

Zenith Fact Sheet “Risky Move: Tar Sands Oil-by-Rail”



Tar sands train unloading at Zenith and new construction at Zenith, February 2019. (Photos by Columbia Riverkeeper).

Trains moving [tar sands oil](#) bound for a Portland, OR, facility—Zenith Energy— threaten communities along the Willamette and Columbia rivers and throughout the Pacific Northwest. [In 2016, Multnomah County, OR, studied oil train hazards.](#) The conclusion: oil trains pose unaddressed, disproportionate risks for low-income communities and communities of color in Multnomah County. Like Bakken crude oil, the oil that spilled and burned in the 2016 Mosier, OR, oil-train derailment, tar sands crude can burn. When spilled, tar sands sink—fouling drinking water, harming fish habitat, and introducing cancer-causing toxins into the environment.

In 2016, Portland’s City Council voted unanimously to prohibit new fossil fuel infrastructure such as oil and gas terminals. Zenith’s expansion contradicts [Portland’s stated opposition to expanded oil train](#) traffic by adding rail unloading infrastructure that will facilitate more tar sands shipments through Portland.

Zenith’s plans might have a connection to McCall Oil & Chemical company’s proposal to dredge the Willamette River at a nearby shipping dock. Located adjacent to Zenith, McCall Oil & Chemical company wants to dredge the Willamette River to facilitate marine shipments of petroleum products, potentially including tar sands from the Zenith facility. Check out [the public notice.](#)

Columbia Riverkeeper and our partners are calling on the City of Portland and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to investigate Zenith’s expansion and halt any additional approvals for the project. [Take Action: Sign a petition to urge the City of Portland, Oregon DEQ, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to deny authorizations for expanded tar sands train shipments through Portland.](#)

Questions? Contact Dan Serres, Conservation Director, at dan@columbiariverkeeper.org