

Tacoma Methanol Project

- **PROJECT TYPE:**
Methanol plant
- **LOCATION:**
Tacoma, Washington
- **INVESTMENT COST:**
\$3.6 billion
- **ORIGINAL CONSTRUCTION DATE:**
September 2018
- **ORIGINAL OPERATING DATE:**
December 2022

OVERVIEW

- In May 2014, Northwest Innovation Works (NWIW) secured a lease with the Port of Tacoma to build a multi-billion-dollar facility to convert natural gas to methanol as a first step in the plastics manufacturing process.¹ The announcement was hailed by state and local officials, as well as business and labor leaders. Washington Governor Inslee voiced his support, noting that methanol manufacturing “moves our clean energy future forward at a very rapid pace.”²
- Nonetheless, the Sierra Club led an aggressive campaign to block the plant, encouraging activists to write letters to the state emphasizing that “Methanol is produced from natural gas, a fossil fuel which should be left in the ground.”³ Other Sierra Club sample materials recommended activists “make it personal if possible,” with suggestions such as “My kids ride a school bus past the site of the storage facility for the explosive methanol.”⁴
- In February 2016, protesters interrupted a hearing to examine the city’s environmental review of the plan.⁵ A South Sound Vegan ad for the protester sign-up said, “It is up to us to change the course and keep this plant from being built!”⁶
- In February 2016, NWIW asked the city of Tacoma to pause the environmental review process after a public hearing on the project attracted “largely hostile” opposition.⁷

LOST OPPORTUNITY ECONOMIC IMPACT



\$3.9↓
BILLION
in GDP impact*



30,860↓
total full-time
equivalent job
years*



\$830↓
MILLION
in lost tax
revenue*



260↓
full-time equivalent
jobs during
operations**



\$166↓
MILLION
in lost property tax
revenue generated during
the project’s first 10 years
of operations**

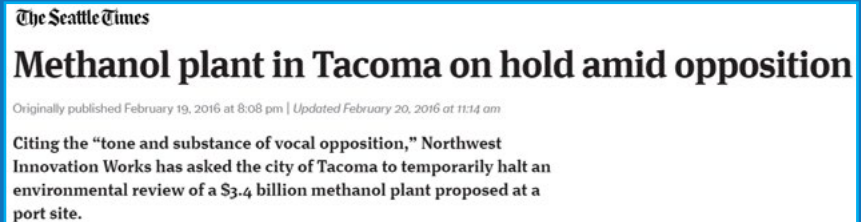


Image from *Seattle Times*

STATUS:

In April 2016, as Sierra Club was preparing “a phone-banking blitz to pack the upcoming Port Commission meeting” on the lease agreement.⁸ NWIW cancelled the project, citing costs and uncertainties associated with the regulatory and permitting process for the facility.

*Because Tacoma operations would not have begun by August 2018, modeled impacts represent prospective lost opportunities from construction/operations/upstream

** Self-reported by project sponsor

Sources:
Global Energy Institute analysis
[NW Innovation Works - Economic Impact Analysis](#)

1. [Port of Tacoma Commission unanimously approves methanol plant lease](#), *The News Tribune*, 5/2/14
2. [Gov. Inslee: Methanol plants boost 'our clean energy future'](#), *The Daily News*, 8/6/15
3. [Sample Comments on the Scope of the Environmental Impact Statement for the Tacoma Manufacturing & Marine Export Facility](#), Sierra Club document
4. [Comment letter suggestions](#), Sierra Club document
5. [South Sound opposition opens up against Tacoma methanol proposal](#), *The News Tribune*, 2/10/16
6. [Environmental Activism - Tacoma Methanol Plant](#), *Meetup*, 2/10/16
7. [Methanol plant in Tacoma on hold amid opposition](#), *The Seattle Times*, 2/19/16
8. [No Methanol Plant in Tacoma!](#), Sierra Club Washington blog