

Hello, my name is Steven T. Cook, a concerned citizen (Grew up in Federal Way, have lived in Tacoma 15+ years). I have been privileged to visit several “third world” countries and have seen what impact high sulfur/sooty coal can have on the ecological systems of those places.

When I was listening to the comments being made at the Tacoma Scoping Meeting, there were a couple of comments that were made that seemed to be based on emotion rather than solid objective information. One was that coal was a non-sustainable program – and yet, information I have found indicates that we have, at the present time, reserves for 500-1,000 years of supply. Another comment was about how terrible things had been in Appalachian coal fields, but no recognition of the fact that most of that coal was of the softer forms, rather than the harder types being mined in Montana/Wyoming.

Another comment that seemed prevalent, was that we should not export it, we can do better. However, the only mention of possible different approach was to get China to transform to renewable power sources – yet no mention was made as to how to do that, when even here the only way such forms are nearly competitive is with heavy (in my view) government subsidies. At the same time, should the coal be transported through Canada, we would have no control over what is happening near the ports, and any contamination there might adversely affect our waters – with no recourse on our behalf.

Any environmental study must properly weigh what the effects would be without the delivery of the coal, as well as the delivery of the coal. In other words, if an environmental study is to be done that takes into account any area outside the coal mines, and the direct track routing area, it should make the comparison of what the effects are both with and without such trains. For example, I have heard that some may want to have the effects of the coal being burned by its importers upon the ocean – if that is the case I would say, go ahead, as long as you compare the effect of the burning of the coal from the US, which is primarily low sulfur, against the coal that would be burned otherwise which is generally speaking considerably higher in sulfur (and other pollutant) content.

I would also suggest that any such study should be made widely available for public review at least two months before any public hearings being held on such studies, and those public hearings be held not less than one month before any possible final action be taken on the decision.

At the same time, I believe it is incumbent upon any decision making body to remember that this port does not only ship one commodity – and that their continued growth is necessary to the continued growth of many of the major economic bulwarks of our great state. Furthermore, not proceeding at this time will only make it take longer and cost more in the future.

We hear a lot about “family wage” jobs and that is what is proposed here, and yet some of the same folks who are complaining about there not being enough “living” or “family” wage jobs are the ones trying to scuttle those very jobs in this situation.

In summary, I believe the scope of this process should be focused solely on the specific route(s) involved in bringing the coal to this port, and how the site would be impacted by the transshipment of the coal through this port.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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