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NETWORK, INC.**

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MAPPING UNADDRESSED RISKS

Increasing Number of Crude Oil Trains Moving Across New York State Pose Unaddressed Risk to Children, Schools, and Communities

The recent spike in oil train traffic in the Albany region presents unexamined and unaddressed risks to public safety, including potential impacts to 75 K-12 schools, according to new mapping by environment and health groups. The recent accidents in Lac Megantic, Quebec and Casselton, ND that resulted in mass casualties and huge releases of air toxins illustrate how woefully unprepared New York State is to address derailments and other accidents.

“We are increasingly concerned about the growing number of crude oil rail cars crossing New York from Buffalo and the upper reaches of Lake Champlain to Albany every day along some of the state's most important waterways and through its village and city centers,” said Healthy Schools Network Executive Director Claire Barnett. “A catastrophic event, should it happen near an occupied school, could devastate a community for a generation or more.”

The Natural Resources Defense Council and Healthy Schools Network have partnered to create the two maps that are being released today. Both maps, one of New York’s Capital District, the other of the Canadian Pacific rail line that runs between Albany and the Canadian border, identify public and private K-12 schools and BOCES within one mile of the train lines currently in active use to haul highly combustible fracked shale oil. The trains of are coming from North Dakota’s Bakken oil fields, and there are new proposals on the table to ship tar sands crude from Alberta, Canada into the Port of Albany. (NRDC: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-jj-Uqv_J65cDBLWkpBd3lmU1U/edit?usp=sharing, Healthy Schools Network: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-jj-Uqv_J65dWQxUjd1Z1JWZzg/edit?usp=sharing)

“These maps illustrate what those who’ve had to live in the path of these dangerous trains the past few years already know – the uncontrolled expansion of crude-by-rail threatens our planet and our communities,” said Jon Krois, Project Attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council. “It’s the government’s job to protect us, and there have been some positive steps, but it’s not enough. They can start right here in Albany by doing a complete review of the health and environmental impacts that come from quadrupling the amount of oil shipments through the region. And government officials also need to take a close look at the local and global impacts of shipping dirty tar sands through the Port.”

A proposal before the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to build an oil processing facility at the Port of Albany has raised awareness of the potential dangers that could impact the local community and areas well beyond. DEC has already issued a narrow finding of negative impact for a facility air emissions permit. However, in light of recent catastrophes, federal warnings about the flammability of the crude oil, and the serious deficiencies of the older rail cars, calls are growing for broader public input and analysis, including a comprehensive environment and health impact assessment that covers the facility and paths by which crude oil reaches the Port.

In the areas covered in these two maps, there are fewer than ten emergency services that have paid 24/7 staff. Along over a hundred miles of railroad track on the western shore of Lake Champlain, only all-volunteer departments exist, appropriate for the general population, but not appropriate for new and greatly expanded industrial-scale risks. Even a first-responder “mutual aid” call might not be adequate for a catastrophic rail disaster and the only recourse then is to move the whole community.

“We are releasing these maps today as part of our call for a more thorough and stringent environmental and health impact analysis,” Barnett added. “We call on state and federal officials to consider the impact on schools and on children, and on the lack of capacity in smaller rural communities to deal with a large-scale industrial catastrophe.” These maps focus on a one-mile radius from the tracks, as these types of disasters have the potential to affect areas up to a mile or more, according to the US Dept. of Transportation.*

Advocacy groups and concerned citizens are calling for a full and transparent accounting of all elements of the potential health impacts of increased oil train traffic, to be conducted by public health professionals. This review must be made public and the public given time to consider and to comment on its findings and recommendations before permits are granted. Additionally, since small spills add up, groups are calling on the state to require a full accounting of all the chemical hazards that are components of tar sands oil that is being transported.

Additional Quotes from Concerned Citizens, Political Representatives and Public Advocates

“I am concerned with the growing number of freight trains carrying crude oil and other hazardous materials through our communities,” said Congressman Bill Owens, representing New York’s 21st District. “Since last year’s tragedy in Quebec, I have advocated for stricter

regulations for updated tank car designs and operational rules such as safer speed limits. I will continue to work to ensure that our state and local first responders have the hazardous shipment information, training, and resources they need to protect our communities, including our children's schools."

Dan Connell, Supervisor, Town of Westport, Essex County, NY, said: "As Town of Westport Supervisor, I have grave concerns about the crude oil trains. They pass through the hamlet and along our lake shore. So a derailment anyplace in the Town of Westport could have devastating effects on the people and the environment throughout the Town."

Assemblymember Pat Fahy, representing the 109th District, said: "As the former president of the Albany School Board, and as an Assemblymember representing several schools and neighborhoods that could be impacted should an oil train disaster occur, I am deeply concerned. We must do all we can to protect our children, our neighbors and ourselves. I thank the Healthy Schools Network for helping to raise awareness about this very serious issue. I will continue to work with my colleagues to find the best ways to make sure the oil trains passing through our community become the safest possible."

Assemblymember John T. McDonald, representing the 108th Assembly District, said: "For generations rail transport has been an efficient method of transporting goods and services across our country, state and region. In as much as I am sure there have been more volatile substances transported without public knowledge over the years, the recent significant uptick in rail transport has surely gotten the attention of those who live near the rail lines as well as throughout the communities. At the state level we continue to advocate and work with our government partners, particularly at the federal level where most jurisdictional oversight is, to ensure the safest rail transport processes are in place to protect not only those proximal to the rail lines but also those in the community and those who might be called to respond in case of an emergency."

"The Adirondack Council is deeply concerned for the safety of local school children, as well as other residents, visitors and the clean waters of the Adirondack Park and Lake Champlain, as explosive crude oil shipments on the Canadian Pacific Rail Road have increased," said William C. Janeway, Executive Director of the Adirondack Council, the park's largest environmental organization. "The rail line travels more than 100 miles through the Adirondack Park, passing through a dozen small communities and hugging the shoreline of Lake Champlain. More than 180,000 people in New York, Vermont and Quebec rely on Lake Champlain for drinking water."

"Governor Cuomo has appropriately applied pressure on federal agencies to significantly strengthen regulations and oversight for crude oil transport by rail. But that does not mean New York should abdicate responsibility where the state has clear jurisdiction to regulate unsafe activities, especially with so many vulnerable populations in the pathway of potential catastrophe," said Roger Downs, Conservation Director, Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter. "The Governor and the DEC should rescind its negative declaration of significance for the expansion of crude oil infrastructure at the Port of Albany and order the comprehensive environmental review that the public has been demanding for months."

*The US Department of Transportation Emergency Response Guidebook recommends a standard evacuation zone of 800 meters (0.5 miles) for accidents involving railcars filled with flammable liquids and gases and an isolation zone of 1600 meters (1.0 miles) around any railcar filled with those materials if they are on fire.

<http://phmsa.dot.gov/staticfiles/PHMSA/DownloadableFiles/Files/Hazmat/ERG2012.pdf>

*Interactive map available online at:

<https://mapsengine.google.com/map/edit?mid=zTqMtnv4qduM.kvreo9iik-30>