



League of Women Voters of Spokane Area

2404 N. Howard, Spokane WA, 99205

PH: 509-326-8026

Web Site: <http://www.lwvwa.org>

January 21, 2013

RE: Environmental Impact Statement/Proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal/Custer

The League of Women Voters of the Spokane Area (LWVSA) offers the following regarding the construction of the deep water port at Cherry Point, Washington, and transportation of coal to the proposed new facility.

LWVSA has positions supporting

- Maximum protection to the Spokane Valley-Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer. This sole source of drinking water is directly underneath the rail lines that are intended to carry the coal from Wyoming to Cherry Point. The Aquifer intermingles with the Spokane River at multiple points through the Spokane Valley – with water from the river going into the aquifer water.
- Maintaining the clean quality of air in the Spokane area. In reality, the local topography and air flow can result in temperature inversions over the populated area Spokane, thus trapping particulates. Poor air quality has an adverse effect on human health.
- A balanced transportation policy. While rail traffic is an important part of Spokane's commerce, there are multiple other forms of transportation in the Spokane area – and all need to be balanced. Additionally, many parts of the Spokane Valley do not have over/under passes—crossings are at grade. Additional train traffic will seriously impact transportation throughout the region.

The League of Women Voters of the Spokane Area believes that the Environmental Impact Statement should be cumulative and address the impacts all along the rail route, and not just on the port terminal area. These additional trains would be coming through Spokane as a result of the completion of the proposed port. Spokane will be a choke point for rail traffic with trains continuing to western Washington as well as Oregon. The League would like you to study:

- Effects to the Spokane Valley-Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer and Spokane River from fugitive dust as well as potential rail car derailments that could deposit coal into the river. Additionally, the study should examine the effect of coal dust that is deposited on land by the rail tracks that could find its way to the Spokane River through run-off.
- The effects of coal dust and diesel particulates from the additional trains on the air quality in the Spokane area (particularly given the air inversions that we experience). We understand that the trains will be uncovered – so, how much will escape and what would be the effect if the loads are covered?
- The affect of the additional rail traffic on the balance of transportation in and through Spokane. In Spokane, the effects on emergency response times and general traffic flow at railroad crossings need to be studied. In addition to compromised emergency response, there needs to be an examination of the affect on air quality when the waiting traffic is

idling while waiting at a crossing. For transportation through Spokane, the rail capacity needs to be examined – will there be capacity for other freight and human rail transport?

Above all, the League appreciates the continued transparency in the process, and encourages continued citizen participation at all steps of the way.

Pam Behring, President
League of Women Voters/Spokane Area