

Golden Pass LNG developer sticks to late 2024 startup as commissioning nears

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The developer of the Golden Pass LNG export terminal in Texas is holding to its timeline for starting in the second half of 2024 and has requested approval from US energy regulators to start commissioning work as soon as November.

Golden Pass LNG Terminal LLC Chief Commercial Officer Jeff Hammad declined to comment on the timeline for introducing feedgas to the \$10 billion facility, however, when discussing the project at the recent LDC Gas Forums' Gulf Coast event in New Orleans.

The introduction of gas will be a key milestone before LNG production begins at the facility, which has a planned output capacity of 18.1 million metric tons per year. The project is backed by majority owner QatarEnergy and partner Exxon Mobil Corp. Hammad spoke Oct. 10 on a panel at the event and also on the sidelines.

Hammad told attendees he had been asked repeatedly about the startup since arriving at the conference, where market participants described new LNG capacity as a critical source of demand growth that could help tighten the US domestic gas market.

"When do we start? We get that question all the time," Hammad said in a speech. "We are still targeting the latter half of 2024. We are doing everything we can to make that schedule."

"But I want you to understand as well that we are open today," he said. "We are buying and selling natural gas today. We are doing term transactions today. So don't wait for tomorrow to make sure that you're having conversations with our team."

Complex start

Hammad, asked in an interview to clarify what he meant by "start," said, "That's the fuzzy part."

"The only thing I'll also remind you about is that commissioning involves facilities, compressors, turbines and liquefaction, so introducing hydrocarbons and liquefying can be two different things," Hammad continued. "There are a lot of facilities you have to commission before you start liquefying."

The export terminal's project sponsors will independently market their own share of the LNG production. QatarEnergy will market 70% and ExxonMobil 30%.

Officials from QatarEnergy and Exxon at the conference deferred to Hammad about timing, but they anticipated a gradual ramp up at the Golden Pass facility, as is common for a new LNG terminal.

"We will update guidance," Hammad said in the interview. "We just aren't doing that right now."

FERC request

Golden Pass LNG asked the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on Oct. 5 for approval to start commissioning the refrigeration and fuel gas systems on the first of three liquefaction trains by Nov. 20. An Oct. 10 filing related to a Golden Pass pipeline expansion project listed the second half of 2024 as the "anticipated timing" for the terminal's first train. It gave the "anticipated in-service timing" for the pipeline as "sometime prior to the second half of 2024."

Exxon CEO Darren Woods said during a July 28 earnings call that Golden Pass "should have its first train up at the back

end of 2024."

Andrew Barry, vice president of global LNG marketing at ExxonMobil, told S&P Global Commodity Insights in a July interview that "feedgas will come in several months, obviously, before the LNG" in the second half of the year. He added that he did not have a specific timeline for feedgas introduction.

"We're working extremely hard to get it up and running as quickly as we can and hope it will have a very smooth startup and operations," Barry said. "It will be an important time from a market perspective to have those volumes up, hopefully before winter next year."

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