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CONTACTS:

Gayle Kiser, LCSC
(360) 749-7029

Dvija Bertish, Rosemere
(360) 281-4747

Community groups give notice of Clean Water Act suit to planned coal export terminal on Columbia River

Longview, WA - Community groups from Longview and Vancouver Washington have filed formal notices of suit for violations of the federal Clean Water Act against the corporation planning to export coal from Longview to China. The sixty-day notice of suit is a legal prerequisite to filing the Clean Water Act suit that will be filed in the Federal District court in Tacoma sixty days from today. The suit targets the fact that Millennium Bulk Terminals and its parent company Ambre Energy are currently importing, storing and exporting coal to their Longview facility absent any permits that allow for such activities under the Clean Water Act. Millennium is currently storing large piles of coal and petcoke on site. Land Owners and Citizens for a Safe Community(LCSC) and Rosemere Neighborhood Association have observed first hand coal trains running through their communities to bring coal to the Millennium coal terminal and have similarly observed coal trucks taking coal out of the terminal.



Train unloading coal at Millennium terminal in June 2011.

“The bottom line is that Millennium does not have a Clean Water Act permit that allows them to import, store or export coal,” says Gayle Kiser of Cowlitz County who is President of Landowners and Citizens for a Safe Community. “When it rains this facility regularly discharges 2 to 3 million gallons of polluted stormwater a day into the section of the Columbia that our families eat fish from. The idea that Millennium and Ambre Energy can ignore the same laws everyone else has to comply with is not a good sign of what is to come with their larger export proposal.”

Dvija Bertish, Director of Environment and Conservation with the Rosemere Neighborhood Association from Vancouver agrees. “It’s clear Ambre Energy is trying to help their push to become a coal exporter to China by operating a smaller scale coal terminal right now. But claiming that a 20-year old pollution permit for an aluminum mill somehow lets them operate a coal terminal on the banks of the Columbia River just doesn’t make sense.”

Scott Jerger, the lead attorney for the groups explained that the continued coal imports to the facility are especially surprising given the past violations at the facility when it was owned by Chinook Ventures. “When you are importing coal by train to a site, moving it around the site on conveyor belts, shipping it out by truck and storing large piles of coal, your stormwater and process water is going to be contaminated with coal. But in this case, there are no pollution controls intended to treat coal-related pollution.”