

NEWS

BY JESLYN LEMKE



PHOTO BY JESLYN LEMKE

350 EUGENE PROTESTS PIPELINE IN SOUTH EUGENE

A new 12-inch natural gas line is being installed underneath Amazon Creek

Construction crews for NW Natural have drilled 60 vertical feet under Amazon Creek to install a 2.5-mile natural gas pipeline that runs the length of 30th Avenue. They began work in early July and were actively working with the raw 12-inch piping on July 16.

Environmental group 350 Eugene has cried foul on the new pipeline at two Eugene city council meetings, saying the pipe will pump new quantities of natural gas byproducts into Eugene's air.

At the drill site by Amazon Creek on July 15, a single metal pole could be seen poking out of a massive muddy hole in the ground. Orange construction fencing blocked off the multiple tractors at the scene.

"We're against the expansion of natural gas. We have a clean electric supply, and that should be for all of Eugene, starting with all new building," says Linda Heyl, co-leader of Oregon Fracked Gas Resistance, one of several ongoing campaign groups within 350 Eugene.

Eugene Public Works accepted \$4,560 in permit costs from NW Natural and signed off on the permit earlier this

year. The \$5-million pipeline, funded by NW Natural, will follow 30th Avenue from Amazon Creek and end at Bloomberg Park, near Lane Community College.

NW Natural also secured a permit from Lane County for the portion of 30th Avenue that crosses into Lane County property.

John Floor, community affairs manager for NW Natural, said in an email June 25 to Heyl that the statewide company is installing the pipeline because this southeast Eugene neighborhood "has experienced low distribution pressures in cold weather for many years."

Floor did not return requests for an interview with *EW*. Another spokesperson for NW Natural, Stephanie Week, denies the pipeline was being installed because of any history of low gas pressure.

"When we are looking at our planning, we look at peak days forecasts. We want to make sure our system can always meet those peak day needs," Week says.

Week also did not know the rate of gas capacity the pipe has, nor was she aware NW Natural had already begun

drilling under Amazon Creek.

When asked what her response would be to those protesting the pipeline, Week says, "We feel we are aligned with climate change goals."

A rally opposing the pipeline will be held 4:30 pm Friday, July 20, at Hilyard Street and 30th Avenue to protest the pipeline, in tandem with Oregon Fracked Gas Resistance's (OFGR) larger goal of urging Eugene to switch from natural gas to electricity.

"We're trying to let people know natural gas is methane gas. Natural gas is fracked gas, primarily," Heyl says.

Heyl and other members of the OFGR regularly sit in on public meetings with the city's Sustainability Commission, which advocates for environmental protection tendencies for city development.

She says her Eugene group will continue to advocate for fuel switching, urging citizens and the city to forego their reliance on fossil fuels in place of cleaner, electric energy.

"It's in the larger context of working to move Eugene from natural gas to electric," Heyl says. ■



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