



Our Lake for Life

July 26, 2019

Nhi Irwin, Rulemaking Lead
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Comments on June 5, 2019 Amending (Chapter 173-186) of the Rulemaking Proposal on Oil Spill Contingency Plan-Railroad

Railroad companies carry fossil fuels and other hazardous substances across and adjacent to Lake Pend Oreille and the Pend Oreille River. As you may know, Burlington Northern Santa Fe recently proposed construction of an additional bridge across Lake Pend Oreille, which would enable rail traffic volume increases in our region.

Hazardous substances including crude oil and potentially, diluted bitumen, are carried across the state line from Idaho into Washington over the Spokane Valley-Rathdrum-Prairie aquifer, which provides sole source drinking water to thousands of residents among our two states. Lake Pend Oreille contributes to recharge of this aquifer at its southernmost point.

The potential for an accident to occur during transport is concerning for a number of reasons; most notably, the potential for surface water or groundwater contamination. Considering these possible outcomes, the need for more rapid response is of primary importance. Please consider requiring a more stringent response time from that which is currently proposed.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Chantilly Higbee

Lake Pend Oreille Waterkeeper