

HOW FUTURE COAL FREIGHTING MAY AFFECT EASTERN WASHINGTON



In Spokane, WA, the hot button topic of the moment is something that affects everywhere from rural Wyoming and Montana, to the US/Canadian border city of Bellingham, WA, to China: coal shipment. Essentially, the region is at least 3-5 years away from having a final environmental impact statement, let alone the approval for the port proposed at Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve near Bellingham, WA. But, that doesn't put locals' minds at ease.

A June 19th, 2012 meeting unanimously approved to further study the impacts coal shipments through the greater Spokane area. The focus of the study could be the environment, emergency response times, aesthetics, air quality affects, and more, due to dusty uncovered coal cars. At the time of the decision, the scope was undetermined. This lead too many scoping meetings throughout the region, including the one discussed below.

An initial health risks study of the rail yard, with the additional coal trains added, was commissioned by the Spokane Regional Clear Air Agency in early 2010. It acknowledged the increased risk of cancer to residents as far as 5 to 6 miles away, depending on wind patterns. As sprawled out as Spokane is, this radius would affect thousands, mostly low-income and collegiate, residents due to the placement of the rail yard. Please [click here](#) to read the study in its entirety.

This month, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Washington State Department of Ecology, and the Whatcom County Council jointly held the 5th of 7 total meetings on the subject at Spokane County Fair and Expo Center at 4pm December 4th, 2012(is all this information necessary?), to figure out what scope the study would adopt. Almost a thousand people attended. Seattle held a similar meeting December 14th, 2012, which saw over 2,000 attendees.



BNSF Railway, just one of the potential coal shippers through Eastern Washington, estimated there would be 16 to 18 coal trains going through the area per day. However, The Western Organization of Resource Council estimated earlier this year that 28 coal trains alone per day would travel through the area by 2017 with up to 68 trains per day in the future, depending on future port developments on the west coast.

Source: <http://www.globalsiteplans.com/environmental-design/infrastructure/how-future-coal-freighting-may-affect-eastern-washington/>