

Executive Summary: Opposition Ramping Up Multi-Narrative Media Offensive

Jordan Cove Project (JCP) opponents have actively taken steps during the past week to flood social and local print media to portray local populations as overwhelmingly opposed to the project. These groups have attempted to capitalize on high profile events last week—such as the Oregon Department of State Lands-hosted town halls and Governor Kate Brown’s inauguration—to advance the perception that Oregonians reject the JCP and to advocate for renewable energy infrastructure projects. We assess that opposition groups are attempting to use these narratives, as well as those backing the rights of indigenous cultures, to bolster their support within local communities while also facilitating outreach with national organizations that are able to provide resources and fundraising.

Jordan Cove Opponents Declare Messaging Victory Following State Permit Hearings

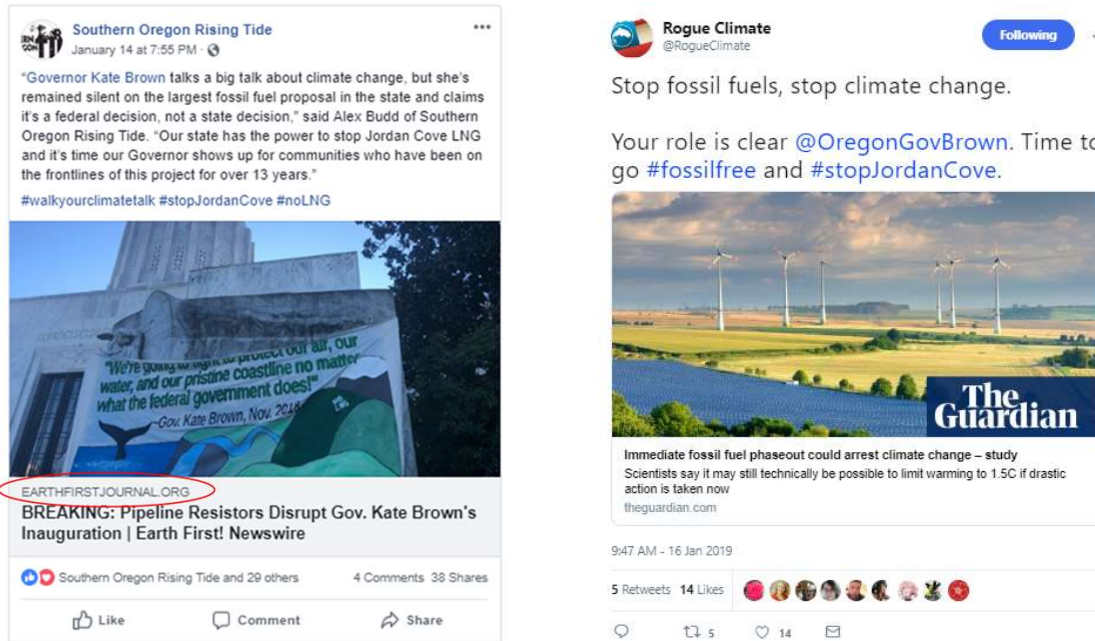
Jordan Cove Project (JCP) opponents have capitalized on ongoing media coverage of Oregon Department of State Land (ODSL) hearings to flood social and local print media to portray the local population as overwhelmingly against the project. Spearheaded by local opposition groups Rogue Climate and Stop Jordan Cove, opponents published at least 20 letters-to-the-editor, op-ed, and blog posts decrying the project as a “bad deal” for the region. These missives have largely repeated the arguments that ODSL meeting attendees made last week, citing erroneous information about the pipeline, framing the debate as a community issue and emphasizing potential harms the project could harm the area. These articles have also continued to publish inflated—and in some cases, doubled—statistics regarding the number of meeting attendees to bolster the perception that a majority of the community oppose the project.

Opposition group’s successful domination of the narrative surrounding coverage of the OSDL hearings demonstrates their significant ability to not only mobilize hearing attendance, as highlighted in previous reports, but also to coordinate and maintain the arguments advanced by those attendees. Without active communication efforts to counter their narrative following those meetings, pipeline opponents will continue to deploy similar tactics that allow them to frame JCP as a threat to local communities’ way of life while simultaneously presenting local populations as intractably against the project. These compelling storylines will facilitate local groups’ fundraising and outreach efforts to national groups, bolstering the resources at their disposal while also risking the inclusion of national groups willing to pursue more dangerous tactics that would threaten JCP and Pembina.

Activists Use Gubernatorial Inauguration To Voice Opposition and Demonstrate Partnerships

Oregon-based climate change activists used Governor Kate Brown’s inauguration on 14 January to protest the Jordan Cove Project (JCP), highlighting their ability to operate within the state and also demonstrating links with a national activist organizing platform. Activists affiliated with Southern Oregon Rising Tide (SORT) interrupted Brown’s inaugural address to demand she direct state agencies to deny state permits to JCP, unfurling a large banner reading “Hey Kate: Walk your climate talk. Support the frontlines, stop the pipeline.” These actions, quickly halted by state police, have since galvanized a powerful social media campaign against Brown: since Monday, at least 100 social media users have echoed SORT’s call for Brown to reject JCP applications (Figure 1).

Figure 1

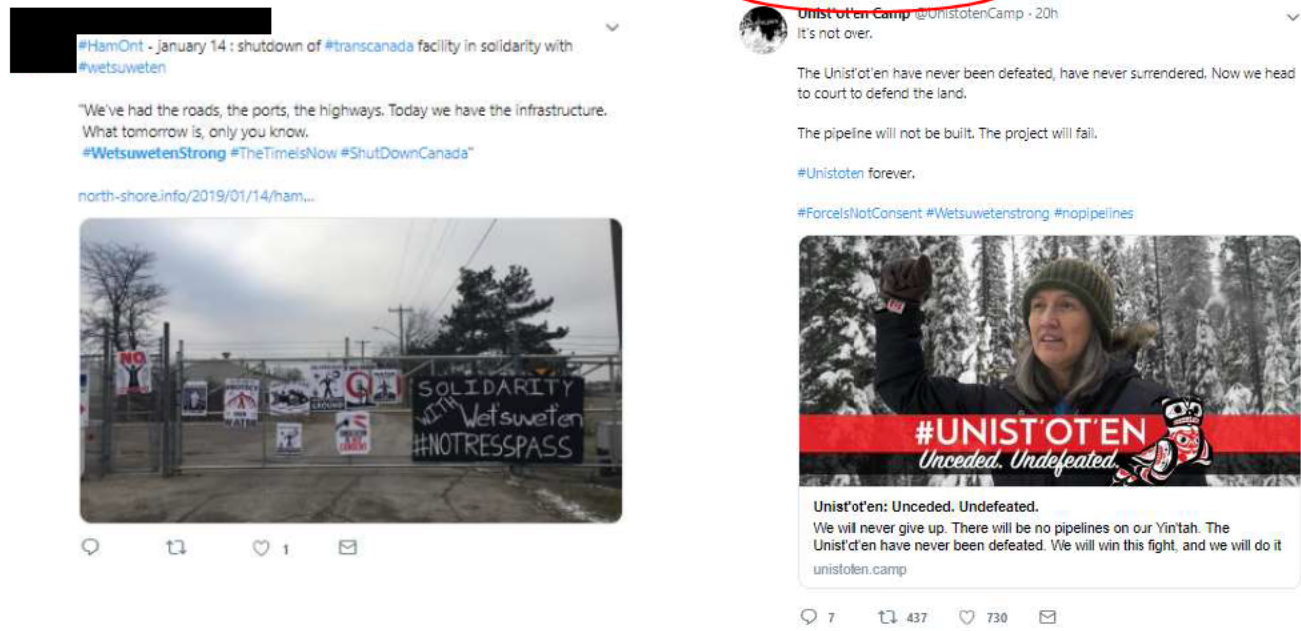


Additionally, the SORT protest, sparsely covered in mainstream media, received prominent attention from Earth First!, a highly-decentralized climate organization advocating methods ranging from “grassroots and legal organizing to civil disobedience and monkeywrenching.” Earth First!’s publication of the article probably stems primarily from an attempt to bolster its relationships with local activist groups in southern Oregon rather than a national mobilization against JCP: in late 2018, Earth First! relocated its primary offices from Florida to the southern Oregon town of Grants Pass, located approximately 40 miles west of the regional center of Medford and near to the proposed Pacific Connector route. However, the publication suggests that Earth First! and SORT will continue to coordinate actions, heightening the potential that Earth First! may in the future attempt to use its national audience to draw attention and resources towards the JCP as the project progresses.

Jordan Cove Opponents Continue To Rally Around Indigenous Issues

Individuals and groups opposed to the Jordan Cove Project (JCP) continue to advance the narrative that the project threatens to violate the rights of indigenous populations in Oregon, capitalizing on international attention to the issue. Opposition groups, including Deep Green Resistance and Rogue Climate, have maintained focus on indigenous issues in Houston, B.C., posting regular updates regarding ongoing disputes between the Members of the Gidimt'en clan of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation and the Canadian Government. JCP opponents cheered the announcement of a Wet'suwet'en-issued challenges to TransCanada and Toronto condemning the plan to continue pipeline development and pledged to stand in solidarity with the Tribes to ensure that no pipeline would be built. The Oregonian groups emphasize what they perceive as the need to resist any so-called seizure of native lands to develop fossil fuel infrastructure and have called on members and online followers to voice their opposition; signs and slogans that appeared at Wet'suwet'en were also prevalent at Oregon Department of State Land town halls last week (Figure 2). Jordan Cove opponents will continue to coalesce around indigenous issues, probably because they perceive them as a human-interest narrative that strengthens local sympathies towards indigenous populations. Renewed national focus on indigenous issues in the United States—including the planned Indigenous Peoples March in Washington DC that occurred on 18 January—also allows local organizations to bolster their relationships with national groups to secure additional resources and funding.

Figure 2



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