

CHASING THE COAL TRAIN

The name of the anonymous company that wants to export six to 10 million tons of dirty coal a year from Coos Bay via trains running through Eugene might be made known at the beginning of April. Public records requests for more information on the secretive proposal have been met with charges of thousands of dollars.

The Sierra Club and local group Beyond Toxics have filed requests under Oregon's public records law to find out what's up with "Project Mainstay." The Sierra Club did a broad request for documents related to the proposal, while Lisa Arkin of Beyond Toxics says her group focused on the rail transport issue on the Coos Bay Rail Link.

"Our concern is that numerous coal trains, some as much as mile and half long, coming into Eugene, stopping in Eugene, changing tracks in Eugene and leaving would pose a severe health risk not only to the neighborhoods closest to the tracks but to all Eugene," Arkin says.

She says that it's estimated each coal car releases a pound of coal dust per mile.

The International Port of Coos Bay assessed the Sierra Club nearly \$20,000 in fees to access 2,500 pages of information. It assessed Beyond Toxics almost \$22,000. The Sierra Club appealed the decision and the Coos County district attorney partially granted the fee waiver

appeal, reducing the fee to a bit over \$3,000.

A Washington state proposal called "Project Platinum" said it was going to export five million tons of coal per year, but documents obtained by a public records requests by the Sierra Club and other groups showed more than 60 million tons was being considered.

If the International Port of Coos Bay decides to go with "Project Mainstay," then the name of the company will be made known April 1, at the end of exclusivity period. Or if the deal doesn't work out, the port could move on to another project — including another coal proposal — and make that project secret.

Arkin says if open trainloads of coal go through Eugene it will be a health concern for everyone, but especially children. She says the area already has the highest rate of asthma in the state and nation. "We can't possibly allow coal trains to come through Eugene and do this to our children."

"Coal dust goes deep into the lungs, and when you breathe it in, it never comes out," she says.

Beyond Toxics is considering entering into a formal appeal along with the Sierra Club, which she says is a big step for the small, rarely litigious group. But seriousness of the health issues associated with coal, including cancer, Arkin says, merits it.

— Camilla Mortensen

OCCUPY VS. CHEMICALS AND ALEC

You might have noticed a chemical spill, a man foaming at the mouth and folks in hazmat suits if you were driving down Hwy. 99 by the Georgia-Pacific Eugene Resin Plant on the cold snowy morning of Feb. 29.

There wasn't a real chemical spill that day, but Occupy Eugene, Tango Down and Cascadia Action Lab did a guerilla street theater enactment of a spill. The action was designed to call attention to the "ever-increasing rate of toxic exposure to air and water contaminants in west Eugene" and "the dangers of carcinogenic, poisoning chemicals" thanks to industries such as the resin plants, according to Occupy and the Action Lab.

The resin plant is outside city limits and so does not have to report to Eugene's Toxics Right-to-Know database. Dusk Winston of Occupy Eugene says the plant emits formaldehyde, among other chemicals.

"There are children coming out with cancer and health problems" in the area, says Winston. "And most people are just unaware."

The radical street theater also highlighted that Georgia-Pacific is a Koch Brothers-owned business that uses its membership in ALEC (American Legislative Exchange Council), a "front group that permits corporations to control politics," to create and push through model bills, the communiqué says.

The skit emulated a chemical spill with yellow liquid coming out of a tipped over drum, hazmat suits and the "worker" had a mock seizure and foamed orange liquid from his mouth. Winston says the street theater was performed just long enough to call attention to the issue, but not so long that an actual hazmat or biohazard team would be called out.

Winston says that the action was part of a national day of action called F29 that protested the role of corporations in politics. She says F29 was fomented by Occupy Portland and had nationwide actions. Also on Feb. 29 the groups shut down Eugene's Bank of America for a period of time, Winston says.

Cascadia Action Lab "believes that it is unacceptable to permit the continued poisoning of our community through unethical pawns known as legislators, who manipulate political process to support expansion and profit for the 1 percent."

Watch a video of the action at wkly.ws/17t or blogs.eugeneweekly.com

— Camilla Mortensen



STREET THEATER CHEMICAL SPILL ON HWY 99

biz beat

Thrive! Chiropractic at the Tamarack building at Donald at Pearl in south Eugene is holding a donation-based charity clinic on Saturday and Sunday, March 10-11, open to the public, all ages. Chiropractic adjustments will be provided by Dr. Lal Kerr in exchange for tax deductible donations to the Musicians Emergency Medical Association (MEMA). Treatments will be on a first-come, first-served basis from 10:30 am to noon and 2:30 to 5 pm both days. See facebook.com/thrivechiro or call 913-8300 for more information.

Pacific Winds Music at 791 W. 8th Ave. in Eugene is celebrating its 25th year in business this March. Founder Willy Knaus says flexibility has been his key to surviving and thriving in a competitive market. Nine employees work in repair, sales and in the office. Email willy@pacificwindsmusic.com or call 343-5660.

Sherri Gibson of Eugene has found a successful niche creating eco-friendly European plasters, textures and faux finishes for homes and businesses. See a gallery of her walls, ceilings and doors at www.faux-chere.com or call her at 521-9503 for a free consultation.

Cottage Grove businesses should get a boost from the **Oregon Gran Fondo** (or "big ride") bicycling event the weekend of June 2. The collection of competitive and recreational rides for everyone is sponsored by Co-Motion Cycles, Rolf Prima, Oakshire Brewing and Hutch's Bicycles. See dark30sports.com and click on "events."

UO economist Tim Duy reports in a new study that UO is a key driver of the Oregon economy with total impact of spending by the institution, its students and visitors estimated at \$2.12 billion. The study, "The Economic Impact of the UO: FY2010-11 Update," says the spending represents a 7.6 percent increase from last year's total of \$1.97 billion. Direct spending by the UO, students and visitors totaled more than \$1.14 billion before economic multiplier calculations. See the full report at <http://wkly.ws/17s>

Send suggestions for Biz Beat items to editor@eugeneweekly.com with "Biz Beat" in the subject line.

ACTIVIST ALERT

• Scholar **Irfan Omar, Ph.D.** of Marquette University will speak at LCC Thursday, March 8, as part of the college's two-year Visiting Scholars on Islam series. From 1 to 2:30 pm Omar will present "Conference of the Birds," selections of well-known Sufi writings. From 5 to 6:30 pm he will present "Dialogue of the Heart: Seeing the 'Other' from an Islamic Perspective" exploring historic interfaith discussions. Both public presentations will be in the Center for Meeting and Learning on the main campus, Building 19, room 226.

• **Charles Eisenstein**, author of *Sacred Economics: Money, Gift, and Society in The Age of Transition* and *The Ascent of Humanity* will speak at 7 pm Thursday, March 8, at 112 Kearney Hall at OSU, across from Circle K in Corvallis. Donations at the door, suggested \$5 to \$20. Email ssi.partnerships@oregonstate.edu or cherylgood@gmail.com for more information.

• **Charles Eisenstein** will also speak from 7 to 10 pm Saturday, March 10, at Columbia 150 on the UO campus, and from 9 am to 4 pm Sunday, March 11, he will conduct an all-day "Transition Activist Intensive" at WOW Hall, 291 West 8th Ave. in Eugene. More details at www.unifyingcascadia.info

• A **Community Circle Meeting** is planned for 11 am Saturday, March 10, at the AFSCME Union Hall, 7th and Charnelton in Eugene. Purpose is to promote social, economic, environmental and political justice. Email local3214or@yahoo.com for more information.

• **Springfield Mayor Christine Lundberg** will be giving awards to local student artists and hosting a meet and greet from 5 to 7 pm Friday, March 9, at the Springfield Museum, 590 Main St. The event is part of Springfield's Second Friday Art Walk.

LIGHTEN UP

The developer of a proposed downtown apartment complex thinks he can keep the 1,200 students — living in connected five-story buildings in which alcohol and partying are allowed — from turning the whole place into the Mother of all Animal Houses. He must be planning to lease only to students who are members of AARP.

BY RAFAEL ALDAVE

PHOTO CREDIT DUSK WINSTON