



# THE FOLDED CRANE

Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility | Fall 2014

## Time to Celebrate: A Major Victory in Preventing Coal Export

*Regna Merritt, Prevent Coal Export Campaign Director*

Great news! First, on August 18<sup>th</sup>, the Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL) denied a key permit to Ambre Energy, the Australian corporation that wants to export over 8 million tons of coal each year to Asia through Oregon and the Columbia Gorge. Then, on September 15<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced that it has stopped all permitting processes for this project.

Huge thanks to everyone who contacted Governor Kitzhaber, the Army Corps, and the Department of State Lands with concerns about the grave risks associated with this project! You, along with 3,000 other medical professionals and public health advocates, participated with a highly effective coalition and with sovereign tribes to score a huge win for the health and safety of all

Oregonians, the Columbia River, and our planet's climate.

After long and careful consideration, DSL denied the permit for the project because:

- the project is not consistent with protection, conservation and best use of water resource;
- the project would unreasonably interfere with the paramount policy of the state to preserve its waters for navigation, fishing and public recreation.

What does this decision mean for Ambre's future? According to our colleagues at Columbia Riverkeeper:

- DSL's decision marks the beginning of the end for Ambre. While Ambre



*Yakama Nation members protest proposed coal export.*

can appeal DSL's decision, this will take years. Ambre cannot begin building its coal dock at the Port of Morrow (Boardman) without the removal-fill permit.

- Without a dock to move coal from land to barges, Ambre has no way of moving over 8 million tons of coal over 200 miles down the Columbia

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## Nuclear Power: A Risky Wager for the Northwest

*Bruce Amundson, MD, Washington PSR Board President & Chuck Johnson, Joint Nuclear Power Task Force Director*

Seattle City Light and its fellow publicly-owned Northwest utilities continue to operate a nuclear power plant of similar vintage and design as the reactors that melted down in Japan in 2011. Now they want to double down with a new series of up to 12 'small modular reactors', designed by Corvallis-based NuScale, at Hanford. That's a risky bet and a surprising one. The previous wager on nuclear energy in the 1980's led to the largest bond default in U.S. history at the time.

Northwest ratepayers are still paying for 3 of the 5 nuclear plants begun by publicly-owned utilities through the Washington Public Power Supply System (WPPSS, or "whoops"). That amounts to 35 percent of the Bonneville Power Administration's annual expenses passed on to residential and business customers throughout our region. The one plant that was actually finished provides only 10 percent of Bonneville's electricity.

Given the poor economics and reliability of nuclear projects in the Pacific Northwest it is imperative that citizens and utilities like Seattle City Light and its fellow board members of Energy Northwest—the former WPPSS was wisely renamed in 1999—carefully assess the financial costs and safety risks associated with renewed development of nuclear power.

The NuScale small modular reactors touted by Energy Northwest for our

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Dear Oregon PSR Supporter:

With your support, Oregon PSR continues to grow in both the scope and the depth of our work. You can read some of the details in this issue of *The Folded Crane*.

We continue working to confront some of the most critically important health issues of our time, and in doing so we are seeing profound connections between effects on human health and our core programs. Whether working to prevent coal transport and export through our region, organizing against a well-heeled nuclear power industry, educating and advocating about the health threats inherent in the toxic chemicals used everywhere around us, addressing the health and environmental threats posed by genetically modified foods, or pushing for more meaningful nuclear abolition policies, we are contributing the voice of medicine and public health to our various coalition efforts.

As part of our work to address the health and humanitarian impacts of global climate change, which we find connections to throughout our programs, our Executive Director Kelly Campbell, Board Member Pat O'Herron, MD and I attended the People's Climate March in New York City, joining other PSR attendees and advocating for recognition of, and sensible approaches to, the growing threats posed by human-induced climate change and the extraction and burning of fossil fuels. We know that these processes release carbon dioxide as well as other such dangerous toxins as mercury, fine particulate matter, sulfur and ozone, all of which contribute to an increase in pulmonary and cardiovascular disease, as well as reproductive problems.

It was a very heartening experience to join optimistic people of all ages, professions, social groups, ethnicities and geographical locations in raising our voices, literally and figuratively, against a policy of denial and defeatism. Addressing climate change has the potential to alleviate many of the



Left to right: Dr. Pat O'Herron, ED Kelly Campbell and her son Finn with Dr. Susan Katz at the People's Climate March.

dire public health consequences of heat waves, water and insect borne illnesses, food and water insecurity, and threats from conflict over scarce resources. We will continue and expand upon our efforts in that direction.

In this issue of *The Folded Crane*, read about this year's very successful and well-attended Hiroshima and Nagasaki commemoration event, our recent public tour of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation, and our support for two upcoming ballot measures (Measure 92, which would protect consumer's rights to know if genetically modified organisms are in our food, and Measure 88, which would help individuals who cannot now obtain a driver's license to do so, thereby improving public health and health equity in Oregon).

We could not engage in this important work without your continued support. Your financial support is needed, as are your ideas, your time, and your energy. If you are ready to take the next step in being an advocate for a more healthy and peaceful world, please contact us to learn about volunteering, joining one of our work groups, or joining our Board of Directors or Advisory Board. We welcome your input, and we thank you for your continued support.

In Peace and Health,

Susan Katz MD, Board President

## Time to Celebrate: A Major Victory in Preventing Coal Exports *(continued from page 1)*

- River to a dock at Port Westward.
- Ambre has filed an administrative appeal. An administrative law judge will conduct a hearing and determine if DSL's decision is consistent with state law.
  - If the administrative judge upholds DSL's decision, Ambre can appeal to the Oregon Court of Appeals.
  - If the court of appeals upholds DSL's decision, Ambre can appeal to the Oregon Supreme Court, which can choose to hear the appeal or deny Ambre's petition review.

This process will likely take years. In the meantime, we celebrate!

"We are pleased the State of Oregon acknowledges our Treaty rights in its decision denying Ambre Energy's permit application," said Yakama Nation Tribal Council Chairman JoDe Goudy. "But this is only the beginning of what I expect will be a long fight. Yakama Nation will not rest until the entire regional threat posed by the coal industry to our ancestral lands and waters is eradicated... Today, however, we thank and stand in solidarity with the State of Oregon, and celebrate its decision to protect the Columbia River from further damage and degradation."

Our governor made the right decision

when he broadly opposed coal exports based on climate impacts and other concerns. The DSL made the right decision in denying the permit based on the need to protect our waters. Northwest communities deserve and will accept nothing less than this kind of leadership that protects human health.

We celebrate this landmark victory, but our work is not finished. Together we'll work to permanently protect our health and our climate from this threat and others, including Ambre's plans for a new coal export facility at Longview, Washington. Follow us on Facebook to learn of timely opportunities to help.

## Vote Yes on Measure 92 to Label Genetically Modified (GM) Foods

*Martin Donohoe, MD, FACP, Oregon PSR Advisory Board Member*

GM crops are created through the insertion of DNA from another organism (plant or animal) into a plant's nucleus. Most are designed to be herbicide-resistant; a smaller amount confer resistance to insect pests. GM crops are grown commercially in 28 countries and cover half of total U.S. cropland. GM crops are found in 85% of processed food, yet only 1 in 4 Americans thinks they have ever eaten GM foods.

### Human Health, Environmental and Economic Consequences

GM crops have been associated with many adverse health effects in animal and human studies, including damage to multiple organs, tumors, changes in immune mediators, impaired fertility/miscarriages, allergies, and premature death. As evolution would predict, those engineered to resist herbicides have developed resistance, leading to increased herbicide use. While insecticide use initially decreased, many insects have now developed resistance to

plants engineered for pest resistance, leading to increased insecticide use. Herbicides and insecticides are toxic to the blood, liver, kidney, brain, and reproductive systems. According to the EPA, each year in the U.S., farm workers suffer 300,000 pesticide-related illnesses; the WHO estimates that 1 million people have died worldwide due to pesticides in the last 6 years. And, the National Academy of Sciences has stated that pesticides in food could cause up to 1 million cancers in the current generation of Americans.

GM crops damage the environment when genes initially designed to protect crops from herbicides are transferred to native weeds, creating "superweeds" resistant to multiple agents. Furthermore, almost 400 GM crop contamination events occurred between 1996 and 2013, many of them in countries where GM crops have never been planted, costing farmers billions of dollars.

GM seeds are produced by large agri-

cultural biotech corporations, which make billions in profit and spend millions on lobbying and campaign donations to inhibit sensible rules and regulations. In the mid-1970s, none of the over 7,000 companies then operating controlled more than 0.5% of the world seed market. Today, Monsanto (the largest), DuPont, and Syngenta control over 50%. These companies also make the herbicides that are sprayed on the crops, thus profiting from both seed and herbicide sales. Monsanto is the company that brought the world toxic compounds such as Agent Orange, PCBs, DDT, and dioxins. It has an extensive record of pollution, criminal activity, financial malfeasance, lawsuits against farmers whose fields have been contaminated with their (unwanted) GM seeds, bribery, human rights violations, and other ethical improprieties.

Despite claims that GM foods are the solution to world hunger, most are utilized for animal feed and biofuels production, and no GM crop has ever

*(continued on page 5)*



## Nuclear Power: A Risky Wager for the Northwest *(continued from page 1)*

region are not a revolutionary new design. They are, instead, smaller versions of the light water reactor technology most familiar to the nuclear power industry. The problem of how to permanently contain highly dangerous plutonium waste, along with radioactive cesium and strontium and other deadly byproducts of nuclear fission, remains an unsolved Achilles heel. These reactors use standard enriched uranium fuel. The process of mining and milling that uranium has severely contaminated lands throughout North America, including the Spokane Indian Reservation in Washington.

At this stage in the design process, NuScale engineers claim a couple of advantages over the Columbia Generating Station (or CGS, the former WPPSS #2 reactor), a GE Boiling Water Reactor that Energy Northwest operates on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation:

1. By suspending up to twelve 45 megawatt reactors in a large, underground water tank with passive cooling systems, designers hope to avoid the vulnerability of the GE Boiling Water Reactors to a loss of coolant accident and resulting hydrogen explosions, as happened in Fukushima.
2. Its extremely hot spent fuel would be stored underwater below ground, unlike at the CGS, which has its spent fuel pool suspended six stories above ground, making it vulnerable to a massive radioactive release should the pool suddenly lose water.
3. NuScale officials claim that the standard model will be rated for up to .5 g

(as in g-force) ground motion in an earthquake, unlike the CGS which was licensed in 1984 with a design basis of withstanding up to .25 g ground motion (U.S. Geological Survey scientists have now revised their estimates for the area, citing a potential for .6 g ground motion in an earthquake at Hanford).

Nevertheless, even if you ignore the long-term waste storage issues and uranium mining wastes associated with small modular reactors, and accept NuScale's design safety claims, it is still premature to jump on the SMR bandwagon. In the first place, their design remains unproven. Despite receiving the commitment of \$217 million in federal matching funds, NuScale recently announced it will delay submitting its design to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission until Fall of 2016, delaying the approval process by a year. According to NuScale documents, 2023 would be the soonest a prototype could be operational at the Idaho National Laboratory.

Even more damaging to the future of SMRs are estimates of the actual price of building them. Throughout the world, sticker shock on construction of new full-sized nuclear power plant designs has slowed new purchases of reactors to a trickle. It will be even more challenging to keep costs down in smaller reactors and overcome the economy of scale issue that has always argued for building commercial reactors big enough to recoup the expensive construction cost with large-scale electricity production when finished.

NuScale claims that small reactors can overcome the higher per-kilowatt cost with mass production, an easing in regulation and redundant safety systems, due to the "inherently safe" design. Studies this past year by researchers at the University of Vermont and Princeton, among others, estimate that the cost of creating the supply chain needed to manufacture SMRs at a competitive price would be as high as \$90 billion. Without massive government subsidies, building small modular reactors would be financially unattractive to intelligent utility leadership. The argument that mass factory production of these reactors would lower the price collapses even further if errors in production make it necessary to recall and replace parts.

Given these uncertainties, it is shocking that Energy Northwest continues to place these experimental new nuclear plants at the center of its long-term energy strategies. We call on Seattle City Light and the other utility members of Energy Northwest to reverse this policy and focus instead on proven wind, solar and, above all, energy conservation strategies, which are affordable and non-polluting alternatives to carbon fuels.

Further, we ask Energy Northwest to acknowledge the inherently unsafe design of its existing reactor on the Columbia River (otherwise, why consider a new design?) It is time to close the Columbia Generating Station until it can be shown to meet earthquake and other safety standards, and replace it with less expensive renewable energy alternatives.



### Oregon PSR Supports Measure 88—Safe Roads for All Oregon

Measure 88 would provide a way for individuals who cannot now apply for a driver's license to do so. The passage of Measure 88 would improve public health and health equity in our state, and build toward our vision of a healthy, just and peaceful world for all.

## Vote Yes on Measure 92 to Label Genetically Modified (GM) Foods *(continued from page 3)*

been marketed that is drought-resistant, flood-resistant, increases yield, or will solve nutritional deficiencies (which can already be solved relatively inexpensively through traditional agriculture, supplements, and political and social will). Instead, our government and agricultural biotech corporations have attempted to undermine the financial security of countries facing famine by offering only GM food aid, which could devastate their export economies, which rely on the sale of non-GM crops to Europe and elsewhere. The UN's Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights has said that poverty is exacerbated by GM seeds.

### Vote Yes on Measure 92

Earlier this year, voters in Jackson and Josephine Counties passed bans on GM foods, as have other US localities. In November, Oregon voters will have the opportunity to vote on Measure 92, which would require labeling of GM foods in the state. In 2002, opponents of a similar bill outspent proponents \$5.5 million to \$200,000, with most of the opposition's money coming from agricultural corporations headquartered outside the state. Many polls conducted then and since show broad support for labeling in the U.S. (85-90%). Sixty-four countries already require labeling, and many have banned GM foods.

Foods are already labeled in the U.S. for vitamin, mineral, calorie, and fat content, sulfites, sources of proteins, kosher/halal, and in some cases country of origin. When the European Union adopted labeling in the late 1990's, Monsanto ran an ad in the United Kingdom that read: "Monsanto fully supports... these labels. We believe you should be aware of all the facts before making a purchase." Indeed, Measure 92 is about the public's right to know what goes into our food.

Opponents will no doubt, as they did in 2002, call labeling supporters anti-technology zealots and spread misinformation about labeling being required for things like church bake sales and dog food. They will scare voters with unfounded claims of grocery price increases. However, when the EU passed labeling, food prices did not increase, and Consumers Union has predicted no increased prices if Measure 92 passes. Indeed, companies change their labeling all the time (think "new and improved").

Oregon PSR and our Healthy Food Program support a YES vote on Measure 92. For more information, visit [oregonrighttoknow.org](http://oregonrighttoknow.org) and see Oregon PSR's statement in your voter guide.



Oregon PSR supports mandatory labeling of genetically modified foods. We believe consumers have the right to know what is in their food and make informed decisions about what they eat.

While advocating for policies that mandate GMO labeling, Oregon PSR also partners with Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) on the Healthy Food in Health Care Program to educate and mobilize the health care sector to support healthy and sustainable food systems. As large purchasers of food, hospitals and other health care institutions are driving sustainable markets by purchasing non-GM foods to the extent possible and sourcing from suppliers that demonstrate a commitment to providing non-GM products.

## Reflections on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation

*Sean Tenney, Associate Director*

On July 31<sup>st</sup>, a contingent of Oregon and Washington PSR members and staff joined the public tour of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation near Richland, WA. After nearly half a century of producing materials for the U.S. nuclear weapons program, Hanford is now one of the most contaminated places on Earth.

In the late 1980's, a massive cleanup effort began at Hanford, one which would prove to be among the largest, most expensive and longest-running in history. After decades of work and billions of taxpayer dollars spent, the site remains severely contaminated, with new leaks of radioactive materials having been discovered earlier this

year and cleanup schedule extensions and cost overruns typical.

Here are just a few of the observations that members of the Hanford tour had:

"I was very impressed by the amount of effort, technological know-how and teamwork that went into constructing

*(continued on next page)* **5**

## Reflections on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation *(continued from previous page)*

Hanford, and was struck by the idea of how much good could have been accomplished for humanity with such a complex endeavor, as opposed to creating weapons capable of destroying it. I'd recommend taking the tour to anyone interested in it, as it is educational from both an historic viewpoint and as it relates to issues facing our region today."

"It is a monumental cleanup effort, one so massive in scope that it is difficult to foresee much substantive progress being made. The mess is just too big, and there don't appear to be any really good solutions for dealing with it."

"I had no idea that Hanford was so huge and the scope of the problem so enormous. I came away with the feeling that the place may never be cleaned up."

"It was amazing to see reactors cocooned for 75 years because they don't know what to do with them."

"At Hanford it seemed that there was a recognition that, except for the lowest level of radioactive waste, the solutions practiced there are far from perfect and in many cases only temporary. Though discouraging that that is true, it is reassuring that it is recognized."

"It is reassuring that some of the people we were able to talk with described a standard of conscientiously working to evaluate and measure the practices that are currently being used. As with many other situations it is just depressing to puzzle over why and how we found it necessary to get ourselves in such a mess."

Oregon PSR organizes groups to participate in the Hanford public tour annually. For more information on joining next year's tour, please contact us at 503-274-2720.

## Hiroshima, Nagasaki & The Old & New Faces of Nuclear Weapons

*Sean Tenney, Associate Director*

Our sincere thanks to everyone who supported and attended the 2014 commemoration of the 69<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6<sup>th</sup> in Portland. We had a great turnout for the event, and were pleased to see so many people gathered together to commemorate the loss of life and to learn more and get involved with nuclear abolition efforts.

The theme for this year's event was *The Old & New Faces of Nuclear Weapons*, which we chose to emphasize how nuclear weapons have evolved from their tragic use at Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the uranium munitions used in modern warfare and ever more dangerous weapons currently being developed. We asked our audience to sign the petition in support of the Marshall Island's lawsuit against the nine nuclear-armed nations for failing to comply with non-proliferation treaties, adding more than 150 signatures in support of this effort. Our speakers included Congressman Earl Blumenauer, who has sponsored new legislation to cut funding for

nuclear weapons, and retired Army Colonel Ann Wright, who famously resigned her U.S. State Department position in protest of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Congressman Blumenauer discussed the need for political action to cut spending on nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. Ann Wright spoke on the folly of nuclear weapons, including uranium munitions, and on the need for citizen activism in creating a nuclear-free future.

Our emcee, Chisao Hata, did a fantastic job, and we had a tremendously entertaining musical performance by en Taiko, a group of talented young taiko performers with contagious energy and enthusiasm. The event also featured a compelling interactive art project by Anna Daedalus and Kerry Davis entitled *River Shadow Scroll*, in which a scroll of fabric imprinted with images of Hanford



*en Taiko performs at The Old & New Faces of Nuclear Weapons, our 2014 commemoration event (photo courtesy of David Adler).*

and the Columbia River was moved through the assembled audience, its serpentine motion symbolizing the motion of this life-giving river.

We hope that you will join us again next year in commemorating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. For more information, or to get involved with our planning committee of diverse organizations and individuals, please contact us. To stay informed on this and other events, visit our website or follow us on Facebook and Twitter.



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