



JUST SAY NO TO PROPOSED COAL EXPORT TERMINAL

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There may be 460 miles separating Sandpoint from Longview, Wash., but a proposed coal export terminal in Longview will still have a direct impact on the health of Idahoans.

The proposed Millennium Bulk Terminals a large project. As the largest proposed coal export terminal in North America, Millennium is estimated to export 44 million tons of coal overseas to Asia. How does a coal export terminal in Washington affect Idaho? The answer lies in where and how this coal will be transported.

The task of filling this new demand will lie with the strip mines of the Powder River Basin in Montana and Wyoming. Once mined, the coal will be loaded in open-topped trains, averaging 110 cars long, to be sent to Longview at a rate of about eight full trains per day, with eight empty trains on the return trip. That's up to 16 additional trains per day in North Idaho.

As these open car trains rumble through Idaho, coal dust falls from the train cars exacerbating health concerns. Studies have shown that up to 500 pounds of coal dust can escape from each rail car as it travels its route.

Coal dust contains lead, mercury, nickel, tin, arsenic and other heavy metals. Exposure to coal dust has been linked to decreased lung capacity, increased childhood bronchitis, asthma, pneumonia, emphysema and heart disease; the diesel exhaust from these 16 extra cars pollutes as well.

The increased rail traffic brings with it another concern. A single slow-moving coal train can obstruct a rail crossing by six minutes or more.

Delays at busy rail crossings would clog traffic, slow response times for emergency responders and limit access to neighborhoods, schools and business corridors.

The Millennium Bulk Terminals in Longview shouldn't be viewed as an issue for another state that has little to no concern for Idaho. The coal export terminal may not be located here, but that doesn't keep it from affecting us here at home.

As we all know, Idaho is filled with scenic beauty, clean air and water, and abundant wildlife. If the project is allowed to go forward, so much of what we love about living here is threatened. We must make our voices heard.

The Washington Department of Ecology is hosting three public hearings on the proposed terminal, one of which is in Spokane on May 26 at the Spokane Convention Center from 1 to 9 p.m.

Even if you cannot make it to Spokane for the hearing, you can still submit written comments until June 13 online at www.ecy.wa.gov/geographic/millennium/.

Let the Washington Department of Ecology and the coal industry know that our health is just too important to risk.

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