



## Washington State Department of Ecology News Release

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[www.ecy.wa.gov](http://www.ecy.wa.gov)

### **Joint news release:**

**Whatcom County, Washington Dept. of Ecology, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

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## **Report summarizes thousands of public comments about scope of environmental review for proposed Cherry Point export terminal**

**BELLEVUE** – The co-lead agencies reviewing a proposal for a bulk-cargo shipping terminal and rail spur improvements at Cherry Point have posted online a [report](#) summarizing and categorizing comments received during a recent public comment period.

The public provided approximately 125,000 comments on the scope of an upcoming environmental impact statement (EIS) during the 121-day comment period, which ran from Sept. 24, 2012, to Jan. 22, 2013.

The official website, [www.eisgatewaypacificwa.gov](http://www.eisgatewaypacificwa.gov), provides additional details about the scoping process, project proposals, and displays comments received.

Pacific International Terminals, a subsidiary of SSA Marine Inc. (SSA), proposes to build and operate the Gateway Pacific Terminal between Ferndale and Blaine. The terminal would provide storage and handling of exported dry bulk commodities, including coal, grain, iron ore, salts and alumina. BNSF Railway Inc. proposes to add rail facilities and install a second track along the six-mile Custer Spur.

Whatcom County, the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) together are conducting the EIS process for the proposed terminal projects and jointly will produce one EIS.

The Scoping Report posted today summarizes comments collected at in-person scoping meetings, online and in writing, and it provides an overview of public outreach activities. After considering the comments, the co-lead agencies will decide what should be studied in the EIS.

Scoping is a preliminary phase of the EIS process when the agencies identify potential adverse impacts and decide which of these to analyze in the EIS. The EIS will evaluate a reasonable range of alternatives, potentially affected resources, significant unavoidable adverse impacts of various alternatives, and explore possible means to avoid, minimize and mitigate effects of the proposals.

Whatcom County and Ecology must follow the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), and the Corps must follow the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The joint NEPA/SEPA EIS process enables the co-lead agencies to avoid duplicated efforts where the two laws overlap, while meeting each statute's separate requirements. Parts of the joint EIS process described on the website apply to both statutes and parts apply to one or the other.

The scoping process does not address whether the proposal should receive permits. Scoping only helps define what will be studied in the EIS. Decisions about issuing permits to construct the proposed projects will not be made until after the EIS is complete.

The co-lead lead agencies plan to review and assess the input received through the public scoping period and begin work later this year on a draft EIS, which may take at least a year to prepare. The lead agencies will seek public comment on the draft EIS, and then produce a final NEPA/SEPA EIS.

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**For more information:**

- [Official website for the Gateway Pacific Terminal/Custer Spur EIS and scoping process](http://www.eisgatewaypacificwa.gov) (www.eisgatewaypacificwa.gov)
- [Ecology's Gateway Pacific Terminal page](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/geographic/gatewaypacific) (www.ecy.wa.gov/geographic/gatewaypacific)
- [Whatcom County's Gateway Pacific Terminal page](http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/pds/plan/current/gpt-ssa/index.jsp) (www.co.whatcom.wa.us/pds/plan/current/gpt-ssa/index.jsp)
- [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District](http://www.nws.usace.gov) (www.nws.usace.)