

Scoping Input for Coal Terminals (Of Stakeholders, Baselines and Comparison Groups)

I am a citizen stakeholder in both the small City of Ridgefield WA and of Clark County WA. I am a stakeholder in the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Complex. I am a resident of the United States. I will recommend stakeholders and information sources in each of these categories. I am also a scientist by training and would like to see tracking of changes from current baselines and use of “comparison groups” when looking at potential impacts and mediations.

I. Cities along the rail lines should be stakeholders.

A. As a resident, I am concerned about the City of Ridgefield WA. It borders the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) train tracks for over a mile. The tracks divide the City from the local marina with its houseboats and from the Port of Ridgefield. The tracks follow and lye above Lake River, which borders Ridgefield and is a source of local water recreation and ecotourism. As a citizen of Clark County, I am also concerned about the other Clark County Cities along the railway, several divided by railroad tracks. And all similar towns and cities between the coal suppliers and the export terminals. Concerns include those commonly cited problems of air and water pollution from uncovered coal trains and multiple engines, delays in service caused by long trains, changes in property values of houses along the tracks and decreased job generation from lower profitability of current businesses and the future decrease in businesses building here because of the pollution from the trains.

Less frequently cited effects include effects on ecotourism. Ridgefield is a destination for ecotourism activities on Lake River and on Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. The City is separated from the Refuge and the Port of Ridgefield by the rail tracks. Even without coal dust (which is not much in evidence) we can smell the trains from Eagle View Park. The petroleum fumes will increase greatly with a large increase in trains.

Further, frequent landslides affect the tracks both north and south of Ridgefield (between Vancouver USA and Longview, for example). The interaction of long trains and slides will increase trains stopped on sidings and thus increase all of the above effects. Sidings are already full and trains are already stopped for hours along our border(s) and across access roads. If there are too few non-street sidings to handle the increase in trains, then coal trains and trains bearing other commodities will be stopped here, further blocking access between the two sides of the tracks.

B. Baselines should include measures in Ridgefield and other towns of current coal-related pollutants (per current rail car, not train, for future comparison) in air, soil and water near tracks. In Clark County WA, we have coal trains for domestic consumption, and those current pollutants should be measurable. Baselines should be taken on both moving trains and trains stopped on sidings. We need baselines on current rates of diseases (by population) known to be related to coal pollutants, delays in services between the two sides of the rail tracks (per coal car), property values along the tracks (relative to the number of coal cars) and business profitability along the tracks. We need baselines for current rate of population growth along the

tracks.

C. Comparison Groups should include all of these measures for cities large and small that have for many years been exposed to coal trains. For pollutants by car/mile/# years of exposure? In terms of effects on human health, wealth and recreation in terms of coal cars/population/# years of exposure?

II. Wildlife Refuges along the rail lines (Region 1 and Region 6 of the USFWS) and their Friends Groups) should be stakeholders.

A. As a user of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, I am a stakeholder in its well being. The Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge Complex includes 4 refuges along the Columbia River, three in or abutting the Columbia River Scenic Gorge Area. Several of them are downhill and or downstream from the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) tracks. BNSF runs adjacent to and through the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, whose purpose is to protect, enhance, and restore the natural diversity of native habitat and wildlife representative of the historic Columbia River ecosystem. Added train traffic could have significant impact to the habitat and wildlife that are dependent on it, as well as increased exposure to the visiting public and refuge employees. The visiting public must access the Refuge by crossing BNSF rail lines. Increased train passage would impede access to the Refuge Units open to the public and could potentially delay emergency vehicle access. Six to ten minutes for a coal train to clear a crossing could mean difference between life and death. Further, the coal dust that will end up in the surrounding watershed of the refuge will affect habitat, wildlife and human visitors.

B. Baselines: The same baseline measures of current pollutants should be taken for Refuges as for Cities. Further, baselines should also be taken for number of visitors and for delay of access to the Refuge by visitors and emergency responders. We need baselines for number of dead deer found near the tracks and population numbers of water-dwelling plants and animals. The Refuges will know which plants and animals are most important for their area and Refuge.

C. Comparison Groups should include Refuges which have been for many years adjacent to rail lines (US and Canada) that carry coal cars and comparison should be made by # of cars for # of years.

III. Cities, Towns and Refuges near both ends of the supply and shipping system (mines and ports) should be stakeholders. As a citizen of the United States I am a stakeholder for my country. One characteristic of a Third World Country is that they allow other nations or multinational corporations to mine and export their resources under conditions that make money for the exterior entity, while underpaying for the resources and workers, damaging the environment and poisoning their citizens in both countries. Currently, coal trains are bringing coal for use within the State of Washington. The workers and the environment in our country still have some protections. There are some restrictions on pollutants from burning the coal. Some of the profit stays in the country. This would be less true when foreign corporations ship coal to China for burning.

A. Baselines should be taken on both ends of the supply and shipping chain, both the mines and the ports. Baselines should be taken on value of coal in this country and other countries and the coal should be priced to match. Baseline information should be collected on current wages for each kind of job titles and for number of jobs at each job title. Baselines should be taken on percent of kind of job, percent of US citizens holding those jobs and percent of wages sent over seas. Current % of profits sent overseas should be calculated.

B. Comparison Groups should be examined to determine what happens to these measures in mines and ports (US, Canada, Europe) in which coal is mined and exported over many years.

IV. Interstate Commerce is supposed to be untouchable. However, each bit of commerce affects the whole system. Product movement in the whole system should be a stakeholder.

A. More trains and/or longer trains require more sidings. In landslide areas like ours, even more sidings are needed. Landslides, earthquakes, hurricanes, accidents, and other impediments and their ratio to siding affect the rest of the system. More or longer trains can affect the shipment of agricultural products, bulk products and people. They may have an effect on the “just-in-time” flow of commercial products that has helped bring down prices in stores. Therefore we should consider some general effects on the rail networks in conjunction with the mines and the ports.

B. Baselines should be taken on current delay of cargo arrival to the shipping port and to areas surrounding the port (farms, cities etc which share that rail line) with current train car levels and siding levels. Cargo includes agriculture, bulk, manufactured and human cargo. Baselines on loss of value of perishable cargo for these delays and for the current cost in transporting human around blockages. Baselines on all of the above for delays in cargo leaving the port and areas around the port. Get baselines for all of these on delay of leaving and arriving at the supply mine and at areas around the supply mine.

C. Find comparison groups of mines which have already mined for many years and used trains to transport coal to ports in US, Canada and Europe. Find comparison communities that host mines and comparison communities that host terminals.

V. Perhaps use in the scoping some of the big tech corporations, such as IBM, with the huge computers. Some are modeling or analyzing transport of goods, distribution of lighting, distribution of data, etc. on national and international levels. They might be able to use baseline and comparison data on these variables to model effects of an increase of in rail cars in general and coal cars in particular on all of these variables.

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