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Petroleum Coke Plant Would Add to Pollution in Corpus Christi Public Meeting Tuesday is an Opportunity to Raise Concerns

Las Brisas Energy Center, LLC, seeks to build a power plant in Corpus Christi that would burn petroleum coke, a byproduct of refineries. The 1200 MW plant would be located on Nueces Bay on the Joe Fulton Corridor bordering the west side of the Port of Corpus Christi Bulk Terminal and would use circulating fluidized-bed technology.

A public meeting for the plant is scheduled for Tuesday, October 7th at 7 PM, and will be held at the Del Mar College Center for Economic Development, 3209 South Staples Street. Formal comments will be accepted from the public and citizens can ask questions and raise concerns.

"Pet coke is filthy," said Tom "Smitty" Smith, Director of Public Citizen's Texas Office, "and is the 'bock beer' of the refinery world, the bottom of the barrel. Burning this waste product releases a series of toxic pollutants that are hazardous to breathe and put our health at risk."

"The company has not committed to controls for toxic mercury emissions. They would emit 320 pounds of the heavy metal every year," said Karen Hadden, Director of the Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED) Coalition. "What happens if this mercury gets into our waterways and fish? Eating mercury contaminated fish is the exposure route for human mercury poisoning which causes permanent brain damage and learning disabilities in children."

By contrast, NuCoastal Corporation recently agreed to reduce their toxic mercury from 70 pounds to 12 pounds per year at their Calhoun County site, and further agreed to 100% offset of their mercury emissions.

"The Corpus Christi area does not need the dirty air and increased smog levels that the Las Brisas Energy Center would bring to the region," said Dr. Neil Carman, Clean Air Director for the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club. "The Las Brisas Energy Center's proposed pet coke power plant would be the largest source of air pollution in Corpus Christi, with more than 27,000 tons annually. This is even more than each of the local oil refineries and would push the region toward ozone nonattainment due to the large volume of smog-forming nitrogen oxide emissions."

"The regional airshed needs less smog-forming pollution, not more," emphasized Carman.

The Las Brisas series of four boilers would emit smog-forming nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds, and sulfur dioxide, which forms acid rain and leads to formation of particles that damage human lungs. Sulfuric and hydrofluoric acids would be released, as well as carbon monoxide and lead, a heavy metal.

"The Las Brisas Energy Company should switch from burning petroleum coke and releasing global warming gases to solar or wind generation, and chart a path that addresses the pressing problem of global warming pollution," said Tom "Smitty" Smith.

Dr. Neil Carman excerpted the following data from the permit application for Las Brisas:

Enormous emissions potential from 4 pet coke CFB units from normal operations, no maintenance, startup and shutdown included.

Normal operating Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂) emissions: 10,480.00 tpy Normal operating Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x) emissions: 3,776.00 tpy Normal operating Carbon Monoxide (CO) emissions: 8,096.00 tpy Normal operating PM10 emissions: 2,808.00 tpy Normal operating VOC emissions: 270.00 tpy Normal operating Lead emissions: 0.12 tpy (240 pounds) Normal operating Hydrogen Fluoride (HF) emissions: 4.40 tpy Normal operating Mercury emissions: 0.16 tpy (320 pounds) Normal operating Sulfuric Acid (H₂SO₄) emissions: 1,996.00 Normal operating Hydrogen Chloride (HCl) emissions: 47.88 tpy Normal operating Ammonia (NH₃) emissions: 140.4 tpy

TOTAL Normal Projected Criteria Emissions: 25,430 tons per year TOTAL Normal Projected Air Toxic Emissions: 2,189 tons per year TOTAL Normal Projected Emissions: 27,619 tons per year