

From: [Council](#)
To: [Mark Personius](#); [Matt Aamot](#); [Becky Boxx](#); [Ashley Ubil](#)
Subject: FW: Please extend the Fossil Fuel Moratorium
Date: Tuesday, June 02, 2020 1:59:49 PM

From: Laura Ackerman <lackerman@landscouncil.org>
Sent: Tuesday, June 02, 2020 1:48 PM
To: Council <Council@co.whatcom.wa.us>
Subject: Please extend the Fossil Fuel Moratorium

Dear Whatcom County Council,

I write to you from my downtown office in Spokane where I can see the elevated tracks of the BNSF line from my window. I work as the Energy Program Director at The Lands Council, a conservation group founded in 1983. I was deeply involved in all the public hearings here in Spokane on coal and oil export facilities proposals as well as legislation on oil transportation and climate. I also work on policy on such issues as oil spill contingency planning. In addition, I been involved in land use issues in Spokane for 20 plus years.

Recently I have been doing research on the oil storage situation in the world and Washington State. In spite of COVID-19 and the reduction of transportation in our state and around the world, oil is still traveling via rail through Spokane. Part of that has to do with the nature of the energy world, oil drilling, contracts and so on. But even with COVID-19 the risks for Spokane are still there for a derailment. Oil headed to storage on ships still entails risks for Spokane.

Spokane, in case you don't know, has elevated triple tracks that run over a mile through the heart of our downtown, over the Spokane River, and near our EPA designated sold source drinking water. Most of Cheney, home of Eastern Washington University and four public schools is within a mile of the double tracked UP and BNSF trains. It's all at grade. The trains also travel through the Spokane Valley which has one below grade crossing. In both of these cities it's a huge challenge to vehicular traffic, including first responders, in emergencies.

Spokane Valley was officially against the proposed Vancouver Energy Facility not because they are anti-fossil fuel, but because they literally could not have more rail traffic from oil coming through their community! It's too dangerous for their citizens, employees and they literally can't afford to build more above grade or at grade crossings. I testified at their city council meeting along with what at the time was an Andeavor employee who was sent by the company and lived in Whatcom County. He tried to get the council to support the

facility proposal in part by saying that Andeavor was a good company.

My point with all of this is that the City of Spokane and Spokane county are very vulnerable. We have I-90, hospitals, apartments, and schools just to name a few institutions very close to the rail tracks. We literally have no say as to what cargo can travel on these tracks because so much of what we would like to have local control over is federally preempted. But Spokane gets all the cargo that rail carries. Land use zoning under GMA is useless for us as far as transportation of cargo.

The decision you make tonight greatly impacts Spokane and Spokane County. If you allow unrefined fossil fuel facilities to be built we get all that unrefined product before you do in the form of trains. Pipelines in Spokane currently only carry refined products. It's difficult to build interstate pipelines for many reasons. So while it's more expensive to ship via rail, it's very convenient and rail companies make a lot of money.

Even if we do not have a derailment (but more trains increase that chance) the air pollution, particularly of diesel 2.5PM will harm the health of many of our vulnerable citizens. Air pollution is the single greatest killer of humans worldwide. It's just slow and undramatic. It doesn't elicit in humans a flight or fight response and air pollution would never make it as a killer on Masterpiece Mystery. The science on the destructive nature on air pollution is plenty and well-documented. And not just on humans; non-human species suffer from air-pollution, too. We have seen just how a 17% reduction in air pollution because of COVID-19 has dramatically changed air quality the entire world over.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/03/200305135048.htm> Air pollution is one of the world's most dangerous health risks. 5.3.2020.

Please continue with your moratorium. Your decision impacts what happens not just in Spokane but in hundreds of rail communities from the Bakken and the Oil Sands fields down through the Columbia Gorge up the I-5 corridor to Whatcom County. Part of our safety and health just in this one part of Washington State will depend on the decision you make tonight. It may not be fair that you are having to take into consideration of thousands of other humans, but that is the reality of a lack of local control. It's not fair, either to all of us who have no voice in the matter.

Please begin a new zoning ordinance to implement development regulations in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan policies for Cherry Point that passed in May 2017 within six months. Addressing the risks and harms of fossil fuels and increasing transparency and accountability of the proposals and impacts helps Whatcom County and Spokane County and dozens of others.

Thank you for all your work on this issue. Land use decision making is a long, arduous and often contentious process. I appreciate the work you have put into it.

If you have questions or comments please email me or call me at 509 230.0869

Sincerely,

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