

State Wades into Coal Terminal Controversy

Local News

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LONGVIEW, Wash. - The State of Washington wants to weigh in on the environmental review process for a coal export terminal.

Several conservation groups banded together earlier this month to challenge a permit for the terminal, granted by the state.

According to the groups' attorney, Jan Hasselman of

Earthjustice

, the move could indicate the state is also not convinced that the environmental and health effects of transporting, storing and burning coal are worth the economic benefits.

"Washington stepping into this case is a recognition that it's an important test case about whether this is the right fit for the state," Hasselman says.

The Australian developer with plans to build the terminal says it would add 70 jobs and generate more than \$3 million a year in tax revenue. But Becky Kelley with the *Washington Environmental Council*, says it would also set Washington up as a middleman for shipping five million tons of coal to China annually. That comes with risks to public health and the environment that have not been addressed, she says.

"There are emissions throughout that whole process - getting it here from Montana and Wyoming, the dust all along the way, the impacts in the river - but perhaps more than anything, the emissions that will come from burning that coal, in power plants in Asia."

The Ecology Department says it would also need to issue its own permit for a coal terminal, and has particular interest in making sure the greenhouse gas analysis of the proposal is as thorough as possible.

The conservation groups' appeal was made to the Washington State Shorelines Hearings Board, because it is waterfront land on which the proposed terminal would sit. The board will hear from all parties in the case in April.