

# Why Faith Communities Oppose Coal Export

People of faith work together to make things better. Our communities pull together through good times and bad. As neighbors we look out for each other. Our values matter to us.

Above all, we care for the gift of creation that God has given us. The responsibility of humans to protect this great gift is central to all faith traditions. Some religions call it stewardship, this obligation to till and keep the Earth. Others believe we have a personal responsibility to care for creation because of God's covenant with us.

Central to our faith is justice and concern for the poor and most vulnerable, the least of these among our human and natural communities. All of God's children deserve enough to eat, clean water to drink, and safe air to breathe. We take this responsibility seriously and speak out for justice while caring for the common good. We work hard and play fair.

**Exporting coal from Northwest ports pollutes our air and water and violates our religious values.**



photo: Paul K. Anderson

**Coal destroys creation.** Mining coal in Montana and Wyoming leaves a devastated landscape. Exporting coal from Northwest ports would mean millions of tons of this dangerous fossil fuel traveling 1,500 miles in uncovered trains through small towns in Montana, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon, blowing dirty coal dust along the way.

Coal shipped from our ports for burning in China would darken skies around the world. It would pollute water and rain sulfuric acid on our forests. Northwest shellfish, salmon and herring are at risk from Asian coal plants.

**Coal is damaging to human life.** Every step of the coal-fired process is dangerous to human health, from mining and processing to transporting to burning and waste. Those most often impacted by these dangerous processes are the most vulnerable: the poor, the elderly, and especially children.

Mercury from coal plants causes neurological damage in babies and children. Large deposits of mercury from coal plants in Asia have been found in the Cascades. Coal burning is linked to the leading causes of death in the United States: heart disease, cancer, stroke, and chronic respiratory diseases.

**Coal burning is poor stewardship.** For the first time in our country, our children may not inherit a better world. It doesn't have to be this way. There are already more than twice as many jobs in wind and solar power than in the entire coal industry.

Allowing dirty coal trains to divide our towns and using valuable waterfront property to store large piles of coal doesn't make economic sense. Putting funds into green infrastructure will create more jobs and better steward our shared resources.

**Coal is an enemy of the common good.** Big coal companies want to take our country backward and damage the world we leave our children by blocking solutions to the serious problem of climate change. The religious community knows that climate disruption is real and won't be deceived. People of faith are standing up to the big coal companies and saying **NO** to coal export from Northwest ports.

# Power Past Coal: No Coal Export!

## Coal Export is Bad for Our Communities

Americans have decided that we don't want coal-fired power plants here at home. Community groups have blocked construction of new coal plants for the last decade. Many states – including Washington! – are phasing out existing plants.

But to keep their profits high, greedy coal companies want to move strip-mined coal from Montana and Wyoming 1,500 miles by open rail car, through our communities to be burned in Asia, where it will blow back across the Pacific to pollute our air and water.

Coal export takes us backward. Under current proposals, big coal companies would ship as much as 150 million tons of coal per year through Washington State. That's more pollution than 60 million cars on the road!

- Burning 150 million tons of coal each year would catastrophically impact the global climate.
- A single slow-moving coal train can obstruct a rail crossing by 6 minutes or more. Adding just 20 trains to Washington's rail system would mean blocking some crossings by 2 hours per day. If all 3 terminals are built, we can expect over 60 more trains per day.
- The railroads themselves say that each train car can lose 500 pounds of coal dust en route, polluting rivers, coastlines, farms, and cities along the way.
- Coal export terminals cover acres of desirable waterfront land with huge piles of coal. The piles are exposed to wind and weather which spreads coal dust for miles into the surrounding community.
- Our beautiful shorelines would become industrial sites with huge piles of coal and constant noise and dust. The proposed site at Cherry Point near Bellingham is on herring grounds. Herring are a primary food source for Chinook salmon. Salmon in turn are the main food source for imperiled Puget Sound orcas.

**Join Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith  
Power & Light to Power Past Coal!**

## What About Jobs?

Coal companies want us to believe that we have to choose between jobs and a clean environment. In fact, for each square foot of port space, coal produces fewer jobs than any other export. Coal hasn't panned out as an economic boom for West Coast cities that have tried exporting it in the past. Both Portland, Oregon and Los Angeles lost millions on unsuccessful coal terminal projects in the 1980s and 1990s.

Coal trains will cut communities in half and starve waterfront development. Coal export will destroy far more jobs than it will create. We can keep our local economies strong and the places we love intact for our families. We won't sell the soul of our communities for coal. The costs to our health, quality of life and our home towns are too high.

## We Can Do Better - Power Past Coal!

Religious communities have led the successful fight against new coal plants and played a central role in the agreement to close TransAlta in Washington. Now we are taking the lead in opposing coal export.

God's creation and our children's future are too valuable to sell for profits. We know that by working together we can invest in the future through conservation, clean energy and renewables. Our faith leads us to stand up to big coal companies and do great things together, including leading the world on solutions to climate change.



photo: Paul K. Anderson