

Will King County power past coal?

Coal companies, seeing little future growth domestically, have a new plan: strip mine coal in Montana and Wyoming, transport it on long coal trains through King County to a massive coal export terminal north of Bellingham at Cherry Point.

Who's behind the plan? Out of state companies, including the world's largest coal company Peabody and investors like Goldman Sachs. SSA Marine would manage the port.

CONGESTION FROM COAL TRAIN TRAFFIC

Communities in and along rail lines, including Seattle, Shoreline, Tukwila, Renton, Kent and Auburn **could see 20 or more coal trains** rolling through town *every day*. This would add more than 3,000 noisy mile-long loaded coal trains traveling through King County rail system *every year*.

A single slow-moving coal train can obstruct a rail crossing by six minutes or more. Adding 20 trains to the local area's rail system would mean blocking some crossings by two hours per day.



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PHOTO CREDIT: PAUL K. ANDERSON

Increased traffic delays at busy rail crossings would clog commuter traffic and could slow response times for emergency responders.

King County has a big stake in the proposed coal terminals, and we need to make our voices heard.

WATERFRONTS AND NEIGHBORHOODS CUT OFF BY COAL TRAINS

Added coal train traffic along the King County rail line would limit access to neighborhoods, schools, business corridors and ferry terminals close to the train tracks. This could drive away investors for new residential, retail and commercial developments in waterfront and rail-adjacent communities in King County.

HEALTH IMPACTS FOR KING COUNTY

Coal Train Emissions: Diesel exhaust is associated with asthma, cardiopulmonary disease and increase incidences of cancer. Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad studies estimate up to 500 pounds of coal can be lost in the form of dust from each rail car en route. The wide ranging health dangers of coal dust include exposure to toxic heavy metals like mercury and increased rates of asthma, especially in children. Coal dust would pollute our clean air and water.

Toxic fish: Mercury and other pollutants from coal-burning power plants travel from Asia to the West Coast of North America where they've been shown to poison our air, water, fish and food supply.

IMPACTS TO PUGET SOUND

Exporting coal promotes deeper global fossil fuel dependence. It delays the urgently needed

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transition to cleaner alternatives. It makes climate disruption inevitable, including extreme flooding and ocean acidification, impacting our shorelines and the Sound.

Close to the terminals, shorelines would be given over to industrial sites with enormous piles of coal and constant dust. For example, the proposed terminal site at Cherry Point would span 1200 acres, fill 131 acres of wetlands and sit directly on herring grounds, which are a primary food source for Chinook salmon.

The companies would ship the coal on massive cargo ships. Every year over 200 of the worlds' biggest, most accident-prone ships would clog the already crowded Straits of Juan de Fuca and Georgia. This would mean ongoing threats to wetlands, waterways and wildlife from potential ship collisions, threatening salmon, orcas and our Sound.

BAD FOR THE ECONOMY

Major public ports, such as the Ports of Seattle, Tacoma,

Vancouver, and Portland have rejected coal export as inconsistent with their economic development strategies. The proposed sites have potential for hundreds of jobs in light industrial and smart-tech growth instead of being mired in a single-commodity, unpredictable dirty export trade. Increased coal train traffic would lower property values along the rail lines and in communities impacted by congested traffic. It would also make it more difficult for ports and shippers to get higher value goods to market along the rail lines.

COUNTY CONTACTS:

- **Joelle Robinson**
Climate Solutions
(206) 443-9570 x29
joelle@climatesolutions.org
- **Robin Everett**
Sierra Club
(206) 378-0114 x308
robin.everett@sierraclub.org
- **Nicole Keenan**
Washington Environmental Council
(206) 631-2606
nicole@wecprotects.org

“The proposed coal terminals sound alarms about global climate change, economic impacts and environmental hazards. Big topics. The daily presence of two-mile-long trains full of coal trundling through towns and cities raises pollution and traffic questions very close to home.

— **OPINION PIECE BY LANCE DICKIE,**
THE SEATTLE TIMES, AUGUST 4, 2011

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- 1** **Call WA State Commissioner of Public Lands Peter Goldmark** at (360) 902-1004 and tell him “please don’t use Washington’s public waters for coal export.”
- 2** **Call King County Council members** at (206) 296-1688 and ask them to ensure that the impacts are fully studied and that our county is protected.
- 3** **Call Governor Christine Gregoire** at (360) 902-4111 and tell her to ensure that Washington says NO to coal export and YES to a clean energy future.

POWER PAST COAL

communities against coal export

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About Power Past Coal: We are a growing coalition of organizations sharing a common interest to prevent the West Coast from becoming a high volume coal corridor.

Primary Partner Organizations Include: Climate Solutions, Columbia River-keeper, Earthjustice, RE Sources for Sustainable Communities, Sierra Club, Washington Environmental Council, Western Organization of Resource Councils