News Release

DEPARTMENT OF
ECOLOGY
State of Washington

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Ecology, Whatcom County to co-lead state environmental review of proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal at Cherry Point

OLYMPIA – The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) has agreed to a request by Whatcom County to serve as a co-lead agency to oversee the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) for a private proposal to develop a bulk cargo marine terminal at Cherry Point on Puget Sound.

Pacific International Terminals, a subsidiary of SSA Marine Inc. (SSA) proposes to build and operate the Gateway Pacific Terminal between Ferndale and Blaine. The terminal would provide storage and handling of exported and imported dry bulk commodities including grain, iron ore, salts, coal, and alumina.

Ecology Director Ted Sturdevant replied today to a letter from Whatcom County Planning Supervisor, Tyler Schroeder. Sturdevant said the department agrees that the proposed project presents statewide and regional issues that the EIS should address. Sturdevant said Ecology agrees to be a co-lead agency in scoping and developing the EIS.

Under Washington's State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), which governs the environmental review process, Whatcom County serves as the lead agency, but can enter into agreements with other agencies to serve as co-lead.

Schroeder, the county's designated SEPA official, said that he is encouraged that Ecology has agreed to be a co-lead agency for the project's environmental review. He said that Ecology will bring guidance and expertise on the elements of the environment that might have statewide or regional impacts.

The EIS will contain environmental data and will evaluate the project's potential impacts as well as options for offsetting them. The EIS makes this information available to the public and aids government agencies in reviewing whether to approve various permits that SSA must apply for in order to construct and operate the project.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is another co-lead agency, responsible for the federal environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Whatcom County and the Corps have agreed to coordinate the SEPA and NEPA processes. Ecology has agreed to negotiate an agreement with the county and Corps under which all three will cooperate.

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The SEPA/NEPA review process provides opportunities for comment and input from affected jurisdictions, citizens, tribes and other agencies. The first opportunity will occur during scoping, and another will occur when the draft EIS is available.

The co-lead agencies will now prepare for the scoping phase, which sets out the issues the EIS will address. The county, Corps and Ecology plan to submit a scoping document for public review and comment later this year.

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For more information:
Ecology: http://www.ecy.wa.gov/geographic/gatewaypacific
Whatcom County: http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/pds/plan/current/gpt-ssa/index.jsp
Washington State Office of Regulatory Assistance: https://secureaccess.wa.gov/ofm/iprmt24
(requires registration)

Broadcast version

The state Department of Ecology says it will join Whatcom County in overseeing the preparation of an Enviornmental Impact Statement for a proposed bulk cargo terminal at Cherry Point.

The county asked the state to serve as a co-lead for the environmental review.

Ecology and the county will negotiate an agreement to spell out each agency's roles.

The U.S. Army Corps of engineers heads up a federal environmental review of the project, in cooperation with the state state E-I-S process.

The county, Corps and Ecology plan to ask for public comment later this year on a list of potential project impacts the E-I-S should address.

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