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Broad Scope for Longview Coal Terminal Evaluation Announced

Strong EIS will consider coal combustion in China, rail impacts in communities outside WA

LONGVIEW, WA - Today, the Washington State Department of Ecology and Cowlitz County announced a broad scope of their Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed coal export terminal in Longview in southwest Washington State. If built, it would be the largest coal export terminal in North America, exporting up to 44 million metric tons of coal per year to Asia.

“It’s great to see the Dept. of Ecology and County Cowlitz using their authority to raise questions about the vast threats to coal exports,” said Gayle Kiser, a local Longview resident and president of Landowners and Citizens for a Safe Community. “This broad scope of the environmental and health review by the agencies reflects our Northwest values and common sense. The entire state of Washington, including Cowlitz County residents, would face impacts from coal export. Coal export would pollute our air and water, and halt the flow of traffic in our towns. Taxpayers and local governments can’t afford to put the blinders on for coal export; our agencies cannot either.”

The agencies will take a broad look at the impacts of the proposed terminal through the EIS, and will include a number of impacts: coal dust around the terminal, rail traffic and coal dust including in Montana, Idaho and the Columbia River Gorge, and the effects of coal combustion in China on Washington state, in particular carbon and mercury pollution. The Army Corps of Engineers has yet to announce their scope for Longview but took a very narrow one with the Cherry Point terminal.

“The Spokane City Council previously unanimously voted to have our voice heard in the building of coal export facilities and its great news that our state agency listened,” said Ben Stuckart, City of Spokane, City Council President. “Spokane has much to lose, and little to gain by allowing all these new coal trains through our town. Such an increase would harm our air quality, transportation systems, and emergency response. Today is a great step in the right direction for Spokane.”

The Dept. of Ecology, Cowlitz County and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers received over 215,000 public comments and heard from thousands of citizens last fall during the public comment period. That brings the total to 370,000 comments that have been submitted on coal export proposals in the Northwest. More than 60 local governments, including 28 local jurisdictions, submitted official comments on proposed Longview terminal. Over 160 elected officials, 500 businesses, and 600 health professionals have expressed concern or opposition to coal export.

“I’m pleased that the State of Washington is including rail impacts to Montana. These trains don’t just materialize at the Washington border, and the impacts increased coal traffic would have on emergency response times and air quality in Montana cities and towns is significant,” said Dawson Dunning of Montana, whose family has ranched near the proposed Otter Creek coal mine for generations. “We still have a ways to go to make sure that our ranching and agricultural interests are taken under full consideration in light of the drastic impacts increased mining would have on Montana and Wyoming.

Any review of these ports needs to take a harder look at the survival of ranching communities and economies like ours.”

The Longview terminal is one of three remaining proposals in Washington and Oregon; three proposals have been pulled off the table in the last two years. The proponents of the terminal include Ambre Energy, its American subsidiary Millennium Bulk Logistics, and Arch Coal.

The Longview coal export proposal has a rocky history. In 2011, a legal challenge exposed internal documents showing that Ambre and their US subsidiary Millennium Bulk Logistics lied to Cowlitz County and state officials about the size of their project, claiming it would ship five million tons per year when they planned a project more than 10 times that size.

The release of the Longview scope comes on the heels of the Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality yesterday announcing that they will require Ambre Energy to do an additional water quality certification process at their proposed terminal in Boardman, OR on the Columbia River.

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POWER PAST COAL is an ever-growing alliance of health, environmental, clean-energy, faith and community groups and businesses working to stop coal export off the West Coast. Visit PowerPastCoal.org for more information.