

Power Past Coal Updates

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Power Past Coal Update April 20th, 2012

There are now at least six proposals to turn the Northwest into a fossil fuel highway to Asia. Awareness of the potential public health and safety, economic and environmental consequences is growing across the region, especially in cities and towns where the terminals would be built, those along the rail shipping corridor where commuter, business and emergency response mobility could be severely disrupted by coal trains, and those living in communities where additional tanker traffic would interfere with mobility.

Combining all these proposals, brings the total to **150 million** tons of dirty coal that would ship from ports in Oregon and Washington *every year*. The rule of thumb in terms of train traffic, is for every five million tons of coal moved annually – it's one train full and one train empty every day. So, 150 million tons of coal equates to about 60 trains *every day* moving through Montana, Idaho, the Columbia River Gorge and some eastern Washington communities including cities like Spokane and dozens of other small towns with numerous at-grade crossings. It would mean a significant increase in tanker traffic in the Salish Sea and off our coast.

It is essential that we understand what the cumulative impacts of these projects would mean to communities, our health, our economies, local environments and climate. We need a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) that looks at the big picture and considers the cumulative impacts of all of these proposals.

If impact statements are done in isolation, there is a risk that affected communities could be left out of the process. The EPA, elected officials and many communities across the region are asking that their concerns be considered:

- The EPA calls for a full review of the impacts of the Port of Morrow proposal: stories here in the [Seattle Times](#) and in the [Oregonian](#). The AP story was picked up across the region.
- [Kitzhaber, Wyden have reservations about coal plan.](#)
- The [Seattle Times](#), the [Vancouver Columbian](#), and the Bozeman Chronicle (attached) have called for in depth analysis of these proposals and the impacts in their communities.
- The [New York Times](#) weighs in, examining the issue in Boardman.
- The cities and/or mayors of Bainbridge Island, Camas, Edmonds, Mosier, Washougal, Dallesport, Marysville, Mt. Vernon, Mukilteo, Seattle and Sandpoint, ID; the counties of San Juan, King and Skagit, the port of Skagit and 13 Washington state senators have weighed in on this issue. You can view these letters [here](#).
- Over 14,000 comments have been sent to Mr. Steve Gagnon at the Army Corps of Engineers in regards to the Army Corps permit regarding Port of Morrow.
- To date, 20 forums across the region exploring coal export and associated impacts have been held. Typical attendance is between 100 and 400 people from potentially affected communities.

This past week, forums took place in Missoula, MT and in the Seattle neighborhood of Ballard (photo attached). Next week forums will occur in Bozeman, Helena and an affected neighborhood in Portland.

- Prior to the forum on Tuesday, there were four articles in the *Missoulian*. I offer them here, so that you can get a sense of the depth of concern in a community who could have no say in these proposals but would experience significant disruption and impacts for its daily commerce and livelihood.
 - [Former Montana coal mine manager says now is time to seek industry change](#)
 - [Editor's Note](#) about a three part series exploring coal export.

Power Past Coal Update May 8th, 2012

Concerns about coal dust have caused a major setback for the 30 million ton Kinder Morgan backed proposal at the Port of St. Helens, Oregon. Portland General Electric (PGE), citing concerns about the impacts of coal dust and rail congestion to their two power-generation facilities at the Port of St. Helens, have blocked Kinder Morgan's proposal. Here is an excerpt from the [story](#) that broke in the local area paper, the Spotlight News.

PGE spokesman Steve Corson told the Spotlight May 2 his company felt the presumed coal dust that would come from the export terminal might harm its significant investments if Kinder Morgan moved in next door.

"We take in air in the course of operating our generator and the coal dust could be a substantial problem for the facility," Corson said. "That's the chief thing."

Corson also said PGE had apprehension over increased rail traffic, a concern echoed by many area residents who fear shipping coal by train through the county would split local cities in two.

The Oregonian also filed this [story](#), with PGE spokesperson saying the proposal just "isn't compatible with operations of our power plants there." We agree with Mr. Corson, coal export facilities aren't compatible with citizen's right to breathe clean air.

Here are a few highlights in the recent work to stop coal export in the Northwest.

- Governor Kitzhaber authored a [letter](#) to the Army Corps of Engineers requesting that they undertake a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement.
- The Oregonian [editorialized](#) about the issue warning that Oregon and northwest neighbors must decide wisely on coal export proposals.
- The Portland Mayor Sam Adams and the [Washington Department of Natural Resources](#) issued letters to the Corps, requesting that an EIS be completed at the Port of Morrow.
- Citizens in Helena, MT, Bozeman, MT and the St. John's neighborhood in Portland gathered to learn more about the potential impacts of these coal export facilities, bringing the total number of citizens who have attended forums to nearly 3,000.
- The City Council of Sandpoint Idaho unanimously passed a [resolution](#) expressing concern about these proposals.

- Salish Law, PLLC authored a report [Will the Trains Come Anyway?](#) This paper “fact checks” the claim that if ports are not built in the US, Canadian ports will provide adequate export capacity and the US might as well have these trains make stops in the US rather than allow the escape of jobs and revenues over the Canadian border. The paper outlines why this assumption is false.
- Rep. Markey, ranking Member of the House Natural Resources Committee, has [asked](#) the Government Accountability Office to review the federal coal leasing program in light of the rise in coal exports.
- A recent Platts [article](#) indicated that our work on coal exports has some in the rail industry wary, “the US Environmental Protection Agency’s recent inquiry into the Morrow Pacific coal export project in Oregon is making Union Pacific wary of possible environmental restrictions as Millennium seeks a permit,” UP is now looking at potential sites in Mexico. Northwest ports are the most direct route from the Powder River Basin to Asia. Will moving coal through ports further away really pencil out?

Many citizens concerned about this issue are joining with www.350.org Climate Impacts Day this weekend. And, the Power Past Coal campaign will feature Robert F. Kennedy Jr. at a [rally](#) at noon in Portland.

Power Past Coal Campaign Update May 11, 2012

There is no doubt that public resistance to the prospect of coal export in the Northwest is significant. Washington Members of Congress Adam Smith and Jim McDermott along with Portland Mayor Sam Adams and the Washington State Department of Ecology joined the call for a cumulative look at coal exports, over 600 people gathered in Portland for a rally opposing coal export, and 13 Canadian citizens were arrested for stopping Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad shipments of coal into Canada. Here is more in depth information about campaign and other coal export related outcomes this past week.

- Flanked by 600+ citizens in Oregon’s largest demonstration opposing exporting coal, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. gave an impassioned call for a halt to the export of North America’s dirtiest fossil fuel. The rally garnered significant media coverage. Here is a short [clip](#).
- The call for a scientific look at the cumulative impacts of the six proposals grew last week. [Washington Members of Congress Adam Smith and Jim McDermott](#) with [Portland Mayor Sam Adams](#) and the [Washington State Department of Ecology](#) joined Governor Kitzhaber, the Yakama Nation, and EPA in calling for cumulative look at coal exports.
- 13 Canadian citizens were [arrested](#) for stopping Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad shipments of coal into Canada.
- **17,000 comments**, most of them also urging a look at cumulative impacts, were also issued in regards to the Port of Morrow project.
- 450 citizens [protested](#) the proposed coal export facility in Whatcom County taking part in 350.orgs international day of action on climate change. There were also coal export related

actions in Olympia, WA, Seattle, WA, Bingen, WA, San Juan Island, WA, Hope, ID, and Hood River, OR.

- Communitywise Bellingham issued a [report](#) looking at the coal export terminal associated train impacts on the Bellingham Waterfront. Key findings include:
 - Gateway Pacific Terminal will require increasing rail capacity in the current Bow to Ferndale bottleneck.
 - Construction of a new siding along Bellingham's waterfront is the preferred solution.
 - A new waterfront siding will significantly affect access to parks, recreation areas and businesses.
 - Gateway Pacific Terminal train traffic will impact future passenger rail and local business uses. Crosscut has an in depth [article](#) looking at this issue.
- On behalf of the Power Past Coal campaign, Climate Solutions organized a business briefing. Over 40 community leaders and staff from county, state and federal offices attended.
- The campaign conducted a media tele-briefing for local, state, regional and national media outlets. Reporters from 19 outlets attended. We had several experts take part, including: Eric de Place, Sightline Institute senior researcher, energy policy expert; Dr. Frank James, a family physician and public health doctor in Bellingham, WA since 1989; Tom Trulove, Mayor of Cheney, WA (Cheney, WA is 17 miles Southwest from Spokane, WA with a population 10,790 residents and home to Eastern Washington University. The rail-lines for both Union Pacific and BNSF run through the community); Gary Lindstrom, LINDSHIP Maritime Services, a professional in the Maritime Industry for over 30 years including 17 years with the Port of Longview; and Lauren Goldberg, Attorney with Columbia Riverkeeper. The call is available for download for listening for the next 14 days at: <https://ftp.icallinc.com/> Username: techsoup Password: T3cHsOuP
- The Eugene Register Guard issued this editorial: [Study coal export projects - Federal officials should heed Kitzhaber's concerns](#)
- Tacoma residents gathered to learn about the potential impacts of coal export proposals. This brings the total number of forums to date to 24 reaching nearly 3000 people.
- 60 local elected officials and three agencies have made statements raising concerns about the impacts of coal export proposals to their communities. You can view those letters [here](#).

Power Past Coal Campaign Update 5-11-2012

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Power Past Coal Campaign Update June 14, 2012

Elected leaders, communities, health professional association and students continue to voice concerns about the six coal export proposals currently on the table in the Northwest. Joining the call for a thorough cumulative impact analysis is [Washington Senator Patty Murray](#).

Local Governments:

Within the last three weeks, the city councils of [Stevenson, WA](#) Seattle, WA [Marysville, WA](#) and [Missoula, MT](#) and the Port Commission of [Skamania County, WA](#) passed resolutions regarding coal export. They join six other cities in the Northwest.

The Mayor of Elma, WA kicked off the campaigns 25th forum stating that he's not against trains – just dirty trains. The [Daily World](#) reports that nearly 100 people attended this forum. [City of Olympia Stephen Buxbaum](#) joins eight other mayors who have written to decision makers about their concerns. [King County Council Member Larry Phillips](#) also submitted a letter on this issue. [Here](#) are all the letters and resolutions.

Health and Air Quality Institutions:

Health and air quality issues continue to be a concern. The [Spokane Regional Health District Board of Health](#) passed a resolution 9-1 to ensure that the impacts of coal transport through Spokane (which would see traffic from *all* the proposed ports come through its town) are studied carefully. Also, the [King County Academy of Family Physicians](#) passed a resolution demonstrating concern. More than 400 health professionals in NW Washington have signed onto to a call for a comprehensive Health Impact Assessment. The [Missoula City-County Air Pollution Control Board](#) also submitted a letter to the Army Corps.

Tribes:

Several Columbia River tribes (Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee), and the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC), which represents the four Lower Columbia River treaty tribes, submitted strongly worded [comments](#) on the Ambre Energy's Morrow Pacific Project. These comments raise serious issues including the impact of coal export on tribal fishing rights, health, cultural resources, and safety.

Students:

The [University of Washington](#) joins Western Washington University in passing a resolution opposed to coal export.

Here are a few other developments:

- [California's AJR 35](#) against West Coast coal exports passed out of Appropriations committee last Friday.
- The [WA Dept of Ecology](#) has agreed to be a co-lead with Cowlitz County on preparing an Environmental Impact Statement for a proposed 44 million annual ton capacity coal export facility in Longview, WA.
- [Wind surfers](#) in the Gorge voice concerns about these proposals – the Columbia River Gorge Windsurfing Association adopted a resolution opposing coal export.
- [Time Magazine](#), [KOMO News](#), and the [Wall Street Journal](#) weigh in on this issue.

August 18th, 2012

Since the last update, the most significant news is that one of the six coal export proposals is off the table. In August, RailAmerica announced plans that they would not proceed with exporting coal out of Grays Harbor, [and our coalition was quick to respond in the press](#).

That leaves five proposals -- three in Oregon and two in Washington. Additionally, we are partnered with Canadian organizations who are working to stop expansions of current ports.

The Power Past Coal campaign continues to grow with over [100 partner organizations](#) committed to help stop new coal exports off the West Coast. Nearly forty coal forums have occurred throughout the region, the most recent ones in West Seattle, WA, [Milwaukie](#), NE Portland Neighborhood and Salem, OR.

Public Engagement Underway for Cherry Point and Morrow

Public comment periods are currently underway on two projects.

- **Morrow Pacific Project:** The Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL) opened a [public comment period](#) for Ambre's Morrow Pacific Project. This is the second DSL public comment period on the project. Our coalition submitted [comments](#) in March. To date agencies involved in this project have received 26,000 comments in opposition to coal export. This comment period closes on Oct. 31st.
- **Gateway Pacific Terminal:** The [public comment period](#) to determine the scope for the Environmental Impact Statement for the Whatcom County proposed facility is underway and closes on January 21st, 2012. There are seven hearings: Bellingham 11 am–3 pm Sat., Oct. 27, Friday Harbor 12–3 pm Sat., Nov. 3, Mount Vernon 4–7 pm Mon., Nov. 5, Seattle 4–7 pm Tues., Nov. 13, Ferndale 3–7 pm Thurs., Nov. 29 Spokane 4– 7 pm Tues., Dec. 4, Vancouver 4 – 7 pm Wed., Dec. 12.

Transportation: The need to deeply assess the potential transportation impacts of the proposed coal export facilities has been front and center in this debate. It is important to distinguish Power

Past Coal's (PPC) concern about coal trains from the work that many PPC partners do to advocate for increased use of trains. Coal trains moving on our rail lines to transport 141 MTY of coal are very different from passenger trains and trains carrying other commodities. They are longer, heavier and dirtier. The clean energy future envisioned by the Power Past Coal campaign includes a more efficient rail system carrying many more passengers, agricultural products, solar panels, wind turbines and other clean commodities. Coal trains clogging our rail lines runs counter to that vision. Here are some recent studies and letters concerning the impacts of coal export on our rail infrastructure.

- The Western Organization of Resource Councils released [*Heavy Traffic Ahead: Rail Impacts of Powder River Basin Coal to Asia by Way of Pacific Northwest Terminals*](#). The report puts a price tag of billions of dollars on upgrading rail lines, roads and other infrastructure to support proposed coal export facilities on the West Coast. Tax payers would be on the hook. In addition, the study also found that increased rail traffic will affect grain producers that need access to rail space. The producers will face increased competition, potentially delaying shipments and increasing costs.
- Senator Maria Cantwell sent a [letter](#) to the Washington State Department of Transportation to Department of Transportation on July 3, 2012, requesting its assistance in evaluating the impacts these terminals would have on our state's transportation system and communities across the state. The [State Department of Transportation](#) responded.
- The Washington State Transportation Commission sent a [letter](#) to BNSF expressing concern about BNSF's capacity to accommodate any type of unit train without disruption to mobility and increased congestion affecting the economy and operation of the state transportation system.
- The Surface Transportation Board (STB) [ruled that the Tongue River Railroad Company must start all over again with a new Environmental Impact Statement](#) to carry coal from the isolated Otter Creek tracts in southeastern Montana. Leading to this ruling, Northern Plains Resource Council and others argued that circumstances have changed dramatically since the railroad was first proposed, because now new coal mined in Montana is destined for Asian instead of upper-Midwest markets. Further, they argued that the impacts this coal hauling railroad will have on climate change must be examined. This new ruling offers an opportunity to question whether it is in America's interest to build a railroad to ship our own coal to China, stoking their economic engine while continuing to contribute to climate change.
- Since the beginning of this year, there have been 19 coal train derailments in the United States and Canada including one near Pasco. Coaltrainfacts.org has provided a complete [listing](#) of derailments, with links to the news sources. Since coal train derailments are a fact of life, the campaign and others are asking for impact statements to include thorough examination of this potential.

The Call for An Area-Wide EIS: Elected leaders from across the region continue to call for an area-wide Environmental Impact Statement. In August, Washougal Mayor Sean Guard sent this [letter](#) to the Corps outlining the request of nearly 100 elected leaders in the region. Their press statement is [here](#).

Since the issue of Mayor Guard's letter, [Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley](#) has called for a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement; six heavily impacted Washington cities have recently weighed in: [Portland](#), [Metro \(OR\)](#), [Bellingham](#), [Longview](#), [Spokane](#), and [Vancouver](#). [Senator Wyden](#) recently called for more rigorous environmental reviews of each terminal proposal. You can find more of the letters and resolutions on the [Power Past Coal website](#).

The [Seattle Times, went](#) on record calling for a look at the cumulative impacts of all the proposals, noting the “intense demand” for a look at the cumulative impacts of all five proposals. But still, the Army Corps of Engineers who would conduct such a study has yet to decide.

Tribes: The Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, a nonprofit organization representing 57 Northwest tribal governments from Oregon, Idaho, Washington, southeast Alaska, Northern California and Western Montana passed [this resolution](#) delineating many concerns and calling for a comprehensive EIS looking at the cumulative impacts of all the proposals. Following passage of the resolution, they released this [statement](#).



The Lummi Nation has held two events to voice their opposition to the Gateway Pacific Terminal in Whatcom County. *The Seattle Times* reported on this event in September:

“Hundreds of tribal members from the Lummi Nation gathered Friday to announce the tribe's opposition to development of a facility at Cherry Point in Whatcom County to ship coal brought by train from the Powder River Basin. They ceremonially burned a check on the beach to make a statement that no amount of money could buy their support for a project that would destroy their village and burial sites on the property. The Lummi people have used the land and waters at Cherry Point for 175 generations, tribal leaders said, and even though they no longer own it, the tribe considers it sacred ground. "No deals, thank you," said Fran James, 88, a revered tribal elder called as a witness to the ceremony. "All of our elders have always told us: 'Take care of this place.'”

The second [event](#) united the Lummi Nation with the Puget Sound Crab Association and the Commercial Fishers of Whatcom County [and The New York Times](#) did a story, accompanied by photos from photographer extraordinaire Paul Anderson. For more information about the Lummi Nation and their plan to stop coal export on their sacred land, visit their [website](#).

Federal Legislation: Congressman Jim McDermott introduced “[The True Cost of Coal Act of 2012](#)” to address the growing concern over coal export proposals. McDermott’s legislation would incorporate environmental pollution, traffic congestion and public health impacts into the cost of coal so that the companies, not the taxpayers, are responsible for paying for the costs of the negative impacts they produce. We also saw just this week two different national news stories in Reuters and the [Washington Post](#) about exporting coal mined from public lands.

Local Governments weigh in (or decide not to weigh in): To date twenty cities, counties and ports in Montana, Idaho, Oregon and Washington have passed [resolutions](#) raising concern or outright opposing coal export proposals. In addition, at least ten other local communities have written letters or made public statements of concern. In the case of Lane County, commissioners were considering a resolution to support the proposed coal export facility in Coos Bay. But, residents didn’t think that was such a good idea. So, the resolution was pulled. Here’s the [scoop](#).