November 19, 2012

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EIS SCOPING FOR GATEWAY PACIFIC TERMINAL PROJECT: CHERRY POINT RESERVE OECAN FLOOR COAL DUST ACCUMULATION

Agency Representatives:

Because I live in the Puget Sound area, specifically Birch Bay, I am deeply concerned for the state of health of all the aquatic life forms - from Orcas, seals, dolphins, salmon, herring and ultimately microplankton. All of these life forms live harmoniously together, depending on each other for the continuation of their life cycles. If we allow contamination from industry to adversely affect any of the natural species which reside in our waters, this will contribute to the degradation and species survival of the entire Puget Sound, as well as having a negative impact on fishing and tourist industries. Puget Sound is the Jewel of the Pacific Northwest. As humans, we are entrusted to take care of all aspects of our environment since our lives depend on it.

Please study and scope the impact on Pacific Herring and their spawned eggs once toxic coal dust settles and accumulates over time onto the ocean floor from spillage, runoff, and/or wind. Herring are already endangered and are a keystone species, responsible for the survival of many other marine species.

As the coal dust accumulates on the ocean floor, it will deposit polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons as well as heavy metals such as mercury, cadmium and lead into the eelgrass beds and onto the sea floor. Once the contaminants find their way into the herring diet, it is possible that we could have an entire species die-off, which would impact the already threatened populations of Chinook salmon and resident Orcas.

It has already been established at the Westshore Terminal near Vancouver that 10% of the nearshore ocean floor is comprised of coal dust. Since coal dust is toxic and has no beneficial effects on life forms in any environment, allowing it in our environment cannot be mitigated, therefore it should never be considered.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Westland

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EIS SCOPING FOR GATEWAY PACIFIC TERMINAL PROJECT: CHERRY POINT AQUATIC RESERVE

Agency Representatives:

In 2003 the Department of Natural Resources finalized their decision to set aside the area we call Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve. This stretches from the southern end of Birch Bay State Park to the northern boundary of the Lummi Indian Nation Reservation and includes tidelands and bedlands extending 5000 feet from the shoreline. This was a 90-year mandate for the purpose of protecting the ecosystems which thrive there. This area has many valuable resources, including the abundant submerged vegetation which forms the habitat and refuge area for many species of ocean life. Since the vegetation functions as rearing and forage habitat for many commercially important species such as juvenile salmon, forage fish and Dungeness crab. Many species of fish use nearshore waters to spawn and feed and several of theses are already listed on the federal Endangered Species Act.

Please scope the detrimental effects on submerged aquatic vegetation in the Cherry Point Reserve which would result from building of the pier for the Gateway Pacific Terminal (GPT). This should specifically include disruption by building, disruption by sound, and ultimate shading on eelgrass, attached macroalgae such as kelps, red algae such as Turkish towel, green algae such as sea lettuce, most importantly, Pacific Herring spawning beds, as outlined in WAC220-110-300(6). Although SSA Marine has stated that no dredging will be needed to build the Pier, please also study and report to the public the probability of any dredging, as it is strictly prohibited in herring spawning beds by the WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife under WA Admin Code 220-110-320(8).

One of the many things that make the Pacific Northwest so special is the rich and relatively healthy marine ecosystems. The Orcas, seals, dolphins, salmon, herring and many more harmoniously together, depending on each other for the continuation of their life cycles. If we allow contamination from industry to adversely affect any of the natural species which reside in our waters, this will contribute to the degradation and species survival of the entire Puget Sound, as well as having a negative impact on fishing and tourist industries. Puget Sound is the Jewel of the Pacific Northwest. As humans, we are entrusted to take care of all aspects of our environment since our lives depend on it.

As a retired person living in Birch Bay, I plan to remain in my home which looks out over the Bay indefinitely. However, if the marine life is compromised and further polluted with the by-products of a coal terminal or, God forbid, an oil spill from a supertanker, I doubt that I would be able to stay and watch the destruction. There is so much to lose when we invade natural systems with toxic materials, noise, and unnecessary commerce that is generally not supportive of a sustainable energy future.

There is no imaginable mitigation which will preserve the abundant and flourishing life we now enjoy, except to NOT allow the building of a coal export terminal at Cherry Point, or anywhere in the Pacific Northwest. I stand with thousands of others in objection to this project.

Respectfully submitted,

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EIS SCOPING FOR GATEWAY PACIFIC TERMINAL PROJECT:
FUGITIVE COAL DUST 10-10-10

Agency Representatives:

How big is 5-10 microns? Can you see it or feel it? If you research this question, you will find that a red blood cell is about 5 microns. Coal dust, like milled flour, is usually only visible with a microscope, but the particles range all the way from 0.5 microns to over 40 microns, which is the width of an average human hair. Therefore, at the 5 to 10 micron level we won't see fine coal dust particles entering our eyes, nose, throat, or landing on our skin. However, we may feel it in the same way as one reacts to allergens in the air. Eventually these very tiny particles can lodge in our lungs and do irreparable damage to the air sacs, causing breathing problems and ultimately disease. Over time, this is a serious threat to human health.

I am retired and hope to remain in my Birch Bay home indefinitely. Thus, I care deeply for the quality of air, land and water which surrounds me, my neighbors, and my loved ones. Coal dust will gravely affect my health because I am sensitive to allergens and occasionally experience asthma. Smog and air pollution is the reason I moved to Washington over 15 years ago. The pollution which will result from coal contamination, accumulating over time will cause me and my family to relocate.

Cherry Point is one of the windiest areas in the Pacific Northwest. Therefore, please scope the amount of coal dust likely to blow off the planned mountains of coal in speeds from 20 – 100 mph, all of which are common to this area. For this study, please initially analyze the windblown fugitive coal dust within a 15 mile radius from the Gateway Pacific Terminal over a 10-year period because the coal dust will accumulate over time.

At the Westshore Terminal in Tsawassen, B.C., wind-blown coal dust has already been estimated at 715 tons per year. At the Seward, Alaska coal terminal coal dust in the amount of approximately 500 tons per year settles downwind, as Seward experiences similar gale force winds as Cherry Point. According to the EPA's AP-42 standard equation using an average wind speed of about 10 mph, it can be estimated that Fugitive coal dust emissions at Cherry Point will be at least 1,000 tons per year. This does not take into account wind events exceeding 20 mph, which are frequent here, nor does it calculate stronger winds from the NE and ENE, which occasionally swoop down from the Fraser River Valley.

Efforts to mitigate cannot possibly contain fugitive coal dust 100% of the time and winds can never be predicted with total accuracy. But, from living in Birch Bay for over 10 years, I know that the prevailing winds into Birch Bay are S-SW and blow directly into our community. Sometimes they are fierce, as much as 80 mph, but the average windy day is probably 20-30 mph. In short, we have lots and lots of wind and we do not look forward to having coal dust spread all over our community and affecting our health.

Respectfully submitted,

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