



SKAGIT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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July 28, 2011

The Honorable Christine O. Gregoire
Governor of the State of Washington
Legislative Building
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

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Office of the Governor

Dear Governor Gregoire,

Skagit County has learned of the Gateway Pacific Terminal proposal for a new coal export facility in Washington State, with a suggested location at Cherry Point, in Whatcom County. After reviewing application materials, we are concerned about the possible impact of additional coal trains along the main Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) freight line. A portion of this line traverses at-grade street crossings throughout Skagit County, including streets that are connected to on-ramps and exits from Interstate 5.

It is our understanding the proponent intends to add nine fully loaded coal trains per day (each up to a mile and a half long) to the system, with a total of 18 trains round trip, with no cap on future facility expansion that could involve even more trains. Among other things, we are concerned about the degradation of transportation levels of service in Skagit County, and the resultant implications under our state's Growth Management Act. We are also concerned about the additional train traffic on the BNSF Bridge over the Skagit River, which is an outdated structure that creates backwater conditions during flood events and has the potential to jeopardize the safety of Skagit County citizens. In addition to concerns about possible lengthy delay at crossings, Skagit County requests that environmental review for this project address impacts to our transportation grid, possible adverse impacts on the County's emergency access points, and the economic impact of substantial new delays at crossings.

We appreciate efforts to improve the nation's trade deficit through the export of raw materials, provided the activities are done in a manner consistent with our quality of life here in the Northwest. The issue of coal exports is complex, and Skagit County has not yet taken any position on the merits of the proposal. However, we urge you to reinvigorate agency and public process to ensure state siting decisions are done transparently, including all jurisdictions impacted by this proposal -- in particular, Skagit County and its communities.

It is our understanding that the State has recently asserted co-lead agency status over environmental review of this proposal, along with Whatcom County. With that in mind, we explicitly request that you instruct State agency directors to carefully consider the regional impacts of this proposal, beyond Whatcom County's Cherry Point area. As part of the analysis, we request full consideration of alternatives, including a no-action alternative as well as consideration of alternative sites proposed for coal export activities within Washington State.

Finally, we request that you make Skagit County a sitting member and participant on your ongoing MAP team, which we understand has been reviewing the proposal for the past nine months under

SKAGIT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING

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the leadership of your Office of Regulatory Assistance (ORA). Throughout that process, we understand the participants have included third parties who are not agencies with permitting jurisdiction or applicants, but whose interests are directly affected by the proposal. Because the proposal is likely to have potential significant impacts within Skagit County, we believe the County meets the criterion for participation.

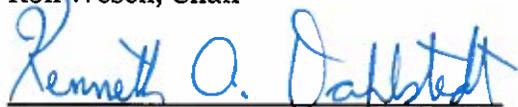
Thank you for considering these requests, and for your continued leadership in the siting of facilities with regional impacts.

Respectfully,

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON**



Ron Wesen, Chair



Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, Commissioner



Sharon D. Dillon, Commissioner

cc: Mr. Peter Goldmark, Commissioner of Public Lands (cpl@dnr.wa.gov)
Mr. Jay Manning, Office of the Governor (jay.manning@gov.wa.gov)
Mr. Ted Sturdevant, Director, Department of Ecology (tstu461@ecy.wa.gov)
Mr. Phil Anderson, Director, Department of Fish and Wildlife (director@dfw.wa.gov)
Ms. Paula Hammond, Director, Department of Transportation (HAMMONP@wsdot.wa.gov)
The Hon. Richard Weyrich, Skagit County Prosecuting Attorney (richardw@co.skagit.wa.us)