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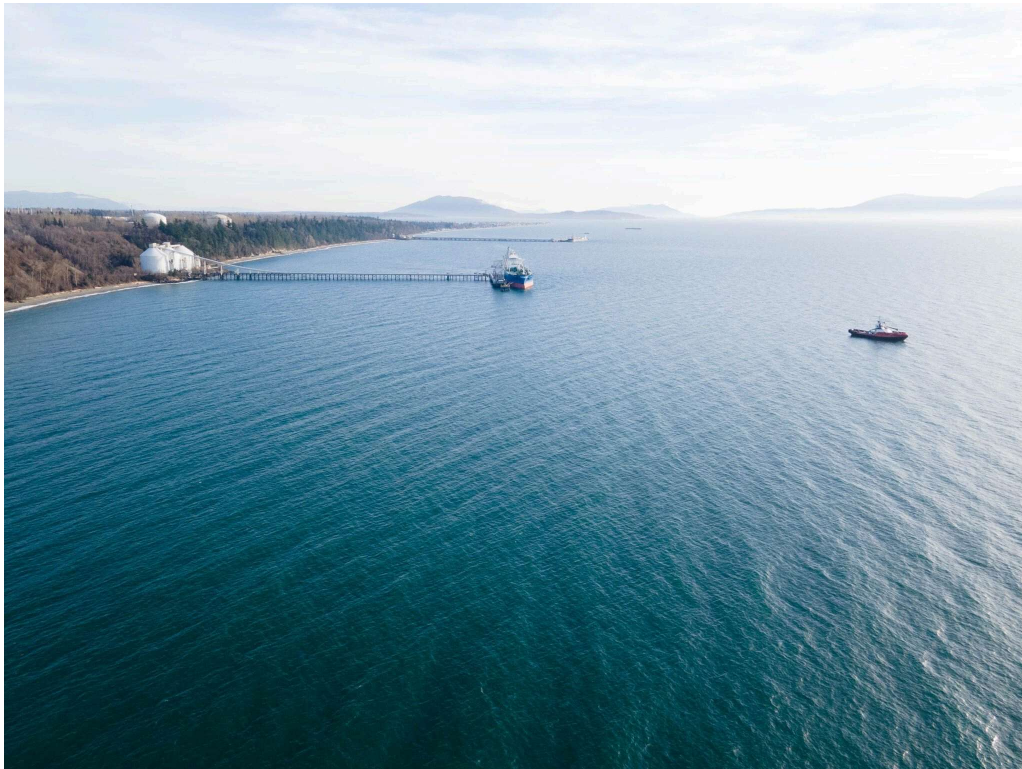
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ENVIRONMENT

Environmentalists rally public comment around Ferndale fossil fuel facility

Public comment about Whatcom County's criteria for AltaGas projects ends at 4 p.m. Sept. 17

Sept. 17, 2025 11:15 a.m.



The deadline for public comment on AltaGas LPG terminal permits in Ferndale is 4 p.m. Sept. 17.

([Hailey Hoffman](#)/Cascadia Daily News)

By **ISAAC STONE SIMONELLI**

Enterprise/Investigations Reporter

Environmental advocates are encouraging the public to demand Whatcom County follow through on its promise to require more stringent criteria for modifications at the liquefied petroleum gas terminal in Ferndale.

The county is in the process of reviewing permits for 33 projects — **31 of which are already completed** — at the AltaGas facility that stores and exports LPG on Cherry Point.

A coalition of environmentalists say more vessel visits to the terminal pose an increased risk of spills, as well as negative impacts on fisheries and wildlife in the Salish Sea, including the endangered Southern Resident orcas.

Advocates say the county planning department sidestepped the need for a more robust Environmental Impact Statement (EIS): The department issued a Mitigated Determination on Non-Significance (MDNS) on Sept. 3 for all projects.

The move appears to contradict a previous statement from the county, which said it would require an EIS as part of a “minimum” to evaluate facility modifications and changes in the amount of product throughput since 2016.

As part of its application to the county, AltaGas provided “substantial amounts” of information, including an analysis of potential impacts from greenhouse gas emissions, as well as vessel traffic on Southern Resident orcas, according to information provided by Mark Personius, the director of Whatcom County Planning and Development Services.

Along with these, the company proposed additional project modifications and voluntary mitigation measures. AltaGas proposals reduced the project impacts to a non-significant level, according to the planning department.

Environmental advocates disagree.

“The scale and pace of change at this terminal demands a thorough, science-based review — not an MDNS shortcut,” said Lovel Pratt, the marine protection and policy director at Friends of the San Juans.

“An EIS is the only tool that can fully evaluate cumulative impacts and identify safeguards for people and the Salish Sea,” she added.

The nonprofit Friends of the San Juans is one of several groups urging the public to submit a comment on the decision before the 4 p.m. deadline on Wednesday, Sept. 17.

As of Wednesday morning, more than 500 letters were sent through a post created by Friends of the San Juans on the **Action Network**.

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