

# *For Immediate Release*

## **Train Derailment at Chehalis River “Too Close For Comfort”**

**TAHOLAH, WA (6/2/16)**—Tuesday afternoon a Pacific Sound & Pacific Railroad train derailed just south of the Grays Harbor town of Central Park, between Montesano and Aberdeen near Highway 12, and six of the train’s eight derailed cars ended up on their side. Their contents spilled onto the tracks and into water-filled ditches, immediately next to the Chehalis River.

“This time the train was carrying cracked grain. Next time it could easily be crude oil,” said Fawn Sharp, President of the Quinault Indian Nation. “This is too close for comfort. It’s what we have been fearing ever since proposals were made to expand the oil terminals here, along with a projected ten time increase in oil train traffic. This crash is a vivid demonstration of the very serious problems these proposals, as well as the existing oil train traffic, pose to us,” she said.

“The crash was extremely close to Quinault traditional fishing grounds, where our people have fished for thousands of years,” said Sharp. “If the train had been carrying oil the spill would have been a major tragic blow to our fishermen, our economy and our way of life,” she said. “It would have killed everything in the water at a time when we are already facing a severely diminished wild Coho run due to pollution and climate change impacts in the ocean.”

None of the grain reportedly spilled into the river, but Sharp says there is no doubt that oil would have easily made it into the water, big time.

Larry Ralston, Quinault Councilman and Treasurer, said the rails and bridges on the train’s route have been seriously out of repair and that heavy oil trains have no business traversing them, even though some repairs have been made.

“I have fished right there ever since I was a young man,” he said. “No amount of oil is worth destroying our fishing grounds. That’s our culture as well as our livelihood. Threatening the river the way the oil industry does is horrible,” he said.

Ironically, the motto of the Puget Sound & Pacific Railroad is that safety is their top priority. “If safety is truly their top priority, it’s even more proof that Grays Harbor is not a suitable place for oil trains,” said Sharp.

According to Alison Meyers, the State Department of Ecology’s Natural Resource Damage Assessment Lead, DOE dispatched responders to the scene last night, but they determined the scene to be too unsafe for assessment in the dark. He said the agency’s responders were following up with a site assessment Thursday afternoon. He added that the current plan of action is to repair the rail, empty the cars and right them, and then clean up the remaining spilled cracked grain. Hulcher Services has been contracted to repair the railroad and NRCES has been contracted for the grain removal and cleanup.

“We dread the next accident,” said President Sharp.

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