

Pipeline protest forming.(Eugene)

The Register-Guard (Eugene, OR) - March 4, 2015

Unavailable

Word count: 1961.

[citation details](#)

Byline: Christian Hill The Register-Guard

The white banners on six homes across from Washburne Park are hard to miss. In big red letters each proclaims: "Condemned."

Also hard to miss is the "pipeline" that runs in front of each of these homes on East 21st Avenue. But the mock display is an example of creativity put to the test, rather than local government run amok.

Eugene resident Mary DeMocker, a freelance writer, artist and harp instructor, is using the blocklong interactive art installation to raise awareness and public opposition to a proposed 232-mile natural gas pipeline that would run through Douglas County and other parts of southwestern Oregon.

"People are saying, 'What? This is Keystone, right?' and I say, 'No, it's about Oregon.' 'What do you mean, a pipeline in Oregon?' They have no idea, which is why we're doing it."

The pipeline, called the Pacific Connector Gas Pipeline, would transport natural gas bound for Pacific Rim markets to a proposed liquefied natural gas terminal at the Port of Coos Bay.

Supporters of the project, which is in the midst of environmental review, say they would represent an economic boon for the community hard hit by the loss of timber jobs.

But DeMocker joins environmentalists and others who see the projects as a raw deal for private landowners, the state and the planet.

Her installation, titled "Condemned? You Decide," draws attention to the ability of the pipeline company, a joint venture of two energy companies, U.S.-based Williams and Canadian-based Veresen, to use the power of eminent domain so it can run the pipeline through privately owned land.

Eminent domain is the power to take private property if a court decides there's a public necessity and a landowner is compensated fairly for the loss. The power is vested with governments, but the federal government extended it to pipeline companies in the 1930s.

"Why does my right as a landowner not hold the same right that a Canadian company has to come and take my land?" asked Debby McGee, who along with DeMocker co-founded a Eugene chapter of 350.org, an advocacy group fighting climate change. "That part makes me mad, too."

Critics also contend the proposed pipeline would harm wildlife, spoil waterways and contribute to climate change by releasing heat-trapping methane into the atmosphere.

The local chapter of 350.org has donated money to the art installation, estimated to cost \$600, and it and others have assisted DeMocker with the art installation.

George Angerbauer, spokesman for the pipeline project, said the company's intent is to purchase land rights through negotiations with private landowners rather than to run to court to take it from them involuntarily.

"The use of eminent domain is something we would use rarely, only as a last resort," Angerbauer said in an email. "If landowners sit down with us and talk about what we're seeking, they'll find we're not after their land. They'll find we are reasonable and want to work with them, especially in accommodating how they use their property."

He said the company is negotiating with about 650 landowners, and it has reached agreement with an unspecified number of them. He said he's unaware of the company filing any condemnation actions.

DeMocker plans to open her art installation at 5 p.m. today with a press conference featuring two Douglas County landowners who are fighting to prevent the pipeline from running across their land. The display ends Sunday.

The opening comes on the eve of the start of the annual Public Interest Environmental Law Conference, which runs through Sunday at the University of Oregon School of Law five blocks away.

DeMocker will moderate a panel discussion Thursday afternoon on "creative disruption," or the use of art, music and the written word to mobilize distracted citizens to political action.

Other panelists include 350.org founder Bill McKibben and Earth Guardians youth director Xiuhtezcatl Roske-Martinez, 13.

"It's hard to get people's attention, and we're all fatigued," explained DeMocker, who for three years has used her front yard as a canvas for art projects to advocate for a just and healthy world. "How do we cut through that cynicism and fatigue to have people look at something that is important to their lives?"

The installation struck a chord with Suma Elan, who lives in the neighborhood and walked by it with a friend Tuesday afternoon.

She said her parents lost their home to eminent domain in Sacramento a long time ago so that officials could pave the way for a new highway.

"It's a powerful way to make a statement about what it really could mean," she said. "People need something to make it real."

One remaining task for DeMocker is to secure a \$54 right-of-way permit from Eugene city officials to run the mock pipeline - metal hoops reinforced with wooden stakes and wrapped in black roofing plastic - across a 14-foot-wide public alley that provides access to several homes.

The residents of the alley, which also is accessible using East 22nd Avenue, support the temporary closure, DeMocker said. But both she and a city official said the city is requiring that she carry \$2 million in liability insurance so that the public is held harmless in the event of an accident or other claim.

DeMocker is still searching for that coverage but said she's not sure whether the pipeline would run across the alley if she can't secure the permit.

The city also is requiring that organizers block off the alley with barricades, a sign and lights.

Painting signs in DeMocker's backyard Tuesday afternoon with two other 350.org members, McGee said she's on top of it.

"Maybe we'll get those flashing lights, right?" McGee offered. "Solar."

Follow Christian on Twitter @RGchill. Email christian.hill@registerguard.com.

"People are saying, 'What? This is Keystone, right?' and I say, 'No, it's about Oregon.' 'What do you mean, a pipeline in Oregon?' They have no idea, which is why we're doing it."

The pipeline, called the Pacific Connector Gas Pipeline, would transport natural gas bound for Pacific Rim markets to a proposed liquefied natural gas terminal at the Port of Coos Bay.

Supporters of the project, which is in the midst of environmental review, say they would represent an economic boon for the community hard-hit by the loss of timber jobs.

But DeMocker joins environmentalists and others who see the projects as a raw deal for private landowners, the state and the planet.

Her installation, titled "Condemned? You Decide," draws attention to the ability of the pipeline company, a joint venture of two energy companies, U.S.-based Williams and

Canadian-based Veresen, to use the power of eminent domain so it can run the pipeline through privately owned land.

Eminent domain is the power to take private property if a court decides there's a public necessity and a landowner is compensated fairly for the loss. The power is vested with governments, but the federal government extended it to pipeline companies in the 1930s.

"Why does my right as a landowner not hold the same right that a Canadian company has to come and take my land?" asked Debby McGee, who along with DeMocker co-founded a Eugene chapter of 350.org, an advocacy group fighting climate change. "That part makes me mad, too."

Critics also contend the proposed pipeline would harm wildlife, spoil waterways and contribute to climate change by releasing heat-trapping methane into the atmosphere.

The local chapter of 350.org has donated money to the art installation, estimated to cost \$600, and it and others have assisted DeMocker with the art installation.

George Angerbauer, spokesman for the pipeline project, said the company's intent is to purchase land rights through negotiations with private landowners rather than to run to court to take it from them involuntarily.

"The use of eminent domain is something we would use rarely, only as a last resort," Angerbauer said in an email. "If landowners sit down with us and talk about what we're seeking, they'll find we're not after their land. They'll find we are reasonable and want to work with them, especially in accommodating how they use their property."

He said the company is negotiating with about 650 landowners, and it has reached agreement with an unspecified number of them. He said he's unaware of the company filing any condemnation actions.

DeMocker plans to open her art installation at 5 p.m. today with a press conference featuring two Douglas County landowners who are fighting to prevent the pipeline from running across their land. The display ends Sunday.

The opening comes on the eve of the start of the Public Interest Environmental Law Conference, which runs through Sunday at the University of Oregon School of Law five blocks away.

DeMocker will moderate a panel discussion Thursday afternoon on "creative disruption," or the use of art, music and the written word to mobilize distracted citizens to political action.

Other panelists include 350.org founder Bill McKibben and Earth Guardians youth director Xiuhtezcatl Roske-Martinez, 13.

"It's hard to get people's attention, and we're all fatigued," explained DeMocker, who for three years has used her front yard as a canvas for art projects to advocate for a just and healthy world. "How do we cut through that cynicism and fatigue to have people look at something that is important to their lives?"

The installation struck a chord with Suma Elan, who lives in the neighborhood and walked by it with a friend Tuesday.

She said her parents lost their home to eminent domain in Sacramento a long time ago so that officials could pave the way for a new highway. "It's a powerful way to make a statement about what it really could mean," she said. "People need something to make it real."

One remaining task for DeMocker is to secure a \$54 right-of-way permit from Eugene city officials to run the mock pipeline - metal hoops reinforced with wooden stakes and wrapped in black roofing plastic - across a 14-foot-wide public alley that provides access to several homes.

The residents of the alley, which also is accessible using East 22nd Avenue, support the temporary closure, DeMocker said. But both she and a city official said the city is requiring that she carry \$2 million in liability insurance so that the public is held harmless in the event of an accident or other claim.

DeMocker is still searching for that coverage but said she's not sure whether the pipeline would run across the alley if she can't secure the permit.

The city also is requiring that organizers block off the alley with barricades, a sign and lights.

Painting signs in DeMocker's backyard Tuesday with two other 350.org members, McGee said she's on top of it. "Maybe we'll get those flashing lights, right?" McGee offered. "Solar."

Follow Christian on Twitter @RGchill. Email christian.hill@registerguard.com.

Citation Details

Title: Pipeline protest forming.(Eugene)

Author: Unavailable

Publication: *The Register-Guard (Eugene, OR)* (Newspaper)

Date: March 4, 2015

Publisher: The Register Guard

Page: A1

