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Coalition Appeals Massive Dredging Permit for Coos Bay that Paves the Way for Export of Liquefied Natural Gas and Coal

Permit opens the door to dirty and dangerous fossil fuel exports in Oregon

Coos Bay, OR - A coalition of citizen groups today filed an appeal of the Oregon Department of State Lands' decision to issue a dredging permit for the Port of Coos Bay that would allow the Port to export dirty coal and liquefied natural gas (LNG). While the "multi-purpose" dredging permit was initially sought to develop an LNG import terminal, the Port of Coos Bay recently entered into a confidential agreement with an undisclosed coal export company seeking to ship between 6 and 10 million tons of coal overseas annually, and LNG backers have changed their plans to export domestic gas instead.

A coalition of local residents and grassroots environmental groups appealed the dredging permit in part due to concerns about the harmful impacts on Coos Bay waterways that serve as salmon and oyster habitat that in turn support commercial and recreational fisheries. The permit authorizes the single largest dredging project in an estuary the state has ever approved, and would facilitate massive LNG and coal tanker ships and heavy ship traffic that could interfere with recreational boating and fishing in the region.

"Oregon's future lies in preserving our unique natural resources, not exporting them across the world, threatening public health, and destroying resources in our estuary for the benefit of foreign corporations," said David Petrie, Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw tribal member and Coos Waterkeeper. "This destructive project is unnecessary and damaging to the surrounding community. Industries that depend on the health of the estuary and marine life, such as oyster farms and salmon fisheries would be adversely impacted. We can do better for our community and the environment."

Oregonians are concerned about potential economic and public health consequences of allowing coal and liquefied natural gas exports at the Port of Coos Bay. Mile-long, open-top coal trains could pass through communities in the Portland area, Eugene, the Columbia Gorge and along the coast, exposing families to toxic coal dust and increasing the risk of respiratory illness. The proposed Pacific Connector LNG pipeline would run across 234 miles of the state, elevating the risk for gas spills, pipeline explosions, and other accidents. Exporting LNG could also result in significant increases in energy prices for Oregon families and businesses.

Local residents, community leaders and environmental groups are also alarmed by the lack of transparency from the State and Port of Coos Bay regarding potential coal exports. Public records requests filed by concerned parties have been met by unclear answers from the Port.

"As a retired public employee whose job it was to make sound, informed and transparent environmental decisions, I'm very concerned about how this unfolded" said North Bend resident and retired Bureau of Land Management official Ron Sadler, "The Coos Bay estuary is already a compromised ecosystem. The people of Oregon deserve to know the truth about harmful impacts

from the Port of Coos Bay's coal and liquefied natural gas export plans. This dredging permit could end up being the most important decision the state has to make about exporting dirty coal and LNG from Oregon, but it has barely been discussed."

In June 2011, Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber commented on the concerns with development fossil fuel export terminals, saying that coal export development in Oregon "should not happen in the dead of night. We must have an open, vigorous public debate before any projects move forward."

"Exporting coal and liquefied natural gas is dirty and dangerous business," said Ivan Maluski, Conservation Program Coordinator of the Sierra Club's Oregon Chapter. "Oregon's leaders should not let out-of-state coal and gas companies hijack our economic future, health, and clean water."

A copy of the appeal can be found here:

<http://earthjustice.org/documents/legal-document/pdf/coos-bay-notice-of-appeal>

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Appellants-- Coos Waterkeeper, Friends of Living Oregon Waters (FLOW), the Sierra Club, Greenpeace, and Climate Solutions are represented by attorneys Jan Hasselman and Janette Brimmer of Earthjustice, and Karl Anuta.

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