

EOTEC: Has received more than \$3.6M from county

Continued from 1A

money, the residents end up with a \$14 million facility. As an investment, he said, that is a "no brainer."

The county over the last four years has put more than \$3.6 million into EOTEC, not including the \$600,000 promised at the last meeting, according to county figures.

The biggest chunk came from the \$3,006,619 the county received in 2012 after selling the fairgrounds to the Hermiston School District. The district will use that property to expand Hermiston High School.

In addition, the county paid \$107,500 for half of the purchase price of access property south of the EOTEC site. And the county — along with the city of Hermiston — put up \$25,000 a year for the center's operating costs. The county also paid \$14,727 to cover some project expenses, including a \$12,280 cultural study. Umatilla County also passed along \$410,130 it received from a federal grant.

When the Hermiston City Council voted at its Oct. 26 meeting to give \$600,000 to EOTEC, city manager Byron Smith told councilors the city had enough money in its reserves to meet the request.

Smith was out of town at a conference Friday, but assistant city manager Mark Morgan said while it was possible some portion of the money could end up coming from another fund, enough money was in the general fund to cover the request completely.

"We have a pretty healthy fund balance we've been rolling over every year, so it shouldn't be an issue," he said.

Hermiston general fund's ending balance was about \$3.2 million in September, according to the September 2015 financial report. And the city expects more revenue as property taxes begin to roll in this month.

Hermiston's financial policy requires a minimum reserve of at least 15 percent of annual budgeted operating expenses, which for 2015-2016 would be \$1.36 million.

Morgan said if the city cuts a check to EOTEC before the end of the fiscal year, the council will have to approve a formal budget amendment. He said the council will also need to approve an ordinance allowing hoteliers to raise the Tourism Promotion Assessment by \$1 per room per night to raise their portion of the EOTEC funding.

Elfering said EOTEC should be able to generate enough money to cover operating costs and even create a rainy day fund once it is up and running. The center will be able to host events the fairgrounds cannot, he said, and that would mean more money in the coffers.

"I just don't know why it wouldn't work," he said.

And covering the county's EOTEC bill also will work, he said. Getting there, though, could mean emptying some county funds and raiding others.

East Oregonian reporter Jade McDowell contributed to this story. Contact Phil Wright at pwright@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0833.

Russia suspends flights to Egypt

MOSCOW (AP) — In an abrupt turnaround, Russia on Friday suspended all passenger flights to Egypt after days of resisting U.S. and British suggestions that a bomb may have brought down a Russian plane in the Sinai Peninsula a week ago.

The move dealt a sharp blow to both countries' tourism sectors amid fears about security in Egypt.

Russia's federal aviation agency said airlines would be allowed to send empty planes to bring home travelers, but it was unclear when the Russians in Egypt, estimated to number at least 40,000, would be able to return home as planned from the Red Sea resorts including Sharm el-Sheikh.

Obama quashes Keystone XL in bid to boost climate leverage

By JOSH LEDERMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Ending a seven-year political saga, President Barack Obama killed the proposed Keystone XL pipeline on Friday, declaring it would have undercut U.S. efforts to clinch a global climate change deal at the center of his environmental legacy.

Obama's decision marked an unambiguous victory for environmental activists who spent years denouncing the pipeline, lobbying the administration and even chaining themselves to tractors to make their point about the threat posed by dirty fossil fuels. It also places the president and fellow Democrats in direct confrontation with Republicans and energy advocates heading into the 2016 presidential election.

The president, announcing his decision at the White House, said he agreed with a State Department conclusion that Keystone wouldn't advance U.S. national interests. He lamented that both political parties had "overinflated" Keystone into a proxy battle for climate change but glossed over his own role in allowing the controversy to drag out over several national elections.

"This pipeline would neither be a silver bullet for the economy, as was promised by some, nor the express lane to climate disaster proclaimed by others," he said.

Although Obama in 2013 said his litmus test for Keystone would be whether it increased U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, his final decision appeared based on other factors. He didn't broach that topic in his remarks, and State Department officials said they'd determined Keystone wouldn't significantly affect carbon pollution levels.

Instead, the administration cited the "broad perception" that Keystone would carry "dirty" oil, and suggested approval would raise questions abroad about whether the U.S. was serious about climate change.

"Frankly, approving this project would have undercut that global leadership," the president said.

Obama will travel to Paris at the end of the month for talks on a global climate agreement, which the president hopes will be the crowning jewel for his environmental legacy. Killing the pipeline allows Obama to claim aggressive action, strength-



AP Photo/Alex Brandon

Gene Karpinski, president of the League of Conservation Voters, speaks during a gathering in front of the White House to celebrate President Barack Obama's rejection of the proposed Keystone XL pipeline Friday in Washington.

ening his hand as world leaders gather in France.

Though environmental groups hailed Friday as a "day of celebration," Obama's decision was unlikely to be the last word for Keystone XL.

TransCanada, the company behind the proposal, said it remained "absolutely committed" to building the project and was considering filing a new application for permits. The company has previously raised the possibility of suing the U.S. to recoup the more than \$2 billion it says it has already spent on develop-

"Today, misplaced symbolism was chosen over merit and science. Rhetoric won out over reason," said TransCanada CEO Russ Girling. His criticism was echoed by Republicans including House Speaker Paul Ryan, who said Obama had rejected tens of thousands of jobs while railroading Congress.

"This decision isn't surprising, but it is sickening," Ryan said.

On the other side, climate activists noted the widespread assumption early in Obama's presidency that he'd eventually approve Keystone, and said his apparent about-face proved how effective a no-holds-barred advocacy campaign could be.

"Now every fossil fuel project around the world is under siege," said Bill McKibben of the environmental group 350.org.

Already, the issue has spilled over into the presidential race. The Republican field is unanimous

in support of Keystone, while the Democratic candidates are all opposed — including Hillary Rodham Clinton, who oversaw the early part of the federal review as Obama's first-term secretary of state.

TransCanada first applied for Keystone permits 2,604 days ago in September 2008 — shortly before Obama was elected. As envisioned, Keystone would snake from Canada's tar sands through Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska, then connect with existing pipelines to carry more than 800,000 barrels of crude oil a day to specialized refineries along the Texas Gulf Coast.

But Democrats and environmental groups latched onto Keystone as just the type of project that must be phased out if the world is to seriously combat climate change. Meanwhile, Republicans, Canadian politicians and the energy industry argued the pipeline would create thousands of jobs and inject billions into the economy. They accused Obama of hypocrisy for complaining about a lack of U.S. infrastructure investment while obstructing an \$8 billion project.

Amid vote after vote in Congress to try to force Obama's hand, the president seemed content to delay further and further. Most pipelines wait roughly a year and a half for permits to cross the U.S. border, but Keystone's review dragged on more than 5 times as long as average, according to a recent Associated Press analysis.

Long road to rejection

Sept. 19, 2008 — TransCanada submits an application for a presidential permit for the Keystone XL pipeline. The pipeline would extend from Canada's tar sands through Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska and connect with existing pipelines to carry more than 800,000 barrels of crude oil a day to specialized refineries along the Texas Gulf Coast. Because the pipeline crosses the border, the State Department must determine whether it is in the national interest.

Oct. 15, 2010 — As the permit is reviewed, then Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says the department is "inclined" to approve project.

"We're either going to be dependent on dirty oil from the Gulf or dirty oil from Canada," she said. The project begins to galvanize the environmental movement to pressure the administration to act on climate change. Republicans and other project supporters argue the project will create jobs and juice the economy.

Aug. 26, 2011 — The State Department issues its final environmental impact statement determining "there would be no significant impacts to most resources along the proposed project corridor."

June 25, 2013 — Obama declares he will only approve the project if it doesn't worsen carbon pollution.

Feb. 19, 2014 — A Nebraska judge overturns the state law that allowed the pipeline, throwing the project into legal limbo.

April 18, 2014 — The State Department announces it is again delaying its review, citing the legal dispute over the Nebraska route.

Feb. 11, 2015 — Congress again tries to push the Obama administration to decide on the permit by passing legislation forcing the decision and sending it to the White House. Obama vetoes the bill days later.

Sept. 22, 2015 — Clinton, now seeking the Democratic nomination for president, says she opposes construction of the Keystone pipeline.

Mormon church issues rules for gay members, their kids

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Mormon church officials have issued a rule change that says members in same-sex marriages can be kicked out and their children must wait until they're 18 and disavow homosexual relationships to be baptized.

The revisions triggered a wave of anger, confusion and sadness for a growing faction of LGBT-supportive Mormons who were buoyed in recent years by church leaders' calls for more compassion and understanding for LGBT members.

"It feels like they are extending an olive branch and hitting you with it," said Wendy Montgomery, who is Mormon and has a 17-year-old gay son. "It's like this emotional whiplash."

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints disseminated the handbook changes this week to local church leaders around the world. The goal was to provide clarity to lay leaders who run congregations, church spokesman Eric Hawkins said. He noted the church has long been on record as opposing same-sex marriages.

"While it respects the law of the land, and acknowledges the right of others to think and act differently, it does not perform or accept same-sex marriage within its membership," Hawkins said in a statement.

Montgomery said Friday the news left her son sobbing and forced her and her husband to consider leaving a religion they've belonged to for generations.

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