San Juan County Council

350 Court Street No. 1
Friday Harbor, WA 98250
(360) 378 - 2898

District 1, Lovel Pratt
District 2, Rich Peterson
District 3, Howard Rosenfeld

District 4, Richard Fralick
District 5, Patty Miller
District 6, Jamie Stephens

30 October 2012

Proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal/Custer Spur EIS
c/o CH2M HILL
1100 112th Avenue NE, Suite 400
Bellevue, WA 98004

Randel Perry, Project Manager
USACE, Seattle District
1440 10th Street
Suite 102
Bellingham, WA 98225-7028

Tyler Schroeder, Planning Supervisor
Whatcom County, Planning & Development Services
5280 Northwest Drive
Bellingham, WA 98226

Alice Kelly, Planner
WA Department of Ecology, NWRO
3190 160th Ave SE
Bellevue, WA 98008-5452

Dear CH2M HILL, Mr. Perry, Mr. Schroeder, and Ms. Kelly,

Thank you for responding to our request that a scoping meeting for the proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be held in San Juan County. This letter will also be hand-delivered at the November 3rd, 2012 scoping meeting in Friday Harbor. At this scoping meeting we will listen to our constituents and we will then submit an additional comment letter with a more comprehensive list of the proposed project's probable significant and adverse impacts that must to be studied, measured, and addressed in the EIS.

For this comment letter we include the attached letters from the San Juan County Board of Health and the San Juan County Marine Resources Committee (which includes the attached oiling residence time map for San Juan County, based on data from the Washington Department of Natural Resources ShoreZone Mapping (2001)).

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the scoping for the proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal EIS and to secure the San Juan County Council's standing in the EIS process.

Sincerely,

COUNTY COUNCIL
SAN JUAN COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Lovel Pratt, Member District No. 1	Richard Peterson, Member District No. 2	Howard Rosenfeld, Member District No. 3
Richard Fralick, Member District No. 4	Patty Miller, Chair District No. 5	Jamie Stephens, Vice-Chair District No. 6

Cc. The Honorable Maria Cantwell, US Senator
The Honorable Patty Murray, US Senator
The Honorable Rick Larsen, US Representative
The Honorable Christine Gregoire, Governor of the State of Washington
The Honorable Kevin Ranker, Washington State Senator
The Honorable Jeff Morris, Washington State Representative
The Honorable Kristine Lytton, Washington State Representative
The Honorable Billy Frank, Chairman, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
The Honorable Cliff Cultee, Chair, Lummi Nation
The Honorable Melvin R. Sheldon, Jr., Chair, Tulalip Tribes
The Honorable Brian Cladoosby, Chair, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community
The Honorable Micah McCarty, Chairman, Makah Tribe
The Honorable W. Ron Allen, Chair, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe
The Honorable Frances Charles, Chair, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe
The Honorable Robert (Bob) Kelly, Chairman, Nooksack Tribe
The Honorable Jeromy Sullivan, Chair, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe
The Honorable Leonard Forsman, Chair, Suquamish Tribe

To: The Health Impact Project
The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation & The Pew Charitable Trusts
901 East Street NW, 10th Floor
Washington, DC 20004
Fax (202) 552-2299
email: healthimpactsproject@pewtrust.org

Re: **San Juan County Board of Health Support for an Independent Health Impact Assessment (HIA) for increased impacts of shipping coal in Washington State**

This letter expresses the strong support of the San Juan County Board of Health for the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) for the evaluation of the possible human health and environmental consequences if the Gateway Pacific Terminal (GPT) project is approved for construction. We ask that you fund this important project.

We feel it is our duty as local officials to ensure that the current and future health of our community is protected, and we believe it is vital that major decisions with potentially large and complex implications are made in light of multiple sources of high-quality information. An independent HIA will fill an important and unique niche in the range of information being gathered. At Cherry Point there will be roughly 500 bulk cargo ships almost 1000 feet long. These will travers the waters of San Juan County, translating into 1000 ingress/egress passages through the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve and around the San Juan Islands. In addition to the ships the ingress and egress of tug boats - usually two per ship each way will also be added to the already congested waterways. That adds up to 2000 passages per year of these very powerful tugs, many 100 feet long with very powerful engines.

What will be the effect of these 3000 passages through the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve and the San Juan Islands for both human health and environmental contamination? What will be the impact on herring, salmon, orcas, eel grass not to mention impacts on tourism and the local economy of the San Juan community?

San Juan County has no decision-making authority over the GPT permit. Rather, we have been working to ensure that our colleagues on the Whatcom County Council will have the broadest range of valuable input available to them as they decide. One way to accomplish this is to support and bring forward relevant and credible information which will supplement and complement rather than duplicate Whatcom County's mandated Environmental Impact Study (EIS) process.

Background. The proposed GPT project at Cherry Point in Whatcom County, Washington, if built, will enable the export of bulk commodities, overwhelmingly sub-bituminous coal, from the western U.S. to markets in the Asia. GPT would be the largest coal shipping

terminal ever operating in North America – at full build out about 50 million tons annually[1] – and would result in a marked increase in train traffic across our state and more than double the rail traffic through many cities and towns throughout the state, as well as greatly increased marine shipping traffic in our regional waters. Understandably, the proposal has generated significant local, regional, and national attention.

Many concerns have been expressed about the potential impacts of this project on our economy, and our environmental and community health. Among those concerned has been a group of over 200 physicians, representing nearly half of the doctors within Whatcom County, have over the past year reviewed the available medical literature on the potential health impacts of the project, and they have concluded that a formal, independent Health Impact Assessment needs to be performed in order to adequately evaluate the impacts on human health of the proposed project and of the rail and shipping traffic it would generate.

The people of San Juan County are faced with a major decision. We need answers, not unfounded debate and speculation. We need to know the true costs and benefits, the risks and potentials, for this unprecedented shipping terminal project. People on all sides – advocates and detractors, the project applicant SSA Marine, the Sierra Club which opposes it, and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad, to name a few – all agree that more and better information is needed, but few can provide it.

This July, the Bellingham City Council unanimously passed Resolution 2012-22, which called upon county, state, and federal agencies to conduct a full evaluation of all potential, cumulative on- and off-site impacts of the GPT project. In particular, we requested "a comprehensive Health Impact Assessment be conducted by a separate and qualified third-party contractor in order to analyze potential impacts to the health and welfare of the citizens of Bellingham including impacts from diesel emissions from trains and ships, coal dust, noise and the potential for increased rail/car and rail/pedestrian accidents."

We are aware that CH2M Hill has been contracted to supervise the county's EIS process. Although CH2M Hill is an internationally recognized engineering consulting firm, they have limited experience in health impact assessments and will be relying upon others to conduct a limited review. Therefore, an independent and objective assessment performed to the best standards is very important.

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[1] SSA Marine has a contract with Peabody Coal for 48 million metric tons, which is just under 53 million US tons.

SAN JUAN BOARD OF HEALTH, signed 20th of September 2012

David Perera, Chair

Richard Fralick, Member

Dale Heisinger, M.D., Member

Rich Peterson, Member

Howard Rosenfeld, Member

John Geyman, M.D., Member

San Juan Marine Resources Committee
135 Rhone Street, P.O. Box 947
Friday Harbor WA 98250

san juan county
marine stewardship area
our sea our source our future

October 30, 2012

Alice Kelly, Northwest Regional Office, Department of Ecology

Randel Perry, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regulatory Branch

Tyler Schroeder, Planning and Development Services, Whatcom County

Re: Proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal EIS Scoping

Dear Ms. Kelly, Mr. Perry, and Mr. Schroeder:

The San Juan County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) serves as an advisory committee to the San Juan County Council on marine science and policy issues, identifies priorities and implements projects for local marine resource protection, conducts scientific and data gathering projects to inform local marine resource management, and engages the community to build greater stewardship of the local marine environment. The San Juan County Marine Resources Committee also serves as the Citizens Advisory Group for implementation of the San Juan Chapter of the federally approved Puget Sound Chinook Recovery Plan. We are highly concerned with the risks associated with the proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal and the impacts these pose to the San Juan Islands community. To address our concerns, we respectfully request that the co-lead agencies, in compliance with NEPA and SEPA, include in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the topics and analyses identified below.

All potential impacts from the proposed increased shipping traffic and transport of coal through the marine waters surrounding San Juan County should be analyzed and evaluated, including impacts to water quality, air quality, critical habitat, aquatic resources, endangered species as well as public health and impacts to our environment and tourism-based economy, including recreational and commercial boating, wildlife viewing and fisheries. Questions we need answers to before this project is considered include:

- How might the increased vessel traffic impact the foraging behavior of the federally listed endangered Southern Resident killer whales?
- What impacts could the terminal and localized impacts have on the spring-spawning Cherry Point herring stock and the associated food web, including federally listed Chinook salmon and killer whales?
- San Juan County will be profoundly affected by climate change, both due to sea level rise and changing and unpredictable weather patterns. What role will the additional burning of North American coal in Asia play in affecting the climate change impacts to the marine environment?
- What is the increased risk of collision and subsequent oil spills from over 900 additional large vessel transits through our waters?

Why this matters:

The entirety of San Juan County is a marine biological preserve established in the 1920s and codified in RCW 28B.20.320 to protect the unique and diverse community of marine plants and animals that live only here. The flora and fauna of this region are exceptionally rich and representative of nearly all major groups of marine algae and invertebrates. The shorelines of San Juan County are designated as Shorelines of Statewide Significance and critical habitat for federally listed threatened Chinook salmon and endangered Southern Resident killer whales. Increased shipping traffic and a major oil spill in this region could have significant impacts on these species, as well as the San Juan community.

A major oil spill has the potential to decimate the Southern Resident killer whale population. In addition, the County's shorelines provide important outmigrating habitat for juvenile salmon, including Chinook, coho, pink and chum from multiple Puget Sound, Fraser River and Vancouver Island stocks. Local food webs support multiple species of ecological, cultural and economic importance in the region, such as Puget Sound Chinook, rockfish, the southern resident killer whale, and seabirds such as the marbled murrelet. This complexity and extent of marine shoreline, as well as the regional food web support they provide is unique and potential impacts to this ecosystem, and the human communities it supports, must be thoroughly analyzed and evaluated in the Gateway Pacific Terminal area-wide Environmental Impact Statement.

The San Juan Archipelago is characterized by complex geography and geology, with over 400 miles of marine shorelines across hundreds of large and small islands. While predominantly rocky, the county's shorelines also support significant "soft" geomorphic shoreforms, including 90 miles of net shore drift cell systems (feeder bluffs, transport zones and accretion beaches), 48 miles of pocket beaches and nearly 20 miles of embayment estuaries and lagoons. The attached oiling residence time map for San Juan County, based on data from the Washington Department of Natural Resources ShoreZone Mapping (2001) illustrates the immense challenges our complex geography poses to oil spill prevention and recovery efforts, with over half of our shorelines (215 miles) designated as high residence times.

As detailed in the Puget Sound Partnership's Action Agenda and the Marine Stewardship Plan for San Juan County, major oil spills are ranked as the top threat to marine ecosystems and major oil spill prevention is identified as a top priority. As this project would significantly increase vessel traffic and thus the probability of a major spill, it is in direct conflict with our local and regional management plans based on state and federal regulations.

The San Juan County MRC requests that the scope of the Environmental Impact Statement recognize the increased risk to the environment throughout the shipping routes as well as the port at Cherry Point, Washington. We ask that the Environmental Impact Statement fully and completely include the connected and cumulative actions, issues and concerns of the marine and human communities of San Juan County, as listed above.

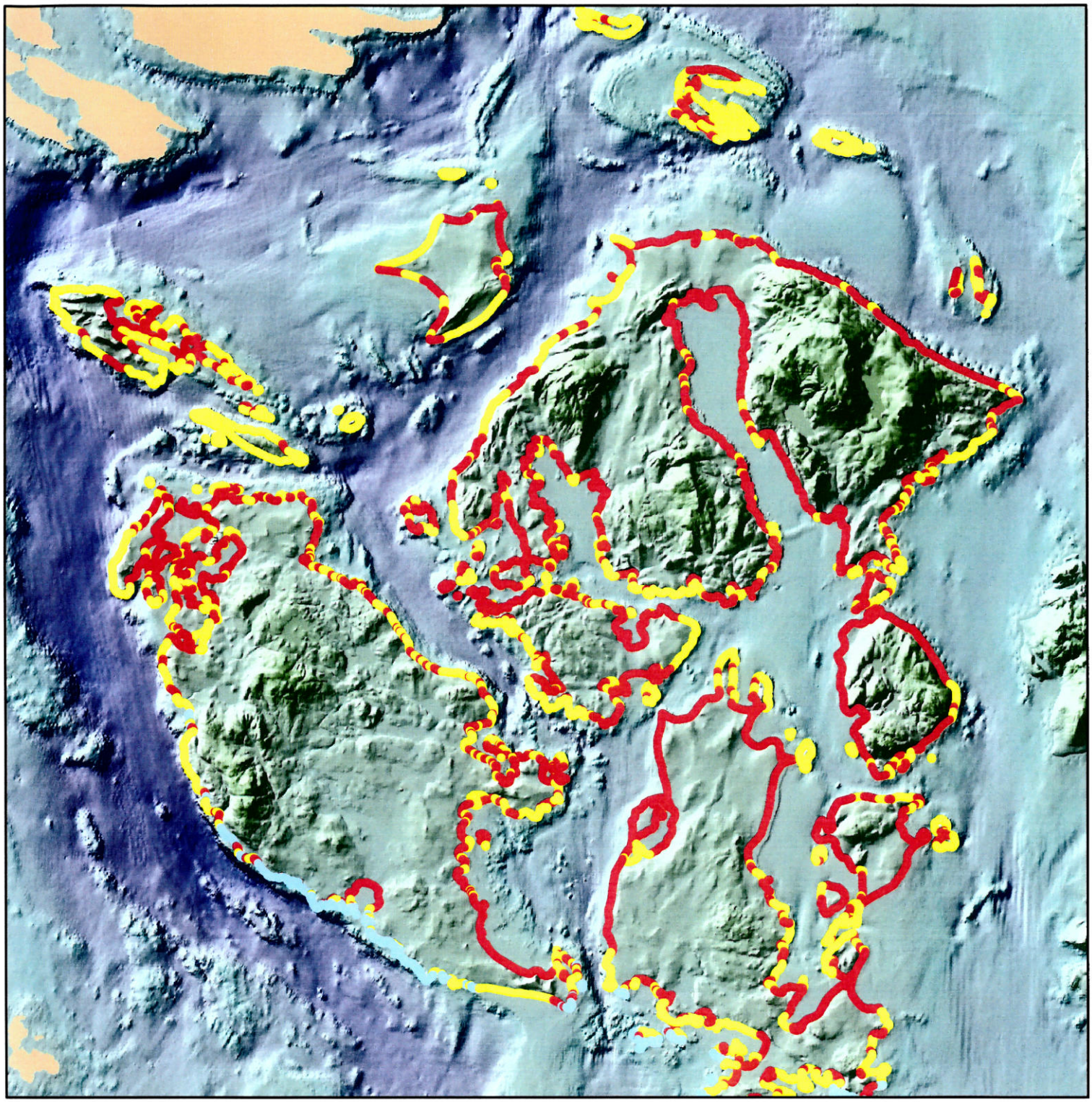
Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Aschoff

John Aschoff, Chair
On behalf of the San Juan County Marine Resources Committee

Projected Oil Residence Time If An Oil Spill Occurs



Legend

szlineth

OIL_RESIDE

- Days to Weeks
- Weeks to Months
- Months to Years

3 1.5 0 3 Miles

Data Source:
Washington Department of Natural Resources
Shorezone Dataset.

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