

Westway and Imperium Expansion Projects

Draft Environmental Impact Statements



Plants and Animals Fact Sheet

Grays Harbor and the Chehalis River are home to numerous special-status plant and animal species, and construction and operation of the proposed projects could affect plants and animals.

What impacts on plants and animals were analyzed?

The studies looked at how construction activities and operations could affect plants and animals.

For construction, the studies looked at noise, ground disturbance, spills of hazardous materials, and pile-driving activities. The studies looked at how increased rail and vessel traffic could affect plants and animals. This could be from increased noise and vibration, risk of invasive species introduction, shoreline erosion, and environmental damage from spills. Risks of spills and explosions are addressed in the *Crude Oil Environmental Health and Safety Fact Sheet* and Chapter 4, *Environmental Health and Safety*, of the studies.

How were the impacts analyzed?

The studies describe the current conditions for plants and animals. They consider the proposed construction, facility operations, and transportation by trains and vessels in Grays Harbor and along the Puget Sound and Pacific (PS&P) rail line. Then they identify potential impacts to plants and animals from the proposed projects. Finally, the studies include actions that can mitigate or offset the potential impacts.

How will the proposed projects affect plants and animals?

Construction

The plants that would be removed during construction (about 1 acre for Westway and 10.9 acres for Imperium) are not native species and do not provide quality habitat for animals. Construction could affect the water quality near the project sites by increasing erosion or accidentally causing the release of construction chemicals. Stormwater and runoff from construction must meet requirements for discharging water back into Grays Harbor to prevent pollutants from entering the water. Construction would increase noise levels, which could affect animals near the project sites. Most construction noise would be low enough that animals would not likely be disturbed significantly. Noise from pile driving at the Imperium project site could affect aquatic species, but the pile driving at the Westway project site is located far enough away from the water that noise levels are not expected to be high enough to harm nearby animals. Imperium would implement mitigation measures to ensure impacts on animals from pile-driving would not occur.

Operations

Noise levels from proposed operations would be similar to noise from existing operations at the facilities, and the studies found it would not affect animals at the project sites. Stormwater and runoff from operations must meet requirements for discharging water back into Grays Harbor to prevent pollutants from entering the water. The proposed facilities' operations would not likely harm fish or plants near the project sites.

Vessels docked at Terminal 1 would cast shade in the water, which could affect aquatic plants and fish. The studies found the amount of shade produced by the largest ship would create shade over only a small area, and is not likely to affect plants or fish.

Depending on the size and location, spills at the facility could harm or kill wildlife or plants. A large spill at the facilities could reach water and could affect plants and animals. The storage tanks and areas where oil would be transferred from trains are required to have areas that are designed to hold the contents of an entire train car or an entire storage tank. Other prevention and response requirements are described in Chapter 4, *Environmental Health and Safety*. This chapter also includes required actions to reduce or offset impacts from spills at the proposed facilities.

Rail and Vessel Trips per Year			
Transport	Without Projects	Proposed Project	
		Westway	Imperium
Rail	1,235	458	730
Vessel	436	238	400

Rail Traffic

Rail traffic along the PS&P rail line would increase from the proposed projects, which would increase noise along the PS&P rail line, potentially disturbing nearby animals. Animals that live along the rail line are currently exposed to train noise and the studies found there would not likely be adverse impacts.

Hazardous materials like diesel fuel, oils, or grease could spill onto the ground or into the water along the rail line, which could harm plants and animals. Requirements to prevent and respond to spills from rail cars are described in Chapter 4, *Environmental Health and Safety*, of the Draft EISs. This chapter also includes required actions to reduce or offset impacts from spills along the rail line.

Vessel Traffic

Vessel traffic would increase within Grays Harbor from the proposed projects. Increased vessel traffic could harm plants and animals if the vessels carried harmful aquatic animals or plants to Grays Harbor in ballast water¹. Vessels must comply with state requirements for discharging ballast water to prevent introduction of invasive species.

Waves from increased vessel traffic could cause shoreline erosion or affect plants and animals. These potential impacts on plants and animals are greatest during low tides when mudflats and shallow beaches are exposed. The studies found the potential for plants and fish to be harmed from the increased vessel traffic is low. Vessels are limited in how fast they can travel in Grays Harbor, and will move along the navigation channel away from the shore. The vessels are also likely to move during high tides.

Increased vessel traffic would increase the chance of colliding with marine mammals in the harbor or while they are moving out into the coastal waters, where larger marine mammals are more likely. The studies found this risk is low. Underwater noise from increased vessel traffic would increase slightly, which could affect marine mammals. The studies found most vessel noise is outside the range of affecting most animals in Grays Harbor, and would not likely impact marine mammals.

Requirements to prevent and respond to spills from vessels are described in Chapter 4, *Environmental Health and Safety*, which also includes required actions to reduce or offset impacts from spills from ships or barges.

What can Westway and Imperium do to reduce impacts on plants and animals?

Permits and plans

Westway and Imperium would be required to plant trees under the City of Hoquiam's Landscaping and Screening Ordinance.

The proposed projects are also required to obtain National Pollution Discharge Elimination System General Permits, Grade and Fill Permits, and Industrial Stormwater Permits. These permits require development of a stormwater pollution prevention plan and implementation of best management practices to reduce the potential of pollutants being released into the environment.

Mitigation measures

The studies identify the following mitigation measures to reduce impacts to plants and animals:

- Voluntarily halt crude oil vessel loading operations for a period of two weeks each year overlapping with the annual Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival.
- Prepare an invasive species monitoring plan in consultation with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. This will address risks from discharging ballast water. The plan will be in place before operations start.
- Imperium will look at alternative pile-driving methods to eliminate the need for impact pile driving at the proposed facility. If these are infeasible, Imperium will retain a qualified acoustical consultant to monitor underwater sound levels during pile driving.

The detailed list of measures is presented in Section 3.4, *Plants*, and Section 3.5, *Animals*, of the Draft EISs. Mitigation related to spills, explosions and incidents is in Chapter 4, *Environmental Health and Safety*.

¹ Ballast water is carried by empty vessels to provide stability during transit. As vessels are loaded with cargo, ballast water is discharged to balance the weight of the new cargo.

Where is more information available?

Within the Draft EISs, Section 3.4, *Plants* and Section 3.5, *Animals* have detailed information on current conditions, analysis, and findings related to the impacts of the proposed projects on plant and animal resources. The following sections of Chapter 3 also include detailed information and analyses relevant to plants and animals: Section 3.7, *Noise and Vibration*, Section 3.15, *Rail Traffic*, and Section 3.17, *Vessel Traffic*. Chapter 4, *Environmental Health and Safety* also includes information about the risks of spills, fires, and explosions.

There are additional fact sheets discussing *Noise and Vibration*, *Rail Traffic* and *Vessel Traffic*. There is also a fact sheet with information on risks of crude oil spills, *Crude Oil Environmental Health and Safety*.

Visit www.ecy.wa.gov/GraysHarbor for more information on the proposed projects.