

Will Whatcom County Cave in to Dirty Coal?

Facts about proposed coal export from Cherry Point



Cherry Point (Matt Krogh)

Multinational coal companies want to ship millions of tons of dirty coal through Washington State to China and other Asian nations looking to feed their rapidly growing energy appetite.

Coal companies would strip mine the coal in Montana and Wyoming, load it into open rail cars and transport it to Whatcom County on trains up to two miles long. They would unload, store and ship the coal overseas from Cherry Point, where Asian countries would burn it in coal-fired power plants. Currently SSA Marine and Peabody Energy—the largest coal company in the world—have a joint agreement for the proposal.



The Westshore coal terminal near Roberts Bank, B.C., ships about 25 million tons of coal annually.

SSA Marine's proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal at Cherry Point would initially handle 24 million tons of coal annually. Fred Palmer, a senior vice president for Peabody was quoted saying the terminal "could reach up to 50 million tons per year." That's enough coal to fill more than 3000 loaded coal trains, each more than a mile long.



Coal train (Scott Granneman - flickr)

Big Coal will make huge profits, China will get the energy, Whatcom County will pay the price

Threats to our health, clean air and water: Coal dust escaping from open coal trains and storage piles, and diesel exhaust from coal trains and cargo ships, would threaten human health, Whatcom County's clean air, and water quality in Puget Sound.

The wide ranging health dangers of coal dust include exposure to toxic heavy metals such as lead, selenium and mercury. Coal dust leads to increased asthma, wheezing and coughing in children. Toxic pollution from diesel exhaust is linked to stunted lung development, increased probability of heart attacks, lung cancer, worsening asthma and infant mortality.

A comprehensive 2001 study of coal dust emissions in Canada found that the Westshore Terminal near Tsawassen B.C. emits roughly 715 metric tons of coal dust a year. The report states that "coal terminals by their nature are active sources of fugitive dust." According to the rail operator, BNSF, every coal car can lose as much as 500 pounds of coal dust en route.

In Seward, Alaska, years of failure to control terminal dust have led to a lawsuit under the Clean Water Act. In 2010, the state of Alaska fined the railroad company that delivers the coal to the terminal \$220,000 for failing to adequately control dust that dirtied Seward's scenic harbor.



Coal dust (Sierra Club)

Shipping 50 million tons of coal annually would mean 18-20 additional coal trains rolling through Whatcom County and Bellingham's waterfront every day.

More traffic and wait-times at rail-crossings:

Added coal train traffic could cause significant new transportation problems in Bellingham and other communities near the terminal and along the rail route. Frequent traffic delays at busy rail crossings could clog commuter traffic, delay utility services and slow response times for police, firefighters and other first responders.

Bellingham's waterfront cut off by continuous march of coal trains:

Constant coal train traffic would cut homes and businesses off from the city's waterfront and could drive away investors looking at the city's spectacular waterfront for new residential, retail and commercial development

Exporting coal means more global warming pollution:

Current plans call for as much as 50 million tons of coal to be shipped through Whatcom County annually to be burned in Asian coal plants. Burning that much more coal every year would produce more global warming pollution than all the cars in Oregon and Washington combined in one year.

Take Action:

Sign a petition to stop dirty coal export at

<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/protectcherrypoint/>

Find out more by visiting

<http://www.re-sources.org/home/Gateway-Pacific-Terminal>



Colstrip Coal Plant – MT (Tim Wagner)