

Submission Number: *UBR-DEIS-00451-0005*

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Commenter: Miki Laws

Organization:

State: Colorado

Agency: STB

Initiative: Uinta Basin Railway EIS

Attachments: No Attachments

Submission Text

With a Master's Degree in Regional Planning, I served on the Colorado State Land Use Commission staff, and more recently as a resident of both Summit County UT, and Boulder County CO, and got to know well both the beauty and the frailties of the Colorado and Utah landscapes. I urge you to choose the no-action alternative for the proposed Uinta Basin Railway. The proposed railway would do irreparable harm to our region's air, water, land and wildlife and should not be built. This draft environmental impact statement does not adequately assess the extreme harm this oil railway could have on the environment, wildlife and nearby communities. The new production resulting from the railway expansion - potentially four times the current amount - will contribute irreversibly to increased greenhouse gas emissions. Our climate is already at a tipping point, so we need to sharply reduce fossil fuel use instead of expanding it. The railway's emissions will also further pollute the air in the Uinta Basin in Utah, which already exceeds federal standards because of existing oil and gas development. Traversing roadless areas, steep canyons and rugged terrain, the railway will degrade more than 10,000 acres of habitat for migratory wildlife and will harm important habitat needed by the rare greater sage grouse and the endangered Barnaby ridge-cress. The preferred project route would run almost the entire length of Utah's Indian Canyon Creek, crossing and degrading more than 400 streams and important wetlands along the Price River - harming the semi-arid state's precious perennial waterways. In Colorado, the project could mean reopening a rail line through scenic Tennessee Pass, despoiling scenic lands and wildlife habitat to get oil trains to the Gulf Coast. Mile-long oil trains could rip through sensitive areas like Browns Canyon, a rugged 22,000-acre national monument designated in 2015 to protect one of the wildest stretches of the Arkansas River. Finally the Uinta Basin Railway would harm people who live and recreate in both states. Landowners in Utah's Argyle Canyon and nearby off-grid canyon communities fear the disruptive noise, traffic delays, and clouds of diesel smoke oil trains will bring along the proposed routes - not to mention the significant potential for accidents, derailments, spills and even sparks that could ignite disastrous wildfires. And people in Colorado won't escape the air pollution drifting downwind from Uinta Basin, even as the railway rips through a national monument and other scenic areas supporting outdoorsy tourism many locals rely on for their livelihood. This project is an unacceptable threat to the health, safety and well-being of wildlife, humans and the planet. Please choose the no-action alternative.