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Ambre's Morrow Pacific Coal Export Project Faces New Hurdle, Water Quality Certification from State of Oregon

PORTLAND, OR—Today the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) announced Ambre Energy's proposal to build Oregon's first coal export terminal will require an additional permit, known as a 401 Water Quality Certification. DEQ received a record breaking 16,500 on Ambre's proposal to export 8.8 million tons of coal through Northwest communities and along the Columbia River. The agency also announced its decision to issue three minor permits for the coal export project, an air quality permit, a construction stormwater permit, and an internal wastewater permit.

"We applaud the announcement that Oregon will use its full authority to take a hard look at the water quality impacts. This adds another major permit for Ambre," said Brett VandenHeuvel, Executive Director for Columbia Riverkeeper. "The issuance of minor air and stormwater permits does not move the project forward because major state and federal permits remain."

"It is the job of Governor Kitzhaber and the DEQ to listen to the tens of thousands of concerned Oregon residents who have submitted comments about this dangerous proposal. That starts with requiring Ambre to go through the new, rigorous reviews of water quality threats," said Cesia Kearns, Senior Campaign Representative for the Sierra Club and co-director of the Power Past Coal coalition. "Our coalition will review the air and water quality permits that DEQ issued today. Families, businesses, health professionals, and community leaders around the Northwest continue to have grave concerns about the impacts toxic coal dust on people's health and salmon recovery."

"DEQ needs to continue to consider the thousands of comments regarding transport of the coal, coal dust emissions, and the other direct threats this project poses to the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and other communities along the transport route," said Ryan Rittenhouse with Friends of the Columbia Gorge. "We now look to Governor Kitzhaber to oppose this project and deny the remaining permits based on these unacceptable risks and impacts."

Ambre is a long way off from moving any coal through Oregon and the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. The federal government is in the process of reviewing Ambre's project under the Rivers and Harbors Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and the Endangered Species Act. The federal government is also consulting with Tribes on how the terminal and vessel traffic would impact treaty rights. Ambre also needs approval from the Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL) before it can build an industrial coal dock on the Columbia River. To date, Ambre failed to provide adequate information requested by the DSL, resulting in six permit extensions from the agency.