

LNG LOOMS IN SOUTHERN OREGON

The proponents of a liquefied natural gas (LNG) pipeline and export facility proposed for southern Oregon say it's in the public interest to extract natural gas through fracking, pipe it through public and private lands and export it overseas. Conservation groups and landowners beg to differ. "Incredibly, they claim they need to increase fracking in the Rocky Mountain basin," says Francis Eatherington of Cascadia Wildlands.

Eatherington is also a landowner whose property could have the Pacific Connector LNG pipeline running through it if the project goes through. Public meetings to discuss the issue are underway in southern Oregon, and public comments can be submitted on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) website through Sept. 4. Eatherington criticizes the project for its negative environmental impacts on forests, streams, farms and other private property, as well as for ethical and economic reasons.

The Pacific Connector Pipeline and Jordan Cove LNG project in Coos Bay were originally proposed as import facilities for liquefied natural gas, which is moved in pipelines as gas but converted to liquid for shipping on tankers. Opponents who predicted the terminal and pipeline would be "flipped" to become export facilities were proven correct earlier this year when the Jordan Cove Energy Project filed paperwork with FERC to change the project to an export terminal.

According to Eatherington, the company asked FERC to add "export" to "import" on its Environmental Impact

Statement (EIS) and "just modify it." She says FERC originally agreed, but opponents "raised a fuss," arguing that the certificate allowing the project to exercise eminent domain over swathes of private property was given under false pretences. "They lied," Eatherington says. FERC regulators changed their minds and pulled the certificate.

"But we weren't given much time to revel," she continues. Scoping is now under way to see what should be in the new EIS for the project.

According to its notice of application to export posted in the Federal Register, Jordan Cove argues that "LNG export authorization will serve the public interest in multiple ways," including job creation and economic and international trade benefits. However, according to Cascadia Wildlands, a study by the Department of Energy found that natural gas prices could rise by up to 54 percent when the U.S. starts competing for gas on the world market.

And in its application to the Department of Energy, Jordan Cove writes it would export shale gas from Western Canada and the Rocky Mountain states. Shale gas is extracted through the controversial practice of fracking, linked to issues such as water contamination and earthquakes.

Eatherington says the public comment period is already plagued by problems. Citizens who try to email their comments to the FERC project manager Paul Friedman get an autoreply telling them to upload their comments through the FERC website, but Eatherington says the website is clunky and difficult for even the above-average user, let alone for "Joe Blow sitting on a farm in rural Oregon where high-speed internet hasn't come yet."

Eatherington says that public meetings have not been publicized in the local papers, clear maps for the pipeline and project have not been provided, and there's conflicting information on how long the public has to give input. One concern residents in the earthquake- and landslide-prone pipeline area have is that the pipeline is planned as Class 1, a rural designation that Eatherington says provides the weakest protections. Eight people were killed in a September 2010 pipeline explosion in San Bruno, Calif.

The International Port of Coos Bay, where the Jordan Cove export terminal is proposed, is also the proposed home of a controversial coal export terminal. For more information on LNG, the public meetings and commenting, go to casewild.org and citizensagainstlng.com

— Camilla Mortensen

HOME ON THE GRANGE

In the historic Mabel Schoolhouse lies an all-but-forgotten organization of farmers and community, the Mohawk Valley Community Grange in Marcola. While the history of these community buildings is long, this grange is taking on a new role as one of the community's oldest backbones.

"The spirit of the grange is opening up the community," Grangemaster Tom Baratta says. "We try to open the doors through volunteerism, planning community events, fundraising and renting out the facility."

Since the formation of The National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry in 1867, the grange has been a focal point for farmers and rural communities alike. It is one of the oldest examples of a grassroots, bottom-up organization. Farmers would come to share techniques, equipment as well as political and economic interests.

Nowadays the Mohawk Valley Community Grange isn't all about raising barns and agrarian issues; it's about socializing within the community. "We tend to shy away from the national grange's political platform, but we share in the idea of getting together and pulling together for the better of the community," Baratta says.

While most granges have dried up, much like the population of farmers, the Mohawk Valley Community Grange remains one of 22 active granges in Lane County. Aside from taking care of business, this grange hosts weekly tai chi and yoga classes plus the Mohawk Valley Lions Club's Texas hold 'em poker events.

— Mike W. Davis

A CONSERVATIVE POSITION ON POT

The "war on drugs" — particularly on marijuana — has already played a big role in Oregon politics this year, garnering national attention during the Oregon attorney general race. Despite that attention, Libertarian vice presidential candidate James P. Gray, former presiding judge of the Superior Court of Orange County, Calif., said during a visit to *EW* that neither the Democrats nor the Republicans are rolling out any new ideas when it comes to the failed drug war.

When it comes to weed, Gray doesn't quite say "legalize it," but he does favor regulating the drug like wine, and he says this as a former federal prosecutor who once held a record for largest heroin bust. He and Libertarian presidential candidate Gary Johnson (former New Mexico governor) have endorsed Oregon's Measure 80, the Oregon Cannabis Tax Act, which would regulate marijuana like wine and generate tax revenue.

Measure 80's organizers say that the state of Oregon spends \$61.5 million per year in law enforcement, corrections and judicial expenditures related to marijuana alone, and regulating marijuana like wine would generate more than \$140 per year in taxes — which could be put into both the general fund and drug treatment programs, while eliminating the unsavory elements related to the black market.

Gray says that years of watching his courtroom "churning out low-level drug offenders" brought him to the conclusion that the U.S. can do better than prohibition. He says that seeing a convicted rapist and robber go free with credit for time served — and a whoop of victory — was a significant moment for him.

"The reality is that the tougher you get with regard to nonviolent drug offenses, literally, the softer you get with regard to prosecution of robbery, rape, murder and everything

else," Gray says. "We only have so many resources in the criminal justice system; let's use them to prosecute people who are causing harm to others instead of just, maybe, harming themselves."

When it comes to other issues of safety, like keeping pot out of kids' hands, Gray points to the relative ease in access that teens have to marijuana compared to beer. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University reports that nationally, 12- to 17-year-olds find it easier to buy marijuana than beer.

Gray began speaking out against marijuana prohibition in 1992 and wrote the book *Why Our Drug Laws Have Failed and What We Can Do About It — A Judicial Indictment of the War on Drugs* to outline his position. He says that he thought he'd make a persuasive spokesman as a clean-cut, conservative judge from a conservative county who's never used illegal drugs. "I have no reason to do this other than the merits," he says.

In addition to creating an unwise allocation of prison resources, Gray says, a system of prohibition has led to a decline in civil liberties, most notably under the search and seizure umbrella, since the day he graduated from law school in 1971. He says that police have an easier time searching trunks during traffic stops, for example, and "we're in no better shape but we've lost civil liberties."

Even though Gray discusses medicalized treatment of heroin addiction, needle exchanges and other health measures for drugs other than marijuana in his book, he says moving forward by changing policy on all drugs at once isn't what he's advocating. "Let's start with marijuana," he says. "Let's see how that goes."

According to Gray, the biggest obstacle to a more functional national drug policy is politics. "In the political world, reality is absolutely irrelevant," he says. "We need to get away from moralizing and deal with the problem."

— Shannon Finnell



PHOTO BY SHANNON FINNELL

Libertarian vice presidential
candidate James P. Gray