

Groups oppose more pollution at Boardman plant

By **JORDAN RANE**
Columbia Insight

BOARDMAN — Portland General Electric's request to increase pollution at its Boardman fracked gas power plant drew fierce opposition from public health and environmental advocates.

PGE's proposal to significantly increase toxic emissions at Carty Generating Station had its final public hearing Dec. 17.

If the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality grants the request to modify emissions at the 440-megawatt, fracked-gas power facility in Boardman, carbon monoxide and volatile organic compound output will increase significantly.

The modifications would amount to a 300% increase in CO levels and more than 800% for volatile organic compounds, according to an October report from Columbia Riverkeeper.

"DEQ's current plan to exempt fracked-gas power plants like Carty from its so-called 'Climate Protection Program' means DEQ should be doing more to rein in pollution," stated Columbia Riverkeeper.

"Calling the site a 'fracked-gas plant' is not entirely accurate," stated PGE spokesperson Allison Dobscha in an email to Columbia Insight. "Both fracked and unfracked gases are transported through the same pipelines, so the

natural gas we use to generate power at Carty comes from a combination of sources. This permit ... reflects updated technical data and won't result in any actual modifications to the plant. The updated permit also establishes more stringent short-term emissions limits than the previous version."

When it opened in 2016, the Carty Plant was viewed as an emissions improvement over its neighboring predecessor, PGE's Boardman Coal Plant, sharing the same location about 15 miles southwest of Boardman and the Columbia River.

PGE shut down the plant in late 2020, making it the last coal-burning power plant in Oregon to cease operations. The plant released an estimated 2 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions per year, according to PGE.

"Part of the purpose of (closing BCP, opening Carty) is to move away from coal and move toward cleaner energy resources," a PGE communications consultant told Oregon Public Broadcasting late last year. "One of our long-term goals is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 80% by 2050."

Dobscha noted PGE has since updated its clean energy targets, aiming to "achieve zero GHG emissions from power served to customers by 2040."

A three-fold increase in carbon monoxide and an eight-fold increase



Michael Durham/Contributed Photo, File

Portland General Electric has asked the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to allow its Carty Generating Station in Boardman to produce more pollution. Thousands of public health and environmental advocates opposed the request by the DEQ's Dec. 17, 2021, deadline to submit comments.

in volatile organic compounds amounts to "a massive increase in air pollution ... and a proposal that deserves more investigation," wrote Dan Serres, Columbia Riverkeeper conservation director. "VOCs are of particular concern because they combine with nitrogen oxides and sunlight to form low-level ozone (smog)."

Columbia Riverkeeper in a press release Monday, Dec. 20, stated community members and activists submitted thousands of comments to DEQ in opposition to PGE's request.

"In addition to the thousands of comments submitted by individu-

als, Columbia Riverkeeper joined 14 other community and environmental justice organizations in calling on DEQ to deny PGE's request," according to the press release. "The groups highlighted the significant threat this pollution increase will place on surrounding communities — which are disproportionately low-income and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities — and urged DEQ to take aggressive action to reduce Carty's emissions limits and protect surrounding communities from increased exposures."

Kate Murphy, community organizer with Columbia Riverkeeper,

said in the release the focus must be on aggressive pollution reductions, not clearing the way for more harmful pollution.

"PGE's proposal to increase harmful pollution is a serious environmental justice issue and is a danger to public health and our shared environment," according to Murphy. "Thousands of community members have spoken up in opposition, and DEQ is obligated to protect our communities and our air from this threat."

Peter Cornelison, Friends of the Columbia Gorge field representative and Hood River resident, added his voice to the opposition.

"The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and its communities are plagued by air pollution from several sources, including the Carty Generation Station," Cornelison said in the press release. "The Oregon DEQ must carry out its mandate to improve air quality in the Columbia Gorge and deny PGE's request to increase its pollution."

According to PGE, the emissions modification at Carty Generating Station is necessary due to both the closure of the Boardman Coal Plant and new information about emissions levels needed to run the power plant according to its normal schedule and capacity.

— *The East Oregonian* contributed to this report.

Wildhorse hire boasts exciting background

Moore's history includes stand-up comedy with famous performers

By **ERICK PETERSON**
East Oregonian

MISSION — Wildhorse Resort & Casino's new director of information systems has wrapped up six months on the job.

Fran Moore took the post in June, and Wildhorse in a press release touted his "expertise in gaming, point-of-sale and other network systems, along with his ability to communicate highly technical ideas to laypeople."

"I've had a lot of varied experiences," Moore said during a phone interview. "I continue to learn and grow. And I hope to have many more experiences."

Moore started with Wildhorse in June after speaking with Wildhorse CEO Gary George, according to the press release. The CEO described the job to him. It sounded interesting, so Moore took it.

Moore's history includes employment as a senior systems engineer for Visa. While at Visa, he set up data centers and trained personnel in Europe, Latin America, Singapore and Hong Kong. In addition, he worked for computerized bookmaking systems in Las Vegas. He was employed for American Wagering, InfoGenesis and more. While at Cash Creek Casino Resort in California, he started as technical support but was promoted up to vice president of information technology. According to Wildhorse's press release, Moore worked for TribalNet, too, and served on boards relating to gaming, hospitality and leisure.

But his background and experience go beyond his field of work.



Moore

EDITOR'S NOTE

This story is part of an annual series by the East Oregonian called "Our New Neighbors," which introduces the community to people who have moved here in the past year.

He was born in Las Vegas and raised in Sacramento. He moved to Walla Walla in June shortly after taking the Wildhorse position.

Moore's worldly and art-filled life has included studies at Chabot College, Holy Names University and UC Berkeley in California. In college, he discovered comedy and he followed that up with work as a stand-up comic for Tommy T's Comedy Club. He worked in other places, too, working alongside such performers as Kevin Pollak, Sinbad, Jay Leno and Janet Jackson. His stage work includes an adaptation of the Greek tragedy "Antigone."

Working alongside comedians, Moore said, he would often spend time in their company and get to know them as people. Some of these comics are just as they seem to the public, according to Moore. Robin Williams, for instance, was "always on," according to Moore.

As he has spent around half a year, commuting 40 minutes one way from Walla Walla to Pendleton for work, Moore has become familiar with the area. He said he enjoys the "quaintness" of the area — that everyone in Pendleton seems to know one another. Walla Walla is nice, too, he said, as it is a "wine and college town" that is "conducive to his lifestyle," he said.

Moore said he lived an exciting life and stepped away from it to have a family. He now has a wife and two grown daughters.

"I have no regrets about that at all," he said.

And Wildhorse is a good fit. "I've got a wonderful staff," he said. "It's great to be working with such well-versed individuals."

Umatilla County looks to make health officer a county employee

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Umatilla County Public Health is looking to add positions and bring its health officer under its roof.

As the Local Public Health Authority, Oregon law requires the county health department to have a health officer. Dr. Jon Hitzman serves in that role, but he does so as an appointment and through a contract with Professional Locum Associates.

That contract expires Friday, Dec. 31, and Alisha Lundgren, the assistant director of Umatilla County Public Health, in a memo is asking the county board of commissioners to create the officer position in the health department.

The county board takes up the request when it meets Wednesday, Dec. 29, at 9 a.m. in



Lundgren

room 114 at the Umatilla County Courthouse, 216 S.E. Fourth St.

The county health department also is asking the board to create two new positions, according to memos.

The department recently received a federal COVID-19 school-based health and recovery grant. The county plans to use the grant to hire an office assistant to increase services at local school-based health centers.

And Umatilla County Public Health wants to add a supervisor position.

The department received funding from the Legislature through the Oregon Health Authority to support public health modernization. The investment created several positions to perform this additional work, according to the memo, and to help oversee this work, the health department wants to make a new program manager position.

"The funding for this position is being fully provided,"

the memo states. "This also includes a regional component for which Umatilla County will be the fiscal agent."

In other business, the county board is considering a request from administrative services to spend about \$6,250 to hire a company to film mortgage books.

The books crowd a small office in the basement of the courthouse, according to the memo from Dan Lonai, head of county administrative services, and scanning and filming the books would allow the county to dispose of the hardcopies and free up office space.

And the board is considering a deal to allow the Westland Irrigation District to use some of county's water pumping capacity from the Columbia River.

For more information about the meeting, visit the county's website, www.co.umatilla.or.us, and click in the board of commissioners' agendas page under the department tab.

LOCAL BRIEF

Irrigon City Council honors Matlack

IRRIGON — The Irrigon City Council during its meeting Tuesday, Dec. 21, honored Ken Matlack for 20 years of service on the council.

Matlack, Morrow County sheriff, stepped down from the council in October. He appeared at the meeting with his wife, Shirley Matlack, and said the move freed up time for other interests.

Irrigon Mayor Margaret Anderson praised Matlack for his service.

"Ken has done a lot for this community," she said. "We appreciate him."

Anderson, who has worked with Matlack since 2012, credited Matlack's ability for critical thinking. Also, she said he will be missed on the council.

Irrigon City Manager Aaron Palmquist wished Matlack well and said the city has yet to advertise the opening. Whoever the council selects will serve the remaining three years of Matlack's four-year term, ending with the next election.

— *EO Media Group*



Erick Peterson/East Oregonian

Ken Matlack receives an award Dec. 21, 2021, from Irrigon Mayor Margaret Anderson for 20 years of service on the Irrigon City Council. Matlack, Morrow County sheriff, stepped down from the council in October.

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