

FACT SHEET

Overview of the Tesoro Savage Oil Terminal Draft EIS



Oil train traveling along WA-14 in the Columbia Gorge. (Photo: Randa Cleaves)

Summary: The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Tesoro Savage oil terminal explains that Tesoro’s project would have significant direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on communities along the Columbia River. The DEIS does not adequately address the project’s contribution to global warming, and the mitigation measures proposed in the DEIS are vague, speculative, and unlikely to be successful. Despite these defects, the DEIS confirms that the Tesoro project is a threat to public safety and the environment—giving EFSEC and the Governor more than adequate justification for rejecting Tesoro’s project.

The full text of the DEIS is available for download here:

<http://www.efsec.wa.gov/Tesoro%20Savage/SEPA%20-%20DEIS/DEIS%20PAGE.shtml>

Key Impacts of Tesoro’s Oil-by-Rail Project: Here are just a few of the project’s safety and public health risks discussed in the EIS.

- **Oil train accidents:** The DEIS predicts that one of Tesoro’s loaded oil trains would derail once every two years in Washington State. Each derailment could result in oil spills, fires, and explosions causing injury or death. DEIS, p.4-86. Even the newest, “safer” rail cars could puncture and explode at speeds as low as 12 mph. DEIS, p.4-27.
- **Oil spills in the Columbia:** Once every twenty years, the DEIS predicts that one of Tesoro’s oil tankers will crash, rupture, and spill crude oil into the Columbia River Estuary. The DEIS also predicts an oil spill of between 42,000 and 420,000 gallons every

34 years. DEIS, Appx. J, p.41. The DEIS does not explain the resources necessary to prevent and clean up an oil spill, but calls for further study. DEIS, pp.ES-17, ES-18.

- **Crude oil export:** Tesoro touts energy independence, but the DEIS explains that this project could export dirty Canadian Tar Sands crude overseas. DEIS, pp.4-33, 5-53.
- **Rail delays and transportation problems:** Tesoro’s project would cause some rail segments “to approach or exceed capacity” and—along with other oil-by-rail proposals—have “major cumulative impacts to transportation” in the Pacific Northwest. DEIS, pp.ES-10, ES-38. Tesoro’s trains could increase vehicle delays up to 26% at 200 at-grade railroad crossing in Washington. DEIS, p.ES-39. Crossing delays could impact emergency response and “could have disproportionate effects on environmental justice populations.” DEIS, pp.ES-39–41.
- **Earthquake risk:** The terminal site is vulnerable to “soil liquefaction” and settling during an earthquake. DEIS, p.ES-12.
- **Harm to endangered salmon:** Oil tanker ships could destroy shallow water habitat in the Columbia River Estuary, resulting a moderate to major long-term effects endangered salmon, steelhead, and eulachon. DEIS, p.ES-32.
- **Global warming:** Tesoro’s project will generate the equivalent of roughly 54 million metric tons of CO₂ per year—roughly.1% of all global greenhouse emissions. DEIS, pp.5-53, 5-47.

Useful Quotes & Notes

Public Safety & Accidents:

- “In the event of a large fire and/or explosion at the proposed Facility, workers, members of the public, and nearby residents of the JWC and Fruit Valley neighborhood could be at risk of injury or death. . . . In an explosion, blast wind could lead to injury or death from violent blunt force trauma from impact with facility infrastructure or explosion debris. The public could be affected if impacts from the large fire and/or explosion affected offsite locations. In that event, other Port tenants or the public could be at risk of injury or fatality.” DEIS, p. 4-86.
- “...emergency responders in the vicinity of the rail corridor expected to be used by unit trains delivering crude oil to the proposed Facility consider themselves in need of additional training and equipment to effectively respond to a crude oil fire and/or explosion.” DEIS, p. 4-88.

- “In the event of a crude oil fire or explosion along the rail transportation corridor, train operators and the general public in the vicinity of the accident could be at risk of injury or fatality. As stated previously, 12 derailments in the United States and Canada between February 15, 2013, and July 23, 2015 had fires reported, and three of these also had an explosion reported. One incident (Lac-Mégantic, Quebec) resulted in a crude oil spill, explosion, and fire causing injuries and 47 fatalities. Another incident (Mount Carbon/Boomer Bottom, West Virginia) resulted in a crude oil spill and fire with one reported injury.” DEIS, p. 4-91.
- “In the event of a crude oil fire or explosion along the rail transportation corridor, train operators and the general public in the vicinity of the accident could be at risk of injury or fatality from blast wind, heat, burns, smoke, and fumes; the impacts would be major.” DEIS, p. ES-47.
- “Bakken crude is . . . notably volatile and potentially flammable in a spill situation. This is the greatest concern with respect to public safety in the event of a spill. Its behavior is not unlike spilled gasoline.” DEIS, Appendix J, p. 48.

Tesoro Savage would ship Tar Sands crude:

- “According to the Applicant, Bakken crude oil and diluted bitumen (dilbit) would be the two most common crude oils transported to and from the proposed Facility.” DEIS, p. ES 8-1.
- “[R]e-export of Canadian sourced crude oil transported through the Proposed facility could occur.” DEIS, p. 5-53.
- “Dilbit would be transported to the proposed Facility from the Alberta, Canada, oil sands.” DEIS, p. 4-33.

Financial Responsibility Undetermined:

- “Conduct a study to identify an appropriate level of financial responsibility for the potential costs for response and cleanup of oil spills, natural resource damages, and costs to state and affected counties and cities for their response actions to reduce the risks and impacts from an oil spill...The study should identify any constraints related to the commercial availability and affordability of financial responsibility.” DEIS, pp. ES 17-18.

Vessel Traffic Impacts:

- “Increase in deep-draft vessel traffic associated with the proposed Facility could result in a moderate to major long-term effect on nearshore fish in the lower 33-mile portion of the Columbia River.” DEIS, p. ES-31.

- “The increase in deep-draft vessel traffic and associated increase in vessel wakes could reduce vegetation communities, resulting in a moderate to major long-term change to the resource, indirectly affecting fish species that rely on these habitats to complete their life cycle.” DEIS, p. ES-32.
- “The approximately 223% increase in deep-draft vessel traffic associated with the proposed Facility could result in a moderate to major long-term effect to nearshore fish in the lower 33-mile portion of the Columbia River.” DEIS, p. ES-33.
- A potential oil spill from “[t]he new vessel traffic associated with the proposed Facility presents a new challenge on the Columbia River that has not been planned for to date.” DEIS, p. 5-54.

Rail Traffic

- “The addition of rail traffic associated with the proposed Facility would cause some segments of rail lines to approach or exceed capacity, resulting in moderate to major impacts.” DEIS, p. ES-38.
- “Impacts to motorists from delays at at-grade crossings resulting from rail transportation associated with the proposed Facility could be moderate to major.” DEIS, p. ES-38.
- Tesoro-Savage’s proposal would increase traffic delays at 200 railroad crossings in Washington by 15% to 26%; an additional 20 to 40 minutes each day. This increase in vehicle delays could constitute a major unavoidable impact to emergency responders. DEIS, pp. ES-39, ES-41.
- Increased railroad crossing delays caused by Tesoro-Savage’s proposal “could have disproportionate effects on environmental justice populations” and would have moderate to major impacts for some minority and/or low-income populations. These impacts include delays in response times for emergency responders and motorist delays. DEIS, pp. ES-41-42.

Spills

- There is a 5% chance every year that a tank vessel carrying oil from Tesoro’s facility will have an accident resulting in the release of crude oil cargo into the Columbia River. In other words, over the 20-year project, the EIS predicts one crude oil spill into the Columbia from a tanker vessel. DEIS, Appendix J, p. 39.
- The DEIS predicts that an oil spill into the Columbia River Estuary of between 42,000 and 420,000 gallons of crude oil will occur every 34 years. DEIS, Appendix J, p. 41 (Table 41).
- A large crude oil spill from Tesoro-Savage’s terminal that reaches the Columbia River could impact water intakes up to 7 miles downstream of the proposed terminal. DEIS, p. ES-42.
- A large or very large oil spill from an oil tanker vessel could impact the entire Columbia River from the site of the spill downstream to the mouth of the river, or beyond. DEIS, p. ES-43.

Global Warming Pollution

- If the crude shipped through Tesoro-Savage's refinery was processed and burned in addition to existing crude oil sources, Tesoro-Savage' project "would account for an approximately 0.1 percent increase in global GHG emissions." DEIS, p. 5-53. *(Note - The DEIS surmises that the oil in Tesoro's project would mostly replace (rather than be in addition to) other oil sources, so the net GHG impact would be zero. This is a key unsupported and erroneous assumption.)*
- "Results indicate that the total life-cycle GHG emissions from activities directly and indirectly related to the proposed Facility are approximately 54 million metric tons per year of CO₂e." DEIS, p. 5-47.

Earthquake Risks

- Paraphrasing 3.1-14: Tesoro-Savage's proposed terminal would be in an area of "moderate to high ground motion hazard" in the event of a major Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake.
- Soils under the proposed Facility are largely composed of sand and silt, and are often saturated due to the high water table. The proposed Facility site has a moderate to high potential for liquefaction in an earthquake, and could subside between several inches up to two feet. This subsidence could damage structures like oil storage tanks, pipelines, and buildings. DEIS, p. 3.1-25.
- EFSEC stated that Tesoro-Savage's proposed ground improvements would not adequately protect the pipeline between the storage tanks and the ship berths. "Given the potential for soil liquefaction and lateral spreading described above, even with the implementation of the Applicant's proposed ground improvements, impacts from these earthquake hazards could range from moderate to major." DEIS, p. 3.1-26.

Air toxics

- Emissions of criteria pollutants and diesel particulate matter from stationary sources, and onsite and near-site mobile sources, during terminal operation could cause moderate air quality impacts near the proposed Facility. DEIS, p. 3.2-33.

More Information:

StandUpToOil.org
Gorgefriends.org
Columbiariverkeeper.org