

As a concerned and informed detractor of the proposed Millennium Bulk Terminals in Cowlitz County, I encourage you to complete the environment impact statement process based not only on the same federal and state environmental regulations which should have been protecting our region for years, but additionally based upon the long-needed realization that there is no such thing as a local-only environmental impact. We all share locally in the ramifications of rising global CO2 levels. We need to consider that gasses and particulates that impact the atmosphere in regions overseas return to the Pacific Northwest on air- and ocean-currents, and that we all are already experiencing losses in health, safety and economic stability due to continued reliance on fossil fuels.

The EIS scope could indeed be limited to Longview, if Longview were not part of the world at large, as if it were bound inside a giant glass terrarium just big enough for it. On the other hand, if Longview were fully isolated from the effects of the outside world (and vice versa), the decision not to build the terminal for local air-quality reasons alone would become immediately clear. The Longview terrarium would be filled to hazy opacity with coal dust from open-topped rail cars, mercury, arsenic, and a smorgasbord of possible other heavy metals. Additionally, the population of Longview would experience ever-increasing cancer, asthma, and autism rates, as it would even without the hypothetical terrarium of our little thought experiment. And needless to say, it would also be getting very hot inside; and it hardly matters anymore whether the terrarium is Longview or Earth itself. A Longview-sized earth just makes the problem easier to see.

So contrary to industry insistence, creating an EIS scope that takes into account global impacts and ramifications does not set a dangerous precedent; it simply recognizes everything that was inadequately recognized before. It sets the boundaries of the EIS scope where they should have been from the beginning.

This project should be reviewed using the same standards and timelines that the opposition is now newly proposing for all other bulk commodity terminals in Washington. An extensive study scope beyond the project area has not been required in the past, but is certainly warranted. Now is the time to use a more stringent, more conscientious, more forward-looking standard, if ever. We have no qualms with the EIS being expeditious; by all means, refuse the Millennium bulk terminal as soon as possible for the good of us all.

This proposed export terminal project presents Cowlitz County with an enormous and unprecedented opportunity to irreversibly mar our distinctive economy (which cannot expect to be helped in the next two years by any port projects anyways, even if they are approved), and undermine our region's health, safety and overall quality of life in an environmentally-regressive way. We can, and must, grow the economy and protect the environment at the same time, and we recognize that the way to do that is with wind and solar electric technology, which is experiencing rapid growth as an industry and is already available at competitive prices. Improving through American engineering upon the groundbreaking leadership of nations such as Brazil and Germany, we can and will develop ever-improving solutions to what technical hurdles there are, just as we always have; because that's what we do, because it's entirely possible and because we must.

This project will not create thousands of family-wage jobs for local trades-people. The coal industry thrives on automation, and the jobs generated per unit of production would be significantly lower than any other option which may compete for the proposed bulk terminal site, now or in the future. Furthermore, most of the jobs generated will be temporary, and any businessperson knows that reducing labor costs often presents the most wiggle-room in one's profitability margin. So the coal industry, already highly-automated, would have every incentive to keep its workforce as small and as tightly-compensated as possible. Surely there are other alternatives for the port, even alternatives produced right here in Washington such as agrarian products, which can also be traded overseas, which require more labor structurally. As our region's economy continues to struggle, it is essential not to rush to solutions which represent a net loss of employment or delay the denial process of this project.

Furthermore, consider whether with its existing coal-train traffic, the industry has been as compliant as it claims with existing health, safety and environmental regulations. Consider the degree to which it has already dirtied our air and land with its uncovered rail stock.

I urge you not to weaken our economy through increased dirty and hazardous exports, by completing an environmental impact statement which does not disregard negative externalities, in a fair and expedient manner.