

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 21, 2017

Matthew Rose
Chief Executive Officer
Burlington Northern Santa Fe, LLC.
2650 Lou Menk Dr.
Fort Worth, TX 76131

Dear Mr. Rose,

We write to express great concern about the dangers of transporting hazardous materials near actively burning wildfires in the Columbia River Gorge and ask you to cease all transport of hazardous materials through the Gorge while ongoing fire dangers persist.

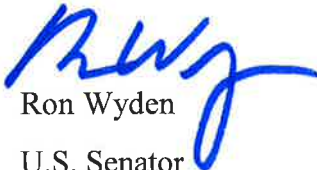
As you know, wildfires are burning hundreds of thousands of acres throughout the western United States, threatening residents in our communities, their property and the natural treasures critical to our culture and economy. Among those blazes, the Eagle Creek Fire and Archer Mountain Fire continue to burn and smolder in the Columbia River Gorge, near BNSF tracks.

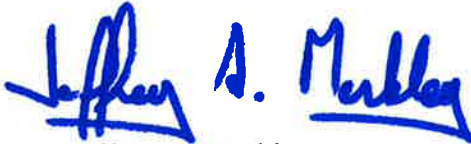
These tragic events have forced evacuations of towns and homes, and endangered lives and infrastructure near these fires. We were pleased to see BNSF take immediate action after the Eagle Creek Fire began, and temporarily stop all train traffic through the Gorge. However, we are concerned that prematurely resuming service and the movement of oil, or other hazardous materials, by train while the fires are still burning could put local communities at further risk of harm. Many constituents and local communities have expressed these very understandable worries to us first-hand when we recently visited the Columbia Gorge and met with them at town meetings.

We request that BNSF postpone movements of oil trains and trains carrying other hazardous materials through the Columbia River Gorge while there are active wildfires and the ongoing concern of flash flooding and rockslides. We also want to thank you for your continued communication with local authorities and first responders on any, and all, train traffic near wildfires.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. We appreciate BNSF's understanding of this situation, and we look forward to our continued collaboration to keep rail transport safe in the Pacific Northwest.

Sincerely,


Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator


Jeffrey A. Merkley
U.S. Senator