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Diverse coalition stands up against proposed Longview coal export facility

Coal project would turn southwest Washington into the coal export capital of North America

Longview, WA – Hundreds of residents from across the Pacific Northwest testified today against a proposal to build the largest coal export terminal in North America in Longview, Washington.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) took public testimony on their Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed Millennium Bulk Terminals coal export facility, which would transport up to 44 million tons of coal per year. The Army Corps’ review focuses narrowly on the project’s impacts at the terminal site, ignoring pollution and safety effects from 16sixteen new trains traveling through Spokane, the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, and dozens of communities along the rail line.

This contrasts with this spring’s review by the Washington Department of Ecology and Cowlitz County, which took a broad look at the terminal’s impacts, accounting for the health and safety issues that would come with more frequent coal trains and the climate pollution emitted when the coal is burned in Asia. Because the Army Corps fails to analyze rail line impacts, they ignore the massive dust loss from open-top coal trains –- an average of 500 pounds per car –- as well as the increased rates of asthma and cardiovascular disease connected to coal dust.

“Millennium is proposing a major project, with major impacts,” said Jerry Iyall, a councilmember of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe. “The project plans a massive movement of fossil fuel across sensitive and important landscapes … We believe this proposed development threatens our sacred resources. Since time immemorial we have relied on the once bountiful regional resources for survival.”

The coal industry is in a downward spiral.[Following its bankruptcy](http://www.wsj.com/articles/arch-coal-files-for-bankruptcy-1452500976), Arch Coal wrote off of its shares in Millennium’s project and walked away from a $57 million investment. Millennium’s sole backer is Lighthouse Resources, which relies primarily on revenues from coal mining to fund its operations. Since 2010, the coal industry has shelved plans for three coal export terminals in the Northwest, and agencies denied permits for two others, most recently the Gateway Pacific terminal in Whatcom County, Washington. A proposal remains for a four million ton per year coal terminal in Surrey, British Columbia.

“Coal is a 19th century commodity in a 21st century world,” said Clark Williams-Derry, Director of Energy Finance at Sightline Institute. “The long-term trends are all tilting against coal. Asia is investing in renewable energy at a feverish pace, and many nations have cut coal consumption or scaled back plans for new coal plants. Meanwhile, U.S. coal exporters face fierce competition from low-cost rivals, including Russia and Indonesia. It’s little wonder that most investors have kept their wallets closed for U.S. coal export schemes.”

Many Longview residents spoke against the proposal, saying doubling down on an industry in decline wasn’t in the community's best interests.

“Never once have I heard someone say they’d like to move here if we had a coal export terminal,” said Kathy Thompson, a Longview real estate agent. “The perception now is that Cowlitz County is going to become the coal export capital of North America. This damages our home values in our community and damages our standards of living. Coal exports are just the wrong path for Cowlitz County.”

**Photos of the rally and hearing will be available by 9:00 pm on Monday, October 24 at this website:**[**http://www.powerpastcoal.org/resources/photography/.**](http://www.powerpastcoal.org/resources/photography/)

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POWER PAST COAL is an ever-growing alliance of health, environmental, clean-energy, faith and community groups and businesses working to stop coal export off the West Coast.  Powerpastcoal.org @powerpastcoal