

## **OpEd: Beyond Jordan Cove: Healing what is broken**

*By: Jan Musgrove Elfers and Peter Sergienko, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon*

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's (EMO) members and our interfaith partners share a common reverence for the natural world. Whether understood as guardianship, mindfulness or stewardship, we are called to be in a caring relationship with the Earth. A version of the Golden Rule—treating others as we wish to be treated—is also a common core teaching across religious traditions. It calls on us to be in caring relationships with one another.

It should be possible to hold these two core beliefs simultaneously. Yet the conventional framework for economic development forces us to choose: jobs or the environment. You can stand with nature and wildlife or you can stand with your neighbor who needs work, but you can't do both. Nowhere is this inadequate and broken framing more evident than the proposed Jordan Cove Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and Pacific Connector Pipeline project.

This project involves construction of an LNG storage, compression and export facility on 240 acres of land on a sand spit at the northern end of the shipping channel into Coos Bay. A 230-mile pipeline across Klamath, Douglas, Jackson and Coos Counties would bring methane to the facility from Canada and the Mountain West. The facility would compress the gas into LNG for export to Asia. None would be sold in the United States.

Our religious beliefs also call for truth and honesty. In truth, we are in the midst of a global environmental crisis. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recently concluded that human caused greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced from 2010 levels by 45 percent by 2030 and by 100 percent by 2050 to preserve even a modestly reasonable chance of avoiding dangerous climate change, which, by definition, would threaten human civilization.

Lamentably, the environmental crisis extends beyond climate. The ecosystems that sustain all life have been severely compromised by centuries of industrialization and human expansion. Sixty percent of the world's wildlife has been eradicated in the last 40 years. There is literally no ecologically significant wilderness left in Oregon. We are approaching a mass extinction event on a scale last seen when the dinosaurs died out some 65 million years ago.

Unfortunately, the Jordan Cove project would leave a permanent, 230-mile long scar across the state, harming wildlife, rivers, streams and forests. It would be by far the largest source of carbon pollution in the state. While the project would create both temporary and permanent employment, it should not be built. The belief that the environmental damage it would cause can adequately be mitigated or offset no longer comports with reality. There is nowhere else to turn.

Yet through our governmental structures, projects such as Jordan Cove continue to be processed and approved in the misguided belief that people can continue to bargain with nature. Our scientists have told us clearly that we cannot.

As people of faith, we acknowledge our own contributions to the environmental crisis and to entrenched viewpoints that make change difficult. Christian belief in humankind's God-given right to dominion over nature has been a major contributing factor. The Doctrine of Discovery provided theological cover for the genocide of indigenous peoples and for the belief in Europeans' Manifest Destiny to settle North America. These are not our current beliefs, but the irreparable harm done in

their name is true. We are flawed messengers as a result and we are truly sorry for our transgressions against our fellow humans and God's creation.

In making amends, we are awakening to the reality of the intimate, sacred interconnections between people and all life. We more clearly understand that our well-being depends on the well-being of nature. Therefore, now is the time for abundant life. Now is the time to reject fear, division and scarcity. Now is the time to preserve, protect and restore our natural environments. Now is the time for family wage jobs, affordable housing and health care, good education, clean air and water, and healthy food. Now is the time for justice so that all communities and people may thrive.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon stands for the full realization of human potential for all Oregonians. This becomes possible only when our shared, basic needs as a human family are met. In the context of projects such as Jordan Cove, EMO will continue to advocate and work for environmental preservation and protection and for a godly economy that values abundant life for all rather than excess for a few.

Jan Musgrove Elfers, president, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon  
Peter Sergienko, board member, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon  
0245 SW Bancroft St., Suite B, Portland OR 97239  
(503) 221-1054  
jelfers@emoregon.org  
petersergienko@gmail.com