



Scott Eustis

How Coal Exports Scum up our Wetlands

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Eric de Place and David Kershner of Sightline.org have recently written a [summary](#) of how coal exports can scum up our wetlands. Just because spilled coal is not as bad as oil, doesn't mean it's not pollution--especially considered that Louisiana Coal terminals mix their coal with petroleum coke from the refineries upriver.

The black grit blocks out the sun's life-giving rays, clogs sensitive gills; the acidity alters the pH of our waters, and the coal itself can carry metals and PAHs into the homes and bodies of aquatic plants, shellfishes, fishes, and otters.



Several studies outlined the negative impacts on fishes and shellfishes in wetlands, although the specific mechanisms remain elusive:

Ahrens and Morrisey were able to identify several studies that examined the effects of coal dust pollution on fish and shellfish. ... For example, a 1963 study found that coal washery solids in relatively low concentrations [reduced the growth rate of exposed trout](#). An even older study from the late 1930s [linked fish mortality to the irritation caused by coal particles](#) entering a freshwater stream. And a 1979 study by an EPA researcher found that PAH contamination from coal [reduced the spawning success](#) of fathead minnows from 90 percent to 36 percent. [- Eric de Place and David Kershner, sightline.org](#)

And what studies have documented tend to show impacts from the particles themselves, rather than their chemical nature. But this is primarily because the issue has not been studied well.

Should the RAM terminal be built in the location of the Myrtle Grove sediment diversion, as is planned, industry would be conducting a large scale experiment with our wetlands. We don't need anymore uncertainty, we of the Louisiana coast desperately need restoration projects to work--and we especially need [Myrtle Grove](#), the first engineered sediment diversion, to work, if we ever expect the nation to fund a [\\$50 billion restoration plan](#).

Tell our public officials that [we reject the proposal for the RAM terminal](#).

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