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Tar Sands Mega-Loads Threaten Pacific Northwest

Massive shipments of tar sands equipment on Northwest rivers and roads could become a permanent fixture. Exxon and other Big Oil companies are lining up at the door to use a Pacific Northwest route to transfer massive equipment bound for tar sands strip-mining in Canada's Boreal Forest. A full federal assessment of this entire project is needed before it proceeds.

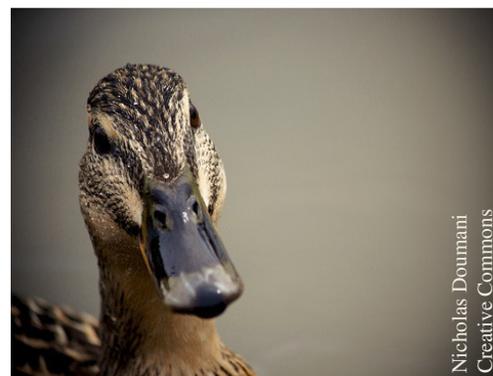
Tar Sands Oil

Big Oil has some big plans to put America's clean energy future in jeopardy by expanding the production of tar sands oil – one of the most destructive, dirty, and costly fossil fuels. The largest tar sands reserves in the world are located beneath the boreal forest in Alberta, Canada. This forest provides critical habitat for about 50 percent of North America's migratory birds and some of the largest populations of wolves, grizzly bears, lynx and moose in the world.

Oil companies are destroying this pristine forest to extract tar sands, leaving behind huge toxic wastelands. To remove the thick black oil from the sand, they heat it using natural gas and wash it using enormous volumes of freshwater. The aftermath leaves toxic lakes so large they are visible from space. These poisonous lakes pose a deadly threat to migrating waterfowl.

Toxic Lakes Killing Wildlife

- According to scientists, annual bird mortality from the toxic tar sands lakes could be 8000 to 100,000 birds a year— greatly exceeding industry estimates.¹
- In November 2010, Syncrude, the largest operator of tar sands projects in Canada, was ordered to pay \$2.92 million for causing the deaths of 1,603 ducks in one day. The company was convicted by an Alberta court for failing to prevent the migratory birds from landing on a toxic pond containing oily residue from one of its operations.²
- In November 2010, just days after Syncrude was ordered to pay its historic fine, another 350 ducks were euthanized after again landing in their toxic tar sands lake.³



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The Pacific Northwest Connection

Starting in 2010, Exxon is seeking to ship over 200 loads of South Korean made tar sands mining machinery to the Port of Vancouver, Washington where it will be barged up the Columbia and Snake Rivers, and then transported on supersized trucks 400 miles through Idaho and Montana to Canada. The equipment is bound for Exxon's Kearl Mine in Northern Alberta- part of an enormous tar sands strip mine.



Canadian tar sands production is the dirtiest oil project on earth, creating global warming pollution three times that of conventional oil projects, while destroying millions of acres of one of the largest carbon storage sites on earth- the Boreal Forest.

The shipments are up to 30 feet high, 24 feet wide and 220 feet long – over two-thirds the length of a football field - and up to 650,000 pounds. (A normal semi-truck/trailer is 13 feet high, 8 feet wide, 70 feet long and 80,000 pounds.) The route in Idaho and Montana, mainly on narrow mountain and valley roads, includes the Lewis & Clark Trail, a National Scenic By-way, a Wild & Scenic River corridor, and the famed Blackfoot River of "A River Runs Through It." In places, the route is the only way local people can reach their jobs and access emergency services. Accidents, especially along winding mountain segments and in winter, threaten great harm to people and natural resources.

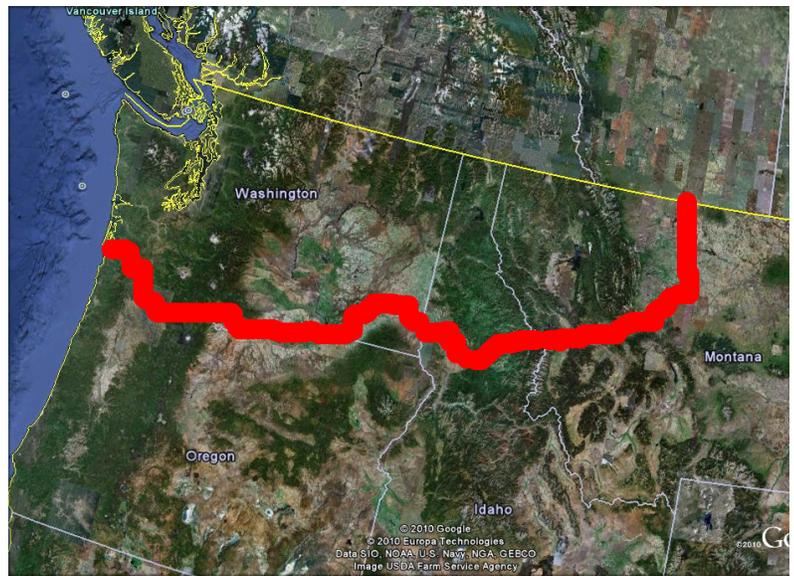


Impacts from a Permanent Tar Sands Shipping Route

Recently released documents from the South Korean manufacturer Sun Jin Geotec, who is producing the tar sands modules for Exxon, indicate that the use of this mega load shipping route will not be a onetime event. Tar sands operations for this project are expected to last more than 30 years. Although State permits have not yet been granted for this project, Exxon and ConocoPhillips have already begun to float their equipment up the Columbia and Snake Rivers to the Port of Lewiston, Idaho. Harvest Energy has indicated their intent to do the same if the permits are approved. It is quite evident that Big Oil sees this Mega Load shipping route as their new Panama Canal- capable of mainlining destructive tar sands machinery through the heart of the Northwest straight to Canada's Boreal Forest for decades to come.

Impacts cross state borders:

Currently the only permits Big Oil needs to move forward with the entirety of this project are local State permits. Because of this, the only environmental assessments being required relate only to the Idaho and Montana legs of the shipping route. Montana and Idaho agencies cannot assess the full environmental impact of the project, which begins in South Korea, spans the Northwest on salmon bearing rivers and nationally scenic roads, and proceeds to tar sands strip mining in the Boreal Forest. **A full federal environmental assessment of this project is needed before it moves forward.**





Big Oil could be here to stay: If this project is approved, Exxon and other oil companies will be in prime position to become a decades-long presence on the Columbia and Snake Rivers. Oregonians and Washingtonians do not want Exxon's lobbyists determining how often the Columbia River is dredged, how much spill migrating salmon are allowed over the dams and when and where sportsmen can fish for salmon, steelhead and sturgeon.

Impacts on Northwest carbon reduction legislation: Over the past years, individuals, businesses and governments in the Pacific Northwest have made a concerted effort to reduce their carbon footprints. Notably, last year the Oregon legislature authorized the Environmental Quality Commission to implement a Low Carbon Fuel Standard (HB 2186) which will reduce vehicle carbon pollution 10% by 2020. Enabling Exxon to transport their mega load machinery through Oregon and Washington to complete their tar sands strip mining in the Boreal Forest will cancel out those carbon reductions.

Exxon does not have local interests at heart: Currently the only information that permitting states are relying on regarding the project's purpose, cost, scale and potential alternatives are from Exxon alone. This is extremely risky considering Exxon's track record of cover-up and numbers fudging following the Exxon Valdez spill.

Take Action

Contact your members of Congress as well as Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson and tell them you are concerned with Exxon's Mega Load project.

Urge them to please stop the transport of tar sands machinery up the Columbia-Snake Rivers and Highway 12 as part of the larger tar sands strip mining project in Canada's Boreal Forest until **A full federal environmental assessment of this project is completed.**

Contact Ray LaHood: (202) 366-4000

Contact Lisa Jackson: (202) 564-4700

Please visit www.nwf.org/tarsands for more info.

¹ Wells, Jeff Ph.D. Danger in the Nursery: Impact on birds of tar sands oil development in Canada's Boreal Forest

² New York Times 10-23-2010 "Canadian Oil Company Fined for Duck Deaths"

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/23/business/energy-environment/23ducksands.html?_r=2&ref=oil_sands

³ Edmonton Journal 10-28-2010 "Ottawa Will Investigate Duck Deaths"

<http://www.edmontonjournal.com/business/Ottawa+will+investigate+duck+deaths/3738679/story.html>