



Comments to the Draft Ordinance Committee
Regarding
Proposed Ordinance: “South Portland Clear Skies Ordinance”

By
Natural Resources Council of Maine

We are submitting these comments to commend the Draft Ordinance Committee for the significant time and focused effort developing the proposed South Portland Clear Skies Ordinance aimed at prohibiting the bulk loading of crude oil onto marine tank vessels in South Portland.

A large percentage of South Portland residents are concerned about the harm that would be caused by loading tar sands oil, or any other kind of crude oil, onto marine tankers in South Portland. The citizens of South Portland identified a threat to their health and community, and the City Council responded to address the concern by promptly moving forward. It selected a Draft Ordinance Committee to study this issue, gather public input from stakeholders, and draft an ordinance in an effective and focused fashion to protect the city from the toxic air pollution and other adverse impacts on land use and aesthetics associated with loading tar sands oil onto marine tankers.

We commend the City Council for the transparent process used in selecting members to the Draft Ordinance Committee and its facilitator, and we appreciate the open and inclusive process used by the Draft Ordinance Committee throughout its proceedings.

The residents and elected representatives of South Portland have every reason to feel proud about the process that has been followed in producing this draft ordinance. The City has the responsibility and the authority to protect its citizens and the character of the community from impacts that could occur due to inappropriate land use, and a project along the South Portland waterfront that involves loading tankers with tar sands oil, or any other kind of crude oil, falls under these local impacts.

The federal and state governments have important roles to play in protecting our environment, as do local governments. In this case, the City of South Portland has taken a decisive step to protect local air quality for its citizens as well as the direction of its community, in line with the aspirations and wishes of its residents, described in the South Portland Comprehensive Plan.

We believe that the Draft Ordinance Committee has achieved the balanced and moderate approach sought by the City Council. We congratulate the Committee for its work and look forward to seeing this proposed ordinance forwarded on to the City Council for a workshop and further public input, prior to adoption in July.