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Northwest Leaders Testify to Congress on Coal Exports:

It's Coal Export vs. Jobs and the Environment

Army Corps Rejects Call for Area-Wide Review of all Northwest Terminals, Focus Pivots to Each Terminal and Critical Role of State Officials, Agencies for Thorough Review

Washington, D.C. Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn and Climate Solutions Policy Director and Power Past Coal representative KC Golden testified at a congressional hearing on the environmental, health and economic impacts from coal exports. The House Energy and Commerce subcommittee on Energy and Power held the hearing on [U.S. Energy Abundance: Regulatory, Market, and Legal Barriers to Export](#).

“This is not a jobs vs. environment situation. It’s a coal export vs. jobs *and* the environment situation,” stated Golden in his testimony. “In a region that places a high economic and cultural value on innovation and quality of life, coal export would commit some of our most valuable resources to a low-value, high-impact, economically unsound use. In a region that aims to pioneer and export sustainable prosperity, coal export would position us as promoters and suppliers of unsustainable fossil fuel development to the world. In a region that depends on climate stability for its water, food, and power supplies – coal export would make us merchants of climate disruption. As Pete Knutson, owner of Loki Fish Company said: ‘Anyone who claims that this massive coal project is about jobs had better learn to subtract. We’re weighing jobs based on the one-time exploitation of a fossil fuel versus livelihoods based on a sustainable resource.’”

At the same hearing, Jennifer Moyer, the Acting Chief for Regulatory Program for the Army Corps of Engineers [revealed in her testimony](#) the federal agency would not be conducting an area-wide review of the proposals coal export terminals in Washington and Oregon.

Over 500 businesses, [160 elected officials](#), including Seattle Mayor McGinn who testifying at the congressional hearing, both Governors Kitzhaber and Inslee and ten members of Congress, three dozen municipalities, over 100 organizations, 600 health professionals and over a dozen newspapers, including the region’s largest *The Seattle Times*, have called for a full and thorough review of the proposed terminals. At least 35,000 citizens wrote to the Army Corps calling for an area-wide EIS. Eleven organizations of the Power Past Coal coalition recently petitioned the Corps for the area-wide EIS.

“We recently called on the Army Corps to stop sitting on their hands and move forward with an area-wide review, and they responded with willingly putting their blinders on,” said Cesia Kearns, Senior Campaign Representative for Sierra Club’s Beyond Coal Campaign and Acting Director for Power Past Coal coalition of which Sierra Club is a member. “It is a mistake for the Army Corps to leave us all in the dark about the real-life impacts coal export would cause across the West. But if the Corps won’t undertake an area-wide review, we certainly expect them to follow the law, and for our state leaders and agencies to step up and for them all to do a full and thorough review of the all impacts at each of the proposed coal export terminals, including at Port of Morrow in Oregon.”

There are currently three active coal export proposals in Washington and Oregon at Cherry Point, WA (north of Bellingham), Longview, WA, and Boardman, OR that would export a total 100 million metric tons per year if all built. While Cherry Point and Longview are in initial stages of the EIS process, the Army Corps has not yet required a site-specific EIS at the Port of Morrow terminal at Boardman, and permit approvals there may go forward after an even more truncated environmental analysis. Many inland rail-line communities could experience up to 40 mile-and-a-half long coal-trains per day if all three terminals were built.

“When the first coal export terminal was proposed three years ago, coal backers thought they could get quick and dirty approval without much public attention. They were wrong,” Kearns continued. “Northwest communities have continued to call for sunlight and truth when looking at the impacts from coal export. Our governors and state agencies should not be bullied by the coal companies and see through the full and thorough review.

The tens of thousands of citizens and hundreds of groups, businesses and elected officials have called for a full and thorough reviews to include impacts from increased mining in Wyoming and Montana, particularly on public lands; increased rail traffic throughout Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon; traffic, pollution, safety, health, and congestion issues along the rail line between Powder River Basin area coal mines and the Pacific Northwest terminal sites; the effect of coal export on domestic energy security and pricing. Reviews also need to look at the effects of significantly increased barge and cargo ship operations on the Columbia River and in Puget Sound and combined vessel traffic impacts and oil spill risks in the transpacific navigational routes including the Gulf of Alaska and Unimak Pass. The Corps and other agencies should also consider effects on global consumption of coal due to the effect of the operation of export terminals on international market prices, and resulting increased greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution impacts from coal combustion in China, including mercury and other contaminant deposition in Pacific Northwest waters. Groups and individuals have asked for hearings to be held around the region on any and all the proposals.

“It is ironic that today the Army Corps also announced the need for a stronger levee system because of growing climate impacts,” said Golden. “Let’s make these decisions in the full light of day. We’re confident that the facts will speak for themselves,” Golden concluded in his testimony to the subcommittee on Tuesday.

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