
From: Sierra Club <information@sierraclub.org> on behalf of Dave Shelman
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To: EFSEC (UTC)
Subject: Comment on Docket No. EF-131590, Application No. 2013-01

Categories: Comment, Additional Content

Nov 13, 2013

Mr. Stephen Posner
P.O. Box 43172
Olympia, WA 98504-3172

Dear Mr. Posner,

I'm writing regarding Docket No. EF-131590, Application No. 2013-01 to urge the Washington Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) to assess the full environmental and public safety impact of the joint Tesoro-Savage proposal to turn the Port of Vancouver into a major crude oil export terminal.

The currently proposed oil port in Washington will have a capacity for up to 380,000 bbl. per day. This represents a huge increase in train traffic. These trains will all pass through our National Scenic Area immediately adjacent to the Columbia River. The negative impacts that will result from this traffic, aside from the catastrophic damage of a spill, are so significant that the very character of the Gorge itself will be altered.

The natural wonder we now call the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area is a spectacular cut through the Cascade Mountain Range. The Columbia Gorge is a source of life and legend for several of America's first nations. After the success of the Lewis and Clark expedition at the beginning of the 19th century it became the river route for early explorers and settlers. And since its earliest human occupation, the Gorge has provided both a home and a source of livelihood for thousands. The balance in this relationship has not always been easy.

The desire, on the part of the citizens of Oregon and Washington and the nation, to preserve that precarious balance is what led to the Scenic Area designation twenty seven years ago. Up to now, management of the National Scenic Area has worked well: development has been modest; open space has been increased and protected; tourist attractions have been enhanced, notably the restoration of the 1915 Scenic Highway for bicyclists and hikers. Most observers would describe the Gorge today as healthy and thriving.

That will change dramatically for the worse, if oil shipments are expanded as currently proposed. Train and traffic will substantially increase above current levels. It does not take much imagination to grasp the potential negative impacts of this intrusion: added pollution due to diesel exhaust; increased risk of derailments; obstruction of views; disruption of surface traffic, including emergency vehicles; increased volume of noise at sensitive tourist sites; risks to fisheries, risks of rail-generated brush fires; interference with passenger and essential freight rail movement.

Preliminary work on ports and rail lines is already underway even while permits for this oil terminal are being reviewed.

I strongly support the inclusion of the potential negative impacts to the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area in the scope of the EIS.

Sincerely,

Mr. Dave Shelman
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