

Mt Baker Group
Washington State Chapter Sierra Club

To: Whatcom County Council
Re: Cherry Point Amendments
Date: August 8, 2018

Honorable Council Members,

The Mt Baker Group (MBGSC), which represents 1,715 members in Whatcom County, fully supports your continued vigilance protecting our community. We urge you to extend the moratorium and to complete and approve the draft ordinance revising the Cherry Point UGA zoning code to ensure protections for our community from the burden of risk and adverse impacts on health and safety from transporting heavy crude oil and other hazardous materials through Whatcom County. We also urge you to strengthen standards for project permits in the Cherry Point UGA. Permits for upgrades must require the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) review of cumulative impacts with greenhouse gas life-cycle analysis, total mitigation of climate pollution, and conditions to require no adverse impacts on herring, salmon, orca and other endangered species.

Previously, facilities at Cherry Point were permitted without any meaningful review or recognition of environmental impacts, including the permitting of two oil by rail up-loading facilities in 2013, which introduced the ongoing risk of oil train explosions in communities - *our* communities - along the rail route without any environmental impact studies being conducted. We find this unacceptable that our county officials would put the public at risk without any questions about risks being incurred. The revised zoning code could greatly improve the permitting process and outcomes.

Xwe'Chi'eXen, the historic village site and fishing area of the Lummi Nation, continues to be a targeted route to increase shipments of crude oil, tar sands bitumen, and other hazardous materials for export through the Salish Sea, heightening threats to the endangered Southern Resident Orca, salmon, herring and other species. The oil refineries are supplied in part by the Trans Mountain Pipeline which carries "heavy oil" from tar sands strip mines in the devastated territories of Athabasca Chippewa and Bear Cree First Nations in Alberta. Tar sands oil is notoriously difficult - if not impossible - to clean up when spilled, and the First Nations people of Canada do not want this expansion across their lands. We need to support their fight by not providing a spigot here. Whatcom County would take the brunt of an oil spill in our backyard - and the risks are simply too great: a tar-sands oil spill in the Salish Sea would be devastating not only to the plant and animal life, but to everyone in Whatcom County who makes their living from the sea including Lummi fisheries and the local fishing industry while destroying the surrounding environment for generations to come. We cannot risk an oil tanker explosion here. We have thousands of our citizens living within a five mile radius of the train tracks and Cherry Point. We cannot risk their lives, their future health, poisoning of groundwater and soil, and devastation to the waterfront that the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County are overseeing millions of dollars to cleanup and develop.

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SUBMITTED BY: Judith Adams
 COUNCIL MEETING
 COMMITTEE
EXHIBIT: D

This is the 11th hour for the Southern Resident Orca: they are starving and in grave danger of complete extinction. We cannot risk an oil spill in their home waters. The Chinook salmon on which they depend have already been severely depleted. For the orcas, the noise from the increased tanker traffic, which interferes with their ability to hunt, will surely push individuals to starvation, malnourishment, and an increase in the deaths of newborns, like the tragedy we are currently witnessing.

Sierra Club supports a just transition from fossil fuels to renewable clean energy and opposes projects that will extend our reliance on fossil fuels when we need to be transitioning to clean energy. Exporting unrefined products does not create good-paying jobs here. Increasing production of carbon products while ignoring new non-carbon product development diverts investments into a cleaner future. We need to be focussing on attracting businesses that will employ our citizens long into the future with good-paying jobs and allow us to live and recreate in a unpolluted environment.

For these reasons and more, MBGSC urges the Council to prohibit any new unrefined oil export proposals to the greatest extent possible through Whatcom County and from Cherry Point, and to adopt permanent and stronger land use ordinances for Cherry Point that will ensure public safety and environmental protections long into the future.

Respectfully,

Mt Baker Group Sierra Club Executive Committee

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