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Lines on map drawn in real lives

SUMMARY: Natural gas Residents weigh concerns about rights of way and property takings for the proposed 223-mile **Pacific Connector pipeline**

SHADY COVE --As coastal communities contend with multiple proposals for new natural gas ports, inland Oregonians are getting their first look at a planned **pipeline** that would carry the gas across the state.

The proposed 223-mile **Pacific Connector pipeline** would run from the yet-to-be-approved Jordan Cove liquefied natural gas terminal in Coos Bay to a junction with a major north-south gas hub in Malin.

It's part of a flurry of planned projects meant to speed the importation and distribution of natural gas to the West Coast's growing markets. In addition to Jordan Cove on the south coast, three liquefied natural gas ports are proposed on the Columbia River.

Domestic demand for natural gas is expected to grow 38 percent by 2025, federal estimates indicate.

The **Pacific Connector** is a partnership among Northwest **Pipeline**, a Salt Lake City subsidiary of Williams, a Tulsa, Okla., natural gas giant; PG&E Corp., a California gas and electric utility; and Fort Chicago Energy Partners LP, a Calgary, Alberta, income trust.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which has final say on the **Pacific Connector's** fate, has approved the **pipeline** companies to begin a pre-application process.

"This is to let the public know what their plan is and get as much public comment as possible before they file their formal applications," said Tamara Young-Allen, a spokeswoman for the agency.

So far, people along the **pipeline** route want to know where the buried pipe --36 inches in diameter --might cut across their property. They have concerns about rights of way on their land or the possibility of property condemnation.

"I just want to see how deep they are going to dig," said Frank Diaz, who raises alfalfa on 400 acres near Malin and attended one of a series of informational meetings on the **pipeline**. "And what are they going to pay. That's probably the most important thing."

The federal government is hosting additional public meetings on the **pipeline** and Jordan Cove port this week.

Williams, which would build the **pipeline**, is seeking agreements with property owners and public land management agencies for easements to build, operate and maintain the **pipeline**.

75-foot-wide swath

The rights of way are usually about 75 feet wide, according to company officials, and would be stripped bare during construction and replanted afterward, though only small shrubs and grasses would be allowed to grow, similar to the area under a power line.

About 153 miles of the proposed route is on private land, much of it timberland. If federal officials approve the **pipeline**, its builders will have the power of eminent domain, meaning they could condemn land in the pipe's path.

That option was forefront in the mind of some attending an open house in the Grange hall in Shady Cove, north of Medford.

"I don't think it's going to make a hill of beans of difference if you protest it because they're going to do it anyway," said Toni Woolsey, who lives on 16 acres near Trail. The **pipeline** is expected to cross the Rogue River near Trail, one of five major river and eight smaller creek crossings.

Surveying request

Woolsey began receiving letters from Williams six months ago, she said, asking for permission to survey on her property. Maps displayed by Williams officials inside the Grange showed the **pipeline** right of way cutting through the oaks, pines and rock formations near Woolsey's house.

"It will be a 75-foot scar there to look at forever," she said. "It's not going to be pretty."

Others worried about the risk of gas leaks or explosions. **Pipeline** officials say numerous efforts are made --such as special coating and pressure testing --to ensure safety during construction and afterward.

Most people at the Shady Cove meeting seemed to have more questions than opinions about the **pipeline** at this point. But some resistance is forming.

A Roseburg environmental group, Umpqua Watersheds, has appealed the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's decision allowing Williams to survey along its preferred route through land managed by the agency.

"They don't need to do that until the public has had a chance to weigh in on the preferred route," said Francis Eatherington, the group's conservation director.

Comment cutoff

Comments will be accepted through July 24, and then the energy regulatory commission will do a full environmental study of the **pipeline** and the Coos Bay terminal. Potential issues noted by the government include damage to wetlands and waterways, forest clearing, and the risk of earthquakes.

Pipeline officials expect to make their full application in January, begin building in 2009 and start moving gas a year later. Once built, it would connect with at least three existing north-south **pipelines** serving

Oregon, Washington and California.

Williams estimates the **pipeline** would generate \$8 million total in tax revenue each year in Coos, Douglas, Jackson and Klamath counties. During construction, the **pipeline** would create 1,000 new jobs, though there's no guarantee they would be local workers, said Steve D. Potts, project manager for Williams.

Some people at the open houses looked at those numbers and were optimistic about the benefits the **pipeline** would bring.

"I'm 100 percent for it," said Matthew Morrison, Medford manager for the Coast Crane Co.

And some hope local utilities will be able to tap into the big pipe and provide natural gas service where it's not available now, like Shady Cove, said Rosalie Gaither a resident of the town.

"It would be nice if it came in my lifetime," said Gaither, 68.

Matthew Preusch: 541-382-2006; preusch@bendbroadband.com

ILLUSTRATION: Map by The Oregonian