



Indian Point Nuclear or LNG

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The Indian Point nuclear facility in Westchester has long been controversial. Fears of a Chernobyl or Three-Mile-Island accident near one of the nation's most densely populated areas has long been a source of anxiety for nearby residents and elected officials. Then, following the attacks of 9/11, when one of the planes that hit the World Trade Center flew almost directly over the Nuclear facility, the calls for the closure increased to a fever pitch. The frontrunner for the Governorship of NY, Eliot Spitzer, has joined this chorus of protest to call for the permanent closure of the 2 nuclear facilities upon the expiration of their permits in 2011 and 2013.

However, everyone realizes that replacing them will be quite difficult since they currently supply about 10% of NY State's total electricity demand. A new study released this week and [reported in the NY Times](#) points out the obvious trade-off between nuclear and fossil fuels to generate electricity. One of study's main conclusion is that New York may have to build a Liquefied Natural Gas terminal nearby to secure its access to natural gas. Why is that? Because North American Supplies of Natural gas are already tight, more nuclear is unpopular, coal is seen as too dirty and renewables are going to need a long time to ramp up.

Can't we just revamp some of the existing plants to produce more efficiently or run for long periods of time?

The amount of generating capacity under construction now is inadequate to meet peak demand in 2009, and the shortfall will be far larger if Indian Point closes, the report said. In seven to nine years, the area will need 3,000 megawatts of additional electric capacity if Indian Point is running, and 5,000 megawatts if it is not, the report said.

Well, what about conservation? What about trying to decrease the amount of demand to save the electricity Indian Point puts out?

One of the authors, Parker D. Mathusa, said in a telephone interview that there were big opportunities for improving efficiency of electric use and expanding electric production. But Mr. Mathusa, a member of the board of directors of the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, said that "to replace 2,000 megawatts of base-load power, very low-cost power, in a critical part of the country that is growing, with air quality that is some of the worst in the country, one would have to pause."

I basically agree with this statement. As much as potential there is to reduce demand for electricity, it's going to be very hard to replace 2,000 megawatts of power.

So that's where LNG comes in...

The report said one alternative to Indian Point was something else that environmentalists do not like: ports for tankers carrying liquefied natural gas. In fact, natural gas, which now sells for more than double its price in the late 1990's, is the only fuel practical for large-scale plants in the New York City area, according to experts, because coal or new reactors are not politically acceptable.

Based on the [analysis](#) I did of NY State's electrical generation source, I cannot see how we can cut out nuclear from the equation. Also given the choice between LNG and burning dirty coal, LNG is clearly better in terms of environmental impact. Where to site that LNG terminal will be a nightmare, but I suspect there are some suitable sites in Long Island or New Jersey.

And so the debate continues...



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