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Hands Across The Border

GSX questioned in Whatcom County

According to a report in the *Bellingham Herald*, the Bellingham environmental group RE Sources wants the proposed natural gas pipeline across Whatcom County (Washington State) to be put on hold until the US federal government reconsiders an alternative route through Canada—where the gas would be used.

Whatcom County residents and government agencies are responding to a draft environmental review by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) of the proposed 85-mile Georgia-Strait Crossing Project pipeline. Research presented by FERC on the impact of the pipeline on wildlife, fish, and birds was said to be 'inadequate.'

The *Herald* reported that Robyn du Pre, the North Sound Baykeeper with local environmental group RE Sources, wrote that the environmental review also fails to account for impacts on the Great Blue Heron colony at Cherry Point and ground fish around the San Juan Islands, where the pipeline will pass.

'Stating that the pipeline will not adversely affect these

species because they 'can swim away' is close to absurd,' du Pre wrote about the FERC's statement in the environmental review.

The most pointed criticism of FERC's review of the project came from the federal US Environmental Protection Agency, which said that FERC failed to consider all the environmental effects of the project, including where the pipeline crosses into Canada. For example, the EPA criticizes FERC's requirement that before construction begins, the pipeline company create a conservation plan to protect against destroying habitat of the marbled murrelet. The bird is listed as 'threatened' on the federal Endangered Species List. EPA officials wrote that a conservation plan should be done before the project is approved and should be included in the environmental review.

RE Sources expressed concern about the project's impacts on the state's crabbing industry. The same concern has been raised by fishers on the Canadian side of the border. ☞

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Island Tides, Box 55, Pender Island, BC, Canada. Phone: 250-629-3660. Fax: 250-629-3838.
Email: islandtides@islandtides.com. Website: <http://www.islandtides.com>

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*Island Tides, Box 55, Pender Island, BC, Canada. Phone: 250-629-3660. Fax: 250-629-3838.
Email: islandtides@gulfislands.com. Website: <http://www.islandtides.com>*
