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Organization:

State: Utah

Agency: STB

Initiative: Uinta Basin Railway EIS

Attachments: No Attachments

Submission Text

Dear Folks, The proposed Uintah Basin Railway is a 19th century answer to a 21st century NON-PROBLEM. As we are and must be transitioning away from fossil fuels, the further embrace of oil and natural gas makes little sense except as the briefest of stopgaps until we can get to level of renewable energy use that will forestall cataclysmic climate change. It will not re-vitalize this part of Utah and, beyond a certain horizon that we MUST reach, will make the railway quite obsolete. I know your sights are set on making oil shale extraction viable, and so it seems you are bent on further sacrificing the Book Cliffs by turning it into an industrial zone. I suppose there is some merit to that if we look merely at the fortunes it would make for a very few. But we are trading our outdoor heritage for a "mess of pottage," as poor Esau did in the Bible. In my mind there is no justification for the expense and land disruption of railroad construction--and the hoped-for industry that it would promote--in an age where the rest of the technologically advanced world is running far beyond this paradigm. I know enough about Environmental Impact Statements (I have responded to scores of them) to know that it really doesn't matter how much assumed or possible environmental or ecological disruption is identified in the study or by the comments to the study; that lots of companies are now making a very good living by pleasing their clients with a favorable EIS; and that, in the end, the proposed action will always be chosen despite any unfortunate and disruptive impact of the project in question. There are ALWAYS unforeseen problems, because that is the nature of the Universe and of our poor power to anticipate what will result in 50, 100, 200 years from a proposed action. This much I know: Anything that perpetuates the use of carbon-based combustible fuels is hastening the day toward a future we and our descendants will regret. The fossil fuel industry in the Uintah Basin is a small but not negligible part of that. If our society is still extracting fossil fuel at boomtown rates in another 20 years it will signal that something was horribly wrong about the way we planned our future and that of our children and their children. I long ago came to the conclusion that all EIS's are kabuki (ritualized) theater to show and say that one has done something before one goes ahead with the action he or they intended in the first place. Mitigation is always promised, but, in my long memory, it is either impossible or never done. I have known very few EIS's or EA's that ever stopped an unfortunate or unwise action when political power was a factor in the decision. So count me against this expensive and untimely anachronism. Sincerely, Will Durant, MD