

## President's Message

By Betty Mayfield

"The friendly cow, all red and white, I love with all my heart. She gives me cream with all her might, to eat with apple tart." Thus wrote Robert Louis Stevenson in 1885.

But in the past year cows have been implicated as a source of air pollution in both Oregon and California. In Oregon the Threemile Canyon Farm (on 93,000 acres just west of Boardman purchased from Boeing in 2000) according to a story in the Oregonian has notified the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that it is releasing at least 850 tons of ammonia a year into the air. The state legislature exempted farms from state air laws before such a large operation existed. The complex has 53,000 cows and is allowed as many as 90,667. In comparison, all of Tillamook County has about 44,000 cattle.

This ammonia combines with the nitrogen and sulfur in the fossil fuel exhaust released by the Portland General Electric coal-burning plant near Boardman, which received an exemption from federal Clean Air Act rules in 1975, two weeks before the regulations went into effect. East winds carry the releases into the Columbia River Gorge, which has become one of the most polluted natural areas in the West.

A different kind of pollution was blamed on cows in the San Joaquin Valley of California last year, when the estimate was raised on the amount of gases called volatile organic compounds (VOC) produced by cows burping while chewing their cuds. These gases combine with other pollutants to form smog. The new figures claim that an average cow produces 19.3 pounds of such gases each year, according to a story in the Los Angeles Times. More dairies will have to apply for permits under a 2003 state law.

Problems seem to arise when numbers, even of good things, become excessive. Cows are good; milk is good; but 53,000 cows on one farm cause problems. Washington has escaped the huge dairy complexes so far, although since 1989, the number of dairies in western Washington has dropped from 1017 to 488. High land costs and urban sprawl have driven dairymen to move cows to the eastern part of the state, but the farms are getting bigger instead of more numerous. Yakima County, with 79 dairies, is the 12th ranked milk-producing county in the nation, and Whatcom County, with 168 dairies, is 15th.

## Presentation on Coal Gasification Plant Proposed for Kalama

Report By Charlotte Persons

On May 1, a forum was held at Lower Columbia College for students and the public to hear views held by Northwest Energy Coalition, a group of utilities and other groups which want to plan for environmentally sound energy development, and by Energy Northwest, the joint operating agency for 17 public and municipal utilities which wants to permit the plant now and build it by 2012. Energy Northwest explained that gasification is a cleaner way than conventional plants to burn coal or other carbon-based fuels such as gas, biofuels, and petroleum coke (a by-product of refining oil tars in Alberta, Canada). It may be possible to retrofit the plant to capture the principal pollutant that will be produced--carbon gas--and sequester it deep underground in basalt layers. Experiments to find out the long-term feasibility and costs of this new technology will be completed in the next few years. Retrofitting the plant will depend on both the results of field tests and costs to rate-payers. Nancy Hirsh, policy director of Northwest Energy Coalition, explained the two principal environmental concerns: (1) that sequestration will not take place due to costs and lack of government requirements and (2) that building this 600 megawatt plant will reduce the possibility of creating more of Washington's power needs through conservation and renewable sources of energy such as wind and solar.

### Gasification Plant In Kalama—Take Action!

\*Sometime in August or September there will be 30-day period for public comment on the proposed coal gasification plant in Kalama. Please be ready to write letters on this proposal as soon as that period is announced.

\*Meanwhile, you can write letters to the editor of your local newspaper or to your local public utility district to explain your views. Cowlitz County PUD: John Searing, President, Jmsearing83@cs.com or 961 12th Ave., Longview, WA 98632.

Wahkiakum County PUD, Esther Gregg, President, P.O. Box 248, Cathlamet, WA 98612.

An information sheet and sample letters to the editor are posted on the WHAS web site, or contact Charlotte Persons at cpersons@yahoo.com or 360-578-3949.