

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.

Of all the places in the Northwest that would be harmed by a ramp-up in oil transport, perhaps none would be put as profoundly at risk as Grays Harbor. 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.

All risk, no reward: Grays Harbor would just be a throughway for oil going elsewhere to places such as California and even overseas, putting its communities to take on the risk, while the oil companies would reap the profits.

Special resources on the line: The very things that make Grays Harbor unique would be put at risk. The threat of an oil spill along the Chehalis River or in the narrow, shallow shipping channel a could devastate the area's maritime economy, productive fisheries, tribal treaty rights and its spectacular coastal waters.

Dirty and dangerous oil trains: The alarming accident record of oil trains means an explosive oil train derailment is more of 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 source of the oil in North Dakota and Canada.

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, and a big economic gamble for Grays Harbor.

Grays Harbor communities would take on the risk, oil and rail 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 located in Hoquiam, would have the combined capacity to handle 5.5 million gallons of crude daily. The terminals would be fed by about sixteen loaded oil train deliveries every week (more than two per day).

Wrong place for oil terminals: dramatic increase in oil tanker and barge traffic in Grays Harbor invites an oil spill disaster.

- If both terminals were built, 638 tankers and barges of oil would need to traverse Grays Harbor every year. The twelve-mile Grays Harbor shipping channel is narrow and shallow, subject strong currents, and has a limited maneuvering area for ships and tugs. An additional 638 trips through the Harbor by tankers and barges – both those carrying crude oil and those empty to receive the crude oil - would only add to congestion and collision risk.

- The largest Panamax class tankers that would carry oil through Grays Harbor can hold almost 17 million gallons and are nearly three football fields in length. For perspective, 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.”
- Grays Harbor is one of four estuaries of “Hemispheric Importance” for nearly a million migrating shorebirds in the spring and fall. It is a critical area for resting and feeding during migration. A spill in the enclosed estuary would decimate bird populations.
- 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 more than 150 tribal commercial fishermen could lose their jobs, 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 collided with a tug off Grays Harbor spilling “only” 231,000 gallons of marine bunker oil, killing and injuring an estimated 56,000 seabirds. The oil contaminated beaches from Oregon to Vancouver Island.
- If built the two terminals together could store an astounding 72 million gallons, 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, and possibly ignite.

Such a huge surge in oil vessel traffic, in a place not suited to it in the first place, invites disaster. We know from disasters like the Deepwater Horizon in the Gulf of Mexico and Exxon Valdez in Alaska that one major oil spill can be devastating: contaminating coastlines, killing fish and wildlife, destroying livelihoods, and ruining property values. The damage can last for decades, even generations. – Larry Thevik, long-time fishermen from Ocean Shores

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 Chehalis, 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 derailed and exploded recently in North America, including in July 2013 when an oil train accident in the province of Quebec killed 47 people.
- There is no safe way to move oil by train: older DOT-111 tank cars, which were supposed to be phased out in the 1990's, have been blamed for these accidents. Yet the new DOT-1232 cars, designed to resist puncture, ruptured and burst into flame in the last four of five oil train derailments: in West Virginia in February 2015 (which burned down a house and contaminated the Kanahwa River), in Illinois the following month, and twice more in Ontario last spring.
- Between June 2011 and December 2013 a freight train derailed on average every 3.5 days in the Northwest region. The rail line between Centralia and Hoquiam had four freight derailments last year.

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.
- Most of that diesel pollution from oil trains would be emitted on a small section of rail line between Poyner Yard and the Westway and Imperium sites near homes and businesses. In the City of Aberdeen, slow moving trains could obstruct many streets simultaneously, 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.

Project Details

- **Westway Terminal Company** currently operates a bulk terminal at the Port of Grays Harbor, and is proposing a retrofit to receive 48,860 barrels of crude per day from oil train shipments.
- **Imperium Terminal Services** at the Port of Grays Harbor wants to retrofit its facility to receive 78,000 barrels of crude oil per day.

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