



ROSEMERE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

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June 19, 2012

Mayor Leavitt and Vancouver City Councilmembers
P.O. Box 1995
Vancouver WA, 98668-1995

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers

Facing the slowing of U.S. coal fired power plants, coal companies like Massey and Arch Coal are looking to harvest and ship an additional 157 million tons of coal per year, sending 30 - 60 trains per day through the Columbia River Gorge via Portland and Vancouver, where it is intended to be shipped to Asia. Each and every car from a coal train can unleash 500 pounds of coal dust. The coal trains proposed to run through Portland and Vancouver will be 75 miles long, each day making the Pacific Northwest the largest coal chute in the nation, originating in Montana's Powder Ridge Basin. There are various international coal export terminals proposed for Oregon and Washington, and should they proceed unabated, the health and environmental impacts to our region and our way life will be substantial.

You are aware that last April, Oregon's Governor Kitzhaber called for the Army, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Department of the Interior to initiate a programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to analyze the cumulative regional impacts with this exponential increase in coal transport. Just last week, Senator Patty Murray officially echoed this call to action. The Port of Vancouver rejected a proposal for an international mega-coal terminal to be built.

We are writing to request that the City of Vancouver join in the efforts to enlist a cumulative programmatic EIS to meet the requirements of federal law, to solicit assistance from the Environmental Protection Agency Region X and other appropriate agencies to achieve important coal industry oversight, to cooperate with other jurisdictions to achieve these goals, and to initiate a public hearing process and outreach program to educate the public and provide them with a voice on these important matters.

The City of Vancouver has invested heavily and will continue to promote waterfront development, including the project at the Boise Cascade property, the new City Hall, the Vancouver Hilton, Esther Short Park, and all development along the waterfront trail. Coal trains roll on railways and spew toxic coal dust on all of these publicly supported properties. We have heard testimony from residents who live adjacent to the railways that currently experience two to three coal trains on a daily basis only 100 feet from their back doors. These coal shipments head to the coal-fired power plant in Centralia, and then on to power plants in Canada. Residents explain that the daily coal dust kills plants and trees in yards, turns patios black, and destroys salmon spawning grounds where great sums have been spent protecting these areas. These damages are being sustained with only a fraction of the shipments that will happen under the international coal trade being proposed for our region.

At a rally held in Portland last month, Robert Kennedy Jr. said "Coal is Crime. Wherever it comes, it's toxic. It is the enemy of our country and everything we stand for. It poisons our values, our democracy, our land, and our people." Kennedy outlined a litany of sobering coal related facts: All Pacific Northwest salmon have

dangerous levels of mercury in their flesh caused by coal based emissions from China. The ozone damage caused by the coal industry costs the U.S. \$345 billion annually, and 65,000 people die annually from breathing in coal dust. One fifth of all the lakes in the Adirondacks are sterile from acid rain caused by emissions from the coal industry. Coal mining uses the equivalent of the Hiroshima bomb every week to blow up mountains in order to harvest coal. Coal industry lobbyists were successful in changing the Clean Water Act making it legal for the coal industry to dump debris, garbage and gravel in rivers and streams without a permit. Eighty-five percent of the residents of West Virginia want to end mountaintop coal removal mining, but the coal industry has tremendous influence over elected officials in that state that allow the coal industry to continue to pollute without hindrance. Giant 22-story machines literally chew up the purple mountains of Appalachia. Coal poisons groundwater and makes communities unlivable. Without huge government subsidies, the coal industry cannot compete in a free market because of catastrophic expenses.

Governor Kitzhaber wrote that 84% of the mercury contamination in the Columbia River Basin is tied to the coal industry, and 18% of that can be traced directly to sources in Asia where the proposed mega terminals seek to ship vast quantities of coal each and every day. It makes no sense to us that the coal industry chews up mountaintops, destroys habitats, destroys surface and groundwater sources, destroys the food chain, poisons the public wherever the coal is shipped, and then we receive another dose of poison in the form of acid rain and emissions from coal fired power plants in Asia that will spew toxic residue into the atmosphere and will find its way back across the ocean into our neighborhoods. We all need to do everything we can to make sure these harms do not befall our community.

Thank you for your time and attention to these comments.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dvija Michael Bertish", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dvija Michael Bertish
Director of Environment & Conservation
Rosemere Neighborhood Association