

Review: Coal terminal would boost global climate-warming gas

April 29 2017, by Phuong Le

A coal-export terminal proposed in Washington state would increase cancer risks for some residents, make rail accidents more likely and add millions of metric tons of climate-changing greenhouse gas globally every year, according to an environmental study released Friday.

Millennium Bulk Terminals-Longview wants to build the facility along the Columbia River near the city of Longview to handle up to 44 million tons of coal a year. Coal would arrive by train from Montana, Wyoming and other [states](#) to be stored and loaded on ships heading to energy-hungry markets in Asia.

The yearslong fight over the deep-water port comes as President Donald Trump has vowed to revive the struggling [coal industry](#) and lifted restrictions on mining coal and drilling for oil and natural gas.

Environmentalists, tribes and others have fiercely opposed the project, which could increase U.S. exports of coal by 40 percent, because of concerns about global warming, coal dust pollution and potential damage to fisheries on the river.

Businesses, some labor groups and other supporters say the project would create jobs, add tax revenue and boost the local economy. The governor of Wyoming, the nation's leading coal-producing state, previously traveled to the Pacific Northwest to pitch the importance of coal exports to the governors of Washington and Oregon.

The environmental review by the state Department of Ecology and Cowlitz County analyzed potential harm to fish habitat, wetlands, [water quality](#), local communities and more. Of 23 environmental issues, 19 would face [harmful effects](#), and some could not be offset or reduced, officials said.

"All of those issues are concerning, but especially the impact to people's health is problematic," ecology department director Maia Bellon said in an interview.

In a statement, Millennium CEO Bill Chapman said, "We have carefully designed the project to protect air and water quality, fish and wildlife, groundwater and people in accordance with regulatory requirements."

Agencies will use the review to decide more than 20 permits needed before the coal terminal can be built.

The review found coal dust pollution from trains would not be major because emissions levels would be below state and federal standards.

But pollution from locomotives would raise the cancer risk for one low-income neighborhood. Residents also would see more noise and traffic delays at rail crossings without a quiet zone or other measures, the study said.

At full capacity, the project would add 16 more trains through the area and increase the number of ships by 1,680 a year. The increased rail traffic "would increase the potential for train accidents," the review said.

The project also would result in a net annual increase of nearly 2 million metric tons of greenhouse gases when the exported coal is burned in Asia. Regulators called on developers to offset that pollution by buying carbon credits or investing in renewable energy projects.

Critics said the request oversteps state law and would set a bad precedent. Kris Johnson, president of the Association of Washington Business, said state law was designed to offset harmful effects near a project and within the state—not worldwide.

The ecology department defended the analysis, saying Washington law requires it to look at global effects.

"For us to do a thorough review that we've done here is exactly what the law expects of us," Bellon said.

Jan Hasselman, an attorney with Earthjustice who represents groups opposed to the terminal, said local leaders should deny permits for the project.

"Any other outcome would be scientifically and legally unsupported," he said.

The Army Corps of Engineers is expected to release its review this year. A local Native American tribe called on the corps to reject the [project](#).

"The proposed [coal](#) terminal is another threat to our way of life, culture, and subsequently our future generations' right to the use and enjoyment of natural resources within our homelands," a Cowlitz Indian Tribe statement said.

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