



## THE SLEEPING GIANT

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The Keystone XL pipeline and oil drilling in the Arctic are favorite topics for politicians on both sides of the aisle and are rallying cries for the environmental community. While these issues have been taking the national spotlight, a behemoth has been quietly extending its tendrils through the temperate rain forests

and communities of the Pacific Northwest. Crude oil export. It's not one single project that begs for a call to arms, but a series of them which stand to dwarf the impact of Keystone XL, both in climate footprint and the potential for social and environmental catastrophe.

Currently there are 15 crude-by-rail export terminals (eight are already in operation) that, if approved and fully operational, could have the capacity to move over 1 million barrels of oil (or nearly 43 million gallons) **per day** to ports along the coastlines and rivers of Washington and Oregon. This is 23 percent more volume than the capacity of the Keystone XL pipeline. But more importantly, the transportation method is much more

susceptible to accidents and spills than moving crude by pipeline. The frequent high winds that make the Columbia River a mecca for windsurfers and kiteboarders, and the pumping surf on the Pacific Northwest coastline that will humble all who enter, make for a disastrous set of conditions for containment and cleanup of any kind of spill. There is nothing any corporation, agency or environmental group can do if it's blowing 50+ knots or there is 40+ foot surf but sit back and watch the devastation.

Surfrider activists in Washington and Oregon have thrown their weight behind stopping two of these projects in particular—the Westway export expansion project in Grays Harbor, Wash., and the Tesoro Savage Export Terminal in Vancouver, Wash., (which would be the largest oil terminal in North America, directly across the Columbia River, which is considered to be part of the metro area of Portland, Ore.). Should these projects be approved, together they would move approximately 150 million barrels of crude by rail per year and then onto ocean vessels through some of the most precious recreation areas in Washington and Oregon.

Hundreds of Surfrider activists from across both states sent letters to the state agencies leading these environmental reviews,



signed petitions, attended rallies and provided public testimony. For the recent Vancouver public comment period, along with our coalition partners, we helped to submit 279,000 comments, the most ever received by the Washington Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council. All came with one unified message—*Not The Answer*.

There are safer and more efficient methods for transporting petroleum products across our lands and waterways. Furthermore, we should be building the foundation for a clean, renewable energy economy, not allowing Big Oil to expand operations for short-term gains that place serious long-term risks on our environment and quality of life.

Not only are these two proposed projects located in recreation hotspots for all the surfers, stand-up paddle boarders, kayakers, fishermen, birders and beach goers who use them, but they also have the potential to

negatively affect a major economic force in the Pacific Northwest.

Back in 2011, the Surfrider Foundation published a study on non-consumptive recreation along the Oregon Coast, which illustrated the economic value of recreation uses on the Columbia River Estuary and along the northern coast of Oregon. This study found that Oregon residents took an estimated 27 million trips to the Oregon coast, with over 80 percent for recreation. Average respondents spent approximately \$88 per trip, translating to an estimated \$2.4 billion in direct trip expenditures. A similar study was conducted in Washington in 2014, demonstrating that Washington residents took an estimated 4.1 million trips to the Washington coast, with nearly 60 percent saying the primary purpose was for recreation. Average respondents spent approximately \$111 per trip, translating to an estimated \$481 million in direct



trip expenditures. Together, these studies demonstrate values *much higher* than the projected positive socioeconomic impacts of both construction (\$129.3 million revenue total) and annual operation (\$130.4 million annually) of the proposed terminal in Vancouver.

While many of these projects were originally billed as supporting energy independence, shipping crude from the interior of the U.S. and Canada (Bakken region of North Dakota and Canadian tar sands oil) to refineries along the West Coast, they could just as easily serve foreign markets, a bait and switch that the oil industry has pulled in the past. Is it really a coincidence that the 40-year ban on domestic crude oil export was recently lifted with heavy lobbying from slippery Big Oil?

Building a massive crude oil export network through some of the most beautiful and harsh environments in our country is an extremely risky proposition at best. Rail accidents resulting in a spill are expected to occur, on average, every two years. Vessel spills from groundings or collisions are expected every

twenty. If that doesn't get us, the fact that both of these facilities are either located directly in the tsunami zone or on unstable soils subject to liquefaction when the next Cascadia subduction earthquake happens most certainly will.

The timeline for a final decision on these two proposed projects is unclear given the level of complexity and the volume of substantive comments submitted outlining shortcomings with the plans, but we expect decisions (and hopefully victories!) sometime in the next year. One thing is clear however, and that is Washington Governor Jay Inslee and the various state agencies that he oversees have the decision making authority to stop these unenlightened proposals and protect our coastlines from the inevitable oil spills that will eventually happen. We will be creating various opportunities to help raise awareness about these proposals and the need to reject them over the next year. Join us as part of the "thin green line" in standing up for the health of our communities, helping to elevate awareness to the national level and protecting this special place we call Cascadia.