

NEWS RELEASE

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DOE urged to reject \$100 million loan guarantee for polluting Taylor Biomass waste gasification plant

Permitted pollution levels exceed federal guidelines for taxpayer-backed clean energy loan guarantee program;

Facility rated “ccc” by Standard & Poor’s – “a significant credit risk”

Pelham MA - A detailed review of more than 3,000 pages of previously undisclosed documents from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) reveals that the highly touted “green” Taylor Biomass waste gasification project in the town of Montgomery in Orange County, New York will have air pollution limits no better than a heavily polluting garbage incinerator.

The report, “Burning Money: Biomass Gasification and the DOE Loan Guarantee Program,” was prepared by the nonprofit Partnership for Policy Integrity (PFPI) and is available at <http://bit.ly/14P5r67>.

The owners of Taylor claim that the plant is so clean that it should qualify for \$100 million in taxpayer-backed loan guarantees from DOE typically reserved for cutting edge renewable energy projects, and \$33 million in federal cash grants. But the documents, many of which were submitted to the Department of Energy by Taylor or its contractors, and were obtained under the Freedom of Information Act by PFPI, fundamentally undermine this claim.

“We identified significant discrepancies between how much pollution Taylor told DOE they would emit, and what Taylor’s state air permit allows,” said Mary S. Booth, PhD, Director of PFPI and author of the report. “Taylor repeatedly describes the facility as ‘clean’ in their loan guarantee application, but their emissions under the air permit are no better than a conventional garbage incinerator.”

Taylor’s permitted air pollution levels for particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, and mercury all exceed the DOE limits to qualify for renewable energy loan guarantees. In addition, the facility will be allowed to emit 10 times more lead, 7 times more cadmium, and 12 times more mercury than it would if it were permitted as an industrial waste burner, and will be a source of dioxins and volatile organics like benzene. Its CO₂ emissions will exceed those of modern fossil-fueled power plants.

In addition, Taylor Biomass has taken aggressive action to block public access to data on fuel contamination and pollution emitted by the facility. In documents provided to PFPI by DOE, emissions estimates were completely redacted at the request of Taylor Biomass, on the grounds that disclosing the data would cause “substantial harm to the applicant’s competitive position.” DOE could have overridden this argument, but did not.

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"Taylor claims its emissions will be comparable to burning natural gas but it has blocked the Department of Energy from releasing information on hazardous materials contained in its fuel mix and projected air and water emissions," said Laura Haight, Senior Environmental Associate at the New York Public Interest Research Group, who commented extensively on the plant during the state's permitting process. "Since Taylor Biomass cannot move forward without taxpayer-funded loan guarantees, the public has a right to know about the pollution this plant will generate," Ms. Haight added.

Citizens and environmental groups have voiced concerns about pollution from the Taylor plant for years.

"Our group extensively reviewed the Taylor project and we found the project to be hyped far beyond its actual ability to perform as clean energy technology," said Barbara Warren, Executive Director of Citizens' Environmental Coalition. "We are concerned that emissions from this facility will impact the health of nearby residents and school children. Taxpayer dollars should not be used to support dirty energy technology."

Michael R. Edelstein, Ph.D., President of Orange Environment, joined the other groups in calling for DOE to apply due diligence to the Taylor project. "Orange Environment, Inc. has opposed the Taylor facility since its inception," he said. "This project is a back-door garbage incinerator dressed up as green and an impediment to implementing a sustainable zero-solid waste master plan in Orange County."

In its review of the DOE documents, PFPI also learned that the Taylor plant received a "ccc" credit rating from the prestigious Standard and Poor's, which characterizes the project as "a significant credit risk," "currently vulnerable to nonpayment, and dependent on favorable business, financial and economic conditions to meet its obligations."

PFPI sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Energy today detailing the inconsistencies in Taylor's application and urging the DOE to reject Taylor's request for a \$100 million federal loan guarantee.

"We strongly support the DOE renewable energy initiatives, including loan guarantees, but the Taylor plant has the pollution profile of a highly polluting incinerator, is based on unproven technology, and comes with an sub-par 'ccc' credit rating," said Booth. "Taxpayers should not be on the hook for this facility."

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