

# Megaload passes through Moscow with protest, without incident

*ITD said overnight travel plan was to end south of Plummer, then pull off until tonight*



Dean Hare

A megaload haul containing a huge piece of a hydrocracker, equipment for use at a Great Falls, Mont., oil facility, is seen stopped at a pull-out area off the northbound lane of U.S. Highway 95 at mile post 320 north of the Lewiston Grade in Nez Peruse County on Monday, Aug. 11, 2014. The haul is 311 feet long, 21 feet wide, and 16 feet, 8 inches high and weighs 926,000 pounds with interconnected trailers and trucks. An additional 160,000 pounds of towing equipment was required to reach the top of Lewiston Grade.

## **Terri Harber/Moscow-Pullman Daily News**

The megaload haul containing a huge piece of equipment used to refine crude oil left its resting spot off U.S. Highway 95 Monday evening and resumed its path north, passing through downtown Moscow on the way to a point south of Plummer.

Dozens of protesters and onlookers from the Moscow-based environmental group Wild Idaho Rising Tide demonstrated against the transport at Third and Washington streets as it passed through shortly before midnight without incident. City police officers were much in evidence, as well as City Councilors Wayne Krauss and Walter Steed.

Protesters unfurled large banners protesting the megaloads and the tar sands oil, which the equipment is intended to process.

Cass Davis, from Moscow, said if people knew of the destruction caused by this sort of oil extraction there would be more people out protesting.

It left the Port of Wilma on the Snake River across from Clarkston late Sunday and stopped at 2:18 a.m. Monday after clearing the Lewiston Grade, the Idaho Transportation Department reported.

Bigge Crane and Rigging Company can only move the huge section of a hydrocracker, which would weigh a total weight of nearly 1 million pounds after going over the grade, from 10 p.m. to 5:30 a.m., according to its state-issued permit allowing the over-regulation size cargo to roll over Idaho roads.

The cargo's final destination is Great Falls, Mont., for use by the Montana Refining Company owned by Calumet Specialty Products Partners. WIRT reports the hydrocracker piece would assist the producers to triple tar sands oil production there. WIRT attempted to have the permit for the haul rescinded but nothing came of that action, ITD spokesman Adam Rush also said Sunday.

It's the heaviest oversized travel permit for such a haul taking this route through Moscow — 926,000 pounds. ITD also describes the shipment as “21 feet wide; 16 feet, 8 inches high; and 311 feet long.”

The 7-mile trip up Lewiston Grade required adding additional trucks weighing 160,000 pounds so the maximum haul weight exceeded 1 million pounds. Those extra trucks were separate from the cargo once that part of the journey was completed.

After passing through Moscow it would continue north on U.S. Highway 95 to Sandpoint, Idaho, and then east on Idaho state Highway 200 to Montana.

Six protesters were arrested in August 2011 when another megaload came up U.S. Highway 95 through Moscow. There were up to 200 protesters at Third Street and Washington attempting to stop that equipment from reaching tar sands in Alberta, Canada. In comparison to this latest haul, that one weighed a total of less than 414,000 pounds.

But this next megaload shipment is significantly smaller than the three that were planned this past winter. Each was to be 441 feet long, 27 feet wide, 16 feet tall and weigh about 1.6 million pounds.

The hauler could stop early at a time deemed appropriate or have a productive leg of the trip and go farther than anticipated, Rush pointed out.

When state transportation and industry officials attended an informational meeting in January at Moscow City Hall about that earlier plan, Police Chief David Duke asked that entourage not to come through while people would be leaving downtown bars and other businesses serving alcohol because it would be potentially unsafe.

The megaload haul that prompted the large 2011 protest reached that point in Moscow at 12:30 a.m. on a Friday, according to previous reports.

The state requires every hauler to provide ITD with and implement a travel plan.

Idaho State Police accompany these hauls.

This stretch of U.S. 95 is allowed a maximum weight of 800 pounds per tire inch-width. The huge haul scheduled early this year still would have been below that weight by adding more wheels which, in turn, would provide more tire width over which to spread the haul's 1.6 million pounds.

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