

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL'S EFFORTS TO DEINDUTRIALIZE CHERRY POINT

In September 2016 the Whatcom County Council passed its first Fossil Fuel Moratorium for Cherry Point. The stated reason was Congress lifting the U.S. crude oil export ban in December 2015. The moratorium and the permanent changes the Council is proposing have much more far reaching implications. The Council has since renewed the moratorium five times and it will be renewed again on January 29, 2019.

The purpose of the moratorium is to prevent new fossil fuel permits being issued at Cherry Point as the County Council works to make permanent changes to the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan and Whatcom County Code. The purpose of these changes is to make it more difficult get permits for anything related to the fossil fuel industry.

The moratorium prohibits *"the filing, acceptance, and processing of new applications for conversion of land or water, new building or structure permits, or other County permits or authorizations in the Cherry Point Urban Growth Area for new or expanded facilities whose purpose is to facilitate the increased shipment of unrefined fossil fuels not to be processed or consumed at Cherry Point..."*

On April 24, 2018, the Whatcom County Council passed Resolution 2018-015 that lays out their agenda to *"Amend the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan and Whatcom County Code to address ways the County can limit the negative impacts on public safety, transportation, the economy, and the environment from crude oil, coal, liquefied petroleum gases, and natural gas exports from the Cherry Point Urban Growth Area, in accordance with Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Policy 2CC-16."*

One section of interest in Resolution 2018-015 states:

"1) Require Conditional Use Permits. Require conditional land use permits, and conditional shoreline permits (per WAC 173-27-160), for certain heavy industry uses, such as new petroleum tank farms, new fossil fuel distribution facilities, additional piers, new on-site rail yards, new facilities that transfer fuel from rail cars, new rail car storage facilities..."

It has become clear that the County Council's final goal is even more restrictive than the moratorium.

If the Whatcom County Council imposes their proposed restrictions on Cherry Point companies it will reduce their operational flexibility, discourage capital investment and make Cherry Point companies less competitive. It will also make Whatcom less attractive to future large employers.

To implement Resolution 2018-015 the Council on August 8 2018 extended the Whatcom County Fossil Fuel Moratorium for the fifth time to give the Council more time to make the changes stated in Resolution 2018-015. As I mentioned above the Council is going to need to renew it for a sixth time on January 29, 2019.

In 2019 the Whatcom County Council will be formalizing the proposed changes to implement Resolution 2018-015 to the Whatcom County Comprehensive Land Use Plan and Whatcom County Code. Once those changes are formalized there will be a Town Hall and at least two public hearings – all with public testimony.