

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, November 1, 2012

Window Closes for Public Comment on Morrow's Controversial Coal Plan *Despite massive outcry, State denies public comment extension*

The Dalles, ORE--The Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL) officially closed its window for public input on the proposal to develop a coal terminal at the Port of Morrow yesterday, despite receiving an outpouring of local opposition and calls for the agency to extend the comment period and offer public hearings. The Department of State Lands could issue a permit as soon as next month, which could help to fast-track the project without proper evaluation and little support from the public.

In Response, John Nelson, concerned citizen and former City Planning Commissioner in The Dalles issues the following statement on behalf of the Power Past Coal Coalition:

"As we welcome Mary Abrams, the incoming director of the Department of State Lands to her new position, Oregon residents continue to send a resounding message that we're counting on her and Governor Kitzhaber to stand up for Oregon families and communities.

The issue of transporting toxic coal through our communities for export to Asia is one that folks around the region are taking very seriously. State agencies and leaders have the future of these dangerous proposals--and therefore the future of Oregon--in their hands, and should scrutinize these projects accordingly.

The size and complexity of this massive project, and the outstanding quality of life and technical concerns that go with it, are just a few of the reasons the public has called for a 30-day comment period extension for the Morrow project. The Oregon Department of State Lands denied the public's requests for more time to comment and public hearings on a proposal that directly threatens the health of their families and communities, and the wellbeing of the industries and traditions that sustain them.

Mitigating traffic delays on the Columbia River Gorge is already a concern, as dam traffic at the entrance and exits of the locks often face serious bottlenecks and can be stalled for several hours at a time. The Morrow proposal would nearly double the daily barge traffic on the Gorge over 2010 traffic, further exacerbating delays and discouraging recreational and tourism boats, as well as other commerce barges used by industries we're committed to supporting.

The continued and overwhelming disdain for this project demonstrates that when the time comes to approve or deny the permits for the Port of Morrow, Governor Kitzhaber and DSL Director Mary Abrams must continue their legacy of protecting Oregonians' health and environment by ensuring the Port of Morrow coal export terminal is not permitted. We simply cannot allow the Port of Morrow become a floodgate for coal through Oregon."

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POWER PAST COAL is an ever-growing alliance of health, environmental, clean-energy, faith, and community groups working to stop coal export off the West Coast. www.powerpastcoal.org