Out-of-state coal companies are trying to ship millions more tons of coal to overseas markets using Louisiana as a gateway. Because demand for dirty, highly polluting coal has plummeted in the United States, these companies are trying to boost profits by increasing exports to Asia and Europe at the expense of our health and environment. If the industry succeeds in expanding and building new coal export terminals in Louisiana, residents will have to live with consequences such as thick, airborne coal dust that triggers respiratory diseases, coal-contaminated runoff that pollutes the Mississippi River and wetlands, and mile-long coal trains that clog traffic, slow emergency response times, and pose the threat of derailment.

More Coal in Louisiana Means...

More coal in our backyard. Coal companies are trying to build a new export terminal — the RAM terminal in Myrtle Grove — and expand existing terminals in St. James, Ascension, and Plaquemines Parishes. These plans would allow more than 50 million tons of coal to be moved through the state each year. Stored in towering, open piles, coal generates hundreds of pounds of airborne dust near the terminals and along the rail lines that ship it.

Coal trains near our homes. If the coal industry ramps up overseas exports, mile-long trains carrying more than 10,000 tons of coal each will roll along the tracks near our homes. Trains will block Highway 23 and slow the emergency response times of police, firefighters and paramedics. Every year, there are approximately 3,000 collisions involving cars and trains in the United States, and nearly three coal train derailments per month. Coal trains lower property values and coat neighborhoods with dust from their uncovered cars.

A threat to public health. Myrtle Grove residents have already won a class-action suit against the International Marine Terminal because coal dust blackens their homes, cars, and properties. For vulnerable groups like children and the elderly, coal dust can cause wheezing and asthma attacks, and it contains arsenic, mercury, and other toxins.
Interference with coastal restoration. The proposed new RAM terminal is slated to be built alongside a key coastal restoration project, a vital element of the state’s Coastal Master Plan² to restore hundreds of acres of wetlands in Southeast Louisiana. Not only do wetlands absorb floodwaters that could devastate our communities, they also provide irreplaceable habitat for shrimp, blue crab and oysters. Building a coal export terminal next to a critical coastal restoration project creates unnecessary risk of collisions. Hurricanes and storms with high winds can blow chunks of coal and coal dust into the river, contaminating the water and undermining the restoration project.

LET’S BUILD COAL-FREE COMMUNITIES THAT THRIVE

Louisiana has the opportunity to invest in businesses of the future — coastal restoration and wind and solar-powered energy. These industries will generate 21st century jobs that will give our young people expertise and skills in growing fields. These industries, which will protect our air, water, and wetlands, are strategies for the future. Coal is a dirty, outdated energy source whose days are numbered.

Join with thousands of others who are calling for a future beyond coal!

ENDNOTES

2 http://www.coastalmasterplan.louisiana.gov/