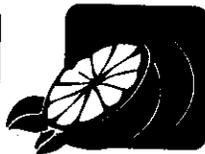




ALL OF THE
 ENCLOSED WELL
 WRITTEN LETTERS
 TO OUR LOCAL
 SKAGIT PAPER
 SPEAK VOLUMES
 ABOUT THE WAY
 WE ALL FEEL ABOUT
 THE COAL TRAINS.
 —STOP THE MADNESS—
 Betty J. Wells



No coal in our stockings

This proposed coal train juggernaut is beyond outrage. Why should the Skagit Valley give up our quality of life, our clean air and environment, our \$280 million worth of annual agricultural revenues, our world leadership in seed and tulip produc-

tion, for 26 worthless (to us) jobs in Fern- dale, in order to export coal that should stay underground? Why subject everything we treasure to extermination?

Who is this "Alliance for Northwest Jobs & Export"? Goldman Sachs, the invest- ment bank that crashed our economy, put millions out of work and homes and whose chairman should be in jail; Peabody Energy, the world's biggest coal-mining company with offices in St. Louis, Australia, Jakarta, Singapore and China (I assume they'll export to their own Beijing subsidiary, to keep the profits "offshore," ready for bribing politicians and influencing future elections); BNSF, each 1.5-mile-long train blocking every crossing simultaneously in Mount Vernon, 20 times per day, seven days per week, year-round, rapidly suffocating Skagit Valley, causing major respiratory ill- nesses from coal dust, diesel fumes, traffic congestion and returning acid rain from Asia. Do these corporations live here? Will their "quality of life" be affected? Are their profits more important than our lives?

I wish I had millions to spare for my own "Alliance for Skagit Valley, the Beautiful & Plentiful" TV ads to show how devastating "clean coal" really is, since there's no such thing. To our "silent" elected officials: If you put coal in our stockings by approving the coal trains issue, I promise we'll replace you with people who care more about us and the environment than corporate greed. If you don't act now, and with your constitu- ents in mind, you may soon look for jobs

at the Cherry Point terminal. Stop the coal train juggernaut.

Why we oppose coal trains

I had the privilege of attending a scoping meeting to hear speakers from our community voicing their concerns for the proposed coal trains — up to 20 a day — that would be passing through our county.

McIntyre Hall was filled, and as people left the hall, another wave came in. Local residents who spoke to the packed auditorium roused support with their questions and concerns. There was great waving of “No Coal” signs or hands in the air when we agreed with the person speaking. Excellent questions were raised and directed to the Army Corps of Engineers and EIS representatives.

The vast majority of people who attended were skeptical and non-supportive of the coal trains passing through Skagit County. We want to be assured that research will be done regarding coal dust and other industrial wastes that will affect water and air quality and, as a result, the health of our residents. Over and over again, the people made it clear that what we want most is quality of life. More important even than the new jobs that would be created.

I agree. I walked away from that meeting proud to be a Skagitonian and one of the many seniors who turned out to say, “Think of the impact this will have on our children and grandchildren. We live in Skagit County because it is a healthy place to live. Let’s keep it that way.”

Nothing good about coal

Peabody Energy and SSA Marine want to build a coal-loading terminal on the bay north of Bellingham. They promise jobs and a tax base. But there is nothing good about coal. It kills miners and their families and neighbors. Its tailings poison watersheds, and thus kill people, creatures and plants downstream.

Coal dust from train cars sifts into farm fields, adding arsenic and mercury to our food; it sifts through rail-side towns, into the lungs of the townspeople.

Burning coal produces a toxic smog that causes heart disease, asthma, bronchitis, cancer — a whole slew of killing lung diseases. This smog causes acid rain, which kills lakes, forests and rivers.

Burning coal causes ocean acidification, which prevents shellfish from making their calcium shells, and so kills oysters, clams, mussels, reefs and pteropods (a seafood-chain basic).

Most of the air we breathe here comes across the ocean from Asia. We breathe in China’s coal toxin-laden smog. Shipping coal to China is therefore a form of suicide.

Jobs at the proposed coal terminal — basically, high-tech coal-shoveling — would not make up for the job losses in aquaculture, commercial fishing and the sport-fishing industry. They would not make up for the degradation of our towns, our croplands, our lakes, bays and oceans.

We need air, water and food to survive, and coal taints all of these with death. We have cleaner alternatives to burning coal. It is time for us to leave it in the ground. For there is nothing good about coal.

Another reason to say 'no'

Re: "Tanker trouble" (Skagit Valley Herald photo, Jan. 10).

The tanker that derailed with "corn oil" is just one more reason to say "no" to the coal trains. We live a couple hundred feet from the railroad tracks. The other day my son asked me what was in the tankers marked "Flammable" and "Hazardous." I told him, "Chemicals."

My son asked me, "Mom, what if one of those derails behind our house?" To alleviate his fears, I said they will evacuate us. We then made a "safe room" with no windows, complete with masks and towels.

Sounds silly? Not to a fearful special-needs kid with autism.

Please rethink the extra trainloads!

Consider the consequences

On Dec. 4, I was held up for 10 minutes by a freight train as it crossed Burlington Boulevard. Although the train was soon gone, the cars were backed up in all directions and it took four traffic signals to get through.

Later that same day, I turned onto College Way. Another train. This one was carrying coal. It took eight minutes to cross. At 3:30 p.m., there was a lot of traffic, including school buses. As I sat there watching this train carrying the coal north, an odd smell was seeping into my car. To my dismay, the air was filled with what I can only describe as the strong smell of creosote.

While we all sat there and waited to get through the lights, I wondered about that smell permeating homes along the route and how people dealt with the odor from idling trains. I wondered about the so-called "scoping" meetings we had all been attending. Were those meetings simply to pacify us, make us all believe that we had a voice, when all the time they were just going to follow the money and go right ahead and pollute the air we breathe, the water we drink, the fish, the land, wildlife and shellfish?

I wondered how anyone could be in favor of 18 mile-long trains per day to supply a few jobs in Ferndale. Did the people in favor of this eternal stench actually think it would be worth the livelihoods in the agricultural and fishing industries? People wouldn't be able to get to work on time. Ambulances, fire trucks and police cars would be stopped.

Do we live in a country of people who cannot consider the consequences of their actions? I think it's called ADHD.

Guest Column

The impact of coal trains from an orca's point of view

This is the first time I've written to the editor. I'm an orca, a member of J pod here in the waters of the San Juans. You shouldn't be surprised that orcas can write. After all, you land folks have determined that corporations are people and money is speech. Let me tell you in a nutshell (or seashell) a very scary tale that is not a fairy tale.

Some very wealthy coal, railroad and financial corporations are proposing to dig up coal in vast areas of Wyoming; dump the clumps into open rail cars; haul it all the way to this part of the Northwest in 1.5-mile-long, 125-unit trains; dump all that black grit onto giant coal piles at Cherry Point; and then load it into mammoth, three-football-field-long cargo ships bound for China, India and Korea to feed their industries to outcompete us.

I'm amazed at what you people will do to maintain your fossil fuel habit. I hear some people asking, "Why should I be concerned about coal trains rumbling through Mount Vernon and Burlington and a pile of coal at Cherry point?" Let me tell you.

The coal trains will impact my orca family in the San Juans. We eat salmon, salmon eat herring, and herring need eel grass. Cherry Point herring struggle to survive when eel grass is not healthy. If the whole marine system isn't healthy, what will I eat? What do you think adding more coal dust, diesel particles and piers are going to do to the eel grass and herring runs of Cherry Point — a marine preserve, by the way? And how will ballast water, noise pollution, sonar, bilge water and ship exhaust emissions impact all us marine creatures in the San Juans? Our fins will flop, a sign of sickness.

I read (yes, I can read, too) that "if a ship is traveling at a speed of only 15 knots, there is a 79 percent chance of a collision being lethal to a whale." I don't like those odds. Bulk cargo ships, such as coal vessels, discharge a huge amount of ballast water, which typically contains

salmon eat herring and herring need eel grass. Cherry Point herring struggle to survive when eel grass is not healthy. If the whole marine system isn't healthy, what will I eat? What do you think adding more coal dust, diesel particles and piers are going to do to the eel grass and herring runs of Cherry Point — a marine preserve, by the way? And how will ballast water, noise pollution, sonar, bilge water and ship exhaust emissions impact all us marine creatures in the San Juans? Our fins will flop, a sign of sickness.

I read (yes, I can read, too) that "if a ship is traveling at a speed of only 15 knots, there is a 79 percent chance of a collision being lethal to a whale." I don't like those odds. Bulk cargo ships, such as coal vessels, discharge a huge amount of ballast water, which typically contains a variety of biological materials, including plants, animals, viruses and bacteria. Noise pollution can cause me and my buddies to be disorientated, hinder communication and make it harder to find our food.

On a ship, oil often leaks from engine and machinery spaces and mixes with water in the bilge. Oil in even small concentrations can sicken or kill fish. The Evergreen State will become the Eversheen State. I don't want to eat sick fish.

Do you think that I'm going to stick around here when I can't eat, hear my buddies or swim in peaceful and clean waters? So when me and my orca friends leave for cleaner, quieter and safer waters (I hope we find some), will the tourist pamphlets and phone-book covers show pictures of giant cargo ships instead of members of my family jumping out of the water? Will the tourists come (if they can get here) to see 1.5-mile-long trains rumbering through the valley, or piles of coal, or giant cargo ships?

Coal terminal. Yes, our planet may be terminal all right if all that coal is burned, releasing all the carbon into the air.

So don't think, Fidalgo Islanders, that this coal train and coal terminal doesn't impact you. It will impact me, and that will impact you. We are all in this together, aren't we?

The 120-day scoping process for the EIS (environmental impact statement) for the proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal and Custer Spur projects has started. Letters from whales aren't accepted, so I'm counting on you to help.

Here's how:

■ Mail to: GPT/Custer Spur EIS c/o
CH2M HILL, 1100 112th Ave. NE, Suite
400, Bellevue, WA 98004

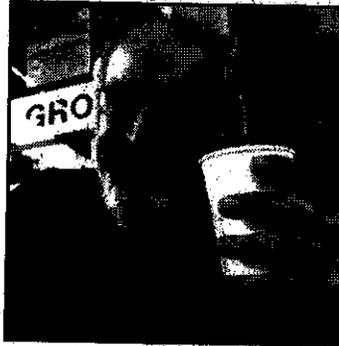
■ Email to: comments@eisgatewaypacificwa.gov

■ Visit: www.eisgatewaypacificwa.gov

■ Attend a scoping meeting Saturday, Nov. 3, in Friday Harbor, or Monday, Nov. 5 in Mount Vernon.

If you help me keep the Northwest from becoming the Eversheen State, I will tell my orca pals to join me in popping out of the water when you come to watch us.

Notes from Pull-and-be-Damned



By Jim Smith

I joined a large, lively group of Skagit Valley residents on Monday in Mount Vernon's Lincoln Theater to learn about the coal trains that may be rumbling through Mount Vernon en route to Bellingham and then to Asia — they say up to 26 trains per day.

The trains will be carrying the coal reserves extracted from Wyoming and Montana to fuel power plants halfway around the world.

Having grown up in the Midwest, trainloads of coal hurtling daily through a little town was nothing new or alarming to me. I used to see them heading east from Wyoming across the Dakotas to Minneapolis to generate electricity for use in the good old USA.

In Fargo, North Dakota, a giant coal-burning power plant sat in the middle of town providing the residents with electricity. The same thing was true in Jamestown, North Dakota — another place I once lived — and the steam from the power plants ran in pipes beneath the sidewalks, keeping them free of snow and ice in the wintertime.

In those days, we thought coal was good. When we burned it in our homes, in schools and other buildings, we gained an intimate knowledge of it. From an early age, we knew the difference between lignite, bituminous, and anthracite: Lignite was soft and dirty; bituminous was medium grade; anthracite was

the age of nuclear power plants, windmills, and solar panels.

So why worry now? Unfortunately, even though coal has a long history of helping build this country, and most of us had a stockpile of it in a bin in our house that kept us warm and was pretty cheap while we were growing up, we have to face it: coal is a dirty, dangerous fuel.

And the dust that will escape from coal cars while being transported daily through Skagit County in mile-long trains in enormous quantities, 130 million tons per year through Washington, will foul our clean air and water and, over time, make many of us — especially kids — sick with diseases such as asthma and lung cancer. That's not to mention the clogged, delay-causing rail crossings and the threat to the quality of our Northwest life.

I went to the coal-train meeting last week because I grew up with coal. You might say there is coal in my veins, as well as my lungs.

My knowledge of coal goes beyond a 25-pound bag of charcoal briquettes. I've shoveled it and ridden in a few coal-burning locomotives. Additionally, I've been in both Lignite, North Dakota, where a vein of coal has been burning for decades, and Gillette, Wyoming, where the coal trains will originate.

I don't know if this makes me an expert, but I think I know more about coal than most people in this wood-burning country. Well, enough to write a few words about it, anyway. Enough to know I don't want any particulates of it hanging around anywhere near me.

Check the Internet if you want to know more than you want to know about coal trains through Washington, coalfreewashington.org.

And, for God's sake, keep those coal dust-spewing trains

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In those days, we thought coal was good. When we burned it in our homes, in schools and other buildings, we gained an intimate knowledge of it. From an early age, we knew the difference between lignite, bituminous, and anthracite: Lignite was soft and dirty; bituminous was medium grade; anthracite was hard, glossy and more expensive. I have a chunk of it on my deck that I've been transporting from one place to another for years; don't ask me why.

We also knew how to shake down a coal stove and carry out ashes to the backyard ash pile.

We remember that at the end of a coal-burning winter, everything was coated with coal dust and smelled of coal. Women did a great job laundering white table cloths, sheets and shirts, but just the same, there was a residue of coal in the air that never went away.

In those days, we didn't worry about such things as our nostrils filled with coal dust because it was the age of coal, long preceding

quality of our Northwest air. I went to the coal-train meeting last week because I grew up with coal. You might say there is coal in my veins, as well as my lungs.

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And, for God's sake, keep those coal dust-spewing trains out of the Skagit Valley.

12-21-12
Letters to the Editor

A lack of vision

Where is the vision for the Black Train? Where is the cost factor? You know the cost factor, don't you?

You do know about the White Train; it was the nuclear warhead train that traveled across this country carrying untold powerful weapons of mass destruction. Each 10 times more powerful than the bombs we dropped on Japan. We still maintain more than 5,000 of those warheads. We are no safer as a world. Ten-thousand is more than enough to blow this world into the Dark Ages.

What does this have to do with the Black Train? In the Cold War era, 1950-98, we spent more than \$8 trillion on all of the costs related to nuclear warheads (ICBMs, B-52s, missile silos, soldiers, Trident subs, etc.) What does that have to do with the Black Train?

A vision of the cost will show us all the unforeseen expenditures that the coal industry, marine-shipping terminal and the shipping industry will not cover. Items that you have all written about: overpasses at high usage intersections, clean air, water, land, noise pollution, the hours that we will have to sit in our vehicles while the trains pass through, the first aid responders, fire engines, police, being late for work and other situations.

Oh yes, I forgot lawsuits that will evolve and be tied up for years.

Did we even imagine that we would still be spending more than \$8 trillion for our war machine? How much are we willing to pay out for the Black Train? As the others are not going to. You can take that to the bank.

"NO TAX DOLLARS"

A growing dissent

We have only until Jan. 21 to submit scoping letters to the U.S. Corps of Engineers, Washington Department of Ecology and Whatcom County to voice concerns about coal exports.

Many county officials and municipalities have expressed their views about the detrimental impact the trains will have on communities. Mount Vernon Mayor Boudreau and the City Council sent a detailed letter, as did Sedro-Woolley and the Skagit County commissioners.

The growing effort to stop proposed construction of North America's largest coal port in Whatcom County has to have

astounded members of the deciding agencies, because of the significant numbers of attendees at scoping meetings and workshops, and now by the flood of letters and emails.

The single mantra of "we need jobs" by proponents has dwindled to a low hum, but is still fueled by Big Money.

If this project is allowed to proceed, businesses will suffer, traffic will be awful, lives will be put in jeopardy. It will destroy the reasons that the Skagit Valley and Samish Bay and the San Juans are heralded as incredible, beautiful places to visit, explore and live.

Bringing 18 more coal trains, and natural gas trains and crude oil trains and bottled water trains through here, on top of what we get now, is ludicrous!

I just think it would be a much healthier idea, and even more commercially beneficial, to promote — not destroy — the things that make this area special.

Dissent against coal is growing, but you can still make a difference and get those letters in.

Remember, they must be submitted by Jan. 21.

Coal and its long-term effects

In November 2011, while visiting Japan, I saw a TV segment on Japanese television in English featuring Gary Locke, our ambassador to China. He addressed the extraordinary pollution in China. He showed a Chinese street where the air pollution was worse than fog. He measured the air pollution at 10 times our EPA standard in the U.S.

I have tried to ask our government why we have EPA standards. We know China doesn't care about our EPA standards. This is a moral issue, and one where money is seen as more important than our health and the future of our country.

Global warming is real, and the time to act is now. If you don't believe in global warming, then just consider the horrific bad effects the coal dust will have on our valley and to the fishing industry here. The transportation of this coal will also have devastating effects on the cities and towns along the rail route. Experts gave testimony about these horrific effects at the scoping meeting in Mount Vernon on Nov. 5.

Why haven't we seen or heard from Gary Locke here on this subject? I think it is blocked.

Politicians who support exporting coal are extremely shortsighted. Is money more important than our health and welfare? What about the tremendous long-term costs?

Need planet-wide solutions

Recently, Gov. Gregoire announced results of a study on ocean acidification and Washington's multimillion dollar shellfish industry. Ocean acidification is a major danger to the marine environment.

Shellfish shells are composed mainly of calcium carbonate, which dissolves (or does not form) in an acid environment. Ocean krill, at the bottom of the marine food chain, fail to hatch or do not mature as environmental acid level increases. Without krill, there will be no fish to support a fishing industry.

While the state can do much to reduce local sources of acidification, the fact is that atmospheric carbon dioxide is the largest contributor to acidification, and as long as the planet continues to spin in the same direction, the atmospheric carbon in the Pacific Ocean comes from points west of the U.S.

The largest contributor to atmospheric CO₂ is burning fossil fuels, and the largest user of fossil fuels west of Washington is China. So why, in the name of a few local jobs, are we "scoping" the local environmental impact of long trains hauling coal in uncovered cars from leased public lands in Montana and Wyoming, to be stored in open piles next to fragile marine environment until it can be shipped through narrow, heavily travelled, environmentally sensitive Strait of Juan de Fuca, to be burned in coal-fired power plants in China and South Korea (remember the smog at the Beijing Olympics?), so that the CO₂ can travel back across the Pacific to kill off more local industry and endanger future food resources for an ever-expanding global population?

There's an old saying that everybody is downstream from somebody. Unless we can learn to live without this planet, we need to start approaching environmental problems on a planet-wide basis, and not on the basis of local jobs.

NATION

WASHINGTON

Study: Carbon dioxide emissions worldwide up again

The amount of heat-trapping pollution the world spewed rose again last year by 3 percent. So scientists say it's now unlikely that global warming can be limited to a couple of degrees, which is an international goal.

The overwhelming majority of the increase was from China, the world's biggest carbon dioxide polluter.

Of the planet's top 10 polluters, the United States and Germany were the only countries that reduced their carbon dioxide emissions.

Last year, all the world's nations combined pumped nearly 38.2 billion tons of carbon dioxide into the air from the burning of fossil fuels such as coal and oil, according to new international calculations on global emissions published Sunday in the journal *Nature Climate Change*. That's about a billion tons more than the previous year.

The total amounts to more than 2.4 million pounds of carbon dioxide released into the air every second.

Because emissions of the key greenhouse gas have been rising steadily and most carbon stays in the air for a century, it is not just unlikely but "rather optimistic" to think that the world can limit future temperature increases to 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), said the study's lead author, Glen Peters at the Center for International Climate and Environmental Research in Oslo, Norway.

FROM MY NEIGHBOR
HI BETTY - FROM LAN

THANKS FOR PASSING
THIS ALONG TO ME. I GUESS
THAT APART FROM THE ISSUES
OF LOCAL NEGATIVE IMPACT
TO TAXPAYERS, POLLUTION,
INFRASTRUCTURE & CITIZEN
ENGAGEMENTS SUCH AS NOISE
AND DUST AND TRAFFIC THE
BIGGEST CONCERNS OF CO₂
EMISSION RAISING PLANET
TEMPERATURES AND ACIDIFYING
OCEANS REQUIRES ALL GOV'TS
TO BE RESPONSIBLE STEWARDS
OF OUR BLUE PLANET. NO
TRAIN'S