

PRESS RELEASE, for immediate release, Thursday, December 14, 2017

Environmental Groups Appeal Permit Decision on Petrochemical Expansion Proposal in Salish Sea

MOUNT VERNON, WA — On Thursday, December 14, six local and regional environmental organizations filed an appeal of the Skagit County Hearing Examiner's of the Shoreline Substantial Development Permit for the Andeavor (formerly Tesoro) Anacortes Refinery petrochemical expansion project.

Last week, the Hearing Examiner approved the permit, despite nearly 7,500 public comments submitted to Skagit County earlier this year pressing for more thorough review, and a November 2nd hearing where dozens of people raised concerns about the project's impacts.

Stand.earth, RE Sources for Sustainable Communities, Friends of the San Juans, Evergreen Islands, Friends of the Earth, and the Sierra Club are requesting the Board of Skagit County Commissioners vacate the Hearing Examiner's decision, saying the decision will result in increased vessel traffic in the Salish Sea, increased risk of petrochemical spills, increased emissions of greenhouse gases, increased impacts to air and water quality, increased threats to public health and safety, and increased impacts to fish and wildlife resources — including the endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales.

"The Salish Sea is irreplaceable, so we have to get this right. Tesoro is proposing to transport a massive quantity of petrochemicals through the community, and the environmental study glosses over the risk of a major spill and the impact from greenhouse gases, among other things," said Chris Winter, co-director of Crag Law Center (crag.org), which is representing five of the six appealing organizations. Friends of the San Juans will be represented by a staff attorney in coordination with the other organizations. "Skagit County needs to do the right thing and deny this permit, in the absence of critical information about project impacts."

The groups' appeal can be read online at <https://www.stand.earth/files/andeavor-appeal>.

The groups are also appealing the Hearing Examiner's decision to move forward with only a Shoreline Substantial Development Permit, instead of a stronger Shoreline Conditional Use Permit. The more rigorous permit is required when older facilities propose new uses in the shoreline area, and when large bulk transfer operations are involved. Because of the unique risks associated with these types of projects, Ecology is responsible for approving shoreline conditional uses.

"Given the significant regional transportation impacts from this project, and the fact that the location Andeavor plans to build is adjacent to a Shoreline of Statewide Significance — a Shoreline Conditional Use Permit should have been required," said Chris Winter. "This more rigorous permit will require the involvement of the State Department of Ecology, which only makes sense for a project of this magnitude."

BACKGROUND

Xylenes are toxic, flammable petrochemicals used to make plastic and synthetics. The Andeavor Anacortes Refinery petrochemical expansion project would add capacity and allow the refinery to begin producing and exporting 15,000 barrels (630,000 gallons) of xylenes per day for export to Asia. It would increase Salish Sea tanker traffic by an additional five tankers per month.

More than 7,500 people submitted comments on the project's draft environmental impact statement (EIS), the majority of which asked Skagit County to address concerns over worker safety standards, petrochemical spills in the Salish Sea, risks to endangered orcas, massive increases in the pollution that causes global warming, and use of the new facility for crude oil export. Commenters also asked the county to separately review the xylene export and clean products upgrade components of the project, while properly accounting for greenhouse gas pollution.

In July 2017, Skagit County Planning and Development Services issued the project's [final environmental impact statement](#), just two months after the public comment period on the draft EIS. The final EIS did not adequately address concerns in many areas.

In November 2017, more than 100 people attended a public hearing on the project's Shoreline Substantial Development Permit. The overwhelming majority of them were there to continue to highlight flaws in the project's final EIS, and to call on the Skagit County Hearing Examiner to deny the crucial shoreline permit for the project.

###

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Alex Ramel, Stand.earth, alex@stand.earth, [360-305-5079](tel:360-305-5079)

Eddy Ury, RE Sources for Sustainable Communities, eddyu@re-sources.org, [206-972-2001](tel:206-972-2001)

Stephanie Buffum, Friends of the San Juans, [360-472-0404](tel:360-472-0404)

Chris Winter, Crag Law Center, [503-701-6002](tel:503-701-6002)