

NO COAL AT WALLULA THE COAL PLANT WORKING GROUP

“If this pilot project (sequestration) proves successful, Port Executive Director Jim Kuntz said the port could attract many carbon-based businesses to the property.” (Tri-City Herald, 9/15/07)

Where things stand with the coal-fueled plant at Wallula (as of 01/24/2008): A consortium (see <http://www.wallulaenergy.com>) plans to build a \$2.1 billion coal-fueled IGCC (Integrated Gasification Combined Cycle) plant at Wallula. On June 14, 2007, the Port of Walla Walla Commissioners signed a letter of intent with the consortium to sell land to the consortium and to provide water. The consortium filed their preliminary application on October 9, 2007 with the Energy Facility Siting Council (EFSEC). EFSEC is the governmental body which will approve or deny siting the plant at Wallula. The formal application to EFSEC has apparently been set back from January, 2008 to April, 2008 according to Bob Divers, one of the principals in the process of having the siting approved. After the formal application is turned in, EFSEC will move to start the permitting process which will take about a year. They have already hired some necessary personnel. The paramount assurance that EFSEC will demand is that the proposed facility can sequester 65% of the CO2 emitted. This is necessary to comply with state law. There will be several public meeting in the EFSEC process and groups may ask to officially intervene in the process.

The Problem The proposed coal-fueled plant at Wallula would negatively impact residents' health, the environment, the economy and the quality of life both here in Walla Walla County and elsewhere.

The electricity produced here will go elsewhere through the grid, the profits will go to Edison Mission Group, but the toxins will be distributed locally. There is no such thing as “clean coal”, a term the proponents use frequently, as if saying so is the same as being so. It is fair to say IGCC plants are “cleaner” than the old style coal plants, but they are not “clean.” This plant will rely on yet unproved sequestration technology (injecting up to 65% of smokestack emissions in the underlying basalt).

What is in coal? Here are a selected number of by products of coal: Arsenic, Barium, Cadmium, Cobalt, Lead, Mercury, Selenium, Strontium, Vanadium, Zinc, Water Vapor, Fly Ash, CO2, Particulate Matter. A Scientific American article worth reading is Coal Ash Is More Radioactive than Nuclear Waste by Mara Hvistendahl - <http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?id=coal-ash-is-more-radioactive-than-nuclear-waste>.

There are great variations in the amount of toxins in various types of coal and even among samples from the same source. The Working Group on Coal is actively seeking information on an analysis of the by products found in Wyoming Powder River Basin coal (PRB), which is the coal that would be used at Wallula.

Sequestration Battelle plans to inject some 5,000 tons of CO2 about 3,500 feet down a well over a 2-4 week period. Battelle's experiment is very limited in scope. They will inject less than one day's real world sequestration (5710 tons/day according to the consortium) over a longer time period. The experiment cannot meaningfully predict what would happen over the life of the plant. If the CO2 escaped in large amounts it could kill people and animals in the area.

The time line The consortium expects to begin construction in the the fall of 2009 and to be on line by 2013. The consortium's time line for beginning construction is, strangely enough, prior to the stated end of the Battelle sequestration study. This government-funded study must find that sequestration is a viable technique for the plant to be certified by EFSEC. The position of The Coal Plant Working Group is that the sequestration study is so limited in scope that it cannot predict what will happen over the decades that the proposed plant would be in operation. The EFSEC board recently suspended certification for a coal-fired plant without sequestration in Kalama, Washington. They did, however, certify a natural gas plant proposed for Wallula in 2000, with a number of the same players in the process. The plant was not built due to economic circumstances.

Consequences: Coal burning plants all across America are under assault because of the pollution which comes from using coal as a fuel. They are the worst industrial polluters in the United States, spewing out nearly one-third of our carbon dioxide (the main ingredient in global warming), about 40% of our mercury (the most toxic emission according to the EPA), one-quarter of our nitrogen oxide (a main component of smog), and two-thirds of our sulfur dioxide (which creates acid rain). The EPA reports that sulfur dioxide aggravates heart disease and asthma, that nitrogen oxides damage lung tissue and that, together, these pollutants form fine particles that contribute to both. Even the carbon filters which capture toxins like mercury have to be disposed of somewhere.

What is at stake? We don't get the profits or the power that would be generated. What we will get in exchange for a coal plant is increased property tax revenue for the county and perhaps 20 jobs. Is that worth the negative effects on crop agriculture, the ever burgeoning wine industry, the tourism industry, your health, the environment and your quality of life?

Smokestack industries are exactly the opposite of the desires expressed by the public in every opinion survey of the residents of our area. Re-read the quote at the beginning of this handout. Note that the Port of Walla Walla Director foresees the possibility of "attracting many carbon-based businesses to the property." So, how many carbon-based plants are in our future?

Who is opposed to this project? Widespread opposition revolves around a broad representation of citizens ranging from business owners, tourism proponents, retirees, health professionals, agricultural interests, and natural resource professionals.

For information Visit our website at <http://www.coalconcerns.org>

What can I do if I'm opposed to a coal plant at Wallula? There are a number of positive steps you can take. Please try and read some of the material found in the news/events and general information sections of our website. Let us know if you find new material to include. Spread the word. Finding others who have concerns about coal plants is a much needed effort. You can communicate with us at coalconcerns@charter.net. Finally, you can let office holders on the local, state, and national levels know that you are unhappy with the idea of a coal plant at Wallula. Here is contact information for the various office holders:

National:

Senator Patty Murray: <http://murray.senate.gov> DC office: phone 202.224.2621 fax 202.224.0238

Senator Maria Cantwell: <http://cantwell.senate.gov> DC office: phone 202.224.3341 fax 202.228.0514

Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers: <http://mcmorris.house.gov>. Walla Walla phone: 509.529.9358

State:

Governor Christine Gregoire: <http://www.governor.wa.gov> phone: 360.902.4111 fax: 360.753.4110

Senator Mike Hewitt: <http://www.leg.wa.gov/senate/hewitt> phone: 360.786.7630 fax: 360.786.1999

Representative Bill Grant: <http://housedemocrats.wa.gov/members/grant> phone/Olympia 360.786.7828

toll free hotline: 1.800.562.0600

Representative Maureen Walsh: <http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/walsh> phone/ Olympia 360.786.7836

County:

Commissioners Loney, Carey and Tompkins: email: wwcocommissioner@co.walla-walla.wa.us

phone: 509.524.2505 fax: 509.524.2512

Port:

Executive Director Jim Kuntz: (not an office holder) email: jk@portwallawalla.com phone: 509.525.3100
fax: 509.525.3101

Comissioners Bennett, Schneidmiller, and Fredrickson: email at:
<http://www.portwallawalla.com/staff/commissioners.htm#contact>

Mr Bennett: 509.525.3455 Mr. Schneidmiller 509.525.8040 Mr. Fredrickson: 509.522.2272