

I'm from Washougal in the Columbia River Gorge. It is a small city between foothills and the Columbia River. Our entire downtown with many small businesses is located on both sides of the rail tracks. Just across the road from the tracks there are two schools, the school district offices, and hundreds of homes.

At full buildout, we can expect 16 coal trains a day from this terminal. They will clog our 5 at-grade crossings, release visible amounts of coal dust on windy days, and impede access to our businesses, schools, parks, and homes.

This terminal, especially if others are built, will convert the Columbia River Gorge and areas next to the tracks all the way to Wyoming into a fossil fuel corridor.

This will affect the property values as well as the quality of life of thousands of people. There is no way to mitigate these effects.

I looked at two interesting studies about the effects of increased coal train traffic on property values for the Gateway Pacific Terminal in Cherry Point. One was by the Puget Sound Regional Council and one by a real estate appraisal firm in Seattle. Both acknowledged a negative effect on property values, easily up to 5%. Even a 1-2% loss of value here in Southwest Washington would erode the value of our homes as well as the revenue for state and local governments.

As I understand it, the Department of Ecology is under court order in a Children's Justice lawsuit to craft an emissions reduction rule by the end of 2016 to combat climate change. Rejecting this coal terminal would be a great place to start, and thousands of home and business owners would breathe more easily.

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June 2, 2016