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Testimony to the Planning & Sustainability Commission, City of Portland, January 13, 2015:

The Proposed Pembina Propane Export Terminal at the Port of Portland

Ted Gleichman

Sierra Club strongly opposes this project. Although there are many specific risks and deficiencies to this plan, including serious violations of ethical public notice and discussion principles by the Port and the City, my testimony today focuses on the core challenge we all face as the climate crisis evolves: virtually no new fossil fuel infrastructure project is anything but a major additional assault on the livability of the planet, with very few exceptions. The exceptions involve only limited local safety and replacement projects; global export projects can never qualify as a net plus.

The carbon industries fight hard to claim “cleanliness” – with constant distortions. No fossil fuel is clean, and recent science has conclusively demonstrated that the differences among carbon energy sources in global warming potential, and carbon dioxide and equivalent output, are inconsequential within the big picture of the challenges we face over the near-, medium-, and long-term. And the future is now: everyone in this room knows that this is not the climate we grew up with, and that our anthropogenic impact is accelerating, not slowing – and certainly not coming close to the sharp reversal required. The big killers, of course, will be droughts, heat waves, famine, and disease.

A “business as usual” approach, which this project exemplifies, is a completely irresponsible formula for disaster. Sierra Club strongly supports the work that creates a healthy society, as we’ve demonstrated through the Blue-Green Alliance, but jobs that harm the planet are not “good” jobs. We need alternative approaches to economic health.

In this region, there are three obvious solutions to the clear need for new good jobs:

- energy-structure conversion to clean, renewable, sustainable sources, along with efficiency and conservation;
- locavore projects for agricultural, hydrology, riparian, and forest protection, regeneration, and climate adaption; and
- massive public, residential, and commercial infrastructure redevelopment to face our guaranteed seismic crisis from the Cascadia subduction zone, which will be Magnitude 8 when it reaches Portland and will constitute the most destructive earthquake and tsunami set in United States history.

Your mission and responsibility now must include as top priorities projects that make us safer from earthquakes, more resilient in the face of coming water and food shortages, and faster in the urgent conversion to clean energy. Approving propane export would be an historic error, tainting you and your work for the duration. You must reject it.