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Mr. Randel Perry
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District
Care of GPT/BNSF Custer Spur EIS Co-Lead Agencies
1100 112th Avenue Northeast, Suite 400
Bellevue, WA 98004

Mr. Ted Sturdevant, Director Department of Ecology
P.O. Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504-7600

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

**EIS SCOPING FOR GATEWAY PACIFIC TERMINAL PROJECT:
OCEAN CONTAMINATION FROM TOXIC COAL PARTICLES**

Agency Representatives:

Please study and scope the cumulative effect over time on plant and animal life of toxic coal dust runoff at the proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal site as sediments are contaminated in the nearby ocean waters of Cherry Point. The huge piles of coal located at the terminal will be constantly moved, rained upon, and disrupted, causing dust and particles to be dispersed. Over time, a significant amount of these particles will be washed into the adjacent ocean. These toxic particles will become part of the general environment where important species of fish feed, live and reproduce. Some of the microscopic coal will accumulate in fish, impairing growth, resistance to disease and reproductive capability. Over a minimum of 10 years, this will become more significant and detrimental for all life forms in the nearby ocean. Every life form in the ocean is a critical link in the diversity and health of the entire ecosystem. By releasing toxic chemicals of any kind into the ocean, we alter the natural balance and destroy untold amounts of life. The effect continues along the chain of life, all dependent on one another.

It is documented knowledge that coal contains high concentrations of arsenic, mercury, lead, chromium, cadmium, selenium, nickel, vanadium, copper and uranium, which are all bio-toxic and have negative, chronic and acute physiological effects on contact with living organisms. Further, when coal is exposed to air or water, bio-toxic sulphur compounds are released into the environment as gases, becoming acid rain or sulphuric acid. This is a vicious cycle, since acid conditions increase the absorption rate of the heavy metals by plant and animal life, whether it is in the ocean or on land. Because piles of toxic coal will be stored in close proximity to our nearby oceans, and loaded into ships waiting in the water, sooner or later some of this coal will be spilled or transported through air or water, polluting and causing chemical changes to these waters and the life forms therein.

By their own admittance, building and operating GPT will impact at least 12 species of sea life *that are already listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act*. In addition, the GPT pier and loading activities will be in the direct path of already declining herring. Herring population at Cherry Point has historically provided spawning habitat for more than 50 percent of the entire herring population of Puget Sound and the Strait of San Juan de Fuca. Herring are a Keystone Species – critical in the biological chain of life in the sea. If this “link” in the food chain is weakened, all species which depend on it are weakened, and so on, ad infinitum.

Many other species of bottom fish, such as cod, Pollock, flounder, sole, lingcod and rockfish are important food sources as well as maintaining a place in the balance of the marine ecosystem. If you affect one, you affect others. There are many ways in which one species of fish can be affected. For instance, Rockfish are unique in that they give birth to live young which float on and feed in tidal currents then settle in sheltered bays before moving to deeper water. Anything that disrupts the close-to-shore areas, will affect the young fry. Many young fish are dependent on clean habitats in shallow waters where they mature. Near shore activities that disrupt eelgrass and kelp beds in bays and inlets where young fish find shelter and grow take away important nursery areas. If toxic chemicals are a part of their environment, they will accumulate in the tissues and could cause numerous problems, including mutations, disease, and death.

I don't know if any sort of mitigation would eliminate coal contamination in the ocean from a shipping terminal on the coast. Coal is a fine particulate matter, becoming airborne at particle size of 500 microns and will easily disperse, spill, or blow into the surrounding environments. The best mitigation for coal is to not ship it anywhere, but leave it in the earth and find alternate clean energy sources that do not poison our earth. By supporting more coal consumption, we are adding huge amounts of CO₂ to the atmosphere causing the oceans to become more acidic and warm, and will first affect the ability of phytoplankton to remain on the surface where the oxygen is released and carbon dioxide is absorbed. In time this phenomenon will result in certain extinction of some if not all life forms.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Westland
8293 Fawn Crescent
Blaine, WA 98230
westlandstar@comcast.net