

REBEL CITIES, from page 8

Pipeline. Veresen Inc. plans to spend \$30 million in 2017 to promote the project while lobbying the White House, and stands opposed by a local coalition of environmentalists, tribal governments, and property owners opposed to eminent domain.

If voters approve the measure, Coos County would become the nation's first to block an LNG export terminal – disrupting the commercial flow of fracked gas from the business end of the pipeline.

The fracked gas for the project would come from the Colorado Rockies, where many community members are rooting for the measure.

"When the bottom really fell out for domestic gas pricing, a lot of communities here in Colorado were hoping the economics would reduce the drilling," says Chris Wilmeng of Lafayette, Colo. "The price here is in a glut. They want to export this stuff, and Jordan Cove does exactly that.

"There's wells next to high schools, in residential neighborhoods, hospitals," Wilmeng said. "I mean the long and the short of it is that the industry does not see these communities. They see their shale."

Wilmeng is a member of the Colorado Community Rights Network – an organization that supports communities and environmental initiatives against extractive industries. The network is linked to the Oregon Community Rights Network, which backs the Coos County initiative and four others on issues that range from aerial pesticide spraying in Lincoln County to genetically modified seeds in Benton County. One of these initiatives in Columbia County seeks to block the transport of coal and oil trains, as well as the expansion of fossil fuel power generation.

Colorado, with its own bountiful mix of nature and resources, has been on the front line in the local control debate for many years.

In 2014 a judge found that state laws facilitating gas extraction pre-empt local fracking bans in places like Fort Collins and

Longmont, rendering them null and void. The Community Rights Network responded by appealing to the Colorado Supreme Court, and pushing a statewide amendment that ultimately failed to get the required signatures. After that, said Wilmeng, "the oil and gas industry ran their own ballot initiative to make it substantially harder to get on the ballot. People were severely misinformed about that, and it passed." In 2016 the Supreme Court ruled again on the local fracking bans, again invalidating the ban.

In Oregon the same centralizing process appears to be in motion – during this year's legislative session Rep. Cliff Bentz (D-Ontario) introduced HB 2480, which would take the ability to regulate fossil fuel infrastructure away from local governments and declare such decisions to be "vested solely in the Legislative Assembly." The bill states it was introduced at the request of Pac/West – the same corporate lobbying group behind Coloradans for Responsible Energy Development, which Pac/West created in 2013 to "shift public opinion in favor of energy development," according to its website.

Pac/West is headquartered in Wilsonville, Ore., with a second office Denver, Colo.

"The American Lung Association gave our air an "F" here in Colorado," said Wilmeng, "and it's widely attributed to oil and gas. It's an extremely short-sighted industry. And it's really the same with Jordan Cove. It's industry that's gonna need to see it's end here, shortly."

Other bills are working their way through the Oregon Legislature that could impose new regulations on fossil fuel transports. One would prohibit the construction, extension or use of a wharf for receipt and discharge of crude oil.

Back in Coos County, Mary Geddry of the Coos Commons Protection Council is proud to say her local measure has Veresen worried.

"The fact that they're scared enough to

form a political action committee and run a push poll shows that they're nervous. Nationwide oil and gas publications say the community rights movement is the largest threat to their industry," she said.

In Columbia County, another community group is gathering the required 1,800 signatures to put their own Sustainable Energy Future ordinance on the ballot. If passed, this measure would block the transportation of oil trains and coal trains through Columbia County, and would also prohibit a proposed methanol plant there, according to spokesperson Brady Preheim.

Similar laws in Oregon have been pulled after receiving pre-filing challenges. One was an effort to block Jordan Cove LNG in Douglas County.

If a measure succeeds and is later challenged, it falls to the local government to defend it in court. This has created trouble in Colorado when city officials are hostile to a measure, a problem identified by Wilmeng when their local fracking bans have gone to court. That situation appears to be mirrored in Coos County, where local officials are largely pro-LNG.

Stacey McLaughlin, a supporter of the measure in Douglas County. She said the timber industry has created a "company town" mentality across Oregon.

"They say 'what we have is natural resources, so we have to utilize them to grow the economy,'" McLaughlin said.

But even if parts of this new batch of laws are struck down, it will be difficult to challenge the political reality that shaped them.

Nick Caleb, a legal fellow at the Center for Sustainable Economy, said Portland's

policy was designed to survive appeal, and can be re-written if it does not.

"I think the way the city defined health and safety made it a very strong policy, and to the extent that it affected interstate commerce it did so in a very reasonable way – especially when you add in the seismic

issues in this area."

Caleb says that Portland can likely shut down new fossil fuel infrastructure regardless of the specific reasoning that comes out of LUBA – largely due to the strength of the local movement. "I think the community has embraced that this is where we're going, and if it's not this particular form of health and safety policy, it's going to be another one that promotes health and safety along with the

decline of the fossil fuel industry."

Mary Geddry in Coos County said that the new Republican administration is forcing localities to embrace self-government.

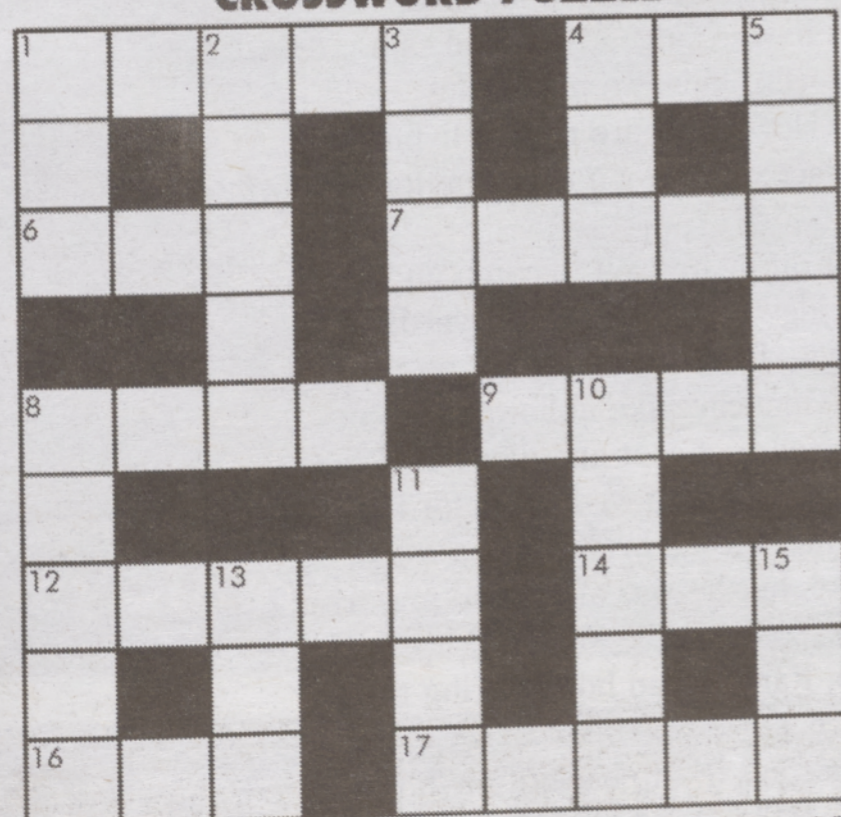
Portland City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly agreed. "I know that these are conversations going on at every level of government: city, county, state, as well as our national delegation. They're all thinking about how we can kind of steel ourselves against the effects of this administration. I think it makes sense to let cities decide what they're going to do," she said.

"What we're being asked to do is to really figure out where we're going to draw the line in the sand and say enough, no more," said Wilmeng. It's a harsh place in history to live in, it's scary. Unfortunately given the scientific fact about climate change, it's a question we're all going to have to step up to."

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– MARY GEDDRY
COOS COMMONS PROTECTION COUNCIL

VOODOO DOUGHNUT CROSSWORD PUZZLE



ACROSS

- 1. Fermentation agent
- 4. Have a bite
- 6. Tree fluid
- 7. Cake ingredient
- 8. Three-ply cookie
- 9. Hook's henchman
- 12. Ground grain
- 14. The gift of ____
- 16. Tease or ridicule
- 17. Francis or Kevin?

DOWN

- 1. Affirmative!
- 2. Type of fritter
- 3. Analyze or try
- 4. Cake ingredient
- 5. Tres
- 8. Deal
- 10. Potter's practice
- 11. Nosh!
- 13. Late rapper; abbr.
- 15. ____ appetit

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