

# The Mesa Refinery Watch Group



## Newsletter: June 4, 2020

FACT-CHECKED REASONS TO REJECT THE PHILLIPS 66 RAIL TERMINAL

### CRUDE-BY-RAIL:

- Only Phillips 66 Wins
- Citizens Become Collateral Damage

### Why MRWG Continues To Publish This Newsletter ...

While we're pleased P66's crude oil rail terminal in SLO County was rejected, Californians must remain vigilant. We face dramatic shifts in government policies ... so there are no assurances P66 will not submit a new proposal. Therefore, we must stay aware of related developments.

This newsletter will continue to be a primary resource. If a new threat arises, the Mesa Refinery Watch will advise you about actions that need to be taken.

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## A. WHAT'S NEW THAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### 1. Town Suffers Two Major Crude-By-Rail Disasters Within Two Months

Last December, a Canadian Pacific (CP) oil train derailed near Guernsey, Saskatchewan, causing 33 tankers to leave the tracks. Almost 400,000 gallons of oil spilled, followed by fires and smoke.

Then this February, on the other side of town, another CP train derailed only a third of a mile away! This time, 32 tankers derailed. A dozen spilled 317,000 gallons of crude. The oil burned for 24 hours.

**The train was carrying bitumen (tar sands oil) owned by ConocoPhillips.**

"Flames and thick black smoke poured from the crumpled cars and prompted an evacuation of 85 residents." The agricultural community expressed its concern. CP hired consultants to assess the impacts. Cleanup will take months.

**One resident stated - "It looks like an inferno, like a war zone. It is pretty bad."**

In reporting the accident, *Railway Age* discussed tar sands oil - "Alberta bitumen is a thick tar diluted by up to one-third with naphtha or other petroleum gases to make it liquid enough to load into tank cars. **It is diluent that makes bitumen shipments explosive.**" (This is the very same crude oil P66 wished to bring to California and the Nipomo Mesa.)

The **ruptured** tankers were type TC-117J, the **newer "industry standard."** TC-117 cars were also involved in the December accident. So again, "industry standards" aren't nearly good enough.



<https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/train-derails-west-of-humboldt-police-on-scene/wcm/9210baf4-d3c3-4c5b-9046-9cbe28c012>  
<https://globalnews.ca/news/6536998/crude-oil-spill-guernsey-saskatchewan-cp-train-derailment/>  
<https://www.railwayage.com/safety/transport-canada-slow-orders-alberta-crude-oil-trains/>  
<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2020/02/06/another-fiery-train-derailment-in-saskatchewan-forces-residents-to-evacuate-from-area.html>  
<https://thestarphoenix.com/news/local-news/highway-remains-closed-as-rail-line-reopens-at-derailment-near-guernsey>  
<https://www.ecowatch.com/valve-turners-climate-direct-action-2645054934.html>  
<https://saskatoon.ctvnews.ca/slowdown-ordered-after-second-train-carrying-oil-derails-near-sask-town-1.4799721>  
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/cp-train-conoco-oil-crude-derail-guernsey-saskatchewan-1.5457520>



## 2. Ethanol Train Slams Into Rockslide; Locomotive Plunges Into A River

### Two Crewmen Rescued By Boat Just Before They Would Be Burned Alive

February 13th -- A CSX train carrying three locomotives and 96 full ethanol cars derailed in eastern Kentucky, close to homes. The cause -- "several hundred yards of mud and rocks on the tracks" as a result of heavy rains. The engines and four ethanol tankers derailed. **One engine fell into a river and was engulfed in flames.**

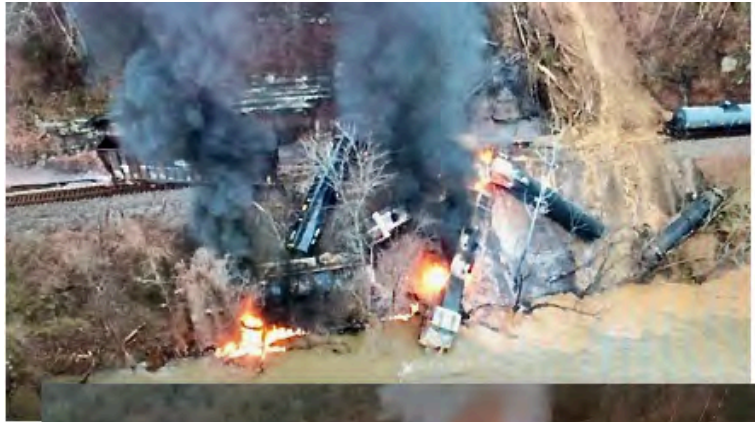
A witness described the scene - "It sounded like a tornado ripping through ... a real loud rumbling. The flames were 50-60 feet in the air. It's gut-wrenching to see."

Two crew members climbed out of the locomotive, clinging to the cab, **yelling for help as the flames grew higher and closer.** The witness said - "Their time was running out quick." Finally a rescue crew arrived by boat and took them to safety. They were transported to a hospital with non-life threatening injuries. (See bottom photo and the video at <https://tinyurl.com/vw57skj>.)

An official reported - "**Two ethanol cars involved in the fire were breached** in the derailment. They have pretty much since burnt out."

Nearby communities were evacuated due to potential explosions from the ethanol cars.

CSX deployed environmental monitors. And since diesel fuel spilled into the river, water samples were taken to make sure it was still safe to drink.



### 3. Crude Oil Tanker Truck Crashes; Spills Load Into River Near Santa Maria, CA

March 21, 2020 - "A tanker truck overturned, **spilling more than 6,600 gallons of crude oil** into a river that flows into a dam and reservoir near the city of Santa Maria."

The driver had turned onto State Road 166 but his trailer began swaying. As he tried to gain control, the tanker disconnected and plunged into the waterway.

**"Crews were racing to stop the oil that spilled into the Cuyama River from reaching Twitchell Dam and reservoir, which provides flood control and water conservation on the Central Coast.** The spill stretched two miles long." Workers had to cut through barbed wire to gain access to the tanker.

"(The crews) constructed dirt berms and threw a boom into the water to contain the oil. They placed large pipes under the berms to keep uncontaminated water flowing to the dam while they use pads to absorb the floating oil slick." The cleanup was estimated to take two weeks.

In addition to emergency crews, **"The Oiled Wildlife Care Network** was activated to respond to reports of oiled wildlife."

This newsletter has previously reported on the dangers posed not only by crude-by-rail but crude-by-truck. Tanker trucks have become more prevalent in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties, given the shutdown of pipelines since the Refugio Beach oil spill in 2015.



[https://santamariatimes.com/news/local/overturned-tanker-spills-k-gallons-oil-into-cuyama-river/article\\_59399496-d63c-55a3-9ad0-69370052b463.html](https://santamariatimes.com/news/local/overturned-tanker-spills-k-gallons-oil-into-cuyama-river/article_59399496-d63c-55a3-9ad0-69370052b463.html)  
[https://santamariatimes.com/news/local/trailer-that-rolled-into-cuyama-river-spilled-about-gallons-of/article\\_169814ba-43d9-5d1e-b46e-533e0a3a8bc7.html](https://santamariatimes.com/news/local/trailer-that-rolled-into-cuyama-river-spilled-about-gallons-of/article_169814ba-43d9-5d1e-b46e-533e0a3a8bc7.html)  
<https://www.ksby.com/news/local-news/overturned-oil-tanker-dumps-6000-gallons-of-crude-oil-into-cuyama-river>  
<https://www.ksby.com/news/local-news/trucks-removing-oil-spilled-into-cuyama-river>



#### 4. Plains All American To Pay \$60 Million Fine For Refugio Beach Oil Spill

"On May 19, 2015, oil gushed from a corroded pipeline north of Refugio State Beach. The spill blackened beaches for miles, killed or fouled hundreds of seabirds, seals and other wildlife and hurt tourism and fishing. It was the worst California coastal oil spill (more than 100,000 gallons) since 1969."



In mid-March, Plains All American Pipeline agreed to end a lawsuit filed by federal and state agencies. **Although they didn't admit wrongdoing, they will pay \$60 million regarding allegations of having violated safety laws.** The complaint included failing to deal with corroded pipelines and reacting too slowly as the spill progressed. The "money will be used for restoration, recreation, education and research projects."

Before the suit is finalized, "the agreement must undergo public comment and needs federal court approval." Plains has filed to replace or repair their defective pipelines.

<https://www.ksby.com/news/local-news/pipeline-owner-agrees-to-pay-60m-over-2015-california-spill>  
<https://www.kclu.org/post/federal-government-reaches-settlement-company-over-2015-oil-spill-santa-barbara-county#stream/0>

#### 5. Oil Companies Attempting To Store Their Glut Of Crude In Railroad Tankers

The demand for crude oil has declined dramatically and **storage space for crude could run out by mid-2020.** But "railroads including Union Pacific and BNSF are telling oil shippers they do not want them to move loaded crude trains to private rail car storage facilities on their tracks due to safety concerns.



"The railroads are telling clients that **tank cars are not a prudent long-term storage mechanism for a hazardous commodity such as crude,** and do not want to put a loaded crude oil train in a private facility and potentially create a safety hazard.

"Most federal regulations require rail cars loaded with crude oil to be **moved promptly within 48 hours.** Therefore, regulations discourage shippers and railroads from leaving crude oil in transportation for an extended time."

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-global-oil-rail-storage/u-s-railroads-push-against-oil-industry-demands-for-storage-in-rail-cars-idUSKCN21R2TO>

## 6. Ten U.S. Oil Refineries Have Unacceptable Levels Of Benzene At Their Fence Lines

In 2018 there were 139 operating oil refineries in the United States.

Recently, the Environmental Integrity Project (an environmental nonprofit organization) "examined the monitoring reports of more than 100 refineries and identified **10 whose fence line benzene levels were higher than the EPA's "action level."** Refineries with the highest levels are in Texas, Pennsylvania and New Mexico.



"Refineries are required to monitor benzene around their fence line and if their concentration exceeds the action level, they are required to implement corrective measures."

"Benzene can affect the human blood system and **increase the risk of cancer.** (It's) classified as a known human carcinogen, with the potential to cause leukemia."

EIP's Executive Director stated - "These results highlight **refineries that need to do a better job of installing pollution controls and implementing safer practices** to reduce the leakage of this cancer-causing pollutant into local communities."

<https://tinyurl.com/w27kzal> • <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/business/2013/08/03/the-most-oil-rich-states/2613497/>

## 7. Railway Planned To Expand Transportation Of The Pollutant "Petcoke" In Chicago Neighborhoods -- Residents Rise Up

In East Chicago, BP's Whiting Refinery produces petcoke (petroleum coke sand/dust) as a byproduct of refining Canadian tar sands oil. It was learned that the railway "Canadian National (CN) planned to **store piles of petroleum coke in the city's neighborhoods.**" "Petcoke particles "can affect the heart and lungs and cause serious health effects." (Petcoke is also produced at P66's refinery on the Nipomo Mesa and stored outdoors in a windy environment.)



CN said their project would be used to store "empty cars." But "city officials said the railway (intended to create) a **transfer point** for the storage of (petcoke to be) shipped to Asian markets." Residents and environmental groups decried the plan. Then -- CN backed off the project, saying their "customer has reevaluated their logistical needs."

<https://tinyurl.com/tzzxnz4> • <https://www.nwitimes.com/content/tncms/live/> • <https://tinyurl.com/u83go8l>



## 8. Refinery Accidents Have Driven Up Insurance Costs ... In Response, Refineries Now Carry Less Insurance!

"U.S. refineries and petrochemical plants are **cutting back on insurance because several years of severe accidents have driven up the cost of coverage.** Rates have increased as much as 100% for some refiners, particularly those that have experienced explosions or fires.

"With energy and chemical production at an all-time high, increasingly complex refineries have been running full-tilt, **eschewing planned downtime (for repairs, etc.)** to try to boost profits.

"The heightened risk comes after a series of high-profile accidents, including several explosions at plants in Texas and last year's blaze that shut the Philadelphia Energy Solutions refinery.

"With less insurance coverage, energy companies could be liable for millions of dollars of costs in repairs and lost business in the case of an explosion or fire. In the worst-case outcome, entire refineries could close if insurance coverage is inadequate." (Note - with the price of oil now down dramatically, it's doubtful that oil companies will increase spending on insurance.)

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-refineries-insurance/u-s-refiners-chemical-makers-pare-insurance-coverage-as-accidents-boost-costs-idUSKBN1ZT0FB>



## 9. Canadian Tar Sands Oil Dealt Major Blow; But Further Development May Be Revived

A developer has **abandoned a nine-year effort** to extend (tar sands) mining. The project would have "slashed through 24,000 acres of boreal forest and released millions of tons of climate-warming carbon dioxide every year." But due to opposition, the developer, Teck Resources, declared -- "there is no constructive path forward."

Unfortunately - "**More than a dozen (tar sands) proposals are awaiting regulatory approval or investment decisions** ... those were (supposedly) economically and environmentally more viable."



<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/24/business/energy-environment/frontier-oil-sands-canada.html?searchResultPosition=1>  
<https://www.desmogblog.com/2013/04/08/photos-mayflower-arkansas-residents-launch-class-action-lawsuit-exxon-tar-sands-disaster>

## 10. Dredging Of Bay Area Waterways Opposed By Environmental Groups

The Army Corps of Engineers is planning to dredge a 13-mile stretch of the San Francisco Bay Estuary. The project would **deepen the channel leading to four oil refineries** (including Phillips 66) by an average of three feet, allowing for the arrival of a **larger class of oil tankers** than can currently access these refineries."



However, local groups such as the Center for Biological Diversity, Sierra Club and San Francisco Baykeeper are in opposition. Their issues "fall into three categories: direct impacts on the aquatic environment from dredging and the increased traffic; direct air quality impacts from the increase in refinery operations; and, concern that increasing the capacity for fossil fuels contradicts the state's goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions."

"This (also) leads to the question of why **taxpayers** should fund (at a cost of \$57 million) a project whose **main beneficiaries are privately owned oil refineries.**"

<https://baynature.org/2020/04/16/environmental-groups-oppose-u-s-army-corps-plan-to-dredge-the-bay-for-bigger-oil-tankers/>  
<https://www.kqed.org/news/11744480/phillips-66-fined-again-for-polluting-san-pablo-bay>  
<https://www.kqed.org/science/1944034/trump-administration-wants-to-dredge-san-francisco-bay-to-help-oil-shipping>

## 11. Expanding The Length Of Trains Leads Union Pacific To Sideline Thousands Of Locomotives

"As many as 200 railroad engines have been sidelined in a Union Pacific rail yard (near Salt Lake City). Reports show the company **sidelined 3,100 locomotives** nationwide by the end of 2019, about 40% of (its) engines.

"A company spokeswoman wrote that the engines are being stored due to a company-wide efficiency program."



A labor union leader had a different explanation - "They're **doubling the size of trains**, so they don't need as many locomotives." He said the trains "**were getting far too long ... two, three, four miles (long)**, depending on the equipment." Union Pacific did not dispute the claim.

One key issue is that longer trains can block multiple highway crossings, "cutting off emergency runs by (first responders). (Responders) often have to reroute many miles to get to (those in need), which could mean life or death."

<https://ksltv.com/435863/dozens-of-railroad-locomotives-sitting-idle-north-of-salt-lake/>



## 12. Two California Phillips 66 Refineries To Be Sued For Violating Pollution Laws

The environmental rights group Earthjustice has sent notice "to Phillips 66 of intent to sue for **'repeated and ongoing' violations of state pollution laws** at the company's Wilmington and Carson refineries."

They argue that "the petroleum refineries expose nearby communities to **hundreds of tons of known carcinogens**, leading to 'increased cancer and other health risks,' and in doing so, violate the federal Clean Air Act." They point out that "low-income communities with higher smog levels are at greater risk of dying from COVID-19 and that health damage from the coronavirus can be made worse by long-term exposure to air pollution."



<https://www.dailybreeze.com/2020/04/29/environmentalists-tell-phillips-66-of-intent-to-sue-over-pollution-concerns-in-carson-wilmington/>

## 13. Trump Administration Disallows Washington State From Protecting Its Citizens Against Oil Trains ... "Market Growth" Overrides Safety

"The Trump administration moved to block a Washington state law that **imposed safety restrictions on oil shipments by rail** following a string of explosive accidents.

"The Department of Transportation determined federal law preempts the Washington law, which mandated crude from the oil fields of the Northern Plains **have more of its volatile gases removed prior to being loaded onto rail cars.**



"The volatility of oil trains drew widespread public attention following several explosive derailments, including one in 2013 in Lac-Megantic, Quebec that killed 47 people. (Also - see above photo from the 2016 Union Pacific rail disaster in Mosier, OR.) Washington's law was aimed at boosting safety for schools and homes that are near passing oil trains."

A DOT spokesperson said - "A state **cannot use safety as a pretext** for inhibiting market growth or instituting a de facto ban on crude oil by rail within its borders."

[https://santamariatimes.com/news/local/state-and-regional/us-says-washington-state-overstepped-with-oil-train-law/article\\_bc27fb4e-9b90-5625-95ca-884596c9b2ed.html](https://santamariatimes.com/news/local/state-and-regional/us-says-washington-state-overstepped-with-oil-train-law/article_bc27fb4e-9b90-5625-95ca-884596c9b2ed.html)



## 14. Ongoing Reversals To Environmental & Safety Safeguards Reminds Us To Remain On Alert Regarding Renewed Crude-By-Rail Proposals

There continue to be ongoing attacks on federal policies and regulations related to environmental protection. With a "business first" attitude radiating from Washington D.C., we must stay on guard against attempts to revive P66's crude oil rail terminal. Here are further examples of recent assaults on our health, safety and environment (sources listed on [page 16](#)):

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### a. EPA Official Goes To Work For Coal Industry Lobby

*The Hill* - "One of the EPA's highest ranking political appointees is leaving to work for the nation's top coal mining advocate. Ryan Jackson (shown in photo), chief of staff to (the) EPA Administrator, **will be a lobbyist for the National Mining Association.**



"Jackson was under investigation by the EPA's Office of Inspector General for his suspected involvement in the destruction of documents that should have been retained. Another investigation centered around whether Jackson interfered with testimony another EPA employee was set to give Congress."

"Environmental groups have argued (that) the Trump EPA has been a revolving door as **high-level employees go back and forth between the agency and industries it regulates.**"

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### b. New Drilling Goes Forward Despite Objections From Federal Agency's Staff

*The Hill* - "The Bureau of Land Management's Washington office ignored the advice of its Colorado staff, deciding to expand oil and gas drilling in the southwest corner of the state **because earlier plans were 'not in line with the administration's direction to decrease regulatory burden and increase access.'**



"Documents show tension between the agency's regional staff and those who work in headquarters. Expanded activity was approved **over objections from Gov. Jared Polis**, who argued the plan would increase haze, interfere with protected wildlife and conflict with state laws on drilling."

### c. The Administration Is Slashing Away Almost 100 Environmental Rules

*NY Times* - "After three years in office, the Trump administration has dismantled most of the major climate and environmental policies the president promised to undo.

"Calling the rules unnecessary and burdensome to the fossil fuel industry and other businesses, his administration **has weakened limits on planet-warming carbon dioxide emissions from power plants and from cars and trucks, and rolled back many more rules governing clean air, water and toxic chemicals.**"

	Completed	In progress	Total
Air pollution and emissions	19	8	27
Drilling and extraction	11	8	19
Infrastructure and planning	10	1	11
Animals	9	2	11
Toxic substances and safety	6	2	8
Water pollution	4	7	11
Other	5	6	11
All	64	34	98

As of early May 2020, "an analysis counts more than 60 environmental rules and regulations officially reversed, revoked or otherwise rolled back. An additional 34 are still in progress. The rollbacks could significantly increase greenhouse gas emissions and lead to thousands of extra deaths from poor air quality."

### d. EPA Uses COVID-19 As An Excuse To Cease Enforcement Of Environmental Rules

*The Hill* - "The EPA issued a **suspension of its enforcement of environmental laws**, telling companies (such as those in the oil industry) they would not need to meet environmental standards during the coronavirus outbreak. The policy which has **set no end date**, would allow any industries to skirt environmental laws. The agency will not seek penalties for noncompliance with routine monitoring and reporting obligations."

"Cynthia Giles, who (previously) headed the EPA's Office of Enforcement, called it an **abdication of the agency's duty**. 'This tells companies they will not face enforcement even if they emit unlawful air and water pollution, so long as they claim those failures are in **some way caused by the virus pandemic**. And it allows them an out on monitoring, so we may never know how bad the violating pollution was.'"



Nine states are now suing the EPA. California's Attorney General -- "The Administration is trying to use the public health crisis to sweep environmental violations under the rug."

### e. Trump Devastates The Next EPA Fiscal Budget; Eradicates Environmental Programs

*The Hill* - "President Trump's proposed budget for fiscal 2021 calls for significant reductions to environmental programs at federal agencies, **including a 26% percent cut to the EPA.**

"(The) budget would **eliminate 50 EPA programs and impose massive cuts to R&D,** while also nixing money for the Energy Star rating system.

"The reductions mark the latest effort to chip away at agencies focused on science, the environment and public lands. The budget would reduce spending at the Energy Department by 8% and cut 16% from the Interior Dept."

A former EPA administrator responded - "Congress should toss this Trump budget into the dustbin. It is unconscionable to take such drastic cuts to EPA. At a time when we're only seeing greater risks from climate change, these agencies deserve to be fully funded."



### f. EPA Plans To Allow Manufacturers To Utilize "Forever" Chemicals Without Having The Finances To Remediate Them

*The Hill* - "The EPA would **absolve the nation's manufacturers of cancer-linked 'forever chemicals' from broad financial responsibility** for cleaning up their product as it leaches into the water supply across the country.

"The class of chemicals known as PFAS are **used in a variety of nonstick products (such as cookware).**"  
PFAS contamination can spread into city water supplies.

"Studies have indicated that exposure to PFAS may be linked to increased cholesterol levels, low infant birth weights, thyroid hormone disturbance and cancer."

"The proposed rule would exclude manufacturers of PFAS from providing financial assurances ... **(they) would not be required to prove they have the financial backing to clean up any contamination.**"





### g. EPA Attempts To Eliminate Regulation That Prevents Leakage Of HFCs

*Electrek* - "The EPA finalized a rule that **eliminates leak prevention and repair requirements for hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs)**, the heat-trapping pollutants used in refrigeration. The rule extended leak prevention requirements to HFCs that were already in place for ozone-depleting refrigerants."



A spokesperson for the Natural Resources Defense Council stated - "EPA's payoff to industries makes no sense. This rollback will fuel the climate crisis by adding super-polluting HFCs to the atmosphere each year, **in an amount equal to the carbon pollution from 1 million cars**. It will save industry just \$24 million a year, a pittance.

However in April - "**a federal court struck down the EPA's rollback** -- the court said the Trump administration did not follow proper procedure." The EPA has not responded.

### h. Administration Appoints Hunting Club Exec To Key Position At U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

*HuffPost* - "The administration has hired Anna Seidman, formerly a lawyer at the trophy hunting advocacy group Safari Club International, to lead the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's international affairs program. **Seidman will lead a team responsible for protecting at-risk wildlife populations.**



"The Club donated \$11,000 to President Trump's 2016 campaign and successfully lobbied Trump's Interior Department to roll back prohibitions on importing trophies of lions and elephants killed for sport.

"Seidman led several lawsuits **against** the Fish and Wildlife Service, including challenging a regulation that prohibited predator control tactics in national preserves."

## i. Administration Approves New Oil Drilling For Carrizo Plain National Monument

*KSBY* - "The Federal Bureau of Land Management (has) approved new oil drilling in the Carrizo Plain National Monument in San Luis Obispo County.

"The area, located in Santa Margarita, is known for its rare wildlife, archaeological sites, Soda Lake, the San Andreas Fault and wildflowers, known best as the 'superbloom.'"



San Luis Obispo County Assemblyman Jordan Cunningham has opposed the new drilling - **"SLO County and California does not want or need to open up our most precious pieces of open space for additional oil drilling.** I am disappointed in the federal government's decision, and urge them to reconsider."

"Under President Trump, the BLM has approved reopening wells that have been unused since the 1950s."

### Sources for attacks against the environmental protections listed above ...

<https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/480864-top-epa-political-staffer-leaves-agency-for-coal-lobby>  
<https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/481850-blm-leadership-expanded-oil-drilling-in-colorado-over-local-staff>  
<https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/482352-trump-budget-slashes-funding-for-epa-environmental-programs>  
<https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/484055-epa-moves-to-limit-financial-pressure-on-forever-chemical>  
<https://www.mdlinx.com/internal-medicine/article/4169>  
<https://electrek.co/2020/02/29/climate-crisis-weekly-epa-rolls-back-greenhouse-gas-leak-prevention-rule/>  
<https://electrek.co/2020/04/08/federal-court-epa-rollback-greenhouse-gas-rule-illegal/>  
[https://www.huffpost.com/entry/safari-club-lawyer-fish-and-wildlife-international-affairs\\_n\\_5e73c372c5b6f5b7c540a3db](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/safari-club-lawyer-fish-and-wildlife-international-affairs_n_5e73c372c5b6f5b7c540a3db)  
<https://twitter.com/SecretaryZinke/status/892866583504326658/photo/1>  
<https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/489753-epa-suspends-enforcement-of-environmental-laws-amid-coronavirus>  
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/climate/trump-environment-rollbacks.html?searchResultPosition=1>  
<https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/497630-9-states-sue-epa-for-suspending-pollution-monitoring-requirements>  
<https://www.ksby.com/news/local-news/carrizo-plain-national-monument-approved-for-oil-drilling-by-federal-bureau-of-land-management>

Newsletter continued below ...

## 15. It's Non-Stop -- Serious Railroad & Oil Industry Safety Problems (see sources on page 23)

### a. Smithton, MO; March 3, 2020: Two Dozen Cars Derail From Union Pacific Train

A "Nixle Alert" (public safety alert) was issued when a Union Pacific train left the tracks. "Twenty-four cars were involved." The cars' contents was not reported.

"Residents were awakened by a loud bang." One said -- "My gosh, I didn't know what it was but I thought it sounded like a bomb."

"Officials said the train was blocking several streets. The Missouri Highway Patrol assisted Union Pacific employees. More than a dozen large flatbed trucks lined the spur to assist in the removal of derailed cars."



### b. Jonesboro, ARK; March 29, 2020: Tornado Rips Union Pacific Train Off The Tracks

On a Saturday evening, a massive EF-3 tornado tore through Jonesboro. That level tornado packs winds of 140 mph. Homes, businesses and a mall were destroyed, with 22 people injured.

"A (stopped) Union Pacific freight train was literally pulled from the tracks, leaving wheels and axles almost in place (see photo)." "About 112 cars derailed, releasing an undisclosed flammable liquid and paint that was not hazardous. The train crew was not injured."



### c. Emeryville, CA; April 19, 2020: Union Pacific Train Derails Near Hotel

"Six cars on a Union Pacific line train derailed, temporarily blocking several street crossings. Three empty tank cars and three refrigerated box cars skidded off the tracks." The derailment occurred near the Hyatt Place Hotel.





**d. Campbell, MO; May 4, 2020:  
Dozens Of Cars On Union Pacific Train  
Tossed From The Tracks**

Twenty-five cars derailed from a Union Pacific train, spilling onto both sides of the railway. A federal highway was closed. Hazmat crews and heavy equipment were on the scene. The cars' contents were not reported; no spills were evident.



**e. Rockford, IL; April 27, 2020:  
Union Pacific Train Derails  
Near YMCA**

"A Union Pacific freight train slipped off its tracks in downtown (Rockford), crumbling parts of the pavement beneath it and getting stuck in the roadway.

The train derailed and remained upright on a stretch of tracks just south of (the) YMCA. No one was injured. The train was traveling just a few miles per hour when it left the tracks. The cause of the derailment is under investigation."



**f. Angelton, TX; May 20, 2020:  
Union Pacific Train Slams  
Into 18-Wheel Truck**

A pair of Union Pacific locomotives crashed into a tractor-trailer that was apparently stuck on the tracks, dragging the 18-wheeler down the rails.

The truck was hauling asphalt, and was severely damaged, as was one of the engines. Luckily the truck driver was unharmed.



**g. Portland, OR; May 19, 2020:  
Union Pacific Train  
Strikes Overpass**

Three empty cars on a UP train left the tracks, with one car damaging the road and a local overpass.

Traffic on the overpass was diverted away from the crash site into different lanes until the damage could be assessed and repaired.



**h. Perry County, PA; April 23, 2020:  
Train Loses A Half Dozen Cars**

The front end of a Norfolk Southern train was coming off a Susquehanna River bridge when it derailed. The train was stopped across the entire span. "Cars could be seen twisting off the tracks toward the road below it." The cars were empty.



**i. Aurora, NY; May 18, 2020:  
Hazmat Train Derails**

A Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad engine and 14 cars left the tracks. It was reported to be transporting "highly flammable petrochemicals." However, the only hazmat material released was diesel fuel from the engine. Residents were asked to evacuate.



"Authorities and railroad experts say it could have been a whole lot worse." The police chief commented - "It was an act of God, I think, for the train to come off here in a parking lot with no structures around or anything."



**j. Baton Rouge, LA; Feb. 11, 2020:  
Yet Another Huge ExxonMobil  
Refinery Fire Lights Up The Night Sky**

"A fire inside an ExxonMobil refinery turned the night sky a shade of orange and sent a large plume of smoke into the air. The glow of the fire could be seen from miles away.

"The refinery is the fifth largest in the country. It produces gasoline, jet fuel and more, as well as items such as paint and adhesives at the chemical plant." No injuries reported. Air quality was being monitored. The cause - TBD.



"The blaze was the third major fire to hit Exxon's U.S. operations in a little more than a year: A fire broke out in a Baytown, Tex., refinery unit last March, and a fire in the Baytown olefins plant injured 37 workers in July."

**k. Carson, CA;  
Feb. 26, 2020:  
Explosion At  
LA Refinery  
Closes The 405  
Freeway**

"The Marathon Refinery (in Carson) is the largest on the West Coast. A large fire that erupted at the refinery sent flames at least 100 feet into the air. An explosion preceded the blaze in a cooling tower."



A resident heard a second explosion. "The smell ... it wasn't smoke. It smelled like chemical, the type that sits at the back of your throat." Residents were asked to stay indoors.

"(Citizens) as far away as Glendale, Studio City and Atwater Village reported hearing the explosion. The fire prompted closure of all lanes of the 405 Freeway. The LA County Sheriff's Department secured a perimeter around the refinery.



**l. Emo, Ontario; Feb. 24, 2020:  
Oil Train Derails, Spills Crude;  
A School And Residents Evacuated**

A CN train derailed in Ontario, near the U.S. border. "More than 30 cars, including 26 containing crude oil, left the track." It was traveling at 44 mph when it "experienced a train-initiated emergency brake application. Crude oil was spilled from several tank cars.



"The incident forced the evacuation of six homes" and a nearby school.

"The Transportation Safety Board confirms that, since 2013, it has investigated six derailments just west of Emo. The Mayor says it may be time to consider reducing the speed of trains passing through his community."

**m. Spofford, TX; Feb. 23, 2020:  
BNFS Train Carrying  
Unleaded Fuel Leaves The Tracks**

"Cleanup (was) underway after a train loaded with unleaded fuel derailed. Fourteen cars tipped over on their side at the Union Pacific Eagle Pass Subdivision. It is unclear if any fuel spilled.



**n. Plainville, CT; March 1, 2020:  
Conductor Leaps From Train  
As It Derails**

A train carrying empty propane tankers went off the tracks. "A conductor had to jump off the train to safety as three cars tipped and derailed, according to the fire department."

The fire chief said - "There is residual fuel (liquid propane) within the tank cars."



"In 2017, a freight train carrying petroleum derailed in the same area."

**o. Prince George, BC; March 5, 2020:  
School Evacuated After  
Freight Train Accident**

"An elementary school had to be evacuated after a major train derailment in a small community. Approximately 20 railcars went off the tracks, according to CN. It is not clear what the train was carrying (although tankers were involved)."

A woman "was driving her children from their home when they came upon the crumpled, twisted rail cars. She described the wreckage as 'un-freaking-believable.'"

The elementary school was just 200 yards from the crash. It was immediately evacuated.



**p. Swalwell, Canada; March 9, 2020:  
Train Slams Into Propane Truck;  
Residents Evacuated**

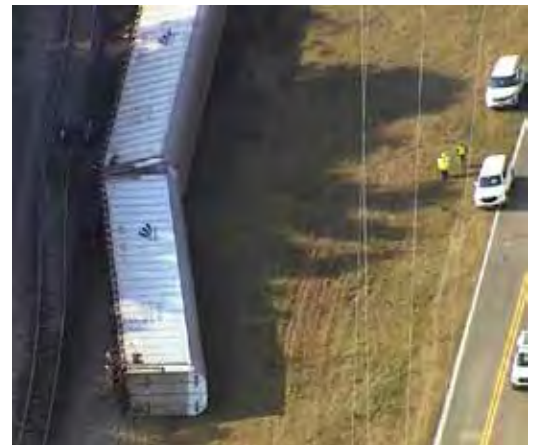
A CN train collided with a fuel truck and "impacted propane tanks. (The county) declared a State of Local Emergency." Fire crews, police and emergency services responded. The severity of the leak was unknown. Air quality tests were performed.

Firefighters went door to door and evacuated 100 people from their homes.



**q. Deland, FL; March 27, 2020:  
179 Autos Topple From Amtrak Auto Train**

Box cars on an Auto Train "lost contact with the tracks. Ten cars carrying 179 vehicles overturned and fell sideways." The train typically transports passengers as well as their automobiles from Florida to Virginia.



**r. Grant County, WI; April 20, 2020:  
Train Hits Boulder On Tracks; Rail  
Cars Land In The Mississippi River**

A BNSF train derailed "after (it) hit a large boulder on the tracks." A spokesperson said - "We had 10 rail cars that derailed, and of that, we had 3 that were partially in the water."

The boulder wound up on the tracks after a mudslide. No injuries were reported. "The cars were empty during the collision."



**Sources for the accidents reported above ...**

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## B. A SYNOPSIS OF WHAT OCCURRED DURING THE BATTLE TO STOP PHILLIPS 66's CRUDE-BY-RAIL PLAN ...

In 2013, Phillips 66 proposed changing its business model at their Arroyo Grande, CA refinery on the Nipomo Mesa. After 60 years of receiving California crude oil by relatively safe underground pipelines, they asked San Luis Obispo County for a permit to build a rail terminal to receive cheaper (more profitable), tar sands crude oil from Canada via rail tankers.



Citizens formed the *Mesa Refinery Watch Group*. We identified the many dangers of "rail" and fought along with other groups opposing the project. It took almost four years, ongoing hearings and testimony at SLO County agencies, as well fending off a Phillips 66 lawsuit. It also required obtaining official opposition from 8 different counties and 28 cities (see map below).

But in October, 2017 it all came to an end when the company withdrew the lawsuit. The rail terminal would not be built and P66's crude oil trains would not traverse California's counties. P66 has not renewed its application to construct a rail terminal, but we must remain vigilant.

For a detailed account go to "History of the Project & the Opposition" -- <http://goo.gl/h8Fo9L>.

### Counties Officially Opposed (see map)

- Alameda County
- Los Angeles County
- Monterey County
- San Luis Obispo County
- Santa Barbara County
- Santa Clara County
- Santa Cruz County
- Ventura County

### Cities Officially Opposed

- Berkeley
- Camarillo
- Carpinteria
- Davis
- Emeryville
- Fremont
- Gilroy
- Goleta
- Grover Beach
- Los Angeles
- Mar Vista
- Milpitas
- Moorpark
- Morgan Hill
- Oakland
- Oxnard
- Paso Robles
- Pismo Beach
- Richmond
- Sacramento Area Council of Governments
- San Jose
- San Leandro
- San Luis Obispo
- Santa Barbara
- Santa Cruz
- Santa Margarita
- Simi Valley
- Ventura



## C. MRWG STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS; LOGISTICS OF THIS NEWSLETTER

### 1. Mesa Refinery Watch Group Steering Committee:

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