King County

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Maia Bellon
Director
Washington State Department of Ecology
P.O. Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504-7600

Colonel Bruce A. Estok
Commander, Seattle District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 3755
Seattle, WA 98124-3755

The Honorable Michael A. Karnofski
Chairman
Cowlitz County Board of Commissioners
207 4th Avenue N., Room 305
Kelso, WA 98626

Dear Director Bellon, Colonel Estok, and Chairman Karnofski:

I continue to closely follow proposals for coal export to Asia through ports in Washington and Oregon. As of November, the three remaining proposals include the Gateway Pacific Terminal north of Bellingham, the Millennium Bulk Terminals proposal near Longview, and the Morrow Pacific Terminal in Boardman, Oregon. In August, the scoping period for the environmental review process for the Longview Millennium Bulk Terminal began. This letter transmits King County's comments as part of this formal public process.

King County shares a strong interest in economic development that will create living-wage jobs across our State and help us to recover and move beyond the recession. However, the Millennium Bulk Terminals proposal, along with two other terminal proposals in Washington and Oregon, will have direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on freight mobility, traffic, economic development, health, and the environment throughout the Northwest Region that need to be carefully assessed and weighed.

In King County, we are already seeing the impacts of climate change on stream flows, snow pack, sea level rise, and temperatures. These changes are affecting public health and safety, triggering the need for investments in critical infrastructure like flood levees. Climate change will also increasingly impact natural resource-based economies like forestry, agriculture, and fishing. According to the project proponents, the Millennium Bulk Terminals proposal would

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ultimately export up to 44 million metric tons of coal annually. Burning this volume of coal would result in roughly the same amount of climate pollution as created from all sources in all of Washington State – including imported electricity. A project of this magnitude should include analysis and consideration of its climate pollution impacts.

The Longview proposal also carries the potential for full and empty coal trains to make the journey between the Powder River Basin in Montana and Longview via rail lines through King County, which would result in direct impacts on vehicle traffic and consume finite rail capacity that supports local manufacturing and economic development.

It is important to understand the full range of financial and environmental impacts of proposed coal export terminals. The Washington State Department of Ecology committed to conducting a comprehensive assessment of potential impacts of the Gateway Pacific Terminal in Whatcom County on public health, the environment, economy, and traffic, not only in the vicinity of the proposed terminal, but also along the rail corridor. Ecology will also assess the climate change impacts associated with end use of coal.

I urge the Army Corps, Ecology and Cowlitz County to conduct a similarly careful and comprehensive review for the Millennium Bulk Terminals proposal so that affected communities and decision-makers can have a full picture of the costs and impacts of this proposal on not only the immediate vicinity of the terminal but also along affected rail corridors and the surrounding region.

Sincerely,

Dow Constantine
King County Executive

cc: The Honorable James Misner, Cowlitz County Commissioner
The Honorable Dennis Weber, Cowlitz County Commissioner
E. Elaine Placido, Planning and Building Director, Cowlitz County
Diane Butorac, Southwest Regional Office, Department of Ecology
Millennium Bulk Terminals-Longview EIS Comments
Christie True, Director, King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks
Megan Smith, Environmental Policy Advisor, King County Executive's Office