

Power Past Coal

Stopping Coal Export from the West Coast



Coal companies, recognizing that there is little future growth to be had domestically, have a new plan: export the strip-mined coal that we're not using to Asia to feed that rapidly growing appetite for energy.

The Powder River Basin is one of the largest coal reserves in the world, and the easiest gateway to get that strip-mined coal to Asia is through West Coast ports.

Coal is the dirtiest, most carbon-intensive fossil fuel. Becoming a gateway for coal export would fly in the face of our region's leadership in the clean energy economy. Shipping up to a hundred million tons of coal a year to Asia through West Coast ports would spread toxic coal dust in dozens of communities along the rail line, clog our railroads and ports, risk our families' health, pollute our air and water, and stoke the climate crisis.

We need to power past coal. We can do better, keeping our local economies strong and the places we love intact for our families. We won't sell the soul of our communities for coal. The costs to our health, quality of life, and our home towns are too high.

Moving and Storing Coal is Dirty, Dangerous and Disruptive:

Currently, the nation's two largest coal companies, Arch Coal and Peabody, are working on massive coal export terminals at Longview, WA and Cherry Point, north of Bellingham, WA. There are also potential proposals for many other communities, including:

- Grays Harbor, WA
- Boardman, OR
- Coos Bay, OR
- St. Helens, OR

The coal has to move from the Powder River Basin along rail lines to the coast, endangering every community along the way.

The wide ranging health dangers of coal dust include exposure to toxic heavy metals like mercury and increased rates of asthma, especially in children. Coal dust and diesel exhaust from coal trains and cargo ships can cause serious long-term health problems like lung and heart disease and would hurt our health and pollute our clean air and water.

Communities in and along rail lines and near the coal export terminals would see 20 or more coal trains rolling through town every day. According to calculations by BNSF Railroad, each train car can lose 500 pounds of coal dust en route.

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Arch Coal and Peabody Energy would ship as much as 130 million tons of coal per year through Washington state. Shipping 130 millions of tons of coal every year would add more than 9,000 mile-long coal trains to Washington's rail system every year.

Many neighborhoods that would experience increased train traffic are lower-income communities that are already over-burdened with pollution and economic development challenges. Frequent traffic delays at busy rail crossings would clog commuter traffic and could slow response times for police, fire fighters and other first responders as well as delay access to many schools and business corridors.

Exporting Pollution to Asia Means More Environmental Problems Here at Home



Exporting coal to Asian nations encourages them to burn more dirty coal and prolongs the world's transition to cleaner alternatives. The result would be more global warming pollution, impacting communities in the Northwest, North America and around the globe.

More coal burning in Asia means more toxic air pollution travelling across the Pacific to contaminate West Coast rivers, lakes and fish. Recent scientific studies show that Asia is an increasing source of mercury and other pollutants on the West Coast.

Closer to home, shorelines would be given over to industrial sites with enormous piles of coal and constant dust. The proposed terminal site at Cherry Point would span 1200 acres, fill 131 acres of wetlands and sit directly on herring grounds, which are a primary food source for Chinook salmon.

Asia would suffer too. As the world's largest coal user, China produces at least 375 million tons of toxic coal ash every year, or enough to fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool every 2 1/2 minutes. Coal ash disposal sites release lead, boron, selenium and other pollutants.

We can do better

Coal companies stand to make huge profits. Asia would get the energy. The West Coast, especially the Northwest, would pay the price. We can do better than coal export to build our region's economy. Washington and Oregon have a long and proud history of economic innovation, and our region already supports thousands of high-tech and clean energy jobs. We should focus on building those industries – not supporting and becoming a middleman in the world's industries of the past like dirty coal.

Pioneering a sustainable prosperity is both our responsibility and one of our greatest economic opportunities; coal export would bind us – economically, politically, and morally – to the opposite path: a global economic development strategy that is fundamentally incompatible with energy security and climate stability.

Washington Governor Gregoire, WA Commissioner of Public Lands Goldmark, Oregon Governor Kitzhaber and other public officials can be leaders in saying no to coal export and yes to continuing a legacy of leadership on climate change and a clean-energy economy.



Photo by Paul K. Anderson

Learn more and get involved at www.powerpastcoal.org

We are a growing coalition of organizations and community leaders who share a common interest in preventing the West Coast from becoming a high volume coal corridor.

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communities against coal export

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