

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## 16 ARRESTED AS CLIMATE JUSTICE GROUPS HALT CONTROVERSIAL TAR SANDS MEGALOAD

**John Day, OR:** On Monday Dec 16, climate justice groups stopped the movement of a controversial shipment of equipment bound for the Alberta tar sands. Concerned citizens locked themselves to two disabled vehicles in front of the 901,000 pound load blocking it's route along highway 26 outside of John Day. Police responded and arrested 16 at the two blockade sites using pain compliance to extract them.

Tonight's action is the latest in a series of protests that have erupted in OR and WA since the megaload began to move. The load was first blocked on December 1st, when two people locked themselves to the truck as an estimated 70 others rallied nearby, including many Umatilla Tribal members. The next night one Umatilla tribal elder was arrested while blocking the load.

Two weeks ago in Fife, WA members of Rising Tide occupied the megaload shipper Omega Morgan's office, and did so again last week in Portland, OR after disrupting a meeting. The group also occupied an office of a General Electric subsidiary in Bellevue, WA that manufactured the equipment being shipped. The group is calling for Omega Morgan and other companies to stop shipping or otherwise facilitating tar sands development. Events tonight marked the 6th regional action against megaloads in just over two weeks.

The 901,000 lb mega load is hauling a heat exchanger to the Athabasca oil fields in Alberta, Canada. The load is 22 feet wide, 18 feet tall and 376 feet in length. A similarly-sized load toppled Tuesday evening in Gladstone, OR, blocking part of I-205 for hours. Omega Morgan says this is the first of three megaload shipments through the region, though it is likely the company needs this route indefinitely, as their former route through Idaho was blocked by an injunction filed by the Nez Perce Tribe, following major protests in Idaho and Montana.

In a recent letter to Governor Kitzhaber, Gary Burke, Chair of the Umatilla Reservation's Board of Trustees, expressed opposition to the megaloads due to lack of consultation with the tribes and the role of tar sands extraction in harming indigenous people and fueling global climate change. He also emphasized the legal requirement of state agencies like the Oregon Department of Transportation to consult tribal representatives before engaging in actions that affect Oregon Tribes, as Kitzhaber mandated in Executive Order 96-30. He also called attention to the role of tar sands extraction in harming indigenous people and fueling global climate change.

Groups organizing the protest in Eastern Oregon, including chapters of Rising Tide and 350.org, oppose the shipments due to their ultimate role in extracting Alberta tar sands, which would supply oil for the controversial Keystone XL, and facilitate what many have called the most destructive industrial project on Earth. Umatilla Tribal Member Shana Radford said, "We have responsibility for what happens on our lands, but there are no boundaries for air, and the carbon dioxide this equipment would create affects us all. The Nez Perce tribe said no to megaloads, and so should we."

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