

League of Women Voters (Coos County)

Informational Presentation The Jordan Cove Energy Project

April 18, 2019

A. The South Coast Economy:

- The Coos Bay area economy in the late 19th Century and for most of the twentieth century has been smokestack industries, overwhelmingly sawmills.
- This begins when the big C. A. Smith Lumber Co. began sawing logs in 1908.
- The "Big Mill" and its extensive operations were the chief employers on the bay until Weyerhaeuser opened in big mill in 1951.
- The operations of the Big Mill and its successors extended from timberlands high above the town of Powers, cutting lumber shipped to San Francisco.
- That arrangement—in good times and bad—lasted through changes in ownership until Georgia Pacific closed its plywood mill in July 1979, the largest single operation to shut down in Coos County.

B. The Early 1980s were Transformative for the Coos Economy:

- The epidemic of mill closures—Al Pierce (Dec. 1979); Cape Arago (1980); Coos Head (1980), G-P Hardboard Mill (1980)
- The Coos Bay area was part of a rash of mill closures in Oregon and the Northwest during the 1980s.
- When I visited here doing research (1983-1985), local and state officials were pushing a variety of proposals that people I interviewed referred to as "chasing smokestacks!"
- Among them, the Port of Coos Bay was the most aggressive:
- Promoting the estuary as a staging area to build off-shore drilling platforms and as a potential visiting stop for "Love Boat" cruises.
- Those efforts took place amid a dramatic decline in industrial jobs and

expanding work in retail and the service sector (and lower wages).

- In the mid-1980s, the North Bend City Council floated a proposal to put up a facility on the North Spit to build ocean oil rigs.
- The scheme, which meant filling 168 acres of wetland, died when the Corps of Engineers denied the projects wetland mitigation plan.
- Local historian Lionel Youst told me at the time that like other projects for the North Spit, they all died "for one reason or another."
- **Demographic changes:** Since the 1980s, the Bay's population has aged, giving a boost to the community college and Bay Area Hospital.

C. Economic Development Since 1985:

- In 1987 Oregon Business Review published "Charleston's Facelift," reporting that Charleston worked with officials to improve the area's attraction:
 - To eliminate fish plant odors;
 - New buildings at the Institute of Marine Biology (replacing CCC Structures;
 - stepped up law enforcement to prevent vandalism.
- In the early 1990s a **Distant Water Fleet Facility** opened in Charleston to repair and restore small ships.
- In 2013, the Charleston Harbor Master Plan Update presented proposals for continuing adjustments to improve the harbor area.
- Mid 1990s: G-P opens a state-of-the-art sawmill with 125 workers on three shifts to cut small logs. **News Flash:** The mill closes in June (111 workers!).
- Southport opened a small mill on Isthmus Slough with 55-65 workers to specialize in cutting very small logs.
- CyberRep purchased a small **call center** in 2000, moved it to North Bend Airport. Employed some 500 people in 2005 at modest wages.
- First Call Resolution, founded in Roseburg, presently operates a call center in Coos Bay — unable to find number of employees.

D. Prospects Ahead:

- Coos Bay's present-day treasure is its waterfront, the upper bay, the waterfronts of North Bend south to Coos Bay.
- Considerable modernization has already taken place, the boardwalk, the County Historical Museum, and the Mill Casino and visitors it attracts.
- A new project, still in the planning stages, **Coos Bay Village**, a waterfront location north of the Museum proposes restaurants and retail establishments.
- The proposal is seeking national and regional investors.
- On the lower bay, at approximately mile five, is the *Hollering Place*, a project of the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians.
- Designed to be a cultural resource center, with vacation cottages, a restaurant, event center, with retail space, the location will also offer ready access to the bay.
 - Construction of the seawall has been completed.
- The tribe originally planned a large hotel complex but prudently decided that might be pound foolish in light of THE BIG ONE — earthquakes and tsunamis!
 - Location—2.5 to 3 miles from Jordan Cove!

Summary: The successful economic development projects since the mid-1980s have been relatively small enterprises, some of them relying on federal and state funding.

None of the initiatives have been on the scale of the Jordan Cove LNG Terminal.

None of them pose a threat to the life and welfare of the citizens of Coos Bay.

None of them require deep dredging in the bay and creating huge spoils islands.

The projects that are currently on the drawing board will add to Coos Bay's attractiveness.

LNG is yesterday's project, a 20th-century enterprise!

Last Note: The USS Coral Sea in the Mediterranean in 1955! 968 feet!