In the past several years, oil by rail traffic has increased significantly in the U.S. This is primarily due to the growth in extraction and production in the Bakkan Shale oil field in North Dakota. The Pacific Northwest is being targeted with several proposals for new or expanded infrastructure projects to facilitate this oil being shipped overseas. Right now, approximately three mile and a half long oil trains each haul 100 cars of crude oil through the region every day. Shell Puget Sound Refinery (PSR) is proposing to expand an oil-by-rail facility to its existing refinery in Anacortes, bringing in six more oil trains per week and 60,000 barrels per day. These trains are routed through Northwest cities and towns, including Spokane, the Columbia River Gorge, Olympia, Tacoma and Seattle.

RISKS
Oil companies stand to make huge profits while Northwest communities bear the risks and costs of explosive oil train derailments, a huge increase in rail traffic, and oil spills from trains, tankers and barges. The increase in oil by rail has meant the increase in dangerous and deadly explosive derailments, as well as toxic spills into our rivers, lakes, marine waters and sensitive places. Along with greater risk of major accidents, the huge potential increase in oil trains means an increase in rail traffic, with more delays at rail crossings, slower emergency response times, more diesel fume pollution and taxpayer costs to pay for infrastructure to make way for all those trains. These trains pass dangerously close to schools, hospitals, and local businesses, endangering our health, safety and economy. Finally, this project points us in the wrong direction on seriously addressing climate change, and contradicts our emissions reduction commitments. Instead of increasing our oil use, we must begin to transition away from fossil fuels to a clean energy economy.

THE GOOD NEWS
Shell’s proposal has not yet been permitted! The project is undergoing a full scale environmental review under the Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), which will examine the potential effects of a major accident and the plan for responding to a catastrophe.
NEXT STEPS
The Department of Ecology and Skagit County are jointly responsible for preparing and releasing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and overseeing a public comment period in conjunction with the release.

- The draft EIS is currently being conducted and results will be made public in the fall of 2016
- The Dept of Ecology and Skagit County will hold public comment hearings following the release of the draft EIS. Stay tuned for a hearing near you!
- They will then produce a final EIS.
- Taking into consideration the findings of the EIS, the permit application and public comment, the agencies will make a decision on the permit.

What YOU can do

- Fill out a comment card to tell the Department of Ecology and Skagit County to deny the permit
- Attend the public hearing in November.
- Get involved with Sierra Club’s local campaign to stop dangerous oil by rail.

SOURCES:
2014 Marine and Rail Transportation Study, Washington Department of Ecology

On June 3rd, an oil train hauling 96 cars of volatile Bakken oil derailed and caught fire in Mosier, OR on its way to a terminal in Tacoma, WA. Children were evacuated from a nearby elementary school only a stone’s throw from the blast zone. Firefighting efforts completely drained Mosier’s municipal water system. And oil leaked into the wastewater treatment plant, shutting down Mosier’s sewer system. We cannot let this happen again!