

derailing myths about coal

the truth behind coal exports
in the Pacific Northwest

red herring

something that distracts
attention from the real issue

**These projects can
be built in a safe and
environmentally
responsible way**



Environmental protection measures often aren't taken.

- Documents and photographs appear to validate allegations of purposeful coal dumping into the waters off Ridley Island by the Ridley Terminals (RTI) (coal export terminals in British Columbia) and knowingly allowing coal-laden water to cover the shoreline. In fact, documents indicate nearly every environmental protection measure RTI says is being taken is not.⁴
- There have been many instances at the Ridley Terminal where there has been an excess of coal after loading a vessel with

operators picking up the coal with the ship loader, a piece of machinery able to move in all directions, and deliberately dropping the coal into the water.⁴

Environmental responsibility extends to all the ecosystems that the projects touch.

- Oxidizing coal particles reduce the oxygen available for clams, mussels, barnacles, and crab larvae, with damage reverberating up the food chain.¹

**The Trains will just
go north to Canada,
so we should have
them stop here and
get the jobs and
benefits**



Canadian ports are not a viable option for large scale shipments of American coal.

- According to the coal industry themselves, B.C. coal export terminals do not have the physical capacity to export 44 million (Longview volume), 48 million (Cherry Point volume) let alone 100 million metric tons of coal every year currently or even if the expansion plans proposed were to go through.²²

- While there is some proposed expansion to the current coal terminals in B.C., there is great public resistance to any expansion plans.²³
- Almost all of the current and expansion capacity is reserved for high-value Canadian steelmaking coal, not low-grade, low-priced US coal.²⁴
- Like in the U.S., this is about private profits, not great public benefit to the local communities.

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communities against coal export

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“Rail crossing delays are not a significant problem and more trains would not increase the risk that emergency responders would be delayed.”



Studies show that rail crossing delays are a significant problem.

- In 2026, the estimated additional daily gate down time for coal trains could be approximately 67 to 183 minutes.⁶
- Studies show that increases in rail traffic have the potential to result in diseconomies as a result of traffic delays.¹⁶
- There is a probable issue concerning emergency services response times in a scenario where the 1.5 mile long trains block all the downtown east-west crossing at the same time for several minutes in smaller communities. Adding 16-18 additional trains per day to service could tip the balance at a critical time when emergency responses are needed.¹⁷

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Coal trains have travelled through the Northwest for decades and dust has never been an issue.



Coal dust from freight trains is a problem.

- Coal dust is a problem wherever coal terminals are found, whether in Alaska or Louisiana; Australia or India; South Africa or South Carolina. It's the same story everywhere, including in the Northwest where coal dust has been a major problem near both big terminals in British Columbia—Westshore and Prince Rupert.
- A 2011 study by BNSF states that the amount of coal dust that escapes from PRB coal trains is surprisingly large. While the amount of coal dust that escapes from a particular coal car depends on a number of factors, including the weather, BNSF has done studies indicating that at least 500 lbs to a ton of coal can escape from a single loaded coal car. BNSF determined that derailments resulted from weakened track structure caused primarily by a combination of coal dust and high levels of rainfall along with other factors.¹⁵

Current data is insufficient to determine coal dust is not a health issue.

- The coal would be stored in big piles near waterways. For example, 80-100 acres of open coal heaps would be in proximity to the aquatic reserve near the Cherry Point Terminal, in an area sometimes subjected to high winds; it is unknown to what extent coal dust in the water might affect the marine plants and animals.¹²

The simple presence of coal dust has been shown to cause ecological harm.

- Coal dust on the undersurface of leaves is not removed by wind, rain, or even physical washing. The undersurface of the leaves, as well as the rough surfaces of twigs, branches and trunk, tend to accumulate dust and appear black.¹

- It's important to realize that the diesel particles from the coal trains are microscopic, ultra-fine particles that you can't see. But they're the ones that do the real damage because they make it to the deepest parts of the airways.²
- Ordinary tidal currents could disperse the coal particles 2.5 miles from the coal loading facility, and potentially over 56 miles under extreme conditions.¹

Coal dust is also a problem after the coal is unloaded from the trains.

- Local economies can suffer from the effects of dust around export terminals. For example, people have relocated boats from nearby marinas due to excessive and damaging coal dust.¹³

The issue extends beyond dust.

- A 1997 study by government researchers in Canada found that coal dust altered genetic expression in juvenile Chinook salmon.¹
- Even the lowest carbon coal has an extremely high carbon footprint. For example, the subbituminous coal characteristic of the Powder River Basin—proposed for export via the Northwest—is 32 percent dirtier than diesel and 82 percent dirtier than natural gas.³
- There were 18 coal train derailments in the first seven months of 2013 alone.¹⁰
- BNSF determined that derailments resulted from weakened track structure caused primarily by a combination of coal dust and high levels of rainfall along with other factors.¹⁵
- Cleaning up coal dust after it has escaped from the coal cars in transit is not an acceptable alternative to taking preventive measures to reduce coal dust emissions. In addition to the high costs of such operations, the increased maintenance activities can adversely affect service availability and reliability.¹⁵

These projects plan to invest billions of dollars in constructing new export terminals.



The companies don't even have billions of dollars to invest in the projects to begin with.

- The company proposing terminals, Ambre Energy, has no track record of success, deeply troubled finances, minuscule overseas assets, and just over one year's worth of experience in the US coal industry. The firm recently admitted that it lost \$10.9 million on a failed coal project in Australia.⁸

It will cost millions to improve rail line infrastructure to allow for coal trains.

- State and local governments will likely bear the brunt and burden of the related infrastructure costs in their localities and will likely be required to spend hundreds of millions of dollars in related mitigation, litigation, debt and other costs associated with the necessary improvements to accommodate export coal traffic levels.¹⁹

Proposed export terminals will not only bring new jobs and economic opportunities, but also provide millions in new tax revenue.



Coal does not maximize our ability to create jobs.

- Nearly any other infrastructure investment produces more jobs than coal, even when you factor in the indirect jobs and other secondary jobs.⁵
- When pressed at a KUOW forum in Seattle in February 2013 on the local tax benefits a rail-line community would see, SSA Marine's Bob Watters said the benefit would "trickle down."²⁴
- The coal industry is failing to account for the negative impact to existing businesses in rail-line communities that would

experience coal train traffic congestion, as well as industries like commercial fishing and shellfish farming that are negatively impacted by ocean acidification, global warming and mercury pollution.

- Communities would be hit hard with the cost of needed rail and traffic upgrades to account for the significant uptick in coal train traffic from even one export proposal. Some communities could see anywhere between 8-16 trains per day, and others like Spokane with up to 40 trains a day if all terminals are built.²⁷

This investment in the Northwest's most important industry is an investment in our future.



We are actively degrading the future health of our state, region and planet - that's a bad investment.

- Coal often contains a range of pollutants, including uranium, thorium, arsenic, mercury, lead, and other elements that are toxic at low concentrations. Even the coal industry's own expert of toxicology says that the public should demand science-based assessments of coal dust arising from export plans.²⁵
- A study on coal externalities estimates that the life cycle effects of coal and the

waste stream generated are costing the U.S. public a third to over one-half of a trillion dollars annually.²¹

- Washington State has put policies in place to phase out coal burning facilities because of coal's negative environmental impact, yet we are exporting it to Asia.¹²
- The coal planned for export from Longview alone would produce roughly as much climate-changing carbon dioxide as every activity combined in the entire state of Washington.²⁶

Constructing new export terminals in the Northwest, as well as upgrading existing ones, would create thousands of temporary construction jobs and permanent family-wage jobs.



There are damage externalities that the coal companies don't always consider.

- The mining process damages aquifers in the Powder River Basin region, affecting human health and local economies, particularly ranching.¹²
- Coal strip mining also affects the quality of water quality. At the Rosebud Mine in Colstrip, for example, there has been an incidence of water contamination by what is believed to be seepage from the mine. A rancher in the area has had cattle die from this contaminated water.¹⁸

This industry does not promote social justice.

- In the Powder River Basin—home to the coal planned for export to Asia via the Northwest—coal miners are 90% non-union and recent employment trends are moving away from union workers.⁵
- In 2007, coal giant Peabody Energy (one of the proponents of the Cherry Point coal export terminal) spun off its worst performing mines into a new company, Patriot Coal, which promptly went bankrupt—and Peabody now says it has no obligation to provide retirement and health benefits to its former employees.²⁸

Coal train traffic would impact property values.

- Single family residences north of Everett, where as many as 18 additional trains are anticipated, could face as much as five to twenty percent decline in value, which doesn't help a working family's bottom-line.⁷