

several coal export terminals proposed in the northern half of the state.

Bob Ferris of Cascadia Wildlands says studies around the Westshore Terminals port, even before the recent accident, show the impact of fugitive coal dust — dust that escapes during coal shipment — “and basically it’s created a set of dead zones around that coal port.”

“Coal has a lot of toxic properties,” Ferris says. “It has a lot of carbon and nitrogen, which will do things to the acidity of the water, and it has a lot of iron, which will take oxygen out of the water.”

Ferris says spilled coal and coal dust are not the only dangers to aquatic life; dredging in the estuaries to allow the massive ships in is also destructive. The ships themselves, he says, are generally old and registered in countries that don’t do a lot of safety inspections. “These bulk carriers are kind of

the most dangerous ships on the sea, huge, underpowered, with small rudders and generally not well maintained.”

He says while in port, the bulk carriers run their engines and burn about four tons of diesel a day “just to keep the lights on,” sending diesel particulates into the water and into people’s lungs. While California has instituted a “cold ironing” requirement where ships stop running engines and plug into shore power to decrease pollution, Oregon and Washington, where the new coal export terminals are being proposed, have no such rules.

A Sierra Club study of Ambre Energy’s Morrow Pacific project says even with measures such as covered coal barges on the Columbia River instead of open rail cars, storage barns with air scrubbers and enclosed conveyor belts, that project would still violate federal air quality standards. — *Camilla Mortensen*

lighten up

BY RAFAEL ALDAVE

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