

LNG: ‘FERC has approved every single (LNG) project’

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the views of the local community,” the letter states. “These particular questions have raised serious and legitimate concerns among our constituents, who have rightly demanded answers to in the aftermath of this judgment.”

Because of the urgency of the LNG issue, the lawmakers said they would appreciate a prompt response from the commission.

“It’s important that the senators (and Bonamici) are raising serious questions to FERC,” said Brett VandenHeuvel, executive director of Columbia Riverkeeper, the Hood River-based environmental group opposing the LNG project. “It’s not clear to anybody why FERC is just spending huge amounts of time and money reviewing this project that (Oregon LNG) can’t build. So we’re hoping this will be a wake-up call to FERC, that Oregon leaders want some answers.”

Litigation

Jonathan Radmacher, the attorney representing Oregon LNG in the Army Corps dispute, said in an email that “Oregon LNG long ago fully informed FERC regarding the state’s property leased to Oregon LNG, which is the prop-

erty at issue in the litigation” over the Army Corps of Engineers dredge spoils easement.

He added that, because the easement is the subject of pending litigation, he would not comment further at this time.

In August, the U.S. District Court in Portland ruled against Oregon LNG in a dispute with the Army Corps. Oregon LNG had claimed that the Army Corps, which has held an easement to deposit dredging spoils since 1957, has no right to the land beneath the water that would become the site of the company’s liquefied natural gas facility.

The court found, however, that the 12-year statute of limitations to bring such a claim under federal law had expired and ruled that Oregon LNG’s lawsuit be dismissed.

The company now claims that the Army Corps, which hasn’t deposited dredge spoils on the site since 1992, has essentially abandoned the property.

Mike Connors, a Portland attorney representing Oregon LNG, said during a public hearing last month on the company’s land use permit applications in Warrenton that the company believes the Army Corps wants something in return for the easement and that, ultimately, the dispute will be

resolved outside of litigation.

Michelle Helms, public affairs specialist with the Army Corps, could not, because of the ongoing litigation, comment on whether the Army Corps intended to use the easement property in the future.

However, VandenHeuvel said that “the Army Corps, through both words and actions, is defending this easement.”

“I don’t expect the Corps to back down, and Oregon LNG can’t build the terminal when the Corps has an easement,” he said. “It’s been a long road for Oregon LNG, and we think that this is the end of the road.”

Environmental impact

Last month, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s environmental staff held two public comment meetings at the Clatsop County Fair & Expo Center where concerned citizens weighed in on the agency’s draft environmental impact statement for the Oregon LNG project.

The nearly 1,000-page draft statement, released in August, concluded that the proposed project will result in adverse environmental impacts on water quality and fish and wildlife habitat, but that Oregon LNG could reduce these impacts to less-than-significant levels with mitigation measures pro-

posed by the company.

The commission will consider the final environmental impact statement, scheduled for release in February, when deciding whether to authorize Oregon LNG to proceed with development in Warrenton.

Asked if the commission has read the lawmakers’ letter, Mary O’Driscoll, the commission’s director of media relations, said the commission’s policy is not to respond to letters — particularly letters from members of Congress — in the media. Once the commissioners receive such letters, they respond in due course, she added.

On Wednesday, the commission granted the final environmental approval for the Jordan Cove LNG project in Coos Bay. (See related story) If built, the \$7 billion port and pipeline project it would be the first LNG port on the West Coast.

“FERC has approved every single (LNG) project. They’ve never denied one, so that doesn’t come as a surprise,” VandenHeuvel said. “This property dispute with the Corps is the elephant in the room on Oregon LNG. So we’re disappointed that FERC is moving forward with these projects at all, but I don’t think (the Jordan Cove) decision affects Oregon LNG.”

Jordan Cove LNG port, pipeline get environmental OK

The \$7 billion project is led by Calgary, Alberta-based Veresen Inc.

By JEFF BARNARD
Associated Press

GRANTS PASS — Federal regulators granted final environmental approval Wednesday for building a pipeline and port facilities for shipping Rocky Mountain natural gas to Asia via the Oregon coast.

The final environmental impact statement prepared for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission found that building and operating the gas terminal and pipeline would cause some environmental damage.

However, it noted the problems would be reduced to less than significant with mitigation measures proposed by project developers.

The Jordan Cove liquefied natural gas terminal at Coos Bay would be the first LNG port on the West Coast and would be linked to existing pipelines by construction of the Pacific Connector Gas Pipeline across southwestern Oregon.

The \$7 billion project is led by Calgary, Alberta-based Veresen Inc.

Final commission approval is expected by the end of this year, with a notice to proceed from the commission by the middle of next year. Developers have said gas is not likely to begin flowing until 2019.

The projects were initially envisioned for importing natural gas into the U.S., but development of gas deposits in the Rockies created an abundance of the fuel that pushed the projects to switch to exports.

Veresen President and CEO Don Althoff said in a statement that the final environmental report was a significant milestone and represented three years of work.

Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyoming, urged the U.S. Department of Energy to quickly approve the project.

“The administration has given communities along the Gulf Coast and East Coast the opportunity to access overseas markets,” Barrasso said in a statement. “It must not leave the West behind.”

The 230-mile pipeline route from the farming town of Malin east of the Cascades just north of the California border to Coos Bay has been opposed by private landowners and conservation groups. It crosses rivers, mountain ranges and a mix of private and public lands.

Lesley Adams, head of the Rogue Riverkeeper conservation group, said the state of Oregon still has to decide on a Clean Water Act permit for the pipeline, and if FERC approves the projects, a coalition of landowners and conservationists plan to take legal action to reverse it.

“It’s clear to us there are adverse impacts to forests, streams and species,” she said. “One of the big problems with the project is water — raising temperatures and sediment impacts on fish.”

The port facilities to be built include a shipping channel, berths for LNG tankers and tugboats and refrigeration facilities to turn the gas into a liquid.

Scientists say the site could someday be subjected to a magnitude-9.0 earthquake and a 50-foot tsunami from the Cascade Subduction Zone.

Federal regulators said the port facilities must be built to withstand earthquakes and tsunamis, limit ship traffic, and provide mitigation for lost wetlands and erosion along the pipeline route.

The commission must negotiate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries Service over how the projects might harm protected species, such as the northern spotted owl and salmon.



Elk walk through the park at Fort Stevens State Park Monday.

Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Elk: ‘They expect feed from people’

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“He believes it intentionally charged his truck,” Workman said. “An officer examined the damage and said it looked consistent with the report.”

Do not feed elk

After word of the incidents spread around the community, Workman said, he started receiving numerous complaints from people saying their neighbors have been feeding the elk.

Warrenton does not have an ordinance against feeding elk, but Workman said his department strongly recommends against it.

People feeding the local herd is a main reason for the recent aggression, according to Warwick.

“I’m comfortable in saying a big contributor is the fact that the herd in Warrenton — people regularly feed them,” he said.

Although it may be tempting to feed an elk and treat the animal like a pet, officials agree that feeding them is unsafe for both the elk and humans.

People need to give elk distance and treat them like the wild animals they are, officials say.

Herman Biederbeck, wildlife biologist for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s North Coast District, said large mammals such as elk and bears can get tamed by being fed.

“They expect feed from people. If they don’t get it,



A driver pulls over to take a photo of a bull elk near Sixth Street in Hammond Tuesday.

Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

then they start looking at other people for food,” Biederbeck said. “It creates a whole host of problems and unintended aggression.”

Close proximity

Another factor possibly leading to elk aggression is the close proximity to residents of the North Coast.

“The aggression is not common, but the potential for it to occur is higher in northwest Clatsop County with the proximity of elk and people,” Biederbeck said.

The Clatsop Plains — west of U.S. Highway 101 from Seaside to Astoria — has more than 300 elk in about four or five herds, according to Biederbeck.

The elk find refuge in

land around Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center and Fort Stevens State Park. Other areas have been developed and are forcing the elk to encounter more people.

The Gearhart elk herd has become famous for how comfortable the animals are around the neighborhoods.

The state Fish and Wildlife Department is torn between being encouraged by the healthy number of elk, and having to respond to the property damage caused by the elk.

“Within the Clatsop Plains area, there are people that very much enjoy the elk and then there are also people who really dislike the elk,” Biederbeck said. “They are the ones

that will suffer the economic impacts of the elk. We have this divided public opinion, whether people want them or not.”

As of now, the only tool to manage the elk population is hunting that occurs on some private farm land in the county.

Overall, Biederbeck said living among the elk herds will remain a reality for Clatsop County residents. It is up to the residents to keep a safe distance, especially in rut season.

“It’s a situation that is not going to get a lot better any time soon,” he said. “There is a steady increase in development in this area. That sets the stage for more elk conflicts with humans.”

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