

Dirty and Dangerous Crude Oil Terminals Proposed in Grays Harbor

Factsheet and talking points for comments on Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Westway and Imperium proposed oil-by-rail terminals.

Proposed oil shipping terminals and the dirty, dangerous oil trains, storage tanks, tankers and barges that would come with them puts the health and safety of people, the local economy, and our ocean and coastlines at risk. There is no way to mitigate the risks and dangers of these crude oil terminals.

Grays Harbor communities would take on the risk, oil companies would reap the profits, and Grays Harbor would become a throughway for oil going elsewhere to places like California and even overseas.

Westway and Imperium, two of three proposed oil terminals for Grays Harbor between Aberdeen and Hoquiam would have the combined capacity to handle nearly 127,000 barrels, or more than 5 million gallons of oil daily (one barrel = 42 gallons) per day. The terminals would be fed by about sixteen loaded oil train deliveries every week (on average more than two per day).

Wrong place for oil terminals: Much of what makes Grays Harbor special would be at risk. The narrow, shallow shipping channel and strong currents put Grays Harbor at high risk of an oil spill. A single major spill could devastate the area's maritime economy, productive fisheries, tribal treaty rights and spectacular coastal waters.

- If both terminals were built 638 tankers and barges of oil would need to traverse Grays Harbor every year. The twelve mile long Grays Harbor shipping channel is narrow, shallow, subject to strong currents and has limited staging area for ships and tugs. An additional 638 trips through the Harbor by empty tankers and barges would only add to congestion and collision risk.
- The largest Panamax class tankers that would carry oil through Grays Harbor can hold nearly 17 million gallons and are nearly three football fields in length. The Exxon Valdez disaster in Alaska in 1979 spilled about 11 million gallons.
- The Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife stated "Grays Harbor is an area particularly sensitive to the adverse effects of oil spills."
- A major oil spill could devastate marine resource jobs which support more than 30% of Grays Harbor's workforce according to a 2013 study by the University of Washington.
- An economic study commissioned by the Quinault Indian Nation found that a major oil spill could put more than 150 tribal commercial fishermen out of a job, resulting in a direct loss of as much as \$20 million in wages and up to \$70 million in revenue for affected businesses.
- In 2014 Washington residents took an estimated 4.1 million trips to the Washington Coast spending \$481 million. More than one-third of those visits were to Grays Harbor County to enjoy its spectacular and productive coastal and ocean waters.
- Grays Harbor and the region are no strangers to oil spills. The Northwest has experienced two dozen spills and near misses over the last two decades. In 1988, the Nestucca barge holed off Grays Harbor spilling 231,000 gallons of marine bunker oil, killing or injuring an estimated 56,000 seabirds. The oil sheen was seen from Oregon to the Strait of Juan De Fuca.
- If built the two terminals together could store an astounding 72 million gallons of crude, or the equivalent of 2526 oil tank cars.
- Grays Harbor sits in a major earthquake and tsunami zone. Geologists say the odds of a "big" Cascadia earthquake happening in the next 50 years are approximately one in three. The odds of the "very big" one are roughly one in 10.

- According to the U.S. Geological survey the overdue earthquake could produce waves from 20 feet to more than 100 feet high. We can expect that wall of water would topple storage tanks washing away all the oil which could possibly ignite.

Dirty and dangerous oil trains: The alarming safety record of oil trains means an explosive oil train derailment may be a question of when, not if. Less dramatic but equally concerning is the air pollution, spill risks, and traffic delays oil trains would bring to communities along the rail line from Hoquiam to Centralia and all the way to the oil source in North Dakota and Alberta, Canada.

Oil train fires, explosions and derailments

- At least 10 crude oil trains have exploded recently in North America, including in July 2013 when an oil train accident in the province of Quebec killed 47 people.
- Between June 2011 and December 2013 a freight train derailed on average every 3.5 days in the Northwest region.
- There is no safe way to move oil by train: The tank cars that split open and burst into flames in Illinois in March 2015 were retrofitted to meet a higher safety standard than federal law requires according to railroad officials.
- The oil cars that derailed in West Virginia in February 2015, leaking oil into the Kanahwa River and burning down a house, were the newer 1232 cars that were supposed to be safer than the older DOT-111 models blamed for previous accidents.

Air pollution, spills and traffic from oil trains

- Oil train spills hit record levels in 2014. In 2013 more oil spilled from trains into rivers, lakes, and marine waters than in the previous forty years combined.
- Increased rail traffic would almost double the emissions of pollutants from rail transport in the county. Parks and some homes near the project site could be exposed to higher levels of diesel particulate pollution shown to increase the risk of cancer, asthma and other respiratory ailments.
- Most of that diesel pollution from oil trains would be emitted near homes and businesses on a small section of tracks between Poyner Yard and the Westway and Imperium sites. In the City of Aberdeen, slow moving trains could block many streets at once, eliminating detour routes for first responders.
- Delays at Olympic Gateway Plaza could increase from between 49 and 70 minutes a day to between 96 to 112 minutes a day for the Westway project, and 108 to 138 minutes a day for the Imperium project.

Better way to meet our energy needs: Washington State is rapidly moving away from fossil fuels and towards clean, renewable sources to meet our energy needs and respond to global warming. Building more, big infrastructure for yesterday's energy is the wrong path to meet today's energy needs.

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