

This letter is a little different and perhaps unique:

Dear U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, WA Department of Ecology, and Cowlitz County Commission,

I strongly oppose the construction of a coal export terminal at Longview, WA. And I want to introduce a new subject into the conversation:

Autism and Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

A recent national study in the US, reinforcing earlier localized studies, is pointing to a strong correlation between prenatal exposure to pollutants found in fossil fuel emissions and the development of Autism in children. Diesel fumes and possibly mercury, which is found in coal dust, may have the strongest connection to increased Autism risk. However, many of the heavy metal pollutants found in fossil fuel emissions are known disruptors of healthy neurological development in infants.

Sources:

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/press-releases/exposure-to-high-pollution-levels-during-pregnancy-may-increase-risk-of-having-child-with-autism/>

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=us-kids-born-in-polluted-areas-more-likely-to-have-autism>

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/18/autism-air-pollution-study\\_n\\_3443518.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/18/autism-air-pollution-study_n_3443518.html)

The causes of Autism are genetic in nature, with environmental triggers, and both prenatal and early childhood exposure to pollutants can have an impact.

I myself have Asperger's Syndrome (a mild ASD) and grew up in very close proximity to the grain freight yard in Colton, California. This meant I was exposed to diesel fumes from the locomotives every day in

my early childhood. I have memories of the sound the engines made as they idled on the tracks at all times of day or night.

I am lucky in that although I test as clearly having an ASD, it is mild and my suffering is minimal. However, it does create anxiety, sensory integration issues, and executive dysfunction for me to live with daily, and despite all my hopes, dreams and efforts, I still feel crippling discomfort when attempting to look women in the eye in a romantic context. I am 30 years old and have been working on this for years. I push on, but I am discouraged to think symptoms like these may never change a great deal for me.

Here are some experiences of people with various forms and degrees of Autism:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l\\_8j59cU\\_PY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_8j59cU_PY)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFxWdpuyY6o>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmDgVquzn2k>

I urge you in all seriousness to please consider the impact of coal dust and diesel fumes from increased rail traffic on Puget Sound Autism rates in the scope of the Environmental Impact Statement. It is my fear that sending 44 million more tons of coal through Washington's most densely populated communities will result in a new generation which experiences a much higher rate of autism. Many with an ASD experience worse anxiety, depression and executive dysfunction than I do, but I would not wish even my milder symptoms on anyone.

Thank you,