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GPT/Custer Spur EIS
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Submitted electronically to comments@eisgatewaypacificwa.gov

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This letter constitutes my scoping comments on the proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal and Custer Spur EIS. The EIS must include careful consideration of the following issues.

- Pollution of waterways from the coal mine to the port, including groundwater and surface waters, fresh and salt. These waters would be polluted from
 - * The mining activities themselves
 - * The estimated 500 pounds of coal dust that can be lost from *each* rail car along the way, and more during loading and unloading
 - * The inevitable spills that will occur, especially devastating given the hundreds of rail miles that border rivers and Puget Sound
 - * The construction of the port itself
 - * The massive ships required to move the coal to Asia (with more risks of accidents and spills)
 - * The burning of the coal itself. This pollution will affect the entire marine ecosystem—coral reefs, shellfish and herring populations, the ESA-listed Puget Sound salmon and orca populations, and other marine mammals.
- Air pollution—again, from the coal dust, diesel engine exhaust, and burning of coal—will have direct effects on human and animal (including ESA-listed birds and other wildlife) health, causing or aggravating respiratory conditions such as asthma and lung cancer, as well as other health problems.
- Effects on plants from air and water pollution in addition to exacerbation of climate change from coal burning must be evaluated—from ocean phytoplankton to northwest forests to farmland crops.
- Traffic will be disrupted by the addition of 18 coal trains per day. This will add up to 2 hours per day to wait times at rail crossings, delay emergency response times (costing lives), impede commerce to local businesses and increase school bus costs.
- The long coal trains are much heavier than other freight trains and have already caused damage to building foundations near the rail lines; increasing the number of these trains could further harm buildings.

- All of these adverse effects will have economic impacts—reducing existing jobs by hurting local businesses, fisheries, and timber, farming and tourism jobs. Property values would be depressed, affecting real estate-related jobs. These losses would far outstrip any jobs created by the proposal.
- The effects of the consequent increased coal combustion on climate change cannot be ignored, and would be a direct impact of constructing this terminal, even though the coal would not be burned in the USA.
- Human health, though mentioned above under “air pollution,” will be impacted by *all* of these factors. Cardiopulmonary disease and cancer would increase, and mental health of residents all along the rail route would suffer as the quality of life was degraded.
- The issue of environmental justice is a real concern, as many railroad lines run through low-income communities, which would feel the impacts most intensely. Construction of the proposed terminal would degrade lands held sacred by the Native American Lummi Tribe.

In addition to thorough scientific evaluation of all of the above issues, I ask that the agencies DENY THE PERMIT for the construction of the export facility.

Thank you for consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Katherine Johnson, DVM