

Fine particulate matter is also a concern. Currently, Lane County has particulate levels of 68 micrograms per cubic meter, and the federal limit is 150 micrograms. On average, the plant would add up to 0.2 micrograms per cubic meter in Lane County. Particulate emissions have been linked to asthma, which is on the rise in Lane County.

"Studies have demonstrated a direct correlation between exposure to fine particulate matter and an increased death rate," says David Monk of the Oregon Toxics Alliance. "The fine particulate matter coming out of these so-called 'clean' natural-gas-fired power plants is coated with the arsenic, mercury and cadmium also being emitted. Breathing in these fine particles allows these heavy metals to enter deep into a person's lungs and thus directly into their bloodstream."

In short, says Monk, the West Cascade proposal is not fair. "The investors get the profit," he says. "The local community gets the pollution."

## WATER, LAND, JOBS

West Cascade would provide 270 jobs for two years during construction of the facility and 30 full-time jobs once it's running. The plant would pay \$4.4 million a year in property taxes and spend \$7 million a year on supplies and services.

"To see a plant of that magnitude, that imposes that sort of burden on the local community, only generate 30 ongoing jobs, is pretty remarkable to me," says Lininger.

But a local farmers' irrigation cooperative looks forward to one of the plant's potential benefits. Marcus agreed to make \$1 million in improvements to the Muddy Creek irrigation canal in exchange for its use to transport water to and from the facility.

West Cascade would use 10 cubic feet of water per second (or about 4,500 gallons per minute) from the McKenzie River. This constitutes about 3 percent of the river's industrial water right. The water would travel to the plant via the irrigation canal, and 90 percent of the intake would evaporate during processing. The rest would be cooled to 64 degrees and discharged to canal, where it would flow toward the farm fields.

The farmers in the cooperative extol Marcus' generosity, but Kinnan brushes it off. "It's the trick of the super-salesmen," she says. "They'll tell you anything and everything to get you to sign on the dotted line."

Although some farmers support the plant, others compile cases against it. According to land use attorney Dan Terrell, who is representing a Coburg resident, the land use code in Oregon protects high-value farmland. Although the law allows 17 acres per farm for energy production, West Cascade would cover 40 acres.

Once land is used for energy production, says Terrell, it is usually rendered unfit for farming. "Toxic materials that will be used for everyday processes will invariably make their way into the ground," says Terrell. "Does a plant this big have a right to be on high-quality farmland? The supporters would say yes, and we say no. The reality is that once these plants are built, every effort is made to keep them running for as long as possible."

## DECISION-MAKING

Kinnan estimates that more than half of Coburg's residents oppose the plant, but opponents complain that they do not have a venue to voice their concerns.

Marcus chose to seek binding review of the West Cascade project through the state Energy Facility Siting Council (EFSC) rather than through the local Board of County Commissioners. EFSC will review over 3,700 pages of the

facility's applications for a variety of permits. Once the agency deems the permits complete, it will hold public hearings. The input that EFSC receives from county commissioners and residents is not binding.

**'I NEED THIS PLACE FOR MY GRANDKIDS. HE NEEDS THE PLANT FOR HIS PROFIT. WHOSE NEED IS GREATER?'**  
— CAROLYN KINNAN

This frustrates opponents of the plant, who want a voice in the process. "I think the proponents should put their money where their mouth is," says Lininger. "If they think this is such an innocuous plan, and it's great for the local economy, present it to our local elected officials."

Marcus defends his decision, saying that members of EFSC, unlike the local commissioners, have expertise in the subject and a resource-rich support staff. Had he sought and won re-election, "Tom Lininger would have been a county commissioner," says Marcus. "And he has demonstrated that he has very little knowledge about this facility, energy in general, and he would be incapable of making this kind of decision."

For some residents, Marcus' decision to pursue permits through EFSC is reason enough for suspicion. "It looks like one of those good-old-boy networks going on," says Nelson. "I have no problem with people making money, but it doesn't have to be at the expense of the people living here."

LRAPA is currently reviewing the air emissions permit based on federal air quality guidelines. Robert Koster, LRAPA's operations manager, will decide whether to issue the emissions permit and then hold a public hearing and 30 days of public comment. He says that the feedback will not affect his decision unless someone points out that he's made a legal error.

Lininger encourages opponents to continue to raise their voices. "The fact that this has been taken away from the normal democratic process makes it more urgent to speak up," he says.

Marcus counters that there is plenty of local input. "There's more local input in this project than anyone could ever want," he says. "What I want is for the project to be judged on its merits according to the law and according to due process."

## DREAMS AT STAKE

For some, the fight over the power plant is personal. That's the case with Kinnan, who became an activist the day she first got whiff of the proposal.

Kinnan owns less than an acre of property in Coburg. Plants and wind chimes clutter her front porch. Cats she never meant to adopt prowl the yard. Inside, her grandchildren's wedding photos hang on the walls. She can see the site of the proposed plant from her house.

"This was my little tiny part of the American Dream that I worked hard to have," says Kinnan, who was self-employed while she raised her five children. She saved up money and bought her house 14 years ago. Now she lives on Social Security. "This land is the only thing I had to leave to my kids,"

she says. "I cannot consciously leave something to my grandkids, my great-grandkids and beyond, that will kill them. I can't do that."

Her eyes well up behind her big bifocals. "My American Dream is going up in the cloud of emissions," she says. "If this thing comes about, my whole life is destroyed. I need this place for my grandkids. He needs the plant for his profit. Whose need is greater? His or ours?"

But Marcus says his need is also personal. "I need to finish the power plant," he says. "If this plant gets somehow run out of town, it sends a very bad message."

Marcus has lived in Eugene since 1975, and he feels that he has made the community a better place. He received an interdisciplinary master's degree, and then a law degree, from the UO. He bailed the Eugene Symphony out of debt, founded the Eugene Jewish Federation, and started up a knee brace company. He's written two novels (neither published) and is working on a third. He says that the two issues that concern him most are overpopulation and global warming.

Marcus professes a commitment to cleaner energy. For his own home, he buys 100 percent wind power from EWEB. A small hydropower plant he developed on Falls Creek won a governor's award for environmental innovation. He points out that West Cascade could actually reduce pollution by decreasing the output from dirtier facilities.

"The sooner we switch to all sources of non-fossil fuels, the better," says Marcus. "It's unfortunate that the federal government does not take the lead in this as they should. What we need is a national tax on CO2. We also need to sign the Kyoto protocol."

Even Lininger attests to Marcus' good intentions. "He's a good guy," says Lininger of Marcus. "Among people who could propose plants like this, Gary's the one you want. His heart's in the right place."

## THE BIG PICTURE

The proposal to build the West Cascade Energy Facility is part of a larger trend called energy deregulation (see sidebar story). Even if this facility is defeated, other proposals are likely to fill its void.

Environmental groups such as the Sierra Club recommend diversifying power to include renewable sources like wind, solar and biomass. This would cut back on greenhouse gases while increasing domestic security.

Weiss emphasizes that the energy problem is national, if not global, in scale. "Ultimately, the problem is the entire country's policy," he says. "Utilities have to stop buying [fossil fuels] and taking those risks, and the country has to stop subsidizing fossil fuels."

Lininger suggests an equitable approach. "I'd say first of all, let's fully explore renewable resources, see how far we can get with that," he says. "Let's fully explore conservation, see how far we can get with that. Then, if it's necessary to build new power plants, let's disperse them evenly throughout the Willamette Valley."

Surprisingly, Marcus advocates more regulation of the energy industry. "We have the technology to live in a perfect world," he says. "We just don't have the political will to pay for it. If we could make greenhouse gases more expensive, it would just be a matter of a few years before industry would respond."

In the meantime, he'll get to work on his plant. **EW**

*A community meeting on the power plant is planned for 7 pm May 5 at Harris Hall. For more, call 465-8860.*

## LONG-TERM CONTRACTS?

Gary Marcus says that the West Cascade Energy Facility will only negotiate 20-year contracts. If so, his energy might be a hard sell. According to energy analyst Steve Weiss, Pacific Gas & Electric only signs contracts with generating facilities for up to five years. According to Weiss, few utilities are willing to negotiate long-term contracts for gas-fired power.

"The price [of natural gas] depends on supply and demand, and no one is willing to offer gas for more than three- or four-year contracts because even the drilling companies are uncertain about how much gas they'll have in three to five years," says Weiss.

West Cascade does not plan to supply natural gas for utilities. Instead, the facility will negotiate long-term "tolling agreements," which stipulate that utilities have to obtain their own gas.

"It's a renting of the equipment, but not of the fuel," says Weiss. "No power plant developer can guarantee the price of the electricity. They can guarantee the use of it. So they'll offer PacifiCorp, or they'll offer PG&E, or they'll offer EWEB what is called a tolling agreement. You, as a utility, have the right to use my gas plant if you provide the natural gas."

Weiss doubts that there will be many takers. "If [Marcus] is saying he's going to make a deal with someone for 20 years, it's some stupid utility that signs up for 20 years and then five years into the deal finds out that gas is so high that they'll never repay the plant," he says. "That's why the power planning council is saying, 'Don't do it. It's too risky.'"

Considering Marcus' proposal, Weiss says, "There's a good chance that this guy will go out of business."

— Kera Abraham