



**Environment Justice Task Force**  
**900 Court Street NE, Salem, OR 97301**  
**July, 2012**

Governor John Kitzhaber  
160 State Capitol  
900 Court Street  
Salem, Oregon 97301-4047

Governor Kitzhaber,

The Environmental Justice Task Force applauds your efforts to explore and understand the environmental impacts of coal transports from Powder River Basin through Oregon. We have heard comments from community members expressing concern about the potential impacts of coal export proposals on low income, communities of color, and other vulnerable community members in our state. We share these health and safety concerns. For that reason, the Environmental Justice Task Force urges you to fully consider a health impact assessment/analysis before proceeding with permits for coal transport and exports.

The Task Force is concerned that diesel emissions and coal dust associated with coal transport would exacerbate the already disproportionate environmental burdens and health inequities experienced by low-income and minority neighborhoods. Proposals on the table are likely to affect tribal lands, minority communities in North and Northeast Portland, and Latino and low income communities in West Eugene.

I am sure you are well aware of the potential for diesel particulate matter to impair pulmonary development, severity of asthma attacks (particularly in children), and increased risk of stroke, heart attacks and cancer. Coal dust is also linked to bronchitis, emphysema and other cardiovascular ailments. The potential for heavy metals leaching from fugitive coal dust is also a concern to be considered. Other impacts of coal transport, including noise, safety at crossings, and traffic delays, have the potential to adversely affect the health of communities along the transportation corridors. Increased coal burning in Asia also contributes to smog, soot, mercury emissions and greenhouse gases that influence our ability to protect the health of Oregon communities.

The Environmental Justice Task Force urges you to fully consider a health impact assessment/analysis before proceeding with permits for coal transport and exports. While this analysis will take time and resources, it is ultimately in the interest of all communities in the state, and particular for those who are most vulnerable to the health and environmental impacts, that we clearly understand the health risks.

On behalf of the EJ Task Force, I thank you for your continued support and advocacy to ensure environmental justice: a safe and healthy environment for every Oregonian to live, work, play, learn and practice spirituality.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Duncan  
Chair, Environmental Justice Task Force