11/2/12

To: Scoping Agencies For Gateway Pacific Terminal

I am a 63 yr old mother, retired Social Worker, grandmother resident of Bellingham. I live approximately ½ mile from the railroad. Personally, I have spent a lifetime trying to improve my own health and prevent the suffering of others due to toxic exposures. I have spent a large portion of my earnings, much of my time and energy making healthy choices. This will be negated and I plan to leave the area and people I love if massive amounts of uncovered coal is transported through this community. I am currently awakened many nights, loosing valuable sleep, due to loud train whistles. My heart breaks at the thought of my grandchildren bearing the health consequences of breathing coal and diesel particulates - known to be toxic (highly) and carcinogenic.
Please study the health impacts regarding exposure to air particulates, water changes, and soil toxicity due to coal and diesel emissions. Locations around the world where they are mining, burning, and transporting coal provide ample examples of long term and far reaching permanent consequences.

While the economic cost is strongly connected to the cost of health problems, I will focus on specific health concerns:

1. Coal dust from terminals are blown to people, homes, and land many miles away, depending on wind conditions and inhaled creating illness and destroying the quality of life and property. Please study up to 50 miles.

2. Coal dust, empty containers is highly combustible creates high probability of fires and those concurrent emissions. Please study history of fires, railroad derailment and associated safety records.

3. Diesel particulate is less than 2.5 microns. These coal train emissions go deep into lungs causing health problems, respiratory disease, and cancers. The coal dust inhaled contains toxic metals. BNSF estimates each uncovered car loses between 500 lbs - 1 ton of coal dust en route. This does not include dust released from the continuously turned 80-100+ acres of piles of coal at the terminal. Examples of problems that are inevitable are Alaska Railroads shipping terminal in Seward Alaska and Brayton Point Station in Massachusetts. High winds created coal dust covering local communities. The people are powerless after disasters.

It took years of efforts finally culminating with the Sierra Club and Alaska Community Action of Toxics filed a lawsuit against Alaska Railroad and Aurora Energy.

4. Coal trains emit Sulfur Oxide and Nitrogen and toxins such as arsenic accumulate in water and soil poisoning the local food supply. This area is a haven for organic local food. Small farmers attract people seeking a fresh health food supply. These farmers, dairy and other will not be able to produce the same healthy products.

5. Coal ship idling continually burn the dirtiest of fuels and those emissions further degrade the quality of air, water + land.

6. Worldwide efforts to decrease the toxic effects of all sources of pollution are effectively cancelled with building the largest coal export facility in North America. 48 million tons of the most polluting fuel we know of!

We lack standards to measuring toxic heavy metals. We are powerless to protect ourselves and loved ones. It is already said this generation will not live as long as their parents — the toxic burden ~~is~~ is becoming too much to avoid.

7. The noise and vibration of 30 miles of trains a day disrupts the nervous system and further interrupts sleep.

Our experience with pulp and paper mills (GP) and other polluting industry in Bellingham teaches us about the costs of trying to undo damage. Much of it cannot be undone and efforts to do a "good enough" job are contentious and expensive. We are talking about permanent and irreparable harm that cannot be mitigated! Because our beautiful area with farmland and recreation happens to have rail and a deep water port — we lose big. Forget development of the waterfront and our efforts to increase tourism. Talk to anyone living near a coal transport or shipping facility. Research "catarrh". It will too late when we realize how bad this will be. Shame on us for what we do in the presence of an avalanche of information about the long term cumulative impact of a project of this size.

A 2011 Harvard report indicates coal costs to health and environment are $175-500 billion a year. Who is going to pay that? Are we expected to pay for our own demise?

Michael Hendryx PhD of West Virginia Institute for Health Policy says "those who are falling ill and dying young are not just the coal miners. Everyone who lives minis, processing plants, or transportation centers is affected by chronic socioeconomic weakness that takes a toll on longevity and health".

The 2010 Clean Air Task Force valued the adverse health impacts at $100 billion a year and summarized the copious data "among all industrial sources of air pollution, none poses greater risks to human health and the environment than coal-fired power plants".

If none of the facts or people matter, if it is only about money for a few then we use "mitigation". There is no way to mitigate our losses. Ultimately, our losses ~~and~~ are everyone's losses. The Surface Transportation Board confirms coal dust is harmful. The science is all there. It is up to you.

Thank you,

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