

STATE OF OREGON REQUIRES NEW LAND LEASE FOR MORROW PACIFIC COAL EXPORT PROJECT

New state land lease requirement deals additional blow to fledgling coal export proposal

Monday, March 17, 2014

Contact:

Brett VandenHeuvel, Columbia Riverkeeper - 503.348.2436, bv@columbiariverkeeper.org

Shane Levy, Sierra Club – 415.977.5724, shane.levy@sierraclub.org

PORTLAND, Ore. - The State of Oregon has notified Ambre Energy that its controversial proposed coal export terminal is located on state-owned land in the Columbia River and now requires a state land lease. In a letter sent from the Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL) to Ambre Energy on Friday, the agency alerted Ambre that its proposed Morrow Pacific coal export project requires aquatic land leases both at Port of Morrow and Port Westward, the upstream and downstream ends of the project. A copy of the letter can be found [here](#).

“Just like any other landlord, the State of Oregon has broad discretion to carefully screen the tenants for leases on state land, and reject companies that don’t fit the goals of our state,” said Brett VandenHeuvel, Executive Director of Columbia Riverkeeper. “The state should exercise that discretion by saying no to coal exports in our state.”

Ambre Energy has long stated that it did not need a lease from Oregon, but the letter from the DSL provides clear evidence to the contrary. The State of Oregon owns the bed and banks of the Columbia River and thus the DSL informed Ambre that it would need at least two and possibly three leases from the state in order to construct its coal export terminal.

In the letter sent to Ambre Energy, the DSL stated that Ambre needs a lease at the downstream end of the proposed coal terminal located at Port Westward because a 650-foot coal barge and tug would be motoring on and anchored in the Columbia River “essentially all the time.” The DSL also noted that Ambre may need a lease for the transloading operations at Port Westward. Ambre Energy must now apply for state-land leases from the Oregon Department of State Lands.

“This decision is a no-brainer. Our state should not lease public land for the construction of a dirty, dangerous coal export terminal that would threaten the health and safety of families throughout Oregon and along the Columbia River Gorge,” said said Cesia Kearns, Senior Campaign Representative for the Sierra Club and co-director of the Power Past Coal coalition.

The requirement to obtain a state land lease for Ambre Energy’s dangerous coal export project is yet another setback to the struggling coal export terminal. Ambre has been plagued by financial questions and has made little progress in obtaining state or federal permits. Just last month, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) announced Ambre Energy’s proposal to build Oregon’s first coal export terminal will require an additional permit, known as a 401 Water Quality Certification. DEQ received a record breaking 16,500 public

comments on Ambre's proposal to export 8.8 million tons of coal through Northwest communities and along the Columbia River. The agency also announced its decision to issue three permits for the coal export project, an air quality permit, a construction stormwater permit, and an internal wastewater permit.

Ambre also needs approval from the Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL) before it can build an industrial coal dock on the Columbia River. To date, Ambre failed to provide adequate information requested by the DSL, resulting in six permit extensions from the agency.

###

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. Visit PowerPastCoal.org for more information.