

# An economic stimulus Oregon could use

By *The Oregonian* editorial board (posted to OregonLive.com on February 11, 2009)



*NorthernStar Natural Gas Co. Artist's rendering of how the Bradwood Landing terminal for liquefied natural gas imports would look on the Columbia River east of Astoria.*

The Oregon Legislature's \$175 million job-creation package is small potatoes compared to a potential economic booster shot that state officials seem hell-bent on rejecting. That's the proposed liquefied natural gas terminal at Bradwood Landing and the associated Palomar pipeline. The two projects would inject more than \$1.5 billion of private money into Oregon's economy, some eight times what lawmakers seek to borrow for their stimulus program.

Unfortunately, some of Oregon's agency heads and elected leaders seem intent on blocking the projects. Attorney General John Kroger, in particular, has been openly hostile to them. (He appointed Brent Foster, head of the conservation group Columbia Riverkeeper and a strident LNG-terminal opponent, to oversee enforcement of environmental crimes. As head of Riverkeeper, Foster was an especially vocal critic of the Bradwood project.)

This isn't to say the state of Oregon should roll over and allow these big projects to move forward in violation of the state's environmental standards. Quite to the contrary, those standards must be met. Developers of the Bradwood Landing LNG terminal, proposed for a site 20 miles east of Astoria on the Columbia River, agree and have appeared to be working in good faith to do exactly that. But the state last month asked the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to overturn federal regulators' approval of the project on grounds that the regulatory commission's approval was procedurally flawed. Kroger, Gov. Ted Kulongoski and state natural resource agencies contend the federal OK was granted before necessary state permits had been processed or a sufficiently rigorous analysis of its environmental impact was completed.

Fair enough. But state officials should work with the Bradwood developers, Houston-based NorthernStar Natural Gas Inc., and resist the politically easy temptation to side with environmentalists who oppose the project on an array of objections that don't hold up particularly well under scrutiny.

The project remains very much alive, despite the inaccurate spin opponents tried to put on a Jan. 27 decision by the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals. It overturned Clatsop County's zoning approval of the Bradwood proposal, but the action was not the big defeat that opponents claimed it was. Actually, the board, known as LUBA, upheld the county's approval on 19 of the 21 objections filed by critics. The two objections that LUBA found valid appear to be entirely surmountable. The county should be able to address them in a timely manner.

We hope the same can be said for the state. Too many jobs are at stake here for politically driven foot-dragging. And the same is true for a competing project, Oregon LNG's proposed terminal at Warrenton, although that plan has yet to receive federal energy regulators' approval.

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