**More natural gas exports on the way**

**March 27, 2016**

By CASEY JUNKINS , Times Leader

ST. CLAIRSVILLE - Ohio's Utica Shale output soared to 303 billion cubic feet during the last three months of 2015, an 80 percent increase from the same period in 2014, as both the Buckeye State and West Virginia contribute to record amounts of shale natural gas production throughout the U.S.

The production increases are leading to the construction of additional seaside terminals to export liquefied natural gas derived in states such as Ohio and West Virginia for use in Asia, Europe and South America, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Recently, an ocean vessel departed the Cheniere Energy Sabine Pass site in Louisiana with LNG on its way to Brazil. The $3.8 billion Dominion Resources Cove Point facility in Maryland is scheduled to open before the end of next year.

"Our Cove Point liquefaction project is also progressing on time and on budget. The project overall is about 56 percent complete and engineering 97 percent complete as we are on schedule for a late 2017 in-service date," Dominion Chairman, President and CEO Thomas F. Farrell II said.

Last year, U.S. Department of Energy officials said they extensively and carefully reviewed Dominion's project before signing off on it. Despite protests from environmentalists, the energy officials said exporting 820 million cubic feet per day from Cove Point for a period of 20 years is "not inconsistent with the public interest." Dominion operates the Blue Racer Natrium complex in Marshall County, as well as other natural gas processing infrastructure in both Ohio and West Virginia, which will now be part of the network used to send material to Cove Point for export so the gas can be shipped throughout the world, particularly to Asia.

Meanwhile, Cheniere is already using its Sabine Pass location on the Gulf of Mexico to export LNG, as the company now works to complete a similar project in Corpus Christi Texas.

When natural gas is cooled to minus-260 degrees Fahrenheit, it becomes a liquid that is one-600th of its gaseous volume, making it easier to transport via vessel, according to the EIA. The term "train" is often used by natural gas industry leaders to describe a liquefaction unit.

"This historic event opens a new chapter for the country in energy trade and is a significant milestone for Cheniere as we prepare Train 1 for commercial operations," Neal Shear, Cheniere Chairman and interim CEO Neal Shear said. "We especially want to thank our federal, state and local agencies, elected officials and community leaders from across Louisiana and the U.S. for their continued support and contributions during development and construction."

Other LNG operations under construction include Sempra Energy's Cameron LNG terminal in Hackberry, La., which is scheduled to open in 2018, as well as the Freeport LNG project in Freeport, Texas, which is set to export in 2019.

Despite record shale production, EIA shows the U.S. still imports more natural gas than it exports. In November, the U.S. distributed 4.8 billion cubic feet per day to other countries via pipeline, mostly to Mexico. However, the nation imported another 7.5 billion cubic feet each day through pipelines, particularly from Canada.

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