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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Cemetery District challenges gas pipeline approval for methanol export

Kelso, WA - The Cowlitz County Cemetery District #6 filed a challenge to a proposed methanol pipeline cutting through a pioneer cemetery known as The Mt. Pleasant Cemetery. The Cemetery District asked the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to withdraw its previous approval because FERC failed to consider the impact on the pioneer cemetery, the surrounding environment, and the 3,628 cemetery districts tax payers.

“It’s shocking that no one considered the impacts to our cemetery before approving a potentially dangerous and destructive gas pipeline for the methanol plant,” stated Bill Spencer, Commissioner for Cemetery District#6. “The Chinese-backed methanol plant may soon have power of eminent domain to take land within our community-owned pioneer cemetery. That’s just not right.”

FERC approved a 24-inch natural gas pipeline to feed a methanol refinery proposed by Northwest Innovation Works. The company signed a lease with the Port of Kalama to build the plant on the Columbia River.

FERC required contracts between pipeline company, Williams, and the methanol plant NorthWest Innovation Works (NWIW) as one of the conditions for the pipeline approval. “It seems odd to approve based on condition of a contract, when it should upon approval of the complete project itself”, and “what happens if the project is not approved or even built? Now you have effectively placed the burden of a pipeline through private property that can longer be used. “ stated by Mr. Spencer.

“I wish the Port would have taken a closer look at the impacts to the county outside of their jurisdiction that will include a pioneer cemetery, as well as our air and water, before signing the lease,” Mr. Spencer stated. “After all the Port appears to making decisions that affect not only the Ports property, but our property here in Cowlitz County”.

Background:

On April 11, 2016, FERC issued a license to Northwest Pipeline, a Williams Pipeline Company, to construct a lateral to connect Northwest’s natural gas system to a proposed methanol export refinery proposed by Northwest Innovation Works at the Port of Kalama. The refinery would use 300,000 cubic feet of natural gas daily or one-third of the gas consumed in the entire state of Washington. FERC must now decide if it will reconsider its pipeline approval, or deny the Cemetery District’s request.

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The Cemetery District is represented by Tom Buchele, Managing Attorney and Clinical Professor at Earthrise Law Center.