

COOS BAY DIST OFFICE

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Comments on Final EIS--Coos
County Pipeline

I am disgusted with the generally disdainful dismissal of concerns expressed by various individuals about pipeline safety, especially following a rupture or, in the language of the EIS, an "incident." According to the Final EIS, the consequence of any pipeline break, explosion and fire seems to be "Don't worry because we say there is no reason to be concerned. (page 73 et seq and Comments passim.) Yet The Oregonian (12/30/02, page B4) cites the federal Office of Pipeline Safety as reporting "there were 208 natural gas pipeline incidents that resulted in 7 deaths and 48 injuries." These figures don't jibe with those given in the EIS. The Oregonian figures indicate that 26% of pipeline incidents will result in injury or death or 1 in 3.78 cases. One can only hope such an incident never happens in Coos County. But if one happens--who will stand and confess to error? BLM? Coos County Commissioners? Natural Gas?

In my comments on the Draft EIS, I asked questions about the impact of an explosion and fire on the BPA power lines. The Answer (page G-2-8) again downplays any problem: "It is unlikely that the initial combustion alone would significantly damage a tower or power line." Then it goes on to explain why a Texas incident which took out 17 towers was unique.

It is also of interest that the response goes on to note that BPA has specified a two day limit (I have been told this has been extended to three days) for outages of electrical services to the South Coast--but no explanation of the impact of any such outage in terms of area, costs or problems resulting from such an outage.

The response goes on to state that BPA and Coos County are "entering into an agreement whereby BPA would be paid to have extra equipment on hand to mitigate possible consequences of a pipeline incident. Yet in December 2002, when I contacted BPA to ask for a copy of this agreement, I was told to call back after Feb 1, 2003 and maybe they be able to help me. In a similar vein, I have been told that PP&L has no agreement with the County about using PP&L's ROW.

In my comments on the Draft EIS, I raised a question about moving the terminus from south of Coos Bay to the Water Board property. The response was ingenious at best--"The County has always maintained that the pipeline will be built to the 'urban growth boundary' of each city." Apparently the Urban Growth Boundary of Coos Bay is some three miles inside the City. Interesting.

The response goes on that the County selected the Water Board property because the initial site at Central and 101 was impractical. My memory is that the general consensus was that the terminus was to be in the Millington area, but it is true that no specific site was named prior to the vote. The Final EIS continues, "Any 'cost difference' due to the substantial in pipeline terminus was moot because the original Highway 42 Rte. is impractical." Frankly, I don't know what this sentence means. It seems to reflect the belief that because the COOS Bay Wagon Road route is ~~shorter~~ than the 42 rte ROW it is okay to take some of the money saved and spend it to benefit NW Natural Gas. I simply fail to understand the justification for placing the terminus on the Water Board property other than for helping the gas company. Unfortunately, this strikes me as being part of the "boodle and Grab School of Public Finance Stewertship."

In conclusion, it is my opinion that the Final EIS is a document which is based on pre-conceived positions, has failed to address in depth several valid issues and seems to downplay the competency of those citizens who disagree. The whole pipeline project has been characterized by mis-direction, hype, pie-in-the-sky thinking and attitudes which build down to the Ends Justifies the Meands and Opposition is Wrong.

The pipeline will be built. I hope it benefits the area. I hope no "incident" scars the County. It is too bad, but I view the Final EIS as a mirror of those eternally seeking Golconda.

Thank you,


Jim Brown