

# Will Thurston County power past coal?

**COAL COMPANIES**, seeing little future growth domestically, have a new plan: strip mine coal in Montana and Wyoming, transport it on long coal trains through Thurston County to a massive coal export terminal north of Bellingham at Cherry Point. There are several other coal terminals proposed in Washington and Oregon

## WHO'S BEHIND THE PLAN?

Out-of-state companies, including the world's largest coal company Peabody and investors including Goldman Sachs. SSA Marine would manage the port.

## CONGESTION FROM COAL TRAIN TRAFFIC

Communities in and along rail lines, including Bucoda, Tenino, East Olympia and Nisqually could see up to 18 coal trains rolling through town every day. And the trains would border the Nisqually Wildlife Refuge. This would add more than 3,000 noisy mile-long loaded coal trains traveling through Thurston County rail system every year.

A single slow-moving coal train can obstruct a rail crossing by six minutes or more. Adding just 18 trains to the local area's rail system would mean blocking some crossings by two hours per day.

Increased traffic delays at busy rail crossings would clog commuter traffic and could slow response times for emergency responders.

## WATERFRONTS AND NEIGHBORHOODS CUT OFF BY COAL TRAINS

Added coal train traffic along the Thurston County rail line would limit access to neighborhoods, schools, and the small downtowns close to the train tracks. This could drive away investors for new residential, retail and commercial developments

in rail-adjacent communities in Thurston County.

## HEALTH IMPACTS FOR THURSTON COUNTY

Diesel exhaust and coal dust from coal trains can cause serious long-term health problems like lung and heart disease and cancer. Diesel exhaust is associated with asthma, cardiopulmonary disease and increased incidences of cancer. Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad studies estimate up to 500 pounds of coal can be lost in the form of dust from each rail car en route. 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 could pollute our clean air and water.

Toxic fish: Mercury and other pollutants from coal-burning power plants travel from Asia to the West Coast of North America where they poison our air, water, fish and food supply.

*(cont)*



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**PHOTO CREDIT: PAUL K. ANDERSON**



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PHOTO CREDIT: SIERRA CLUB.

### IMPACTS TO PUGET SOUND

Close to the terminals, shorelines would be given over to industrial sites with enormous piles of coal and constant dust. For example, the proposed terminal site at Cherry Point would destroy and degrade 162 acres of wetlands and sit directly on herring grounds, which are a primary food source for Chinook salmon.

The companies would ship the coal on massive cargo ships. Every year over 500 of the worlds' biggest, most accident-prone ships would clog the already crowded Straits of Juan de Fuca and Georgia. This would mean ongoing threats to wetlands, waterways and wildlife from potential ship collisions, threatening salmon, orcas and our Sound.

Exporting coal promotes deeper global fossil fuel dependence. It delays the urgently needed transition to cleaner alternatives. It makes climate disruption inevitable, including extreme flooding and ocean acidification, impacting our shorelines and the Sound.

### BAD FOR THE ECONOMY

Major public ports, such as the Ports of Seattle, Tacoma, Vancouver and Portland have rejected coal export as inconsistent with their economic

development strategies. The proposed sites have potential for hundreds of jobs in light industria' and smart-tech growth instead of being mired in a single-commodi unpredictable dirty export trade. Increased coal train traffic would lower property values along the rail lines and in communities impacted by congested traffic. It would also make it more difficult for ports and shippers to get higher value goods to market along the rail lines.

“Even the most cursory review of the Gateway proposal shows that the additional trains required to supply the new terminal will further obstruct traffic and have a negative impact on economic development in our community leading to a net loss of jobs.”

-Letter from Skagit County Port Commissioners to Governor Gre- goire, Sept. 13, 2011

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“The concern expressed by mayors and governors and the leaders of community, medical and faith groups cuts across any debate about the potential boost to local employment and economies.

They believe there are too many unknown details about the extent of the port-development plans, along with the eventual scale of the coal deliveries through cities and towns, and the potential local and global hazards to human health and the environment.”

— SEATTLE TIMES EDITORIAL  
OCTOBER 2, 2012

## WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1

**Call Senators Cantwell and Murray** and tell them they need to demand the Army Corps conduct a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) at Ambre Energy's Port of Morrow proposal on the Columbia River - the only project without an EIS - because it would impact WA communities. Congressional Switchboard: 202-224-3121.

2

**Call WA State Commissioner of Public Lands Peter Goldmark** at 360-902-1004 and tell him “please don't use Washington's public waters for coal export.”

3

**Call Gov. Inslee at 360-902-4111** and tell him it is more important than ever that he protect our communities. Governor Inslee must ensure his state agencies conduct the broadest possible review of the cumulative impacts of all the coal export proposals.

# POWER PAST COAL

communities against coal export

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