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Contact: Ann Smith, Clean Economy Coalition, 361-992-1535 or 361-774-8127, Donna Hoffman, Sierra Club, 512-299-5776, or Tom 'Smitty' Smith, Public Citizen, 512-797-8468

Video B-Roll available and great visuals at press conference, 10 AM City Hall, Today

Clean Economy Coalition Ready to Fight Las Brisas Permit Serious Public Health and Economic Concerns raised by Medical and Scientific Community, Business People, Teachers, and Environmental Groups

(Corpus Christi, TX) -- Coastal Bend citizens from all walks of life, concerned about serious public health risks and calling for clean power and green jobs gathered for a press conference on Monday morning at City Hall to announce that they will ask for a contested case hearing as a part of their fight plan against the Las Brisas coke-plant. The Clean Economy Coalition brought together almost 200 people for a march along the bayfront on Sunday and also presented Monday's press conference.

Medical Community coming out strongly Against Las Brisas

Most prominent in the Clean Economy Coalition (CEC) are the leading **medical doctors and other health care professionals** who are expressing deep concern about the likely increase in the Coastal Bend population of the following chronic medical conditions if Las Brisas were built:

- Increase in asthma and worsening of existing emphysema and other serious respiratory illnesses,
- heart attacks,
- cancer,
- neurological and behavioral problems,
- poor newborn outcomes,
- and a *decrease* in longevity.

“In Corpus Christi, we already experience twice as much asthma as the state average,” said Gerald Sansing, Chair of the CEC and PhD biochemist. **“If this plant is allowed to go forward with its huge annual emissions of smog and smoke in their application, we will see a significant increase of even more asthma in Corpus Christi and the surrounding towns. That is unacceptable.”**

Sansing points to the study ‘Dirty Power, Dirty Air’ by the Clean Air Task Force which links asthma and other respiratory illnesses and heart disease to coal plant pollution.

Dr. Bruce Taylor, a Corpus Christi pediatrician and anesthesiologist said, **“The Coastal Bend area is a highly medically vulnerable community. Having an urban power plant is only going to increase our community’s health care burden. Las Brisas has not disclosed the health risks. Besides any toxicology analysis, the effects of the toxic emissions must be carefully evaluated by epidemiologists and clinicians. Only then will the state be able to make an informed decision.”**

“As a pediatrician, I agree with the American Academy of Pediatrics that children are different and they are more susceptible to pollution. Las Brisas has not taken this into account to the potential detriment to our children and our future,” Dr. Taylor concluded.

The Nueces County Medical Society and the San Patricio-Aransas-Refugio Counties Combined Medical Society passed resolutions opposing the Las Brisas project. In 2007, the Texas Medical Association passed a resolution stating their concerns about mercury emissions into the environment and another resolution calling for a moratorium on old technology coal plants and emissions from all existing and any future coal plants.

Based on projected emissions levels in the Las Brisas draft permit, the plant would produce more pollution – **21,166 tons per year** – than all of the Nueces County refineries combined, 21,100; while creating less than 4% of the jobs. Las Brisas at the maximum would create only 100 jobs, while the refineries in the County equal 2,476 jobs.

Impacts on Students

Barbara Tharas, President of the Texas A&M University Corpus Christi student group, Student Environmental Action League (SEAL) helped to organize a large rally on Saturday, February 14 and spoke at the Press Conference on Monday.

“Students are organized and taking responsibility to fight Las Brisas because we are concerned about our own health, our future children, and the health of our families. I have a young and old family members here who I love deeply and I don’t want to see them or myself hurt by coke plant pollution.”

Financial Stakes –Clean Power and Green Jobs versus Las Brisas

“Corpus Christi does not need a coke plant. The way to build a clean economy is to combine building renewable power such as wind and a lot more solar power with manufacturing and installing already available energy efficiency measures in our homes and buildings,” said Hal Suter, Chair of the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club and member of the Coastal Bend Sierra Club. **“Study after study, including the recent one by the Public Utility Commission of Texas, shows that we can meet peak demand and create more jobs with energy efficiency and renewables than coal or coke.”**

“If Las Brisas were built, it would be in direct competition with the clean economy and green jobs that are gaining momentum in the Coastal Bend with the great wind and solar resource we have,” said Suter. **“The Sierra Club is excited about the prospects for job-building and economic development that exist in the new, green economy. Corpus Christi can get on board with repowering, refueling, and rebuilding our economy.”**

Because Nueces County is borderline on attainment of National Ambient Air Quality Standards, Las Brisas poses further financial risk.

“Air Quality standards help us to know when the air is unsafe to breathe. The smog that Las Brisas would create could push Nueces County into non-attainment of these important federal standards for public health and the County could risk losing federal funding for roads,” said Karen Hadden of the Sustainable Energy for Economic Development Coalition (SEED), a CEC member group. **“The City and County, plus individuals and small businesses would then be required to spend money to bring down emissions in the area. That doesn’t make economic sense.”**

Costs in Global Warming

Power plant emissions are one of the leading contributors to global warming.

“In addition to all of the other financial arguments against Las Brisas, we have the economic and moral consequences of the global warming emissions this plant would pump into the atmosphere,” said Tom ‘Smitty’ Smith with Public Citizen. **“This plant would emit about 10 million tons per year of Carbon Dioxide, (CO₂) the principal greenhouse gas. Recent high court legal decisions will be implemented soon regulating CO₂. If it is built, the cost of controlling CO₂ or offsetting it would add another \$350 million per year for operating this plant if it were built. The evidence is clear that temperatures and sea levels are rising rapidly. We have to look at that in Corpus Christi. The consequence of more coal and coke emissions will be to accelerate the dramatic changes we are already seeing. Coastal incursions due to sea level rise and strengthen hurricanes could make large parts of the Coastal Bend uninhabitable. We cannot conscionably allow Las Brisas to be built and add more greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. The ecology and the economy can’t withstand it.”**

Dr. Arnold Gonzalez spoke in both English and Spanish at the press conference. He said,, **“The cost to our health and resulting increased taxes will outstrip the few jobs this plant will create. This plant will damage our fishing. It will harm the brains of our unborn children. It will damage reputation as the Sparkling City by the Sea and drive away tourism. We must do something about it by stopping Las Brisas.**

“Working together we will fight this plant not just in this hearing but also in other venues, at city hall, in the halls of commerce, and in the hearts and mind of Corpus. Together we can stop this plant, We deserve clean power and green jobs here. We can have a clean environment and a strong economy.

The CEC is a membership organization comprised of hundreds of local citizens and groups such as the Nueces County Medical Society, the San Patricio-Aransas-Refugio combined counties’ Medical Society, school nurses, teachers and University professors, business people, and scientists, students including the Student Environmental Advocacy League.

Many CEC members will seek standing to contest the Las Brisas permit at a preliminary hearing tomorrow, Tuesday, February 17, at 10:00 AM. The State Office of Administrative Hearings will conduct the hearing in order to make a Proposal for Decision to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. The hearing which is open to the public is scheduled at the Corpus Christi City Hall on Leopard Street.

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Ann Smith, Clean Economy Coalition, 361-992-1535 or 361-774-8127, smtann@stx.rr.com