

Quinault Indian Nation Says Quebec "Could Have Been Hoquiam"

Local News

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TAHOLAHA, Wash. - The Quinault Indian Nation has released a statement on the recent train wreck in Quebec Canada, President Fawn Sharp said "Five people killed, 40 missing, many more injured, a city nearly destroyed and untold environmental damage. This is what they call safe? Yes, this all took place with the oil train derailment in Quebec this week end. But it could have easily been Hoquiam," "The Quinault Nation continues to oppose the expansion of the Westway Terminals' Port of Grays Harbor facility to handle shipments of crude oil. We consider such an expansion a violation of federally protected treaty rights and a violation of good stewardship and common sense," she said. "The risk is not worth a few more, unsustainable jobs. Far too much is at stake, and there is simply no way oil train proponents can pass the straight face test and tell us that their proposal is safe. Lives are at stake. Fish and wildlife resources. Water quality and much, much more. These are the same type of rail cars that will come pouring through our area, and unquestionably threaten the lives and safety of our people and resources," she said.

Westway Terminal Company, based in Louisiana and Texas, has been pushing ahead toward construction of a new oil shipping terminal in Grays Harbor that would give it the capacity to store 800,000 barrels of crude oil at any given time. Westway predicts it will bring at least ten million barrels of crude oil annually through Grays Harbor, via rail and marine vessels. Two additional facilities for crude-by-rail—amounting to tens of millions of barrels of crude oil annually through Grays Harbor—are also being proposed in the same area, posing major environmental risks to the Grays Harbor community and the Quinault Nation. State and local regulators have decided to allow this proposal to go forward with minimal environmental review. "It is not a matter of 'if' these shipments will cause a major spill; it's a matter of 'when,'" said Sharp. "The massive train, oil barge and ship traffic this project will bring to Grays Harbor is a tragedy waiting to happen. There will be spills and they will harm salmon, shellfish, and aquatic life, trample our treaty rights and cultural historic sites, and tie up traffic for extensive distances," she said. "In 2012, major U.S. railroads transported at least 20 times as many carloads of crude oil as they did in 2008—more than a 2,000 percent increase in four years. "The number of accidents has risen proportionately," said Sharp. The Grays Harbor proposals add marine vessels to this patchwork system: crude oil would arrive by rail, be transferred into large storage tanks, then be piped into ocean-going barges and ships to be transported and again transferred to refineries in Washington or California. "It has aptly been called a pipeline on wheels," she said. "And this ill-conceived system has been given a short-cut permit process, with all the wheels greased, all for the very narrow interests of profits and short-term financial gain. But the money this project will bring into our area will be dwarfed by the devastation when the spills come. Just ask our neighbors to the north," she said.