

December 3, 2012

Dear Decision Maker,

As a Spokane, Washington resident I request that you consider the environmental impact on the entire transportation corridor for coal exports from the Powder River Basin to the proposed Bellingham coal export terminal, which includes the impact on Spokane. I am a nurse, an attorney and a person of faith. My request is informed by each of these perspectives.

We do not know the precise magnitude of the impact on health and the environment of more coal transport through cities like Spokane, but science indicates the likelihood of some negative impact. This is the reason why the environmental impact statement must be broad enough to answer the important questions about negative outcomes before any permits are issued. In the past we have made mistakes that caused significant health and environmental problems because we either ignored or were unaware of the risks associated with particular environmental pollutants, e.g. PCBs, plutonium. We have far too many "super sites" on the clean-up list up because of these errors. As a decision maker, you have the opportunity to apply what science tells us about the risks associated with this low grade coal and to make an informed decision that protects our health and our environment as required by law.

We know that the number of diesel burning trains carrying low grade coal through Spokane will increase by up to 50 trains a day with many on-grade crossings. I have both specific and global concerns about this endeavor.

Specifically, I am concerned about:

- The health effects of the fine particulate emissions from the increased number of diesel trains and the dust from the coal being transported. We know that the emissions and dust are a threat to the respiratory and cardiac systems of pregnant women, young children, seniors, people of lower socioeconomic status and those with lung or heart disease. The particles are too small to see, but have devastating health effects, causing chronic health problems as well as cancer. I have asthma and I walk and bike along the Centennial Trail and Fish Lake Trail, both of which are close to the rail lines. The transport of this coal can have real impacts on my personal health as well as the health of many others.
- The environmental effect on our water and air. We know that it is virtually impossible to contain all of the coal dust and particles during transport. Those pollutants will find their way into our air and water degrading both important resources. Spokane is billed as "near nature, near perfect." The attraction of our city for residents, conferences, and business is based significantly on our natural resources. Having more coal trains lumbering directly along the Spokane River and through the center of downtown will damage the appeal of our environment and thus negatively impact our economy. In addition, coal trains can derail. Increasing the number of coal trains increases the chance of a derailment. A derailment in downtown would be a human and environmental catastrophe. Moreover, fueling a significantly greater number of trains at the refueling station over our sole source aquifer is courting disaster. There have already been leaks during refueling despite the railroad's statement that this could not possibly occur.
- The negative effect on our transportation system. We know that there are numerous on-grade crossings where additional long coal trains will impede automobile traffic. This is not a mere

inconvenience. It can disrupt school schedules, businesses and individuals and increase the risk of accidents.

From a global perspective I am concerned about:

- The ethics of exporting a low grade of coal, that we would not burn ourselves, to developing countries where use will result in local negative health and environmental effects. I find it unconscionable that the United States would consider this action.
- Climate change. We must reduce our reliance on fossil fuels like coal or suffer severe consequences. This is not the time to try to extract all the low grade coal reserves and flood the world market with such a damaging product. Instead, we should be focusing on clean and renewable energy sources. We must consider the global negative effect of producing, transporting and burning the low grade coal.
- The health risk from the burning of low grade coal. While the coal trains will have a local effect on health, the burning of the coal in other countries will create additional air pollution which is likely to also cause additional health problems in the United States as well as in other countries.

Please take a broad and in-depth perspective on the scoping of the environmental impact statement for this coal export endeavor. We have only one chance to get it right.

Sincerely,  
Mary Lou Johnson  
3319 W. 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave.  
Spokane, WA 99224  
509-991-5512