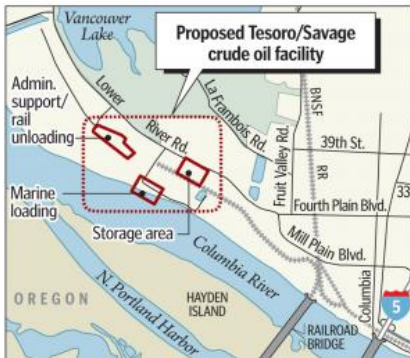


Oregon Interfaith Power and Light

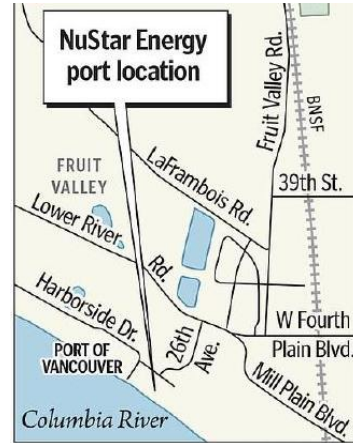
A Tale of Two Terminals: An Oil Train Eco-Justice Exploration

On Friday, October 16, Oregon Interfaith Power and Light supporters and leaders took a mini-pilgrimage to Vancouver, Washington, which behind its sleepy-Friday scene is under talks to become ground zero for what could be the largest oil-by-rail export terminal in the world.



Courtesy of *The Columbian* and Columbia Riverkeeper

We started our exploration with Dan Serres, Conservation Director for Columbia Riverkeeper, at a quiet, clean table in the corner of City Hall. We learned the basics of two oil terminals that have been proposed: the largest, about a mile from downtown, funded by Tesoro/Savage, and the closest right at the



Courtesy of *The Columbian* and Columbia Riverkeeper

waterfront, a project of NuStar Energy LP, between the railroad and I-5 bridges. The Tesoro facility would have the capacity to store 360,000 barrels a day, making it the largest oil-by-rail proposal in the world, according to Columbia Riverkeeper's research.



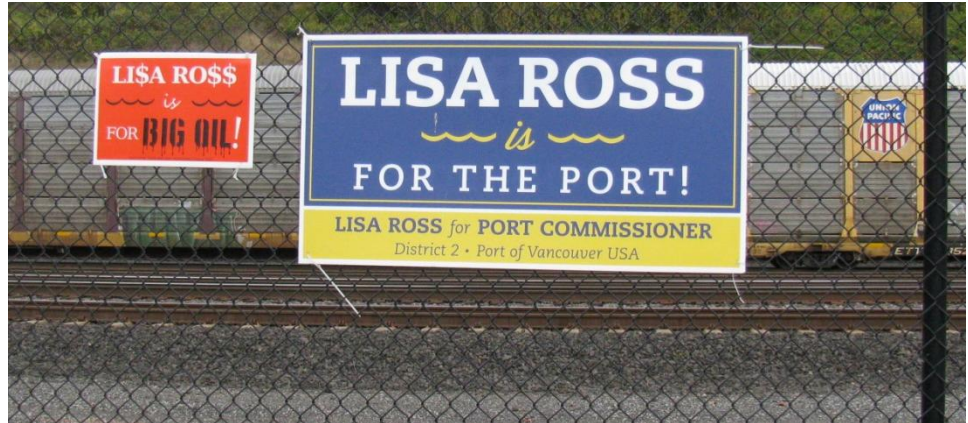
As Dan elaborated on the virtual certainty of an eventual accident, derailment, or spill, and their consequential harm to the Columbia, downtown Vancouver, and surrounding low-income communities, no less than four trains passed by the windows of City Hall. One of them, bearing red diamond placards, caught his attention more pointedly. "That's definitely an oil train," he said. By city regulation, to minimize risks, trains through downtown Vancouver are supposed to travel no faster than 10-15 mph. But the five-minute-black-stretch we photographed seemed to be going faster, and speeding up. "I wouldn't doubt if that last car was going faster than 25 as it left the parking lot," Dan guessed.



Following our meeting with Dan, we drove a mile from downtown to the offices of Tesoro, and to our amusement, turned left on St. Francis (the patron saint of ecology) Lane into the high-security premises, where we snapped the following photo of their ironic mailbox. Along the train tracks leading out of downtown we

traveled through the working class neighborhood of Fruit Valley where we encountered within blocks of the tracks that carry flammable oil tankers, Fruit Valley Elementary School, a community center, and a playground, all sober reminders of what the fossil fuel economy leaves hanging in the balance.

We drove a little farther along the tracks to the NuStar facility, next to a community farm store, and across the street from a prominent sign promoting Lisa Ross, a candidate for Vancouver Port Commissioner who is running on a staunch pro-oil platform. Her supporters and opponents made sure to spell out her campaign clearly.



The good news is that there is significant momentum behind the opposition to these projects. The City of Vancouver denied NuStar’s appeal to avoid a State Environmental Impact Statement (See <http://columbiariverkeeper.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/NuStar-DS-Appeal-Decision.pdf>). The City is also concerned about the proposed Tesoro Savage project. (See http://www.efsec.wa.gov/Tesoro%20Savage/20150415CtyVanDEIS_PublCmt.pdf) A major downtown waterfront-development is underway and the trains would travel directly through the area. But when it comes to fossil fuels, the local community has only part of the say. “The State and Tesoro-Savage themselves also get a vote in a statewide council since the project is so massive,” Dan said.

State Environmental Impact Statements are currently underway for both proposed terminals thanks to to Washington’s State Environmental Policy Act (which Oregon does not have). In the meantime, other proposals for increased fossil fuel infrastructure and transport in the Pacific Northwest, including a natural gas terminal at the mouth of the Columbia and increased storage facilities in the Port of Grays Harbor, Washington, require statewide attention. The Columbia River and its communities need people of faith with their common moral vision to speak out against the conversion of our region into a carbon corridor. Please visit our website, http://www.emoregon.org/power_light.php, to learn what you can do to add your voice to the chorus.

This reflection was written by Heather Moline, Program Assistant, with contributions by Jenny Holmes, EMO Environmental Ministries Director.