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## **Thousands Turn Out to Voice Opposition of Controversial Coal Export Proposal**

*Hearing in Bellingham First of Seven for Cherry Point Terminal*

Bellingham, WA - Close to 2,000 residents from Northern Washington packed Squaticum High School to kick off the first of seven public comment hearings to show opposition of the proposed coal export terminal at Cherry Point. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of Ecology, and the Whatcom County Council hosted the hearing. The three organizations are set to hear concerns from the public who are demanding that coal export proposals be thoroughly evaluated and considered by the group before moving forward with the project.

Julie Trimmingham, a local mother and founder of the informational website, CoalTrainsFacts.org, says she is saddened by the impact the issue has already on the community. She and several others feel that many of the proponents of the coal port have tried to pit community members against one another by making people feel like they must choose between jobs and the environment.

“The Pacific Northwest economy has always been tied to the environment,” said Ms. Trimmingham. Historically, local commerce has heavily depended on the fishers, farmers and foresters the area has employed. “Increasingly, local Northwest economies have grown to complement the local natural resources and as a result, industries like tourism, high-tech, education, and health care have continued to flourish. Our long-term prosperity and security have always –and will continue to– come from us making the most of our regional strengths, not by diminishing them with this dangerous coal export terminal,” she added.

Recently, the threat to the fishing industry has garnered more attention, predominantly due to last month’s announcement from the Lummi Nation that they would not support the coal export proposal. In a bold statement, the tribal nation declared that they would not sacrifice their heritage and livelihood for dangerous and dirty coal exports, “not even for millions of dollars,” and ceremoniously burned a check in opposition to these plans.

Walter Young, a longtime Bellingham resident and retired commercial fisherman who depends on the local waterways, says these proposed coal export terminals would directly threaten the safety and livelihood of his family and community. “The bottom line is we need to end the mining, exporting, and burning of dirty coal. Coal companies are plundering our environment at the expense of clean air, clean water, and public health. The people have a right to be heard, and today’s hearing sends the message loud and clear: we need a look deeply at this proposed terminal,” said Young.

“The scale of these projects, whether it’s the construction of a massive coal export terminal or shipping trains full of toxic coal, is simply incompatible with the lifestyle and culture we have here in

Washington,” said Nicole Brown, a mother and organic farmer. “The proposed coal export projects would threaten the natural resources, clean air, and clean water that have sustained our way of life for generations. Because of the transformative risk and impacts on our economy and culture, these projects deserve a thorough and comprehensive study.”

The Army Corps and Dept. of Ecology will conduct scoping hearings for the proposed coal export terminal across the state in the coming months. The schedule for upcoming scoping hearings is as follows: Friday Harbor 11/3, Mt. Vernon 11/5, Seattle 11/13, Ferndale 11/29, Spokane 12/4, and Vancouver 12/12. Montana organizations plan to hold “peoples’ hearings” since there are no formal hearings in Montana or Idaho, yet those two states would experience significant increases in coal train traffic with trains headed from the Powder River Basin to Washington and Oregon.

“There’s a reason coal use is flat-lining in the U.S.: because coal is a fossil fuel of the past that takes us backwards, and we know can innovate and accelerate clean energy solutions,” said Crina Hoyer, Executive Director for RE Sources for Sustainable Communities. “Coal is the dirtiest fossil fuel by far—and it’s exactly why SSA Marine scrubs the word coal off their website and hides it in their paperwork and testimonies and wants coal barely mentioned in the federal register notice. If approved, this would be the largest coal export terminal in North America. Exporting coal off the West Coast would mean transporting a dirty and dangerous combustible fuel in open rail cars through our communities and business corridors, and on massive cargo ships through the Salish Sea. We can do better.”

Already, over 160 elected officials – including both Sens. Murray and Cantwell – close to 600 health professionals, over 400 local businesses, 220 faith leaders, close to 30 municipalities and some Northwest Tribes including the Lummi Nation have either voiced concern or come out against coal export off the West Coast.

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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](http://www.powerpastcoal.org)