

Comments for the scoping process for the Millennial Bulk Terminals at Longview:

The impact on climate change of burning all the coal that will be exported from the proposed terminals is of the same order of magnitude as for the tar sands that would be transported through the Keystone pipeline. We are already seeing the disastrous consequences of human caused climate change with more severe storms, flooding, droughts, forest fires, and killer heat waves. The greenhouse gas from the coal that we burn will continue to have an effect long after the coal is gone. The impact on future generations will be much, much worse. They can expect famine, water shortages caused by lack of snow pack, massive extinctions, inundation of coastal cities, climate refugees, failed states, anarchy, and war.

The worst possible scenarios will result from crossing tipping points in global warming, where runaway positive feedback loops will result. For example: the lack of polar ice to reflect sunlight, the release of the methane gas that's trapped in permafrost, the acidification of the ocean causing interference with the ability of marine organisms to incorporate CO₂ into their shells. It will be too late for future generations to do anything about it. It's up to us to keep that from happening by taking action now. All countries need to act now to prevent the worst from becoming reality, especially the US and China. If we export huge amounts of coal to China, how can we possibly persuade them to cut back on their use of coal? That's like drug dealers telling their clients to "just say no". According to some analysts, China may already be deciding to move away from coal, because they have such bad air pollution, but we would be pushing them in the wrong direction. Also, the prevailing winds push that air pollution in our direction, so the accompanying mercury ends up in our water and our fish.

As a resident of Sandpoint, I am also concerned about the impact of transporting the coal through our community. That includes the pollution of Lake Pend Oreille and the Clark Fork river from coal dust along the rail route, and derailment of coal trains. Sandpoint had two trains derailed in 2012 because of track bed collapse. With such a large increase in train traffic, we can expect the problem to get worse. We will also have much worse automobile traffic delays, since everyone here has to cross railroad tracks to go anywhere. This includes emergency vehicles. Also, most of us live close enough to the tracks to be affected by the increased noise pollution and the diesel fumes.

Instead of pursuing this very dangerous scheme to build facilities in order to export huge amounts of coal, we should be investing all our resources in making our economy sustainable, an effort which would require millions of new jobs to bring about. I urge you to consider all these very serious impacts to the region and the world, and especially to the future, in the scoping process for the Millennial Bulk Terminals at Longview.