



The Daily News
The Washington Department of Ecology has rejected Northwest Innovation Works' climate change study, delaying the project by as much as a year.

Riverkeeper wants probe of methanol plant

By MALLORY GRUBEN
The Daily News

LONGVIEW, Wash. — A conservation group fighting the proposed Kalama methanol plant now wants the federal government to investigate Northwest Innovation Works for potentially misleading investors. But it was unclear whether the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission will follow up on the claims. Columbia Riverkeeper, a Hood River-based non-profit conservation group, sent a letter Tuesday to the SEC alleging that Northwest Innovation “touted Chinese demand for methanol as a fuel,” while seeking investments for its \$2 billion methanol plant at the Port of Kalama. But the company never explained to investors that it doesn’t intend to participate in the fuels market. From the time it first proposed the plant in 2014, the company has said the methanol will be used to make plastics in Asia, not burned for fuel.

“We perceive that there is a disconnect between what Northwest Innovation Works is telling its investors and what it’s telling regulators and the public, and we’ve tried to raise that issue with everyone from Cowlitz County to Ecology, and now to federal regulators,” said Miles Johnson, senior attorney with Riverkeeper. “While we don’t have control over what the SEC does, we do have control over the kinds of questions we get to ask, and we think this is an important one.”

Riverkeeper is arguing

both sides of the issue: First, it challenged the company’s statements about making the methanol only for plastics; now it’s accusing Northwest Innovation of misleading investors by implying it will sell the methanol for fuel. Representatives with the SEC declined Wednesday to comment on the letter or the general investigation process. Northwest Innovation Chief Commercial Officer Vee Godley said Riverkeeper is “trying to generate something out of nothing,” and the claims in the letter are “continued misinformation and spreading rumors.” “The bottom line is ... we are making this product for materials. We’ve said that from day one,” Godley said. “We have even entered into an agreement ... with the port that this methanol will only be used for materials.”

The company also stood by those claims in 2019, when Riverkeeper first accused it of misleading the public, state regulators or potential investors. That year company officials said any investor who did “their due diligence” would see the project is dedicated to making materials for plastics manufacturing. “(Riverkeeper) seems to be desperate. They can’t beat us on science, so I guess they are desperate to find other avenues to try to sway

public opinion,” Godley said of the letter. Riverkeeper’s claims are based on a 26-slide PowerPoint presentation for potential investors from March 2018. That same presentation served as the basis for the nonprofit’s accusations in April. The presentation outlines “methanol applications and market opportunities.” “The investment overview asserts and implies that NWIW’s core business model is producing methanol for the Chinese fuel market — but never explains that NWIW does not intend to participate in that market,” Riverkeeper writes in its letter. The company “appears to have misled potential investors about the market and level of demand for NWIW’s product and, by extension, the value of investing in NWIW,” the letter continues.

Northwest Innovation is proposing to build the nation’s largest gas-to-methanol manufacturing and export facility. The plan would use natural gas as feedstock to create methanol and then export that methanol to China, according to the company. Company officials say the plant would create 1,000 construction jobs, nearly 200 permanent jobs and generate millions in tax revenue.

Bill would give cities lifeline on homelessness

One provision has some worried

By JAKE THOMAS
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Cities struggling with homelessness are expected to be one of the biggest beneficiaries under legislation sponsored by state House Speaker Tina Kotek. But not every city official fully supports the idea, with worries that it could limit local governments’ control over where homeless shelters are built.

House Bill 4001, one of Kotek’s legislative priorities, is designed to help boost the number of homeless shelters in Oregon by this fall. On Wednesday, Kotek presented the House Human Services and Housing Committee with an updated version of her proposal that she said would increase the legislation’s original \$40 million to \$60 million as a result of the state’s higher than expected tax collections.

“We’re trying to really take an emergency mindset to the thousands and thousands of Oregonians who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness,” Kotek, a Portland Democrat, told the committee.

The money allocated by the bill would be distributed to local governments and nonprofits through competitive grants. The bill also requires local governments to waive land use and zoning restrictions that would otherwise prevent the siting of shelters, a provision that would expire in July 2021.

Most witnesses supported the bill. Ariel Nelson, a lobbyist for the League of Oregon Cities, said cities supported the new shelter funding. But she said the association wasn’t taking a position on the siting provi-



Christine Bridgens
A homeless camp in Warrenton.

sion because cities disagreed on it.

Rob Drake, the city manager for Cornelius, told the committee that while he appreciated the bill’s intent, it could mean homeless shelters being built next to day care centers or other sensitive locations, as well as commercial districts.

“The big issue for us is losing local control,” he said.

“How much control do we have right now when we have all these camps that are on our sidewalks?” shot back Rep. Cheri Helt, R-Bend.

She specifically referenced the homeless encampment in downtown Salem.

In written testimony, Wilsonville Mayor Tim Knapp raised similar concerns and took issue with how the bill could also allow siting of shelters in rural, unincorporated lands outside of urban

growth boundary areas. He wrote that these areas lack public transit or social services and the bill could lead to the creation of “centralized, rural low-income zones.”

Samantha Bayer, associate policy counsel for the Oregon Farm Bureau, said that the bill could permit shelters on farmland in areas without drinking water, fire protection and septic service.

Kotek said she is continuing to work on the bill, and said it only provides one-time money to help get shelters going. She expects ongoing operating costs to be an issue.

“I suspect a lot of people are going to be back here in 2021 asking for operation dollars,” she said.

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Providence’s North Coast cardiology team invites you to celebrate your healthy heart.

We’re proud to welcome Gary Greenberg, M.D. to Providence’s cardiology team. From left to right: Gary Greenberg, M.D.; Zach Caverley, PA-C; Robert Morse, D.O.; and Masud Ahmad, M.D.

Join us as we celebrate National Heart Month with these fun and free heart-healthy offerings.

- ♥ **Women’s Healthy Heart Tea**
Join Providence Seaside registered dietitian, **Beth Schwenk, RD, LD** to learn heart-smart eating habits. Light luncheon provided.
12:15 p.m., Friday, Feb. 14
Providence Seaside Hospital, Education Room A, 725 S. Wahanna Road
- ♥ **Know Your Numbers**
Knowing your numbers is important for heart health. This heart health screening will help you identify your blood pressure, pulse, height, weight and body mass index (BMI).
1-4 p.m., Friday, Feb. 28
Providence Seaside Clinic, Suite 101, 725 S. Wahanna Road
- ♥ **Heart Talk and Walk**
Providence cardiologist, **Robert Morse, D.O.,** and **Zach Caverley, PA-C** invite you to join them for a presentation on heart health followed by a walk on the prom.
10 a.m., Saturday, Feb. 29
Best Western Plus Ocean View Resort, 414 N. Prom

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