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City of Mosier

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

Dick Pederson
Director, Department of Environmental Quality
811 SW Sixth Ave.
Portland, OR 97204-1390

Louise Solliday
Director, Department of State Lands
775 Summer St. NE, Suite 100
Salem, OR 97301-1279

Matthew Garrett
Director, Department of Transportation
1158 Chemeketa St NE
Salem, OR 97301-2528

Dear Governor Kitzhaber and Directors Pederson, Solliday, and Garrett,

The Mosier City Council strongly opposes the proposed new coal export terminals which could result in an untenable increase in train traffic through our community and the exposure of our entire population and our environment to the harmful effects of coal dust. Calculations based only on the proposals that have been publicly announced reveal that mile long trains of open cars filled with coal could fill to capacity the railroad tracks that run through the heart of our community. Proposals have also been made to load coal on barges and ship the exposed coal down the Columbia River, the river which forms the City of Mosier's northern boundary.

The City of Mosier is located on the Columbia River in the heart of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Tourists visiting this national treasure also visit Mosier because we offer excellent cycling roads through the natural scenic beauty of the Gorge and because the City of Mosier has invested heavily in a waterfront park that includes a windsurfing beach on the Columbia River.

Cherry orchards have historically formed the economic base of the Mosier Valley and are still the Mosier area's strongest industry. Vineyards have contributed recently to this strong agricultural presence. Within our city limits, Mosier relies more heavily on the tourist industry to sustain the businesses in our downtown core.

The proposals to traffic open train cars full of coal through the Columbia River Gorge could heavily impact every sector of the Mosier community. These proposals represent a change in the usage of the rail lines that is unprecedented.

The Union Pacific Railroad runs alongside the City of Mosier's downtown commercial zone, through our Waterfront Park, and through our residential areas. Every residence and business in Mosier is exposed to the railroad by a very close proximity. Mosier Community School children play in the schoolyard located less than 100 yards from the railroad tracks. Our restaurants and our market are located less than 100 yards from the railroad tracks. The historic Mosier Fruit Growers building, where cherries are packed every summer for export, is located less than 30 yards from the railroad tracks. One of our new residential developments, the Mosier Creek Condos, is located less than 30 yards from the railroad tracks and our largest subdivisions are directly exposed to the railroad tracks by sight and sound. Some of the Mosier Valley's orchards border the railroad tracks.

Because our residences and our school are so exposed to the railroad tracks, The Mosier City Council is gravely concerned about the impact of coal dust on the health of our community members, especially our children.

And because coal dust escaping from the open train cars could pollute our air, our river, and our orchards, we are concerned that coal train traffic will damage our economic bases of agriculture and tourism.

If coal trains are allowed to dominate our community, they could stunt if not crush the success of our developing downtown.

Yet these coal export terminal proposals are moving forward without any opportunity for public debate. Negotiations are occurring literally behind closed doors. The City of Mosier and other Columbia Gorge communities that could be seriously impacted by the proposed coal export terminals have not been invited to participate in any form of information gathering or decision making.

The Mosier City Council expects Governor Kitzhaber and our Oregon state agencies to respond to our concerns with the following:

1. - Require an analysis of public health impacts of coal dust as would be relevant to the communities in the Columbia River Gorge. -
2. - Require an analysis of the economic impact of coal train traffic on Oregon communities (health care, businesses, property values, downtown development, agriculture, etc).
3. - Require an analysis of the environmental impacts of coal train traffic on air quality, surface and/or ground water, and agriculture within 7 miles of the railroad tracks.
4. - Ensure that all information is public.
5. - Hold informational hearings in affected communities and in the Columbia River Gorge in order to share information and hear concerns from citizens. These hearings should include the governor, his staff, and the directors of state agencies.
6. - The governor should direct the agencies to carefully scrutinize any permits and consult with him prior to any approvals for permits associated with coal export.
7. - Require an analysis of the cost of the environmental devastation a coal train derailment would have on the communities in the Columbia River Gorge.
8. - Require coal companies to avoid adversely affecting communities like Mosier or compensate these communities for the negative health, environmental, and economic impacts resulting from coal exports and the associated traffic by rail or barge.

Thank you for your attention to this issue which could have such a strong negative impact on our community. We request that you inform the City of Mosier in a timely manner of any updates regarding the proposed new coal export terminals.

Sincerely,

Andrea Rogers, Mayor
Mosier City Council
City of Mosier