

LNG: State and local governments have oversight role, too

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that the project would have minimal impacts on commercial and recreational fishing.

“Commercial and recreational fishermen are already accustomed to the presence of large tankers in the federal navigation channel,” the draft review states. “The Coast Guard’s safety and security measures would require fishermen in the vicinity of the federal navigation channel or proposed turning basin to temporarily move out of the way of LNG marine carriers to avoid the safety zone recommended by the Coast Guard.

“However, this temporary inconvenience would last only a short time as the ship passes, at which point the fishing activities would be allowed to resume at the original positions within the river.”

While the terminal will lead to slightly higher traffic volumes on already congested Warrenton

roads, the draft projects that terminal operations would not have significant cumulative impacts on future traffic conditions.

The draft review estimates that terminal construction over four years would generate about 9,584 jobs, including 2,755 direct jobs. Once the terminal is built, Oregon LNG could employ about 145 workers.

Pipeline construction, which would take about three years, could generate about 256 direct jobs.

“We conclude that the economic impacts of the Oregon LNG project would be positive,” the draft states.

Oregon LNG, a subsidiary of Leucadia National Corp., a New York-based holding company, did not respond to an email seeking comment on the draft review.

Lauren Goldberg, a staff attorney for Columbia Riverkeeper, a Hood River-based environmental group that has been among the leaders of the opposi-

tion to the project, said she had not yet seen the draft. The Daily Astorian described some of the findings to her.

“The people of Clatsop County want clean water, safe communities, and strong salmon runs. Oregon LNG’s project undermines these goals,” Goldberg said in an email. “FERC has a track record of ignoring well-founded local concerns — including significant concerns from expert state and federal scientists — about the risks of LNG development.

“The draft environmental impact statement adds to this history of ignoring the best available science and the people who understand the most about the Columbia River estuary.”

Geology, reliability, safety

Given the risk of a devastating earthquake linked to the Cascadia Subduction Zone, and the potential for tsunamis on the North Coast, the draft found that

Oregon LNG would reduce hazards through special construction techniques and monitoring of operations.

The draft concludes that if the energy company follows through on such measures along with staff recommendations, the geologic risks would be reduced to acceptable levels.

Activists have warned that the project would unnecessarily expose residents in Warrenton and Astoria to danger from an explosion or spill.

But Federal Energy Regulatory Commission staff concluded that the project, if designed as proposed by Oregon LNG and improved through staff recommendations, “would provide acceptable layers of protection that would reduce the risk of a potentially hazardous scenario from developing into an event that could impact the off-site public.”

Review, possible hurdles

While other federal agencies,

such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Army Corps of Engineers, provided input on the draft environmental review, the agencies could release separate conclusions and recommendations about the project.

The draft review references a lawsuit Oregon LNG filed against the Army Corps of Engineers last year challenging an easement the Corps holds along the Skipanon Peninsula to deposit dredging spoils. A federal magistrate judge ruled last week that Oregon LNG waited too long to bring the claim, potentially clouding whether the energy company can fully use land leased from the Port of Astoria for the project.

State and local governments also have an oversight role, and could pose potential hurdles for Oregon LNG.

Earlier this year, the state Land Use Board of Appeals upheld Clatsop County’s 2013 vote

to reject a permit for part of the pipeline. The county had raised possible safety concerns for residents; conflicts with aquatic zone standards; and the potential risk of “frac-outs” — or toxic fluid escapes — during horizontal directional drilling for underground pipeline construction.

The draft recommends that prior to any construction, Oregon LNG show the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission that the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development has found the project consistent with the federal Coastal Zone Management Act.

Part of the criteria the state is expected to use in making that determination is whether the project has county approvals.

• Read the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s draft environmental impact statement on the Oregon LNG project at: <http://www.ferc.gov/industries/gas/enviro/eis/2015/08-05-15-eis.asp>

Marina: Port still expects nearly \$139,000 in losses from marina operations

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• 7.5 percent to two-thirds increases in daily moorage rates, with sharper increases for vessels shorter in length.

Off the water, the new tariff doubles all-day parking fees from \$5 to \$10, while adding a \$100 charge for extra parking passes for annual moorages and boosting monthly parking passes from \$60 to \$150.

Even with the increases, McGrath and Burk’s report said, the Port still expects nearly \$139,000 in losses from marina operations in the coming fiscal year.

Support for increases

Port Commission Chairman John Raichl said when the proposed increases were brought to the Marina Advisory Committee, which includes commercial and recreational boaters, the panel was not against the marina fee increases, but opposed the parking increases.

More specifically, Burk said, they only opposed the parking increases at the west end basin, saying it might drive away customers. Meanwhile,

at the east end, Port staff still needs to ascertain whether grant funds used for the paved area there prohibit parking rate increases.

Jeff Keightley, who has operated Astoria Fishing Charters for the past six years at the Port, readied his boat late Tuesday morning to take a family from Minnesota out fishing for salmon.

“I don’t think you can overcapitalize on this fishery in August,” Keightley said, adding he turns away customers daily and has thought about doubling his guide rates. Keightley said he wouldn’t bat an eyelash at a 50 percent increase in the \$1,100 a year he pays to moor his guide boat at the west end.

Keightley, who said he tells his customers to get a parking pass and stay south of the railroad tracks, opposes the parking increases. He said the real problem with parking is enforcement north of the Astoria Riverfront Trolley tracks.

“I don’t think there’s any enforcement on this side of the tracks, because you don’t know how long people are parking,” Keightley said, referencing



Cody Herman, owner of Day One Outdoors, cleans salmon at the West End Mooring Basin cleaning station.

the sparsely marked zones of 15-minute, one- and two-hour parking near the west end. The Port would need a full-time parking officer, he added, to solve the issue.

And if the Port wants to add revenue, he said, it should open

up more of the east end basin to fishermen.

Tragedy of the commons

Port commissioners have repeatedly complained about catching guide boats who they say come to the Port to park,

pick up customers, drop them off and clean fish at the west end, a station meant for marina tenants, sometimes without paying the Port for any services.

The Port has ordered several electronic parking pass ma-

chines that would take credit cards. Staff has said the machines will make it easier for people to pay to park and likely increase compliance.

Burk last month said it would take around-the-clock enforcement to catch the guide boats, which she estimated at maybe 10 a day during the busy season based on the number of trailers, with some fishermen leaving as early as 4 a.m.

Commercial guide boats need a business license to operate in Astoria, Commissioner Stephen Fulton said during the July presentation, and the Port should be using that avenue to capture revenue from boaters using the Port’s docks. But Sue Dohaniuk, a financial operations manager with Astoria, said the city doesn’t break out which business licenses belong to boats.

On Tuesday, Fulton said the rate increases were probably not properly noticed to the community and will likely result in push back, but were needed nonetheless. “We’re going to have to be responsible and maintain our facility,” he said, “and I think this is a step in the right direction.”

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