

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Eli Marchbanks, I'm a second year student at Gonzaga University School of Law and an intern in the University Legal Assistance Environmental Law Clinic. I am writing as a citizen concerned for the health of the Northwest water bodies. The proposed coal train route passes closely by Canyon Ferry Lake in Montana, Lake Pend Oreille in Idaho, runs along the Columbia River for several miles, and likely encounters many other navigable waters. Nationwide there were 22 coal train derailments in 2012 alone and coal dust on trains is notoriously difficult to keep contained. In the event that coal dust and coal from a train derailment enters these water bodies there could be both direct and indirect effects to plant, animal and human life.

The direct impact of coal entering these waters should be evaluated. The effect that the introduction of coal and its dust to plants and wildlife could be serious and must be analyzed. Also, there could be indirect effects to human life. Many fish which are consumed come from the Columbia River. The effect of consuming fish which have been exposed to coal and coal dust should be evaluated.

As the proposed train route spans from the Midwest to the Pacific Ocean, this impact analysis should be extensive. There are many different kinds of ecosystems, plant life, and wildlife that could be affected including the animals that are indirectly affected by consuming the exposed plants and aquatic wildlife. Each individual ecosystem which could come into contact with the coal should be analyzed and should be included in an environmental impact statement. Any micro-economies that depend on these ecosystems should also be analyzed. For example, any fishing industries that depend on fish that swim the Columbia River should be taken into consideration.

In the event that negative environmental impacts are found, alternative routes that minimize the coal trains' proximity to navigable water bodies, and/or research and development efforts should be put towards new technologies that make coal transportation safer.

Sincerely,

Eli Marchbanks