



Oil Trains – A Threat to the Flathead Watershed

WHAT IS THE THREAT?

Up to 40 million gallons of Bakken crude oil are being transported through the Middle Fork Flathead River corridor each week. Between 2000 and 2012, there were 37 train derailments in this corridor. Bakken crude oil is highly flammable, explosive, and toxic. This is a very real threat and it only takes one of these derailments to catastrophically change Flathead Lake watershed forever.

WHAT IS AT STAKE?

Glacier National Park and the Great Bear Wilderness Area border the Middle Fork corridor. An explosion and fire from an oil train derailment and spill during the summer could ignite a firestorm in Glacier Park.

Flathead Lake is downstream. It is the largest freshwater lake west of the Mississippi River and one of the cleanest large lakes anywhere in populated areas of the world. Its 6 million acre watershed is one of our nation's most pristine and scenic areas.



Tank cars of Bakken oil burn in the James River after the recent derailment in Lynchburg, Virginia.
Photo courtesy of James River Association

WHAT IS AT STAKE? cont.

Shallow aquifers – less than 50 feet and in many places less than 5 feet deep – lie along the Middle Fork and mainstem Flathead Rivers. The water moves quickly through porous gravels as far as a mile from the river. The aquifer supports a complex network of organisms that cleanse the water, providing clean water for people, fish, and wildlife, and supporting unique riparian habitats.

A derailment and oil spill in the Middle Fork corridor would have disastrous long-term impacts on:

- people, their livelihoods, our communities, and our local economy
- clean water supplies,
- fish and wildlife and their habitat, and
- scenic vistas and recreation opportunities that draw people from around the nation and world.

Long-time Flathead Lake Biological Station Director Dr. Jack Stanford has conducted research on the Middle Fork and its complex connected groundwater and riparian system over many years. He believes that effective response to a spill in the Middle Fork corridor would be impossible.

WHAT WE CAN DO

The Flathead Lakers, with over 1,500 members, has been working to protect clean water in Flathead Lake and its watershed since 1958. We believe current federal regulations are not adequate to prevent future derailments and oil spills in the Middle Fork canyon or anywhere else.

Stronger safety measures are urgently needed for Bakken oil transport by rail. To protect Flathead waters, wildlife, and communities, we need to advocate for policy, regulatory, and voluntary actions to ensure:

- all oil tank cars meet higher safety standards,
- slower speed limits for oil train traveling through sensitive areas, like the Middle Fork,
- limits on the number of oil tank cars per train,
- additional avalanche sheds in Glacier Park to reduce the chance of an avalanche-caused derailment, and
- additional safety measures are in place.

Join us to help protect this special place and our priceless clean water

We will work with and learn from other local, regional, and national groups, speak up for Flathead Lake and its watershed, advocate for safety measures, and talk to our public officials and other stakeholders.

- **Join the Flathead Lakers** through our website – www.flatheadlakers.org
- **Share our video** Oil and Water Don't Mix
- **Join our volunteer oil train advocacy team.** Volunteer to be a leader on this issue.
- **Write** to your legislators asking for greater safety measures.

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