

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Wednesday, December 12, 2018

**Contact:** Rebekah Hinojosa, (956) 975-6634 or [Rebekah.Hinojosa@sierraclub.org](mailto:Rebekah.Hinojosa@sierraclub.org)

## **TCEQ Denies Contested Case Hearings to Protest Rio Grande LNG Air Permit**

**AUSTIN, TX** - Today, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) denied granting petitioners a contested case hearing on NextDecade's air pollution permit for the Rio Grande LNG terminal proposed for the Rio Grande Valley.

In the spring, several cities, organizations, and individuals, including the cities of Port Isabel and Laguna Vista, Save RGV from LNG, Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid (TRLA) on behalf of shrimpers and fisherman, and Vecinos Para el Bienestar de la Comunidad Costera (VBCC), requested a contested case hearing on the air permit. Around the same time, [more than 1,800 comments from Texans across the state](#) were delivered to the TCEQ headquarters in Austin opposing the air permit.

"Rio Grande LNG would be the biggest polluter in the Rio Grande Valley. The TCEQ's decision is not a green light for Rio Grande LNG. The project needs a federal permit, has organizational and financial problems, and has faced huge and persistent opposition from our communities over the last four years," said John Young with Save RGV from LNG.

"This is yet another example of the TCEQ rubber stamping air permits for the fossil fuel industry, but it's not a done deal. Locals, along with allies across the state, will continue to pressure the regulators to deny all permits for Rio Grande LNG," said Rebekah Hinojosa, Rio Grande Valley Sierra Club Organizer.

"I am deeply concerned with how the cocktail of toxins that Rio Grande LNG plans to spew out, in combination with the emissions from the two other proposed LNG terminals, will impact my health," said Marianne Poythress, a resident of Laguna Vista, Texas and one of the individuals who requested a CCH.

The denial of the requests is not surprising because TCEQ frequently denies contested case hearings. Even the process to be granted party status became much more difficult after the passage of SB 709 in 2015 by the Texas Legislature, which significantly limited the rights of individuals and organizations to seek contested case hearings.

If the TCEQ grants the air permit to Rio Grande LNG, a lawsuit can be filed against the agency in Travis County State District Court alleging that the permit is deficient under the law. A potential lawsuit could delay construction of the terminal for one to two years. Rio Grande LNG

has yet to receive approval to build from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and a decision on that is expected in July 2019.

###

About the Sierra Club

*The Sierra Club is America's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with more than 3 million members and supporters. In addition to helping people from all backgrounds explore nature and our outdoor heritage, the Sierra Club works to promote clean energy, safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and legal action. For more information, visit [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org).*