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Great Lakes Basin RR

Cynthia Campbell

13947 S. Bluff Road

Rockton, IL 61072-

campsup@aol.com

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To Whom it May Concern:

I am from West Rockton, Illinois. Let me describe our West Rockton/Shirland area. It is a small area surrounded by three rivers; the Sugar to the West, the Pecatonica to the South, and the Rock to the East. We have only two East/West main roads; Shirland/Rockton Road and Yale Bridge Road. Our hospitals, etc. are located South. We have one bridge South on Meridian Road and the only other bridge is East, then through the village of Rockton to another bridge South. The new proposal is crossing Meridian, Shirland/Rockton and Yale Bridge roads! Our community will be ruined. Emergency vehicles, water trucks, etc. will find it difficult to respond in a timely matter.

We live in an area of many wetlands, Nygren being our largest, 720 plus acres of restored wetlands, prairies, forest and savannas. People come from all over to see the Sandhill cranes, newly returned otters, bald eagles, pelicans, badgers and other water fowl and mammals. The federally endangered Whooping Crane comes each Autumn and stays until the first snow falls on their way South. They depend on large, open wetland ecosystems.

The Sand Bluff Observatory, a bird banding station is situated in the Colored Sands Forest Preserve. It is one of the largest small bird banding stations in the country that is open to the public. Birds are almost incapable of avoiding high speed trains when they approach. It has been observed that birds can barely avoid vehicles moving at higher speeds than 43.5 miles per hour. Many groups of birds including endangered species are vulnerable.

There are Burial mounds in the path of the proposed route. Unlike Wisconsin, Illinois has done a poor job of protecting the mounds. We need to save the remaining mounds for history sake, if not for "just the right thing to do".

Williams tree farm, Copperstone Inn, The Pavillion, Sugar River Forest Preserve, etc. in our small area. People from Chicago and all around come to our quiet, beautiful country to buy their Christmas trees, get married, hold their wedding receptions, hike, fish, camp, horseback ride.

Huge effect on farming. Loss of income, land divided, road closures to get to their fields. Loss of way of life. Centennial farms - this proposed route would be crossing the farms of some of our original settlers. Money offered for a track on our land costs us so much more in the long run. The crops that land would of provided would of paid us many times over.

Any spills would pollute 3 rivers and streams! Our area would be ruined. Our sandy soil would assure contamination of our wells (drinking water).

Eminent domain by private companies is against our constitution. I believe it is time to go back to the Supreme Court for a new decision.

Here are a few quotes from visitors of our wonderful Nygren wetlands:

"The Nygren Wetland is one of the most spectacular natural resource enhancement programs that I have ever seen in Illinois. The scale of the vision is really exciting. This is a big winner". Dr. Brian Andersen, in his capacity as Conservation 2000 Coordinator for the State of Illinois.

"I think Americans from coast to coast are alarmed at the rate we are losing prime farmland, wood lots, wetland areas, wildlife habitat. We're talking about the liveability of communities..the sustainability of communities environmentally, culturally, economically. Folks all over the country can learn from what the Natural Land Institute and partners are doing". John F. Turner, president of the Conservation Funds and former director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"The Nygren Preserve is only one example of how an individual or a small number of individuals can inspire others to pick a cause to preserve habitat for the many creatures we all enjoy. Time is running out as we see more and more development encroaching on these special wild places. It does little good for us to work to restore a species like the Whooping Crane, if there is no habitat left to sustain it". Walter Sturgeon with Operation Migration, the group re-introducing Whooping Cranes.

PLEASE STOP the Great Lakes Basin Railroad!!

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Cynthia Campbell

West Rockton, IL

campsup@aol.colm