

For Immediate Release:

July 11th, 2015

Contacts:

Mary Donahue, Clean Water Action, 215-545-0250 x 206, mdonahue@cleanwater.org

Tracy Carluccio, Delaware Riverkeeper Network, 215-369-1188 x104,
tracy@delawareriverkeeper.org

Liz Arnold, EDGE, 267-745-7041, arnold.elizabeth@gmail.com

Philadelphia Participates in National Stop Oil Trains Week of Action

Community organizations gather with residents to remember Lac-Mégantic, Quebec Oil Train Disaster and demand protection for Philadelphia from unsafe oil tank cars

Philadelphia, PA –Neighbors and community organizations joined actions nationwide and gathered in a show of solidarity with the people of Lac-Mégantic, Quebec at the Schuylkill River Park at 25th and Spruce Streets. The event memorialized the 47 lives lost in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec on July 6, 2013, when an oil train derailed and exploded in a fireball that consumed half of the downtown area.

Neighbors demanded action to protect Philadelphia’s communities from an oil train tragedy similar to Lac-Mégantic. Philadelphia has already experienced two oil train derailments in the last two years. While neither derailment was anything close to the death toll and damage in Lac-Mégantic or even more recent derailments in Mount Carmel, West Virginia, or Lynchburg, Virginia, the derailments point to an inherent danger in transporting Bakken crude oil from North Dakota in unsafe tank cars on aging rail infrastructure. “Residents from impacted communities who rallied along the tracks are growing increasingly frustrated by the lack of emergency response outreach from the city’s Office of Emergency Management (OEM). We need to see our City work to protect our communities from the same fate and we want to know when and where our community meetings will be held,” **said Mary Donahue, Program Coordinator, Clean Water Action.**

Speakers called for: an immediate ban of all unsafe tank cars transporting explosive Bakken crude; demanded that OEM conduct emergency response workshops in communities along the rails; outlined health impacts to neighbors of the refinery; raised the negative economic impacts of oil trains; and highlighted threats to employee health and safety.

The US Department of Transportation (DOT) has overwhelming evidence that should prohibit the use of DOT 111 and CPC 1232 tank cars, yet the recently released updates to crude by rail

safety standards allow these puncture prone tank cars to continue to be in use for up to ten years.

Philadelphia Energy Solutions (PES) is the largest consumer of Bakken crude in the U.S. Three, mile-long oil trains comprised of 100 or more unsafe tank cars, carry up to 3.6 million gallons of highly explosive Bakken crude oil through Philadelphia's communities every day. "I love living in this neighborhood, but right now I do not feel safe because of the excessive oil tank cars traveling right here on these tracks," **said Barry Renninger, Board Member of Locust Point Condominium Association and Chairman of its Oil Train Public Safety Committee.** Oil trains put our communities, business centers, drinking water and over 700,000 people who live within the blast zone at risk. "Every day Philadelphia residents are threatened with an oil train derailment like the tragedy that occurred in Lac-Mégantic and are exposed to pollution from the toxic oil these trains carry. It is wrong that Philadelphia Energy Solution's refinery imposes these burdens to serve their bottom line - the protection of the City's communities must be made a priority," **said Tracy Carluccio, Deputy Director, Delaware Riverkeeper Network.**

"Residents are noticing an increase in the number of trains rumbling through our community. Current estimates put that number at 50 trains per week, increasing our vulnerability and putting us at a greater risk of catastrophe. Now more than ever, we need to be informed of what is being transported through our communities, at what rate, and what the response plan is in case of a catastrophe," **said Jessica Gould, President, West Passyunk Neighbors Association.**

City Council responded to community concern by passing a [resolution](#) in March of this year that called on OEM to engage neighborhoods through community workshops on emergency response procedures specific to crude by rail hazards. Nearly four months since passage, residents refused to just wait for tragedy to happen and took action on Saturday along the tracks to call attention to the intolerable risks and demand emergency workshops to ensure their communities are prepared.

The speaker program was closed with a memorial for the 47 lives lost. "The way for us to make meaning out of the tragic and needless deaths of the Lac-Mégantic explosion is to take measures to prevent it from happening again. As we mark their deaths, we commit ourselves to keeping Philadelphia safe from the dangers of the oil trains," **said Rabbi Mordechai Liebling, Director, Social Justice Organizing Program at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College.** The crowd joined in a jazz funeral procession led by members of the West Philadelphia Orchestra, holding decorative umbrellas and banners calling for green jobs.

"Last year the Class 1 Railroads made tens of billions of dollars in profits. Oil train disasters can be eliminated if they would invest money in the rail infrastructure, slow the speed of the trains

that carry hazardous material, and improve the integrity of the tank cars in which the hazardous material rides. The problem is that the Class 1 Railroads value their profits over the lives and property of the citizens and this is why their trains are exploding in our communities all across the United States. In addition, the government regulators that are supposed to protect the people from this runaway greed often leave their positions with the government and take well paying positions with the very railroad industry they are supposed to regulate. Our communities are in great danger because of this callous disregard for our safety”, **said Jed Dodd, General Chairman, Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way.**

"Every time I ride my bike under the aqueduct bridge on Grey's Ferry, or run with my dog on Schuylkill trail or drive over the Walnut Street Bridge, I see the ominous CSX trains, idling or moving on the railways, carrying their bomb cargo. And every time I can't help wonder when will be that time, that time when we Philadelphians all pulverize to oblivion like those people did in Lac-Mégantic two years ago," **said Dr. Pouné Saberi, President, Physicians for Social Responsibility.**

"The oil bomb trains threaten 25 million Americans' lives, including in the city of Philadelphia where two derailments have already occurred. This is unacceptable. To protect climate, health, safety, and our waterways, we say: keep Bakken Shale oil in the ground!" **said Iris Marie Bloom, Director, Protecting Our Waters.**

"For the benefit of consumers and the environment, Philadelphia needs to start shifting towards a plan for renewables and away from the volatile fossil fuels that put residents in immediate danger on a daily basis. Today, renewables are the most cost-effective and efficient option. We need to halt investing in a reckless and outdated industry before we self-destruct,” **said Joanne Douglas, EDGE.** "Oil trains are a clear example of Philadelphia's dangerous reliance on an outdated fossil fuel economy. 350 Philadelphia calls for a rapid and just transition away from fossil fuels to protect our city now and in the future,” **said Cord Briggs, 350 Philadelphia.**

Kevin Poole, a resident of Northeast Gray’s Ferry neighborhood in Philadelphia spoke for the Northeast Grays Ferry Residents Association, Inc. Mr. Poole said oil train traffic must change and rejected the acceptance of the danger the explosive trains pose in the City’s neighborhoods, calling for people to band together to fight for public health and safety and clean alternative energy sources.

This event was organized by the Philadelphia Oil Train Working Group, a network of organizations working to protect Philadelphia’s region from oil trains, including: Clean Water Action, Delaware Riverkeeper Network, EDGE, Protecting Our Waters and 350 Philadelphia.