Issues Surrounding the Transportation of Crude Oil in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River region

Tom Crane
Deputy Director
Status of the Reports on Oil Transportation

• Request to prepare an issue brief in September 2013

• Summary report and four separate issue briefs on oil transportation completed

• Presenting the summary at 2014 Annual Meeting as a “discussion draft”

• Action request to initiate a 60-day review by states, provinces and stakeholders

• Final reports to be presented at 2015 Semiannual meeting
Approach to the Project

• Project scoping in winter/early spring (2014)

• Staff team assembled to conduct research and prepare issue briefs

• Researchers from Cornell authored the brief on risks and impacts

• Summary report outlines major issues and presents findings gleaned from the other briefs
Summary of Key Findings

• Dramatic increase in domestic oil production (and transportation of oil) over the past 10 years
• All modes have advantages and disadvantages
• Risks are complex and difficult to quantify
• Safety is a concern for all modes of transport
• Infrastructure issues are a concern especially for pipeline and rail transport
Yearly Crude Oil Production
Oil sands and Bakken shale

- Oil sands
- Bakken shale
Summary of Key Findings

• Dramatic increase in domestic oil production (and transportation of oil) over the past 10 years
• All modes have advantages and disadvantages
• Risks are complex and difficult to quantify
• Safety is a concern for all modes of transport
• Infrastructure issues are a concern especially for pipeline and rail transport
Great Lakes basin railroad network  
Source: priceofoil.com

North American pipeline network  
Members of the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association  
Source: www.cepa.com
Summary of Key Findings

• Currently no crude oil transported by vessel on the Great Lakes

• Response technologies for heavy oil spills in open freshwater are lacking

• Increases in oil transportation (especially by rail) are outpacing regulatory, inspection and enforcement programs

• Mechanisms for communication, coordination and spill notification between jurisdictions exist but may need to be expanded
Information to be added to the briefs

• Discussion of reducing volatility of crude oil before transport

• Fuller description of state/provincial pipeline permitting programs

• Fuller description of Canadian programs governing oil transportation by vessel

• Summarize laws, policies and programs in a table
Request of Great Lakes Commissioners

• Carefully review the summary and four issue briefs
• Identify any issues/major themes not currently covered for inclusion in final report
• Identify individuals/agencies within the states and provinces to review the discussion draft
• Identify other stakeholders that should review the discussion draft
Concluding Remarks

• High governmental and societal interest in this issue

• Need to get this right – remain current, verify facts and properly understand the issues

• Action request to initiate a 60-day review by states, provinces and stakeholders

• Recommendations to follow will focus on safe transportation of crude oil, risk reduction and protection of public health and the environment
Questions?/Comments

Contact:  Tom Crane  tcrane@glc.org

Email address:  oilcomments@glc.org

Website:  https://www.glc.org/oiltransport/comments.php