or underway at the site.

The first measure was a joint removal of more than one million gallons of abandoned wastes from the site by EPA and DES in 1997. The second continuing measure includes the removal of mobile contaminated oil floating on top of the drinking water aquifer, which EPA began in February 2000. Over 80,000 gallons of oil have been removed to date.

A copy of the complete Record of Decision and the Administrative Record, which includes documents that form the basis for the EPA's decision, will be available for review starting January 21 online at:

<http://www.epa.gov/region01/superfund/sites/beede>

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Parts of Rocky Mountain Arsenal Deleted from Superfund Site

DENVER, Colorado, January 16, 2004 (ENS) - Two contaminated areas of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal have been cleaned up enough so that they can be removed from the Superfund site and become a wildlife area, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said Thursday.

A total of 4,927 acres of approximately 17,000 acres at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal will now be available for the U.S. Army to transfer to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service according to the 1992 RMA National Wildlife Refuge Act.

"Establishment of the RMA National Wildlife Refuge will create a major asset for the Montbello and Commerce City communities as well as the greater Denver metropolitan area," said EPA Assistant Regional Administrator Max Dodson.

The areas being deleted from the Superfund site include 100 foot wide strips immediately inside the Rocky Mountain Arsenal boundary along 96th and 56th Avenues, and Highway 2. These areas will be conveyed to state or local government to improve traffic flow and access to the Denver International Airport.

The Rocky Mountain Arsenal located 10 miles northeast of downtown Denver is one of the largest Superfund cleanup sites in the country.

In 1942, the arsenal was established by the U.S. Army to manufacture chemical warfare agents and incendiary munitions for use in World War II. Beginning in 1946, the facility was leased to private companies to manufacture industrial and agricultural chemicals.

The deletion of the perimeter area and the selected surface area from the Superfund site is the result of years of work cleaning up contaminated water as well as the on-site disposal of soil and structures, the EPA said.

Structures with no future use and a contamination history were demolished and the debris placed in a double-lined landfill on the Rocky Mountain Arsenal site.

The arsenal was placed on the Superfund List in 1987. The cleanup is expected to be completed by 2011, the EPA said.

But even when the cleanup is considered complete, surface and groundwater will not be allowed as a source of drinking water and consumption of fish and game from the site will be prohibited. Agricultural, industrial and residential use will not be permitted.

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EPA Sued Over Secret Meetings with Chemical Companies

SEATTLE, Washington, January 16, 2004 (ENS) - Five conservation and pesticide watchdog groups have filed a lawsuit in federal court to stop the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from giving illegal special access to a group of chemical corporations. The suit alleges that a task force made up of these companies is advocating that the agency circumvent the Endangered Species Act for pesticide uses that harm federally protected species.

Documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act and other sources reveal that the task force, made up solely of 14 agro-chemical companies with no public interest representatives, has met regularly with EPA officials in secret and has urged the agency to write new pesticide

regulations that would eliminate expert oversight over species protections.

The Federal Advisory Committee Act prohibits the federal government from obtaining advice from committees comprised of only the regulated industry. That act also requires that the meetings of advisory groups be open to the public.

The lawsuit was filed in federal district court in Seattle Thursday by the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, Washington Toxics Coalition, and Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides, represented by the environmental law firm Earthjustice.

The lawsuit asks the court to order the EPA to commit to bring its actions into compliance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

"EPA is letting the pesticide industry have inside influence over the fate of endangered species poisoned by toxic pesticides," said Earthjustice attorney Patti Goldman.

The lawsuit claims that the chemical companies are pushing the EPA to weaken pesticide safeguards by cutting expert biologists in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries out of consultations determining the effects of pesticides on wildlife. At the companies' urging, EPA has starting a rulemaking to reserve authority over such evaluations to itself, the suit alleges.

In 2000, EPA established the chemical industry group, known as the FIFRA Endangered Species Task Force, to develop data disclosing the locations of endangered species.

Over the past year, the task force has shifted its efforts away from generating data toward supporting new pesticide regulations that would eliminate expert oversight. In early 2003, EPA announced its plan to issue such regulations, and it plans to propose the new rules soon, the lawsuit says.

"EPA has an open door policy to the biggest chemical companies in America while excluding the rest of us," said Mike Senatore of Defenders of Wildlife. "That's not right. In America all voices are supposed to be heard, not just wealthy interests that make campaign contributions."

As of March 2003, the companies on the FIFRA Endangered Species Task Force were: Albaugh, Inc., Aventis, BASF Corp, Bayer CropScience, Dow AgroSciences, LLC, DuPont Ag Products, FMC Corp., ISK Biosciences Corporation, Monsanto Co., Nissan Chemical Industries Ltd, Nufarm Inc., Syngenta, Uniroyal Chemical Co., and Valent USA Corp.

The lawsuit complains that the EPA has not chartered the Task Force under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, has not ensured that Task Force meetings are open to the public, has not made Task Force records available for public inspection, or kept public minutes of Task Force proceedings, or ensured that the Task Force is "fairly balanced in terms of the points of view represented," as the act requires.

"For years, EPA has flouted its obligation to protect endangered species from pesticides," said Aaron Colangelo of Natural Resources Defense Council. "Now that the courts are directing EPA to comply with its duties, the pesticide industry and the Bush administration have come up with a new trick for delaying species protections."

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Washington Livestock Industry Urges Ban on Downer Cattle

OLYMPIA, Washington, January 16, 2004 (ENS) - The livestock industry in Washington state is calling for a permanent, legislative ban on

the sale of non-ambulatory or so-called downer cattle in the state. The cow found to be infected with mad cow disease in December was a downer cow on a Washington dairy farm.

The ban proposal was made public Thursday in testimony to the Washington State Joint Senate and House Agriculture Committee by Jay Gordon, executive director of the Washington State Dairy Federation, the industry's policy making and legislative awareness arm. The proposal is also supported by the Washington Cattlemen's Association.

Gordon said that the proposed ban will be contained in a draft bill to be placed before the state legislature for consideration in the current session.

The proposed legislation that would implement the ban reads in part, "A person commits the crime of trading in non-ambulatory livestock if the person knowingly delivers or accepts delivery of a non-ambulatory livestock animal." Violations of the proposed law would be punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 per incident.

"This proposed ban will help to reinforce the American consumer's continuing faith in the safety of our food supply," Gordon said.

The proposed ban would effectively stop the commercial movement of all downers within Washington. If enacted, the proposed ban would be similar to legislation passed in Oregon and California with the support of those states' dairy and beef industries.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently enacted a ban on the processing of downers for their meat. The USDA estimates that 130,000 downer cattle are sent to meatpacking plants each year. Other estimates range from 75,000 to 200,000.

Gordon said that before recent action by USDA stopped the processing of non-ambulatory animals for their meat, "downers" accounted for less than one percent of all animals arriving at U.S. beef processing plants. "While downers have always represented a small portion of the food supply, we believe that this proposed ban will effectively address public concern over this issue," Gordon said.

But Chris Galen, vice president of the National Milk Producers Federation which represents 32 dairy cooperatives nationwide told the "Oregonian" newspaper that it is "not always clear what a downer cow is."

Everyone agrees that a downer is a cow that is unable to stand up and walk. But some lie down because they need to rest, Galen said. Others are disabled by illness that is not necessarily contagious or related to mad cow disease. The mad cow found in Washington was injured giving birth to a large calf.

About three million dairy cows and 35 million beef cattle are slaughtered each year in the United States.

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Savannah Honors Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary

SAVANNAH, Georgia, January 16, 2004 (ENS) - The City of Savannah has recognized January 16 as Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Day in honor of the 23rd anniversary of the sanctuary's designation.

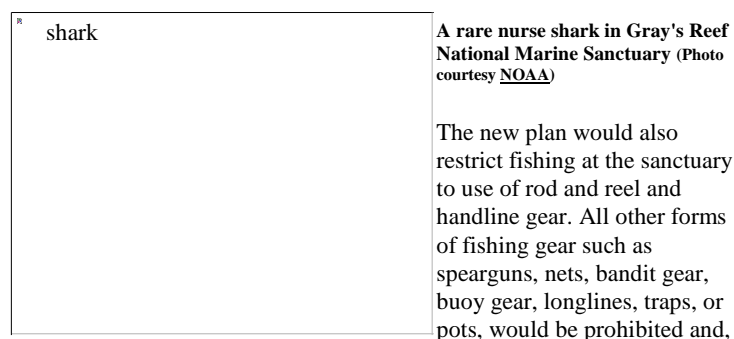
The official Mayoral Proclamation was signed by then Mayor Floyd Adams in December 2003. The proclamation recognizes that Gray's Reef "holds a significant and unique place in the heart of Savannah" and that the sanctuary "is the only federally protected example of the marine environment between North Carolina and the Florida Keys."

The sanctuary is adjacent to the only known winter calving ground for the endangered northern right whale. Loggerhead sea turtles, a threatened

species, use Gray's Reef year round for foraging and resting.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) manages the sanctuary. "It is an honor to have the city recognize the value and benefit of NOAA's Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary through this proclamation," said Greg McFall, Gray's Reef Sanctuary's science coordinator. "We look forward to opportunities that further involve the community, through education and outreach efforts, as together we share the future of this national treasure."

A new draft management plan was issued for the sanctuary on October 24, 2003 which proposes a regulation to prohibit anchoring within its boundaries. In an emergency situation, the plan provides that boaters would be allowed to anchor in the sanctuary or moor to existing boundary marker buoys. With the restrictions in place, a public awareness campaign would be initiated. The sanctuary would also increase enforcement activities and continue to monitor the condition of the live bottom habitat.



if on board a vessel, would have to be stowed when the vessel is in the sanctuary.

Existing regulations would also be revised to address placing or abandoning structures on the submerged lands; using explosives or devices generating electrical current underwater; and removing, injuring, or possessing historical resources.

The regulations would apply to all users of the sanctuary, but, nearly all users already conduct their activities in such a manner as to already be in compliance with the proposed regulations, NOAA managers state.

Still, they say new regulations are needed because human use of the sanctuary has boomed in the past 20 years and is predicted to increase more in the future. In 1983, the sanctuary began conducting a yearlong survey using fixed wing aircraft to fly over and count the number of vessels visiting the sanctuary. There were a total of 106 vessels sighted during 62 flights over the course of the year. The highest daily sighting was 14 boats during the Sapelo Open Kingfish Tournament.

Today, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary flies routine surveys over the sanctuary. In 1999, a total of 527 boats were observed in the sanctuary during 90 overflights.

During one tournament day in 2001, 150 vessels were counted at the sanctuary, exceeding the total counted during the entire year of 1983.

The trend toward increased use of the sanctuary is expected to continue due to the rise in human population along the coast with a corresponding increase in boat registrations, the popularity of recreational fishing, and improved boating and fish-finding technologies, according to the the draft management plan document, which is also a draft environmental impact statement.

"Increase in use, coupled with declines in fish populations, degradation of coastal habitats, and advancements in scientific and educational technologies require that the sanctuary management plan be reviewed and revised appropriately to reflect current conditions," NOAA says in the

document.

The public comment period on the draft management plan and environmental impact statement ended December 31, 2003, and NOAA is expected to issue the final regulation this year. The plan and supporting documents are online at:

<http://www.graysreef.nos.noaa.gov/newdraftplan/newdraftplan.html>

Encompassing some 17 square nautical miles, Gray's Reef contains one of the largest near shore, live bottom reefs in southeastern U.S. waters. The sanctuary supports abundant reef fish and invertebrate populations.

Gray's Reef was designated in 1981 as the nation's fourth marine sanctuary. Five years later, its value as a unique bioregion was recognized by the United Nations. The sanctuary is a habitat of particular scientific interest and is an area of great favor to sport fisherman and divers.

The sanctuary will hold celebratory events at its annual Oceanfest, Savannah's community wide festival celebrating all ocean related aspects of the region. Oceanfest is traditionally held in the summer.

Visit Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary online at:

<http://graysreef.noaa.gov>

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New Climate Monitoring System Operating in 28 States

SEATTLE, Washington, January 16, 2004 (ENS) - A new, high tech climate monitoring network, designed to track the nation's temperature and precipitation trends, is now operating in 28 states the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced this week.

The U.S. Climate Reference Network (CRN), developed by NOAA scientists, will improve the ability of America's government and industry decision makers to form policies about programs impacted by climate variability and change. NOAA is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

"The CRN will give America a first-class observing network for the next 50 to 100 years that will serve as a benchmark for climate monitoring," said Gregory Withee, assistant administrator for the NOAA Satellites and Information Service. He made the announcement Tuesday at a news conference at the American Meteorological Society's annual meeting in Seattle.

Currently, there are 46 CRN stations deployed on the ground in 28 states. Additional deployments for the next two years are scheduled at a rate of about 27 each year. Officials said a total of 100 stations are planned throughout the rest of nation by 2006.

"The climate reference network helps us fill an important land based gap of data in the United States that we will need in the larger and more comprehensive Earth observation system being developed by more than 34 countries in what could be the next 10 years," said NOAA administrator retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad Lautenbacher, Ph.D., undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere.

With more than \$3 trillion of U.S. Gross Domestic Product affected by climate and weather, including the agriculture, energy, construction, travel and transportation industry sectors, there are powerful economic as well as environmental incentives for gaining a greater understanding of these phenomena.

"With important links like the CRN, the Earth observation system will help address emerging global issues and lay the groundwork for improved environmental decision making and economic growth and prosperity," Lautenbacher said.

The NOAA Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellites transmit the data received from these ground based stations in near real-time to the NOAA Climatic Data Center in Asheville, North Carolina. The Data Center posts the observations online in near real-time to users around the world.

The basis of the network can be credited to Thomas Karl, NOAA's director at the Data Center, who proposed 10 climate principles that were adopted by the National Research Council.

Karl said a crucial aspect of this network is that all stations are located in fairly pristine environments to help eliminate local human influences from confounding the interpretation of any observed changes in climate.

Most of the 50 states, including nine large scale climate regions, are represented in the network. The observing stations will be established at locations sensitive to climate change and placed at or near stations having long term historical climate records.

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