

TransAlta: Public comment period for environmental review and air permit for coal to gas transition



(photo courtesy: TransAlta)

Comments accepted

July 31, 2026, 12:00 a.m. –
September 6, 2026, 11:59 p.m.

Comment online

[https://go.ecology.wa.gov/
CommentTransAlta](https://go.ecology.wa.gov/CommentTransAlta)

Or by mail to:

Bobbak Talebi
Southwest Region
WA Department of Ecology
P.O. Box 47775
Olympia, WA 98504-7775

Document review locations

ecology.wa.gov/transalta

Centralia Library
110 South Silver Street
Centralia, WA 98531
360-736-0183

Department of Ecology Southwest Region Office

by appointment only

300 Desmond Drive SE
Lacey, WA 98503

PublicDisclosureSWRO@ecy.wa.gov

360-407-6365

Air permit and environmental review documents available for public comment

TransAlta proposes to transition the remaining unit of its existing Centralia coal-fired electrical generation facility to generate electricity from natural gas. To supply natural gas to the facility, TransAlta proposes constructing a new 1,500-foot long, 12-inch diameter natural gas pipeline. TransAlta would develop the pipeline on land they own and have used for the existing facility.

The project will require a Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) air quality permit because the proposed project would increase volatile organic compounds (VOCs) with natural gas operations.

Ecology reviewed the project to determine how it would impact the environment. We considered environmental, historical, and cultural factors. TransAlta has proposed mitigation to reduce project impacts.

We want your comments on the following documents:

- **Draft PSD air quality permit and technical support document**
- **State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Mitigated Determination of Nonsignificance**
- **SEPA checklist:** This document summarizes the project's potential environmental impacts and a high-level overview of measures that TransAlta will take to reduce those impacts.

Note: Although the U.S. Department of Energy ordered the plant to continue burning coal, the facility is not operating. The State of Washington has appealed the order. The applicant has chosen to continue with the environmental review and permitting process for the proposed natural gas conversion project.

Project details

- This project is a result of the 2011 [TransAlta Energy Transition Bill](#)¹. Former Gov. Gregoire, TransAlta, environmental groups, and the local community worked together to transition the facility from coal to natural gas. The bill reduces emissions from energy production while allowing TransAlta to move to cleaner fuels.
- Once it starts using natural gas, the facility is expected to operate at a less than 20% yearly capacity over the life of the facility (16 years). At most, the facility would operate up to 59% capacity.
- The facility will provide electricity to Washingtonians when renewable sources are not available or there is high demand for electricity.
- The facility is not currently operating. It plans to start operating again in 2028 using natural gas. In 2044, the facility will shut down permanently.

Reducing project impacts

This project will result in:

- Greenhouse gas emissions of 70,000 to two million metric tons of CO_{2e} per year.
- Volatile organic compounds, which are chemicals that can evaporate quickly into the air.

To address these impacts, TransAlta must:

- Get and follow all the permits needed to build and run the project, including a stormwater permit and the Prevention of Significant Deterioration air quality permit.
- Obey the Climate Commitment Act requirements to manage the project's greenhouse gas emissions through the Cap-and-Invest Program.

In addition, Ecology and TransAlta agreed to establish a new clean energy grant program to benefit local community members near the project site. The grant program will fund clean energy projects and help local residents weatherize their homes. It will be similar to the transition grant program that was part of the 2011 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). Local agencies, Tribes, and 501(c)(3) organizations in Lewis County and Thurston County may be eligible.

¹[http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2011-12/Pdf/Bills/Session Laws/Senate/5769-S2.SL.pdf](http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2011-12/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/5769-S2.SL.pdf)

²<http://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=43.21C>

What is SEPA?

The [State Environmental Policy Act](#)² (SEPA) process analyzes environmental impacts associated with governmental decisions. These decisions may be related to issuing permits for private projects, constructing public facilities, or adopting regulations, policies, and plans.

The SEPA review process helps agency decision-makers, applicants, and the public understand how the entire proposal will affect the environment. Based on this process, Ecology can propose measures (called mitigation) to modify avoid, reduce, or compensate for project impacts.

We summarize our environmental review in a document known as the "SEPA checklist." Agencies will use this information when making project decisions.

Ecology determined that the project is not likely to cause negative impacts to the environment if it includes mitigation measures to lessen impacts from greenhouse gas emissions. The proposed mitigation is a clean energy grant program.

Ecology and TransAlta will enter into a new MOA to create and run this grant program. TransAlta will pay into the grant program every year that the facility runs. We will base this funding amount on the facility's annual percent capacity. This means that TransAlta will put more money into the program in years when the facility generates more power. For the life of the project, TransAlta will pay anywhere from \$7 million dollars (if the plant only runs at 20% capacity each year) to a maximum of \$21 million dollars (if the plant runs at the maximum 59% capacity each year).

Next steps

- Ecology will review your comments and may make edits to the air quality permit or SEPA checklist and other project documents based on your input.
- Ecology will move forward with the permit process.
- Ecology and TransAlta will develop an agreement to formalize and implement the grant program.
- TransAlta will work with Ecology to make sure all the appropriate permits are in place before they start operating.

Helpful tips for effective comments

- **Be specific** when identifying project impacts.
- **Reference data** or specific language that you are concerned about.
- **Identify new** or unknown information.
- **Describe specific actions** for agencies to take.
- **Propose specific ideas** about how to reduce project impacts.
- General statements opposing or supporting a project are less helpful.

SEPA review is **not a decision** about whether a project moves forward.

Tentative public hearing: August 19, 2026 at 6 p.m. (online)

(if requested by Aug 11, 2026, 11:59 p.m.)

We will hold a public hearing online if there is significant public interest. If we do not receive written requests for a public hearing by **August 11, 2026**, then the online meeting will be cancelled. We will update our webpage (<https://ecology.wa.gov/transalta>) either cancelling the public hearing or adding a link to the public hearing. If you request a public hearing, please tell us if you need interpretation in a language other than English.

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ADA accessibility

To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 425 681 6236 or visit ecology.wa.gov/accessibility. For relay service or TTY, call 711 or 877 833 6341. If you need this document translated to another language, contact Meg Bommarito at 425 681 6236 or meg.bommarito@ecy.wa.gov