

NORTHWEST NATURAL GAS CO
Form DEF 14A
April 18, 2011
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UNITED STATES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

Washington, D.C. 20549

SCHEDULE 14A INFORMATION

**Proxy Statement Pursuant to Section 14(a) of the
Securities Exchange Act of 1934**

(Amendment No.)

Filed by the Registrant

Filed by a Party other than the Registrant

Check the appropriate box:

- Preliminary Proxy Statement
- Confidential, for Use of the Commission Only (as permitted by Rule 14a-6(e)(2))**
- Definitive Proxy Statement
- Definitive Additional Materials
- Soliciting Material under §240.14a-12

NORTHWEST NATURAL GAS COMPANY

(Name of registrant as specified in its charter)

(Name of person(s) filing proxy statement, if other than the registrant)

Payment of Filing Fee (Check the appropriate box):

- No fee required
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(1) Amount Previously Paid:

(2) Form, Schedule or Registration Statement No.:

(3) Filing Party:

(4) Date Filed:

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220 NW SECOND AVENUE

PORTLAND, OR 97209

April 18, 2011

To the Shareholders of Northwest Natural Gas Company:

We cordially invite you to attend the 2011 Annual Meeting of Shareholders of Northwest Natural Gas Company (NW Natural), which will be held in Meeting Rooms F 150 and F 151 at the Oregon Convention Center, 777 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Portland, Oregon, 97232 on Thursday, May 26, 2011, commencing at 2:00 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time. We look forward to greeting as many of our shareholders as are able to join us.

At the meeting you will be asked to consider and vote upon five proposals: (1) the election of four Class III directors for terms of three years; (2) the reapproval and amendment of our long term incentive plan; (3) an advisory vote on executive compensation; (4) an advisory vote on frequency of voting on executive compensation; and (5) the ratification of the appointment of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP as NW Natural's independent registered public accountants for the fiscal year 2011. Your Board of Directors unanimously recommends that you vote **FOR** each of Proposals 1, 2, 3, and 5 and that you vote for a frequency of **EVERY THREE YEARS** for Proposal 4.

In connection with the meeting, we enclose a notice of the meeting, a proxy statement, a proxy card and an **admission ticket for you and one guest to attend the meeting. If you plan to attend the Annual Meeting, please detach and retain the admission ticket attached to your proxy card.** As space is limited, you may bring only one guest to the meeting. If you hold your stock through a broker, bank, or other nominee, please bring evidence to the meeting that you owned NW Natural Common Stock as of the record date, April 6, 2011, and we will provide you with an admission ticket. Please see page 2 for further instructions on attending the Annual Meeting. Detailed information relating to NW Natural's business activities and operating performance is contained in our 2010 Annual Report, which is also enclosed.

It is important that your shares are represented and voted at the meeting. Whether or not you plan to attend, please vote your shares in one of three ways: via internet, telephone or mail. Instructions regarding internet and telephone voting are included on the proxy card. If you elect to vote by mail, please sign, date and return the proxy card in the enclosed postage-paid envelope. Your proxy may be revoked at any time before it is exercised in the manner set forth in the proxy statement.

Sincerely,

/s/ Russell F. Tromley
Russell F. Tromley
Chairman of the Board

/s/ Gregg S. Kantor
Gregg S. Kantor
President and Chief Executive Officer

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NORTHWEST NATURAL GAS COMPANY

ONE PACIFIC SQUARE

220 NW SECOND AVENUE

PORTLAND, OREGON 97209

(503) 226-4211

NOTICE OF 2011 ANNUAL MEETING OF SHAREHOLDERS

Portland, Oregon, April 18, 2011

To our Shareholders:

The 2011 Annual Meeting of Shareholders of Northwest Natural Gas Company (NW Natural) will be held in Meeting Rooms F 150 and F 151 at the Oregon Convention Center, 777 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Portland, Oregon, 97232 on Thursday, May 26, 2011, at 2:00 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time, for the following purposes:

1. to elect four Class III directors for terms of three years;
2. to reapprove and amend the long term incentive plan;
3. to conduct an advisory vote on executive compensation;
4. to conduct an advisory vote on the frequency of voting on executive compensation;
5. to ratify the appointment of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP as NW Natural's independent registered public accountants for the fiscal year 2011; and
6. to transact such other business as may properly come before the meeting or any adjournment thereof.

If you were a holder of record of NW Natural Common Stock at the close of business on April 6, 2011, the record date set for the Annual Meeting, you will be entitled to vote upon all matters properly submitted to shareholder vote at the meeting.

Our Board of Directors is soliciting the proxies of all holders of NW Natural Common Stock who may be unable to attend the meeting in person. These proxies also will instruct the relevant fiduciary under NW Natural's Dividend Reinvestment and Direct Stock Purchase Plan or Retirement K Savings Plan to vote any shares held for shareholders' benefit under those plans, as indicated on the proxies. A proxy and a stamped return envelope are enclosed for your use. No postage is needed if mailed in the United States. Instructions regarding internet and telephone voting also are included in the enclosed proxy card.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE REGARDING THE AVAILABILITY OF PROXY MATERIALS
FOR THE SHAREHOLDER MEETING TO BE HELD ON MAY 26, 2011**

This proxy statement and our 2010 Annual Report are available at www.nwnatural.com.

Your vote is very important to us.

We urge you to vote by promptly marking, signing, dating and returning the enclosed proxy card, or by granting a proxy by the internet or telephone in accordance with the instructions in the enclosed proxy card, as soon as possible. Your prompt vote will save us the additional expense of further requests to ensure the presence of a quorum. You may vote in person at the meeting whether or not you previously have returned your proxy.

By Order of the Board of Directors,

/s/ MardiLyn Saathoff

MardiLyn Saathoff

Chief Governance Officer, Deputy General Counsel and
Corporate Secretary

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NORTHWEST NATURAL GAS COMPANY

April 18, 2011

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NORTHWEST NATURAL GAS COMPANY

ONE PACIFIC SQUARE

220 NW SECOND AVENUE

PORTLAND, OREGON 97209

(503) 226-4211

2011 ANNUAL MEETING OF SHAREHOLDERS

TO BE HELD MAY 26, 2011

PROXY STATEMENT

The Board of Directors of Northwest Natural Gas Company (NW Natural) is soliciting the proxies of all holders of NW Natural Common Stock who may be unable to attend in person the Annual Meeting of Shareholders to be held in Meeting Rooms F 150 and F 151 at the Oregon Convention Center, 777 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Portland, Oregon, 97232 on Thursday, May 26, 2011, at 2:00 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time. We request that you sign and return the enclosed proxy promptly. Alternatively, you may grant your proxy by the internet or telephone.

NW Natural's Annual Report for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2010, including audited financial statements, is being mailed to all shareholders, together with this proxy statement and the accompanying proxy card, commencing April 18, 2011.

The close of business on April 6, 2011 has been fixed as the record date for the determination of shareholders entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting.

VOTING BY PROXY AND HOW TO REVOKE YOUR PROXY

You may vote your shares either in person or by duly authorized proxy. You may use the proxy card accompanying this proxy statement if you are unable to attend the meeting in person or you wish to have your shares voted by proxy even if you do attend the meeting. If you are a registered shareholder, you may vote by internet, telephone or mail, or you may vote your shares in person at the meeting. To vote:

By internet (do not return your proxy card)

Go to **www.proxyvote.com**. Internet voting is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, until 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on May 25, 2011.

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Have your proxy card available.

Follow the simple instructions. You will be prompted to enter your 12-digit Control Number located on your proxy card.

By telephone (do not return your proxy card)

On a touch-tone telephone, call the toll-free number indicated on your proxy card. Telephone voting is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, until 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on May 25, 2011.

Have your proxy card available when you call.

Follow the simple recorded instructions. You will be prompted to enter your 12-digit Control Number located on your proxy card.

By mail

Mark your choice on your proxy card. If you properly execute your proxy card but do not specify your choice, your shares will be voted FOR Proposals 1, 2, 3 and 5 and EVERY THREE YEARS on Proposal 4, as recommended by NW Natural's Board of Directors.

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Date and sign your proxy card.

Mail your proxy card in the enclosed postage-paid envelope. If your envelope is misplaced, send your proxy card to Northwest Natural Gas Company, c/o Broadridge Investor Solutions, Inc., 51 Mercedes Way, Edgewood, NY 11717.

You may revoke your proxy at any time before the proxy is exercised: (1) by delivering a written notice of revocation; (2) by filing with the Corporate Secretary a subsequently dated, properly executed proxy; (3) by voting after the date of the proxy by the internet or telephone; or (4) by attending the meeting and voting in person. Your attendance at the meeting, by itself, will not constitute a revocation of a proxy. You should address any written notices of proxy revocation to:

Northwest Natural Gas Company

220 NW Second Avenue

Portland, OR 97209

Attention: Corporate Secretary

If your shares are held in nominee or street name by a bank or broker, you should follow the directions on the instruction form you receive from your bank or broker as to how to vote, change your vote, or revoke your proxy. If you want to vote those shares in person at the Annual Meeting, you must bring a signed proxy from the broker, bank, or other nominee giving you the right to vote the shares. Revocation of proxies for shares held through a broker, bank, or other nominee must be made through the appropriate nominee in accordance with its instructions.

If an adjournment of the meeting occurs, it will have no effect on the ability of shareholders of record as of the record date to exercise their voting rights or to revoke any previously delivered proxies.

VOTING YOUR SECURITIES

The 26,672,812 shares of Common Stock outstanding on April 1, 2011 were held by 7,041 shareholders residing in 50 states, the District of Columbia and a number of foreign countries.

Each holder of Common Stock of record at the close of business on April 6, 2011 will be entitled to one vote for each share of Common Stock so held on all matters properly submitted at the meeting. Such holder will be entitled to cumulative voting for directors; that is, to cast as many votes for one candidate as shall equal the number of shares held of record multiplied by the number of directors to be elected, or to distribute such number of votes among any number of the candidates.

A majority of the shares of Common Stock outstanding at the close of business on April 6, 2011 must be represented at the meeting, in person or by proxy, to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

It is important that your shares be represented at the meeting. You are urged, regardless of the number of shares held, to sign and return your proxy. Alternatively, you may grant your proxy by the internet or telephone as described above.

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ATTENDING THE ANNUAL MEETING

IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND THE ANNUAL MEETING, PLEASE DETACH AND RETAIN THE ADMISSION TICKET ATTACHED TO YOUR PROXY CARD. As space is limited, you may bring only one guest to the meeting. If you hold your stock through a broker, bank, or other nominee, please bring evidence to the meeting that you owned NW Natural Common Stock as of the record date, April 6, 2011, and we will provide you with an admission ticket. If you receive your Annual Meeting materials electronically and wish to attend the meeting, please follow the instructions provided online for attendance. A form of government-issued photograph identification will be required for both you and your guest to enter the meeting. To permit as many shareholders as possible to participate, only shareholders or their valid proxy holders may submit questions at the meeting. Large bags and packages, cameras, recording equipment, and other electronic devices will not be permitted in the meeting. A map with driving directions appears on the inside cover of this proxy statement.

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PROPOSAL 1 ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

NW Natural's Restated Articles of Incorporation provide that the Board of Directors be composed of not less than nine nor more than 13 directors, with the exact number of directors to be determined by the Board. The Board has fixed the number of directors at 11.

Our Chairman of the Board, Mr. Russell F. Tromley, will chair the 2011 Annual Shareholders Meeting. In February 2010, the Board reappointed Mr. Tromley as Chair of the Board of Directors and extended his term as a member of the Board pursuant to its authority under NW Natural's bylaws and its Corporate Governance Standards. Mr. Tromley has been a director since 1994 and during that time has served on various committees. Currently, Mr. Tromley serves as Chair of the Governance Committee and as a member of the Audit Committee and the Organization and Executive Compensation Committee. Mr. Tromley became Chairman of the Board in 2008. See Corporate Governance Standards, below.

The Restated Articles also provide that the Board of Directors be divided into three classes and that the number of directors in each class be as nearly equal in number as possible. Members of each class are elected to serve a three-year term with the terms of office of each class ending in successive years. The term of Class III directors expires with this year's Annual Meeting. Ms. Martha L. Stormy Byorum and Messrs. John D. Carter, C. Scott Gibson and Gregg S. Kantor are nominees for election to the Board as Class III directors to serve until the 2014 Annual Meeting or until their successors have been duly qualified and elected. Ms. Byorum and Messrs. Carter and Gibson were elected to the Board of Directors by the shareholders at the 2008 Annual Meeting. Mr. Kantor was elected to the Board of Directors by the shareholders at the 2009 Annual Meeting. In case any of the nominees should become unavailable for election for any reason, the persons named in the proxy will have discretionary authority to vote for a substitute. Management knows of no reason why any of the nominees would be unable to serve if elected.

Vote Required

Under Oregon law, if a quorum of shareholders is present at the Annual Meeting, the four nominees who receive the greatest number of votes cast at the meeting shall be elected directors. Abstentions and broker non-votes are counted for purposes of determining whether a quorum exists at the Annual Meeting but are not counted and have no effect on the results of the vote for directors.

The Board of Directors recommends the election of the nominees listed below.

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**INFORMATION CONCERNING NOMINEES
AND CONTINUING DIRECTORS**

Set forth below is information with respect to the nominees and continuing directors, including their recent employment or principal occupation, a summary of their specific experience, qualifications, attributes or skills that led to the conclusion that they are qualified to serve as a director, the names of other public companies for which they currently serve as a director or have served as a director within the past five years, and their period of service as a NW Natural director, the committees on which they currently serve, and their age.

NOMINEES FOR ELECTION TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Class III

(For a Term ending in 2014)

Martha L. Stormy Byorum

Senior Managing Director, Stephens Cori Capital Advisors, New York, New York

Age: 62

Director since: 2004

Board Committees: Audit, Finance (Chair)

In January 2005, Ms. Byorum became Senior Managing Director of Stephens Cori Capital Advisors, a division of Stephens, Inc., a private investment banking firm founded in 1933. From 2003 to 2004, Ms. Byorum served as Chief Executive Officer of Cori Investment Advisors, LLC, which was spun off from Violy, Byorum & Partners (VB&P) in 2003. VB&P was a leading independent strategic advisory and investment banking firm specializing in Latin America. Prior to co-founding VB&P in 1996, Ms. Byorum had a 24-year career at Citibank, where, among other things, she served as Chief of Staff and Chief Financial Officer for Citibank's Latin American Banking Group from 1986-1990, overseeing \$15 billion of loans and coordinating activities in 22 countries. She later was appointed the head of Citibank's U.S. Corporate Banking Business and a member of the bank's Operating Committee and Customer Group with global responsibilities. A graduate of Southern Methodist University and the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, she is a Life Trustee of Amherst College, a Trustee Emeritus of the Folger Shakespeare Library and a board member of M&F Worldwide Corp., a publicly-traded holding company operating four businesses. From 2001 until May of 2010, Ms. Byorum was also a board member of Aeterna-Zentaris Laboratories, Inc., a publicly-traded biopharmaceutical company.

Ms. Byorum brings to the NW Natural Board more than 35 years of extensive experience in investment banking and public and private finance. Her multiple executive leadership roles at Stephens Cori Capital Advisors, Cori Investment Advisors, LLC, VB&P and Citibank position her to advise NW Natural on a wide range of financial, strategic and governance matters. Ms. Byorum's experience also allows her to provide insights in areas including, but not limited to, mergers and acquisitions, human capital management and diversity, and investor and media relations. Ms. Byorum's current and prior service on other boards, including M&F Worldwide Corp. and Aeterna-Zentaris Laboratories, Inc., enables her to provide effective oversight of management and insight into a wide variety of public company operations and governance matters. Ms. Byorum's extensive finance and banking experience strengthens the Board's collective knowledge, capabilities and experience.

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John D. Carter

Chairman of the Board, Schnitzer Steel Industries, Inc., Portland, Oregon

Age: 65

Director since: 2002

Board Committees: Audit (Chair), Finance, Governance

Mr. Carter served as President and Chief Executive Officer of Schnitzer Steel Industries Inc. from May 2005 to December 2008 when he was appointed Chairman of the Board. From 2002 to May 2005, Mr. Carter was engaged in a consulting practice focused primarily on strategic planning in transportation and energy for national and international businesses, as well as other small business ventures. From 1982 to 2002, Mr. Carter served in a variety of senior management capacities at Bechtel Group, Inc., including Executive Vice President and Director, as well as President of Bechtel Enterprises, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Bechtel Group, Inc., and other operating groups. Prior to his Bechtel tenure, Mr. Carter was a partner in a San Francisco law firm. He is Chairman of the Board of Schnitzer Steel Industries, and a director of FLIR Systems, Inc., and privately-owned Kuni Automotive in the United States. In the United Kingdom, he served as a director of London & Continental Railways until February 2006, and, until December 2005, served as a director of Cross London Rail Links, Ltd. Mr. Carter also serves as a Trustee of the Nature Conservancy of Oregon. He is a graduate of Stanford University and Harvard Law School.

Mr. Carter brings to the NW Natural Board a broad array of executive, leadership and board service experiences that contribute to the Board's governance of the Company. Mr. Carter's extensive executive senior management experiences including at Bechtel and as Chief Executive Officer of Schnitzer Steel Industries and his other board service, including as Chairman of the Board of Schnitzer Steel Industries, and a director of FLIR Systems, Inc. and Kuni Automotive, enable him to provide effective oversight of management and insight into a wide variety of strategic, corporate governance and financial matters, including, but not limited to, experience in large project development, acquisitions, human capital management, executive compensation, media and governmental relations, growth orientation, change management, and strategic direction. In addition, Mr. Carter's tenure as General Counsel of Bechtel Group, Inc. and prior experience as a partner in a San Francisco law firm brings to the Board substantial legal and governance expertise. Mr. Carter also has extensive knowledge of finance and accounting matters, as a result of which, the Board has determined that he is an audit committee financial expert as defined by the SEC rules. Mr. Carter's multifaceted skill set and professional experiences strengthen the Board's collective knowledge, capabilities and experience.

C. Scott Gibson

President, Gibson Enterprises, Jackson Hole, Wyoming

Age: 58

Director since: 2002

Board Committees: Governance, Organization and Executive Compensation (Chair), Public Affairs and Environmental Policy

Mr. Gibson has been President of Gibson Enterprises, since its formation in 1992. In 1983, Mr. Gibson co-founded Sequent Computer Systems and served as its President from 1988 until March 1992. Before his tenure at Sequent, Mr. Gibson served as General Manager for the

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Memory Components Division of Intel Corporation. Mr. Gibson serves as Chairman of the Board of RadiSys Corporation and as a director of TriQuint Semiconductor, Pixelworks and Verigy Pte. In the past five years, Mr. Gibson served as director of Electroglas, Inc. He also serves as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering. Until 2009, Mr. Gibson was Vice Chair of the Oregon Health and Science University governing board, and until 2010, he was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Oregon Community Foundation. Mr. Gibson earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering and a Masters in Business degree from the University of Illinois.

Mr. Gibson brings to the NW Natural Board extensive experience as a director of publicly-traded companies, including RadiSys, TriQuint Semiconductor, Pixelworks and Verigy Pte. He is a professional public company and non-profit board member, dedicating all his work hours to the boards and companies on which he serves. Based on this experience and other professional experiences, Mr. Gibson is able to deliver important insights to our management and other directors on subjects ranging from management oversight to growth orientation, change management and strategic direction. In particular, Mr. Gibson's past or present service as an audit committee member of RadiSys Corporation, TriQuint Semiconductor, Pixelworks and Verigy Pte. highlight Mr. Gibson's substantial experience in finance and accounting matters and position Mr. Gibson to provide important guidance to the Board on matters of accounting, finance, and corporate governance. Additionally, Mr. Gibson's prior and current service on the compensation committees of RadiSys Corporation, TriQuint Semiconductor, Pixelworks, Electroglas, Inc. and Verigy Pte. enable him to substantially contribute to Board matters involving executive compensation, human capital management, and general corporate governance. Mr. Gibson's broad and varied public company leadership service strengthens the Board's collective knowledge, capabilities and experience.

Gregg S. Kantor

President and Chief Executive Officer, NW Natural, Portland, Oregon

Age: 53

Director since: 2008

Board Committees: None

Mr. Kantor became President and Chief Executive Officer of NW Natural on January 1, 2009. Previously, Mr. Kantor served as President and Chief Operating Officer of NW Natural from May 2007 to December 2008, and as Executive Vice President from December 2006 to April 2007. He also served as Senior Vice President of Public and Regulatory Affairs from 2003 to 2006, as Vice President of Public Affairs and Communications from 1998 to 2003, and as Director of Public Affairs and Communications from 1996 to 1998. Mr. Kantor is a board member of the Portland Business Alliance, the Oregon Business Council and Greenlight of Greater Portland. He was also a board member of the Leaders Roundtable until December 2010 and the Oregon Global Warming Commission until January 2011. Mr. Kantor earned a Bachelor of Arts in Geography and Environmental Studies from the University of California at Santa Barbara and a Masters of Urban Planning from the University of Oregon.

Mr. Kantor serves a key leadership role on the NW Natural Board and provides the Board with in-depth knowledge of each area of NW Natural's business, the energy industry generally, and the Company's challenges and opportunities. Mr. Kantor acts as the principal intermediary between management and the independent directors of our Board, and communicates to the Board management's perspective on important matters brought before the Board. Mr. Kantor's

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14 years with NW Natural enable him to bring to the Board a comprehensive understanding of the Company's business operations as well as matters relating to the energy industry generally. Mr. Kantor's service on local business, educational, charitable and public service boards, including his past membership on the Oregon Energy Planning Council, provide an important connection between NW Natural and the communities it serves. Additionally, Mr. Kantor's extensive experience in public affairs and communications contributes to the Board important perspectives on governmental and regulatory relations and advocacy, and community and media relations. Mr. Kantor's combined professional skills and insights from his position as President and Chief Executive Officer strengthen the Board's collective knowledge, capabilities and experience.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS CONTINUING IN OFFICE

Class I

(Term ending in 2012)

Timothy P. Boyle

President and Chief Executive Officer, Columbia Sportswear Company, Portland, Oregon

Age: 61

Director since: 2003

Board Committees: Public Affairs and Environmental Policy, Strategic Planning

Since 1989, Mr. Boyle has served as President and Chief Executive Officer of Columbia Sportswear Company, an active outdoor apparel and footwear company headquartered in Portland, Oregon. He began working with Columbia Sportswear Company in 1970. Mr. Boyle is a member of the boards of directors of Columbia Sportswear Company, Craft Brewers Alliance Inc. and Freshwater Trust and is a trustee of Reed College, the Youth Outdoor Legacy Fund and a past member of the Young Presidents' Organization. He also is a past trustee of the University of Oregon Foundation and Vice Chairman of its capital campaign committee. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Journalism from the University of Oregon.

Mr. Boyle's professional experiences, including his service as President and Chief Executive Officer and member of the board of directors of Columbia Sportswear Company and his service as a director of Craft Brewers Alliance, Inc., as well as his prior service on the NW Natural Board, and his community and public service, enable Mr. Boyle to provide valuable insight to the Board and management regarding public company operations, acquisitions, human capital management, executive compensation, investor and media relations, government relations, and growth and strategic direction, all of which strengthen the Board's collective knowledge, capabilities and experience.

Mark S. Dodson

Former Chief Executive Officer, NW Natural, Vancouver, Washington

Age: 66

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Director since: 2003

Board Committees: Public Affairs and Environmental Policy, Strategic Planning

Mr. Dodson served as President and Chief Executive Officer of NW Natural from January 1, 2003 to April 30, 2007, when he relinquished his position as President and continued to serve as Chief Executive Officer until his retirement on December 31, 2008. From 2001 to January

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2003, Mr. Dodson served as President, Chief Operating Officer and General Counsel of NW Natural. Mr. Dodson joined NW Natural in 1997 as Senior Vice President of Public Affairs and General Counsel, following a 17-year career with the Portland law firm Ater Wynne Hewitt Dodson & Skerritt LLP. Mr. Dodson previously served as a director of the American Gas Association, the Energy Insurance Mutual and the Oregon Business Council. Mr. Dodson currently serves on the board of directors of Medical Teams International and the Nature Conservancy of Oregon. He also has worked on affordable housing issues as a board member and Chairman of the Neighborhood Partnership Fund. Mr. Dodson was formerly the Chair of the Portland Business Alliance and the Oregon State Board of Higher Education. He headed the Oregon Governor's Task Force on Scholarship and Student Aid. He earned an undergraduate degree from Harvard University and a law degree from Boalt College of Law at the University of California, Berkeley.

Mr. Dodson brings a seasoned perspective and comprehensive knowledge of the natural gas industry to our Board. Mr. Dodson's 12 years of service at NW Natural, including six years as Chief Executive Officer and eight years as a member of the Board of Directors, combined with a 17-year career as a regulatory attorney at a Portland law firm, allow Mr. Dodson to contribute substantial expertise to NW Natural's Board and management. Mr. Dodson's professional experiences enable him to provide insight on a wide variety of matters affecting NW Natural, including, but not limited to: local, state and federal regulatory matters; large project development; gas storage projects; large pipeline projects; acquisitions; public company matters; human capital management; executive compensation; investor, media and government relations; legal matters; environmental issues; and strategic direction. Mr. Dodson's many years of experience serving NW Natural and his prior years serving as an outside legal advisor to NW Natural strengthen the Board's collective knowledge, capabilities and experience.

George J. Puentes

Former President, Don Pancho Authentic Mexican Foods, Inc., Salem, Oregon

Age: 63

Director since: 2007

Board Committees: Finance, Public Affairs and Environmental Policy

Mr. Puentes served as President of Don Pancho Authentic Mexican Foods, Inc., a manufacturer of tortillas and other foods, which he founded in Salem, Oregon in 1979, until December 2009, and is now an Advisor to the President of Don Pancho Authentic Mexican Foods. Mr. Puentes serves as a trustee of the Meyer Memorial Trust and as a Director of Standard Insurance Company. In the last five years, Mr. Puentes served on the board of directors of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, Portland branch, and Regence Blue Cross/Blue Shield. Mr. Puentes earned a Bachelor of Science degree in business management from San Jose State University.

Mr. Puentes' extensive experience as founder and President of Don Pancho Authentic Mexican Foods, Inc., beginning in 1979, enables him to bring a broad range of executive experience to the NW Natural Board, including, but not limited to, human capital management, diversity, executive compensation, governmental and community relations, and environmental issues. In addition, Mr. Puentes' experience on the boards of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, Portland branch and Regence Blue Cross/Blue Shield allow him to provide insights to management related to regulatory issues, acquisitions, growth strategy, strategic direction and change management, all of which strengthen the Board's collective knowledge, capabilities and experience.

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Class II
(Term ending in 2013)

Tod R. Hamachek

Former Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Penwest Pharmaceuticals Company, Ketchum, Idaho

Age: 65

Director since: 1986

Board Committees: Audit, Governance, Strategic Planning (Chair)

Mr. Hamachek served as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Penwest Pharmaceuticals Company from October 1997 to February 2005. Penwest, which was spun off from Penford Corporation in 1998, was located in Danbury, Connecticut and was engaged in the research, development and commercialization of novel drug delivery products and technologies. From 1985 until 1998, Mr. Hamachek served as President and Chief Executive Officer of Penford Corporation, a diversified producer of specialty paper, food starches and pharmaceutical ingredients. He is a director of The Seattle Times Company and The Blethen Corporation (the majority owner of The Seattle Times Company). Mr. Hamachek is a member of the board of directors of Virginia Mason Medical Center and Virginia Mason Medical System in Seattle, Washington and President of the Board of Directors of The Sun Valley Center for The Arts in Ketchum, Idaho. He is a graduate of Williams College and Harvard Business School.

Mr. Hamachek is our longest-serving director, and he brings to the NW Natural Board a broad array of institutional knowledge and historical perspective. Mr. Hamachek has served on our board for more than 25 years and has participated in a variety of our principal standing committees. Drawing on his experience as an executive and director of Penwest Pharmaceuticals Company and an executive of Penford Corporation along with his other professional experiences, Mr. Hamachek is able to provide important insights to our management and other directors on subjects ranging from corporate governance and corporate strategy to management oversight on large project development, public company operations, acquisitions, executive compensation, and media and government relations, all of which strengthen the Board's collective knowledge, capabilities and experience.

Jane L. Peverett

Former President and Chief Executive Officer, British Columbia Transmission Corporation, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Age: 52

Director since: 2007

Board Committees: Audit, Organization and Executive Compensation, Strategic Planning

From 2005 to January 2009, Ms. Peverett served as President and Chief Executive Officer of British Columbia Transmission Corporation (BCTC), an electric utility in Vancouver, British Columbia. Between 2003 and 2005, she served as Chief Financial Officer of BCTC. Prior to joining BCTC, from 1988 through 2003, Ms. Peverett held various senior positions with Westcoast Energy Ltd., including serving as President and Chief Executive Officer of Union Gas Limited, a Westcoast Energy company, between 2001 and 2003. Ms. Peverett serves on the board of directors of Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC), EnCana Corporation, AEGIS, British Columbia Ferry Authority and the United Way

of Lower Mainland. Within the last five years, Ms. Peverett also served on the board of directors of BC Ferries Services, Inc.

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(BC Ferries) and the Canadian Electricity Association. Ms. Peverett earned a Bachelor of Commerce degree from McMaster University and a Master of Business Administration degree from Queen's University. She is a certified management accountant.

Ms. Peverett's extensive senior management experience at Union Gas Limited of Toronto, Ontario, a natural gas distribution, storage and transmission company, and her board experience at EnCana Corporation, one of the largest natural gas suppliers in North America, as well as her senior management experience at BCTC, the entity responsible for managing British Columbia's publicly-owned electrical transmission system, as well as her prior board experience at BC Ferries, positions her to advise management on a wide range of natural gas and energy industry-specific strategic and regulatory matters as well as large project development and other business matters. In addition, Ms. Peverett's other board experiences, including as a member of the audit committee of CIBC, a leading North American financial institution with almost 11 million personal banking and business customers, and EnCana Corporation enable her to provide effective oversight of management and insight into a wide variety of corporate governance and financial matters. Ms. Peverett also has extensive knowledge of and training in finance and accounting matters, which strengthens the Board's collective knowledge, capabilities and experience.

Kenneth Thrasher

Chairman of the Board, Alternative Legal Solutions, Inc. (dba Compli), Portland, Oregon

Age: 61

Director since: 2005

Board Committees: Audit, Organization and Executive Compensation, Public Affairs and Environmental Policy (Chair)

Mr. Thrasher served as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Alternative Legal Solutions, Inc. (dba Compli), a software solution provider for management of compliance in employment, regulatory, environmental, health and safety, and corporate governance practices from 2002 through December 2009, when he relinquished his position as Chief Executive Officer and continued to serve as Chairman of the Board. Prior to joining Compli, Mr. Thrasher served 19 years in executive positions with Fred Meyer, Inc., including serving as President and Chief Executive Officer from 1999 to 2001, as Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer from 1997 to 1999, and as Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer from 1987 to 1997. Mr. Thrasher serves on the boards of directors of Compli, GSL Solutions, Inc., The Jensen Fund, Friends of the Children, Oregon Mentors, the Children's Institute, Innovation Partnership, the Portland State University Foundation, the OSU College of Education Advisory Board, and is a senior director on the Oregon Business Council. Until December 2010, Mr. Thrasher served on the board of directors of the Leaders Roundtable, and during 2008 and the eight years prior, he served as a member of the board of directors for the Oregon Coast Aquarium, for which his term expired on October 25, 2008. Mr. Thrasher earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from Oregon State University.

Mr. Thrasher brings to the NW Natural Board a wide range of leadership experiences in both the public and private sectors. Mr. Thrasher's service as an executive at Fred Meyer, Inc. positions him to provide oversight of management on a wide variety of strategic, financial, and public company matters, including, but not limited to, large project development and acquisitions. Mr. Thrasher's service as an executive and board member of Compli enables him to advise management on matters of compliance, regulation, human capital management, executive compensation and corporate governance. Mr. Thrasher's other professional

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experiences, particularly his community- and government-related experience, provide insight with respect to government, community and media relations, all of which strengthen the Board's collective knowledge, capabilities and experience.

Russell F. Tromley

Chairman of the Board of NW Natural; Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Tromley Industrial Holdings, Inc., Tualatin, Oregon

Age: 71

Director since: 1994

Board Committees: Audit, Governance (Chair), Organization and Executive Compensation

Mr. Tromley became Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Tromley Industrial Holdings, Inc. in 2005 after having served as President and Chief Executive Officer since the company's formation in 1990. Tromley Industrial Holdings is involved in the manufacture and sale of equipment for the foundry and steel industry, industrial equipment leasing and industrial and retail business property investments. Mr. Tromley is a past President of the Casting Industry Suppliers Association and of the Arlington Club, and is a non-lawyer arbitrator for the Oregon State Bar Association. He was a founding director of The Bank of the Northwest and served on the advisory board of Pacific Northwest Bank of Oregon and as a director emeritus of the Western Golf Association. Mr. Tromley attended the University of Washington and Harvard Business School.

With over 17 years on NW Natural's Board, Mr. Tromley has developed an in-depth knowledge and understanding of our business, and is able to devote considerable attention to the Company. Mr. Tromley provides expertise in gas storage projects, energy industry matters and governmental relations. Mr. Tromley's service as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Tromley Industrial Holdings and his tenure as director of The Bank of the Northwest and advisory board member of Pacific Northwest Bank of Oregon positions Mr. Tromley to provide important insight to the Board and management regarding matters of finance, regulation, acquisitions, diversity, executive compensation, environmental matters and media relations, all of which strengthen the Board's collective knowledge, capabilities and experience.

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CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND ITS COMMITTEES

Meeting Attendance

The Board of Directors conducts its annual organization meeting on the same date as the Annual Meeting of Shareholders, which all of the directors are encouraged to attend. In 2010, all of our directors attended the Annual Meeting of Shareholders.

During 2010, there were seven meetings of our Board, each of which included an executive session of non-management directors. No director attended fewer than 75 percent of the aggregate meetings of our Board and Committees on which he or she served.

Independence

The Board of Directors has adopted Director Independence Standards to comply with New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) rules. The Director Independence Standards, amended July 23, 2009, are available at www.nwnatural.com and are available in print to any shareholder who requests them. No director is deemed independent unless the Board affirmatively determines that the director has no material relationship with NW Natural either directly or as a partner, shareholder or officer of an organization that has a relationship with NW Natural. The Board applies NW Natural's Director Independence Standards as well as additional qualifications prescribed under the listing standards of the NYSE and applicable state and federal statutes. Annually, the Board determines whether each director meets the criteria of independence. In February 2011, the Board determined that nine of the 11 directors met the independence criteria. They are directors Boyle, Byorum, Carter, Gibson, Hamachek, Peverett, Puentes, Thrasher and Tromley.

Board Nominations

The Board is responsible for selecting candidates for Board membership and the Governance Committee has been assigned the responsibility of recommending to the Board of Directors nominees for election as directors. The Governance Committee, with recommendations and input from the Chairman of the Board, the Chief Executive Officer and other directors, evaluates the qualifications of each director candidate in accordance with the Director Selection Criteria established by the Board. Candidates for director nominees are reviewed in the context of the current composition of the Board, the operating requirements of NW Natural, the existing and prospective business environment faced by NW Natural and the long-term interests of shareholders. Such director candidates must be able to make a significant contribution to the governance of NW Natural by virtue of their business and financial expertise, educational and professional background, and current or recent experience as a chief executive officer or other senior leader of a public company or other major organization. The business discipline that may be sought at any given time will vary depending on the needs and strategic direction of our Company and the disciplines represented by our incumbent directors. In addition, the Governance Committee looks at the overall composition of the Board and how a candidate would contribute to the overall synergy and collaborative process of the Board. In conducting its assessment, the Governance Committee considers a variety of criteria, including the following:

Integrity. Directors should have proven integrity and be of the highest ethical character and share NW Natural's values.

Reputation. Directors should have reputations, both personal and professional, consistent with NW Natural's image and reputation.

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Judgment. Directors should have the ability to exercise sound business judgment on a broad range of issues.

Knowledge. Directors should be financially literate and have a sound understanding of business strategy, business environment, corporate governance and Board operations.