

## [Grays Harbor Oyster Growers Association opposes crude by rail](#)

### Local News

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GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY, Wash. - The Grays Harbor Oyster Growers Association this week announced their opposition to petroleum export projects underway at the Port of Grays Harbor. Mark Ballo, president of the association said "The Grays Harbor Oyster Growers have concerns about these three projects and are shut out of any discussion because of the Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance." ***The following editorial was submitted by Mark Ballo, president of the Grays Harbor Oyster Growers Association.*** Recently the Port of Grays Harbor Commissioners passed a resolution allowing crude by rail to be part of the Port's business plan. Presently, three crude by rail proposals are in the works. The City of Hoquiam and Department of Ecology are jointly responsible for the permitting process to allow this to happen. Hoquiam and the Department of Ecology issued a Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance. What this means is that even though the public had concerns and made them known during the comment period, the city and the state did not honor them, even if valid.

The Grays Harbor Oyster Growers have concerns about these three projects and are shut out of any discussion because of the Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance. Our concerns are that standard quality crude is difficult to clean up after a spill and that the infrastructure for the three projects will be built and in place before the real impacts are revealed. We know that when the money has been spent the projects are sure to go forward no matter what the studies determine. Even more importantly the types of petroleum products that can be shipped do not lend themselves to current cleanup methods being proposed. The Port, Hoquiam and Department of Ecology say &mdash; just trust us. The petroleum product that has not had much discussion is that of tar sands bitumen from Canada. This product is a very heavy and thick product and has to be thinned to be pumped. One thinner that is used is benzene, a regulated carcinogen. There are other carriers but the petroleum industry does not have to reveal what they are. The product the growers have special concern with is dilute bitumen or dilbit. There has been a number of dilute bitumen spills in recent years with disturbing cleanup results. For example, the spill in Michigan's Kalamazoo River happened nearly three years ago and the federal Environmental Protection Agency is still trying to clean it up. If interested Google it. Dilbit has special properties that make it dangerous for the Grays Harbor Oyster Growers and the environment we all use and enjoy. When spilled, once the thinners are exposed to water and air the product sinks to the bottom. Once it gets under the surface it does not lend itself to standard clean-up procedures. You can imagine a tar like substance trading up and down the estuary and Chehalis River bottoms releasing a contaminant sheen on each tide change. Once the permits are in place the railroad can haul this product and federal laws will protect this use. The shellfish growers, fishing families and tourism based industries need a clean environment to operate. A recent study concluded that the lower Chehalis River and estuary provide more than 30 percent of the economic base for our county. They are claiming to create a lot of jobs, but as stated at a recent public meeting, in Elma, Westway currently only hires four employees at their local tank farm. Please contact your elected official and neighbors and demand a Environmental Impact Statement so that the public questions can be asked and the answers provided before crude by rail is allowed in Grays Harbor.