

Town of Woodway
WASHINGTON

January 18, 2013

Brig. Gen. John McMahon
Commander and Division Engineer
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Northwestern Division
P.O. Box 2870
Portland, OR 97208-2870

Col. John Eisenhower
Commander, Portland District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 2946
Portland, OR 97208-2946

Col. Bruce Estok
Commander, Seattle District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 3755
Seattle, WA 98124-3755

RE: Scoping Comments concerning the Proposed Gateway Pacific Coal Export
Terminal at Cherry Point

Dear Sirs:

The Town of Woodway is located in the southwestern tip of Snohomish County with our western municipal boundaries running north and south along the coast of Puget Sound. The Burlington Northern Railroad's railroad line traverses along that coast with high bank lands adjacent. Woodway residents own single-family homes along that bluff. The coal trains that would operate in and out of the proposed terminal would run along that rail line.

Many organizations and individuals have submitted comments regarding the proposed terminal. Scoping comments have identified issues such as public investment, transportation, public health, public safety, economic impacts, marine health, and climate change. The focus of my community's concerns echo the issues identified in a letter submitted by Snohomish County Tomorrow, which is a growth management advisory council to Snohomish County government.

Additionally, my community is concerned about the impacts the increased rail traffic would have on the lands adjacent to the rail line. Our community has identified those

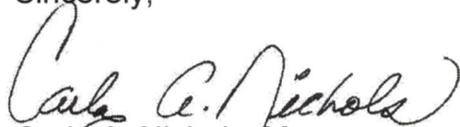
lands and adjacent high bank bluffs as “critical areas” as defined by the Washington State Department of Ecology. Development is prohibited due to the environmental value of these lands plus the steep grade. Over the years, various geotechnical companies have analyzed these lands and have concluded that the soil composition, layers of specific unstable materials plus underground springs have created a high potential for landslides.

There are several “triggers” that influence the stability of these lands. Excessive moisture during the winter months can increase the ground water, saturating the soils and creating landslides that close the Burlington Northern rail line. A severe slide occurred in 1997 that moved 100,000 to 150,000 cubic yards of soil and debris¹ and derailed three Amtrak cars, pushing them into the waters of Puget Sound. In recent months, we have again seen land instability on the rail line between Seattle and Everett (between November 22, 2012 and January 4, 2013, at least 73 slides² have closed the line to rail traffic). During 2011, a total of 70 train runs were cancelled due to mudslides.

Another “trigger” that affects bluff stability is heavy vibration of trains that idle on the tracks or trains that are moving slowly. The proposed increase in train traffic and the length of the trains (which require a slower pace) could create increased instability to these lands, which are already well documented as unstable.

The proposed Environmental Impact Statement must study the impacts of the coal trains and their movement along Puget Sound and these high bluff, unstable lands. While many groups have discussed the impacts to commuter rail and the safety of train riders, it is equally important to consider the impacts of those individuals who live adjacent to the rail lines and what measures will be added to assure that these unstable conditions can be addressed.

Sincerely,



Carla A. Nichols, Mayor

cc: Town Council
Stephanie Wright, Chair
Snohomish County Council

¹ Woodway Landslide - A Reminder and an Opportunity

² The Seattle Times, January 4, 2013