

Nov. 3, 2012

Pacific Gateway Project Scoping Hearing Testimony

My name is Jim McNairy. I'm a social studies teacher at Friday Harbor High School and a 20-year resident of San Juan Island.

There will be a lot of talk and concerns raised in these hearings about the negative impacts the Pacific Gateway project will have on local communities due to the disruption caused by the endless procession of trains going back and forth between the coal fields in Montana and Wyoming and the export terminals that will be built, concerns about the health impacts of ambient coal dust people along the way will be exposed to, and the threat to the marine environment if and when an accident occurs involving the thousands of trips ships that will be involved in transporting the coal to Asian markets will take during the lifetime of the project.

However, I want to focus my comments on another aspect of what should be covered in the EIS project. Mainly, that you should measure and quantify the impact this project will have on the energy security and independence of the U.S.

We're being inundated during this election campaign with commercials sponsored by the coal and energy companies exhorting us to be "energy voters". The companies and the presidential candidates talk about the need to develop more U.S. energy resources for our own uses, in order to make us as energy independent as we can be in the future.

Yet this project is all about asking local communities to make significant sacrifices, endure tremendous disruptions, and assume potentially dangerous health risks, all in the name of allowing the owners of the coal mined in Montana and Wyoming to be able to ship this valuable American natural resource to our economic competitors in East Asia.

I realize that there is an argument being made that hundreds of good paying jobs will be created building and operating the export terminal or terminals in Whatcom County and possibly elsewhere along the West Coast.

However, while we focus on these jobs and whether we should help U.S. energy companies make money selling Montana and Wyoming coal to China and other Asian countries, China is fast becoming a leader in the development of 21st C. green energy technologies.

You ought to focus part of the EIS on a cost/benefit analysis of the economic impact on U.S. energy security and independence associated with exporting this American coal to Asian markets, who are some of our main global economic competitors, versus saving this coal for

use here in the U.S. as part of an "all-of-the-above" domestic energy strategy to help fuel our own economy in the years to come.

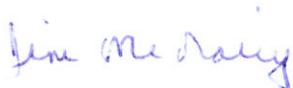
What will be the economic impact and environmental tradeoffs of creating an equivalent number of jobs in Whatcom Co. manufacturing green energy technologies, such as wind, hydro, solar, biofuels, etc.? These ought to be compared with the health risks and community disruptions associated with the massive Pacific Gateway Terminal project, for instance.

Both Obama and Romney are calling for more investment in clean coal research, in the hope that one day we can develop the ability to mine and burn coal here in the U.S. without as many negative impacts on the environment and atmosphere.

There's also a growing drumbeat about the need for our country to become more energy independent as we move forward in the 21st century.

Let's heed these calls and use this EIS process to do a thoughtful, thorough, and honest assessment of the pros and cons of keeping U.S. coal in the U.S. for our own use. We shouldn't necessarily be forcing communities in Washington that live along the transit routes or where the terminal will be located to shoulder a great potential burden of risk, so that the coal and transportation companies and their investors can move ahead with their project to sell this vital and strategic American resource to countries we're in direct economic competition with.

Thank you.



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