

Pinchot Hikes *(Continued from Page 9)*

August 18th-Quartz Creek in the Dark Divide to enjoy swimming holes and lots of shade from the ancient forest.

September 15th-Learn about the Task Force timber sale monitoring program and forest watch work by hiking through a planned timber sale.

October 20th- Foliage, Fungus, and Fruit-fall in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest brings mushrooms and fruit to fill your tummies, and fall colors.

Kalama Coal Gasification Plant Clears One Hurdle

by Darrel Whipple

I attended the April 10 meeting of the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) in Olympia. The members discussed at length whether they could certify that the proposed Kalama coal gasification electrical power plant is consistent with state and local land use rules without thereby also implying that the proposal meets the requirements of Cowlitz County's Critical Areas Ordinance.

Apparently, the matter of critical areas is bundled with land use when such development proposals are considered in any of the larger counties in the state -- those counties populous enough to fall under the requirements of the Growth Management Act.

Since Cowlitz County has reportedly not yet reached the population threshold to be governed by the GMA, its Critical Areas Ordinance is not automatically bundled with other land use laws; hence the issues that may come up regarding the proposed plant's compliance with the ordinance can properly be taken up separately at a later time in the plant approval process.

Following that reasoning, the Council declared that the proposal is consistent with land use laws, and the Council will address whether it complies with the Critical Areas Ordinance at another time.

The Council had received information and testimony on the proposed plant (including mine in opposition on behalf of WHAS) from an earlier hearing in Kalama and had received letters from the City of Kalama and Cowlitz County affirming consistency with local land

use laws. The April 10 meeting was not a public hearing on this proposal, but the chairperson agreed to receive comments from Brett VandenHeuvel of Columbia Riverkeeper regarding applicable language in the state code. VandenHeuvel told Don Jenkins of The Daily News that he would be looking further into the county's Critical Areas Ordinance soon. (Stay tuned.)

The plant is proposed by Energy Northwest, a joint operating agency for 19 public utilities and municipal utilities headquartered in Richland, Washington. Cowlitz and Wahkiakum PUDs are members of the consortium.

The next steps in "the process" will be the issuance of the draft Environmental Impact Statement (in June, I think) followed by the request for intervention.

WHAS's position is that while this breed of coal plant is dramatically cleaner and more efficient than conventional coal plants, it will contribute a significant and unacceptable amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to the atmosphere at a time when massive efforts should be directed to forestalling global warming.

Large-scale CO2 storage in geologic formations on or near the site, offered as a tempting future add-on to the plant, comes with far too many economic and environmental unknowns to justify accepting this plant at this time. EFSEC and ultimately Governor Gregoire should disallow the plant and honor the recent successful statewide ballot initiative requiring greater investments in renewable energy. Moreover, EFSEC and Cowlitz County should honor the letter and spirit of the Critical Areas Ordinance to the extent that it applies to portions of the north end of the Port of Kalama's industrial area.

Volunteer Opportunities

Youth Forestry Days at Longview, May 24-25
WHAS will have displays. Contact Darrel Whipple, 503-556-9838, dwhipple@opusnet.com.

Washington Youth Outdoor Adventure Expo, Longview, May 18-19 Contact Campfire USA, Lower Columbia Council, Toledo, WA, 360-864-4259, campfireusa@toledotel.com.