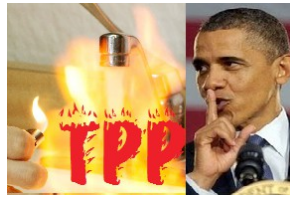


An Explosion of Fracking?

One of the dirtiest secrets of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Free Trade Agreement

The United States is quietly negotiating an expansive trade agreement with ten other countries that could dramatically increase exports of liquefied natural gas to overseas markets without any domestic oversight. The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement, therefore, could increase dirty fracking and carbon emissions; put sensitive ecological areas at risk; and increase natural gas and electricity prices, impacting consumers, manufacturers, workers, and increasing the use of dirty coal power.



The Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement

The Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement is an expansive new trade agreement being negotiated between countries in the Pacific Rim, including Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam, and the United States, and Japan—the world’s largest natural gas importer. TPP is intended as a “docking agreement,” meaning other Pacific Rim countries can join over time.

The TPP is being negotiated in near complete secrecy. None of the draft chapters of the agreement have been made public and apart from TPP government officials, nearly the only people with access to texts are more than 600 business representatives who serve as official US trade advisers. The Obama administration intends to request Fast Track Authority for TPP from Congress, meaning that at the end of the negotiations, he will be able to send TPP to Congress, where Congress must vote on the agreement in a set time period without amending it in any way, eliminating any possibility for Congress to strengthen environmental protections in the agreement. One of TPP's the dirtiest secrets is its potential to pave the way for dramatically increase fracking across the US.

How the TPP could increase fracking

In order for the United States to export natural gas to another country, the Department of Energy (DOE) must first conduct a thorough public analysis to determine whether those exports are consistent with the public interest. This analysis is critical to understanding the environmental and economic impacts associated with natural gas exports and to building a deliberate energy policy that protects the interests of the US public. Unfortunately, the DOE loses its authority to regulate exports of natural gas to countries with which the United States has a free trade agreement that includes so-called “national treatment for trade in gas.”

The TPP, therefore, could mean automatic approval of liquid natural gas (LNG) export permits—without any review or consideration—to TPP countries. And many TPP countries would likely be quite interested in importing LNG from the United States. This is particularly true of Japan.

Already, the DOE is considering applications to export approximately 45% of the total U.S. domestic gas production. Exporting this volume of US LNG would in turn mean increased fracking, the dirty and violent process that dislodges gas deposits from shale rock formations. It would also likely cause an increase in natural gas and electricity prices—up to three times their current price by some estimates—impacting consumers,

manufacturers, and workers, while increasing the use of dirty coal power.

TPP Investor Tribunals Endanger Fracking Bans

TPP is expected to include a NAFTA-style investor-state dispute resolution process – a mechanism by which foreign corporate investors in any TPP nation will be able to sue the governments of any other TPP nation in UN or World Bank international tribunals outside the jurisdiction of that nation's court system when local or national governments enforce or enact environmental laws that corporations believe will prevent them from profiting off of their investments. Under NAFTA-style investment rules, corporations can demand compensation not only for monies they've already invested in a polluting project, but for all the profits they project they *might* have made in the future if they had not been prevented from carrying out a polluting project – with no cap on the amount they are able to demand! Quebec's ban on fracking is currently being challenged under NAFTA by Lone Pine Resources, a US fracking company. If TPP is ratified with NAFTA-style investment rules, corporation in Japan and other TPP nations will gain the ability to challenge fracking bans in US states.

Environmental impacts of natural gas exports

Exporting natural gas is polluting at every stage of its life cycle. The process begins with extracting the gas– the vast majority of which will come from fracking. An intrusive process, fracking involves pumping millions of gallons of a mixture of water, sand, and chemicals underground to create pressure which forces out natural gas. The fracking process can spew large amounts of hazardous, smog-forming, and climate altering air pollutants into our air, and is also linked to serious threats to our water supply. Fracking operations also disrupt forests, parks, and communities across the country as they spread across the landscape.

But the environmental impacts associated with natural gas exports don't stop here. Once the gas is extracted, it needs to travel from production sites to coastal export terminals through hundreds of miles of pipelines. Whether exporters are expanding old pipelines or building new ones, these major construction projects can cut across private property and public land, further fragmenting landscapes and increasing pollution. Then there are the environmental impacts associated with the building of the natural gas export terminals. New terminals will require the dredging of sensitive estuaries to make room for massive LNG tankers. Expanding facilities and ship traffic will also take their toll on coastal communities and the environment. Finally, while some tout natural gas as a clean, safe way to provide energy, the fact is that the energy needed to cool and liquefy natural gas to be shipped overseas makes LNG's carbon footprint just as dirty as coal by some estimates.

What You Can Do

Call and email your Senators and your US Representative and urge them to publicly commit to voting against Fast Track Authority for TPP, to publicly call on President Obama to not request and to demand that the Office of the US Trade Representative publicly release the negotiating texts of TPP. You can find their names and contact information at <http://gjae.org/leg>.

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Flyer adapted in part from a factsheet by the Sierra Club (<http://sierraclub.org/trade>)