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Record breaking 169,000 comments raise concerns about water quality impacts of Longview coal export terminal

Longview, Washington - More than 169,000 public comments flooded the Washington Department of Ecology encouraging the agency to deny a water quality permit needed for the proposed Millennium Bulk Terminals coal export facility in Longview. This is the largest number of comments Ecology has ever received on a Water Quality Certification permit.

Today marks the end of the public comment period. Ecology is slated to issue their decision by September 29, 2017. The Power Past Coal coalition submitted testimony highlighting how the nation’s largest coal export terminal would harm salmon and pollute the Columbia River.

"Not one angler in the entire state of Washington believes that our salmon need more climate change, more toxics, and more acidification,” said Bob Rees, Executive Director of the Northwest Association of Steelheaders. "The coal pollution from Millennium would harm salmon and people that rely on strong salmon runs for a living. Ecology can protect the Northwest’s fishing heritage and our climate by denying the coal terminal."

If built, Millennium would export 44 million tons of coal per year—the climate [equivalent of adding 8 million cars](https://thinkprogress.org/proposed-coal-terminal-would-be-the-equivalent-of-adding-8-million-cars-to-the-road-dd4b076d9919) to the road—to Asia as a fuel source for coal-fired power plants. Millennium would would add up to sixteen trains a day traveling between Wyoming and Longview, tying up traffic and impacting public safety response times in rail communities across the Pacific Northwest.

“Based on the sweeping impacts of Millennium’s project and the overwhelming opposition to coal export, Ecology should use its authority to deny Millennium’s unprecedented proposal to build the nation’s largest coal export terminal in the Columbia River estuary,” stated Power Past Coal Co-Director Jasmine Zimmer-Stucky. “Ecology’s own environmental review, scientific evidence, comments by Tribes, federal and state agencies, non-governmental organizations, and everyday citizens document how Millennium’s project would harm our region. It’s time for Ecology to protect Washington from coal export.”

"Opposition to coal export continues to build," stated Gary Wallace, president of Landowners and Citizens for a Safe Community, " over 169,000 people are asking Ecology to stop this dead-end project and help us usher in cleaner, safer industries that benefit our environment and economy. I hope the agency listens."

Ecology’s environmental review of the Millennium project documented significant, harmful impacts from the coal terminal and associated rail traffic. The project would discharge coal dust discharge from 75 acres of uncovered coal piles and mile-and-a-half long coal trains and increase large vessel traffic in the Columbia River estuary by 1,680 trips per year. The federal and state governments, as well as Tribes, have invested billions of dollars to restore the Columbia River estuary for salmon and other endangered species.

Earlier this year the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) dealt a major blow to the project when it denied a critical sublease for Millennium to operate on the Columbia River. Millennium sued DNR; the appeal is pending in Cowlitz County Superior Court. Millennium also needs permits from multiple state agencies, the federal government, and Cowlitz County.

[Link to Power Past Coal Coalition comments](http://columbiariverkeeper.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Power-Past-Coal-Second-401-Comments.pdf)

*Power Past Coal is an ever-growing alliance of health, environmental, clean-energy, faith and community groups and businesses working to stop coal export off the West Coast. The Power Past Coal coalition includes Columbia Riverkeeper, Climate Solutions, Friends of the Columbia Gorge, Association of Northwest Steelheaders, Washington Environmental Council, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility, Sierra Club, RE Sources for Sustainable Communities, Northern Plains Resource Council, Greenpeace, USA National Wildlife Federation, and Western Organization of Resource Councils.*