

Submission Number: UBR-DEIS-00364**Received:** 1/24/2021 10:07:00 PM**Commenter:** Devin Castendyk**Organization:****State:** Colorado**Agency:** STB**Initiative:** Uinta Basin Railway EIS**Attachments:** No Attachments**Submission Text**

I am writing in to express concerns over downline impacts associated with the proposed Uinta Basin Railway (UBR). The Draft EIS provided minimal discussion on downline impacts. Oil from the Uinta Basin will be transported by rail into Colorado along the I-70 corridor, and then brought over Tennessee Pass to Canyon City via an old rail line which follows the Arkansas River. As a resident of Salida, Colorado, I wish to inform the OEA of the likely downline impacts which 3.68 to 10.52 trains per day would have on the Headwaters of the Arkansas River and residents of Colorado: (1) Climate Change: 2020 was one of the worst wildfire years in Colorado's history. The proposed transport route would intersect one of the most impacted areas in the state, the 32,631-acre Grizzly Creek Fire burn area near Glenwood Springs. The denuded landscape caused by the fire is expected to produce debris flows and rockfalls for years into the future, causing perpetual damage and maintenance to rail and road infrastructure. Approval of this project would directly increase greenhouse gases production in the USA, further exacerbating climate change, leading to more frequent drought conditions in the future, and likely contributing to future fire seasons equal to or greater than the 2020 season. As a state providing passage for this oil, Colorado may suffer some of the greatest impacts of this decision. Approval of this project will undermine national objectives to curb greenhouse gas production. (2) Sediment Loading to the Arkansas River: The rail line between Tennessee Pass and Canyon City has not been in operation for approximately 30 years. The tracks are aged, rock covered, eroded and in need of significant repairs. Restoring the tracks to operational conditions will require significant machinery and effort, and will likely release a large load of sediment into the Arkansas River. Today's clear waters will likely turn turbid during this construction effort. The Arkansas is one of the best trout fishing streams in Colorado and one of the most commercially rafted rivers in the United States. Construction activities nearly always result in the addition of fine-grained sediments into streams, and the proximity of the railbed to the river in Browns Canyon National Monument and Royal Gorge makes these impacts unavoidable. Before a single rail car transits from Utah to Gulf Coast refineries, fish populations and rafting activities will likely be impacted by riparian zone disturbances. It may take years for water clarity and aquatic ecology to recover. (3) Train derailments and oil spills: The history of rail activity between Tennessee Pass and Canyon City records multiple trail derailments that resulted from landslides and rockfalls. Similar geologic disruptions will occur in the future, and future derailments along this section are inevitable. However, if the UBR is approved, oil trains will be rolling into the Headwaters of the Arkansas River, resulting in a national environmental crisis on par with the Exxon Valdez or Deep Well Horizon oil spills. Not only would the aquatic ecosystem and recreational activities be ruined, farmers with senior water rights would not be able to use river water to irrigate their fields or feed their livestock. As the Gold King Mine Blowout demonstrated just a few years ago, the small communities of Colorado are too often the ones to pay the price for external business ventures such as the UBR. In the wake of such a disaster, it could be decades before the river flourishes again. (4) Wayside Noise: In the 30 years since the last train passed from Tennessee Pass to Canyon City, a generation in multiple small communities (Leadville, Buena Vista, Salida, Canyon City) has grown up living adjacent to silent rail lines. Rail traffic consisting of 3.68 to 10.52 trains per day would have a direct and measurable impact on the quality of life, due to noise and exhaust.