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Joint Release: Cowlitz County, Washington State Department of Health

Contact: Dr. Jennifer Vines, Cowlitz County Health Officer, (360) 414-5599

Subject: Health Impact Assessment Steering Committee meeting for Millennium Bulk Terminals—Longview proposed coal export terminal scheduled for September 28, 2016, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., at the Longview Public Library Auditorium

COWLITZ COUNTY, WA – Cowlitz County Building and Planning, Cowlitz County Health and Human Services, and Washington State Department of Health are convening a Steering Committee as the next step in a Health Impact Assessment of the proposed Millennium Bulk Terminals—Longview (MBTL) project. The meeting will be a work session for the Steering Committee held Wednesday, September 28, at the Longview Public Library Auditorium from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The meeting is open to the public, and there will be 15 minutes for public comment from 12:45 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Members of the Steering Committee are individuals who expressed interest at any of four focus group meetings held late last year (2015) to gather input into what health questions Cowlitz County residents have about the MBTL project, which may not be fully addressed in the environmental impact statements (EISs) required by state and federal law. The state draft EIS was released for public review in April 2016, and the state agencies are currently responding to comments received on the document. The federal draft EIS is currently in preparation and will be released for public review later this year.

Unlike the EISs, a Health Impact Assessment is not legally required as part of the permitting process but is a useful public health tool for understanding health effects—both good and bad—of a given project. The Steering Committee will decide what health questions are most important and provide guidance on how best to answer those questions. The committee will review and approve the final Health Impact Assessment report, which will likely include recommendations about maximizing the potential benefits and minimizing the possible harms of the MBTL project, if it moves forward.

“A Health Impact Assessment is a community conversation about what a particular development project means for the people who live here,” said Dr. Jennifer Vines, Cowlitz County Health Officer. “We’re grateful to the Steering Committee members for volunteering their time and to Millennium for supporting the process.”

To stay informed about the Health Impact Assessment process, visit:
<http://www.millenniumbulkeiswa.gov/health-impact-assessment.html>.

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