

# The coal-terminal debate: A view from Japan

Originally published September 19, 2017 at 1:43 pm Updated September 19, 2017 at 2:03 pm

**The Longview Millennium project brings substantial benefits to Longview and the state of Washington — and it also offers Japan a sound solution to its pressing energy-security challenges.**

## Share story

---

By

[Shozo Kaneko](#)

*Special to The Times*

IT has been more than six years since Japan suffered the devastating earthquake and tsunami that triggered a meltdown at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant. The world is well-aware of the massive destruction caused by this unprecedented natural disaster. Perhaps less well-known is that the disaster also radically changed Japan's energy options.

Japan lacks meaningful domestic natural energy resources and consequently imports 96 percent of such resources. Nuclear energy was seen as a viable way to be more self-sufficient in meeting our energy needs. But Fukushima changed all that with the ensuing suspension of nuclear power generation and loss of public support. Despite a concerted national effort to deploy additional renewable resources, the loss of nearly one-third of power generation capacity was difficult to replace. We were suddenly more reliant than ever on imported fossil fuels to generate electricity.

Today, we are one of the world's top importers of coal. It is a major, indispensable source of energy in Japan for electricity. Our economy and society depend on it as a stable, reliable energy source. A stable energy supply is also a matter of national security. In a region that is becoming increasingly unfriendly and unstable, this has never been a harsher reality.



**Shozo Kaneko** is a fellow of the Japan Society of Mechanical Engineers. He has recently retired from the faculty of the University of Tokyo.

Coal has always been an important part of Japan's energy mix, but this dependence increased dramatically after the Fukushima disaster. In fact, Japan is currently building two new advanced technology gasification-based coal plants in the Fukushima area — called “the Fukushima Revitalization Project” to ensure energy security and revival of local economy.

To stabilize and secure our supply, Japan is highly interested in importing coal from the United

States, a trusted ally and reliable trading partner. We do not import any appreciable energy resources from the U. S. today. As major trade partners with Washington state, we see the proposed Millennium terminal in Longview as a solution in meeting our energy, national-security and economic-growth needs.

Japan is committed to honoring its Paris Climate Accord commitments. We all recognize that coal is a major source of greenhouse gases, but it is also one of the world's most accessible, abundant and reliable energy sources. The 2016 International Energy Outlook concludes that coal will remain the second-largest energy source worldwide until 2030. World coal consumption is projected to increase by more than 20 percent by 2040. Knowledgeable and responsible energy planners, economists and humanitarians agree that this reliance on coal is a reality that will not change for decades.

There is a viable path forward with coal: reducing emissions through advanced coal technologies and more efficient consumption. By significantly reducing CO2 emissions from coal, we can move the needle in the right direction as we also work to bring new technologies online.

Japan is a global leader in aggressively pursuing high-efficiency/low-to-zero-emission technologies for generating electricity from coal. This

includes some of the most technologically advanced coal-fired power generation plants in the world. We also want to import the highest quality coal possible to optimize our substantial investments in coal technology infrastructure.

Coal shipped through the Longview terminal is Powder River Basin coal. Due to its unique qualities, this coal is the most suitable fuel for the highly efficient gasification-based technologies we are developing at Fukushima and elsewhere. Japan needs a reliable supply of high-quality coal to support economic growth and national security while also meeting our stringent environmental requirements.

The Millennium project brings substantial benefits to Longview and the state of Washington — and it also offers Japan a sound solution to its pressing energy-security challenges.

The Japanese people are already warmly familiar with such Pacific Northwest icons as Boeing, Starbucks, Microsoft — and, of course, the Seattle Mariners. Millennium represents a mutually beneficial opportunity to further extend our trade relationship and friendship with Washington state, and encourages people in Fukushima Prefecture with a brighter future.