

Is The Vancouver Fraser Port Authority's Roberts Bank Terminal 2 (RBT2) environmentally sustainable?

Answering just one question determines if RBT2 should be approved. The question - are the significant adverse environmental effects that will result from building RBT2 fully mitigable?

On August 24 2020 Environment and Climate Change Canada Minister Jonathan Wilkinson acknowledged, " ...*that even taking into account mitigation measures the Review Panel determined that significant adverse effects to fish and fish habitat, including species at risk, human health, and current use of lands and resources for traditional purposes, among others were likely*". So is RBT2 mitigable? Is the project environmentally sustainable?

Not according to many who say NO, including:

1. Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) scientists. In reports and published papers in independent internationally peer-reviewed scientific journals submitted to the Environmental Assessment Review Panel the scientists said the project's impacts on biofilm (a critical food source for million of shorebirds) "*are anticipated to be high in magnitude, permanent, irreversible, and, continuous*". In other words unmitigable.
2. ECCC scientists also rebutted the Port's claim that biofilm can be created, stating, "*there are no accepted techniques to remediate for functional biofilm for shorebirds on intertidal mudflats*", nor enough other available habitat to replace what will be lost if RBT2 is built, therefore mitigation for this habitat loss is not possible.
3. The Canadian Wildlife Service, state Western Sandpipers have been declining at 2 percent a year and the entire species risks extinction if RBT2 is built.
4. Forty or more environmental and other groups including BC Nature, Birds Canada and Nature Canada have all registered opposition, stating RBT2 will result in significant adverse environmental effects that cannot be mitigated.
5. The cities of Richmond and Delta, both of whom voted to oppose RBT2.
6. Major international environmental organizations such as BirdLife International (which lists the Fraser Estuary as an "Important Bird Area" in danger) and the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.
7. Recently published UBC research states the Fraser Estuary is on the brink of collapse and 102 species are at risk of extinction. (Conservation Science and Practice Journal)
8. Internationally recognized scientists (Professors Pat Baird (SFU) and Peter Beninger (University of Nantes), experts in ecosystem function, have vigorously challenged the Port science – the Port science has never been published in an independent peer-reviewed scientific journal.
9. Georgia Strait Alliance and Ecojustice state the Southern Resident Killer Whales are subjected to increasing levels of underwater noise plus a lack of Chinook salmon that put them at increased risk of extinction, made much worse as a result of RBT2.
10. Raincoast Conservation and Rivers Institute (M.Rosenau) state RBT2 will impede the ability of juvenile salmon to access rearing habitat in the estuary and increase the risk of predation as the juveniles navigate around the port causeway, Deltaport and now (if built) RBT2.

If not mitigable then is RBT2 otherwise justifiable? Is an additional terminal needed on Roberts Bank because West Coast Canada is running out of terminal capacity as VFPA claims? Not according to the statistics. Despite claims of record growth VFPA's 2019 and 2020 volumes have remained basically flat compared to 2018. Its twelve-year compound annual growth rate is below 3 percent. Global Container Terminals and DP World are both adding capacity in Vancouver. DP World has plans for a large expansion at Prince Rupert, all this giving the West Coast potential capacity of 10 million container's (TEUs), sufficient to accommodate Canadian trade for decades to come without ever building RBT2.