



Millennium Bulk Terminal: Comment 3: Global Climate Change/Costs

The League of Women Voters of Bellingham Whatcom County urges you to study the effects of the increase in the degradation of our air and water by shipping Powder River Basin Coal to China.

The League believes global climate change threatens the integrity of the earth's climate system and that there is an urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Coal is the major contributor of CO₂ emissions in the United States. Each short ton of Powder River Basin coal contributes over 2.8 tons of CO₂ to the atmosphere.¹ In addition coal contains toxins like mercury—only 35% of which is captured by pollution control devices.²

The world recognizes the impacts of burning coal. The UN just released a report that scientists are now 95% sure climate change is rapid and caused by man and the burning of fossil fuels. China and India are taking a second look as their air becomes worse and their people's life expectancy diminishes.

Washington State law specifies a return to 1990 greenhouse emissions by 2020.³ The Millennium carbon footprint is 880% of this goal. If China proceeds with intensive coal burning plans, experts estimate that China's contribution to greenhouse gases from coal burning over the next 25 years will exceed that of all other industrial countries combined.⁴ Should we contribute to this?

Coal toxins are airborne. Already, fish caught off the coasts of Hawaii routinely have mercury in them. The Seattle Times in their Sea Change series (Sept. 15-17-2013) reports carbon emissions have destroyed the Pacific oyster beds and the even scarier proposition, that the red king crab, a \$100 million industry, may crash if carbon emissions aren't curbed.

New information must be considered. When the Millennium Bulk Terminal and other terminals were first proposed, coal was at an all-time high on the commodity markets. Since then coal companies themselves have already scaled back export goals with the worldwide glut and price slump. China accounts for 50% of coal use but their newer plants are being shifted to natural gas and solar power. China's Policy Research Center is developing a set of scientific and industrial practices called CO Control to reduce China's dependence on coal.⁵ Some experts predict that China will no longer be a net importer of coal by 2015⁶

Even Goldman Sachs, a partner in terminal expansion, now forecasts "not enough global demand to justify the large scale projects already in the pipeline."⁷

This new information should be considered as you deliberate the permits for exporting coal. We could build this facility, fill our train capacity with coal, degrade our air quality, and threaten our inland waters, only to find the market has disappeared. What would be the cost of an environmental cleanup?

We urge the scoping agencies to do a cost/benefit analysis. Even if coal could be seen as a good investment, is it worth shipping this resource to China where it will add to global emissions and pollute our air and water as prevailing winds bring the coal back to our shore? Study the economics of fueling our competitors, the costs to our fishing and shell fish industries of polluted waters, the health costs to our citizens and our medical systems caused by breathing airborne toxins. Would any increase in tax revenue offset these costs?

The League urges you to take these impacts into consideration on any permitting decisions.

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¹ DOE www.eia.gov/cneaf/electricity/page/co2report/co2emiss.pdf

²The Energy Challenge: Pollution from Chinese Coal Casts a Global Shadow NY Times 6/11/2006

³WA statute RCW70.235.020 and Gov. Gregoire's Exec. Order EO-0702

⁴Mercury: basic information: <http://www.epa.gov/mercury/about.htm>

⁵"Circle of Blue" Keith Schneider 9/27/13

⁶New York Times, "Energy and Investment", 9/14/13

⁷The Grist, "Goldman Sachs " 7/29/13