

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
395 E. Street, S.W.
Washington DC 20423-0001

December 3, 2012

Atten: Ken Blodgett:

We are writing concerning the scoping process currently under way regarding the proposed Tongue River Railroad in Eastern Montana. We are asking to be listed as a party of record with an interest in this issue.

We live on the corner of Rosebud Creek and Cow Creek and own 2240 acres of Section 13, 14, 15 T1NR42E, and Section 18 T1NR43E, in Rosebud County. This has been our home for the past 25 years and we have invested many years of hard work and money building a shop, corrals, making improvement to our house, etc to make this our permanent home. We are very concerned about the proposed BNSF Colstrip alternative route. It appears that it will cross right across the middle of our property.

We do want to go on record as being opposed to the Otter Creek Mine and any mining that involves the sale of coal outside of the United States. There seems no way to justify the destruction of land in Montana, Idaho and Washington to ship coal overseas--that just does not make sense!! There has to be a tipping point on what is good for our state and what is just plain greed and this certainly seems to be an issue that is fueled by greed and not the desires of people in Eastern Montana.

We have a lot of questions that we would like answered so I will attempt to list the most important ones.

Question #1: Why haven't we been contacted by BNSF or anyone regarding the proposed Colstrip Alternative Route? Why would we have to pick up a newspaper and read about the route there to even know that it was part of the plan?

Question #2: How can the local people voice an opinion regarding the proposed route when no one can even tell us for sure which route is even being discussed?

Question #3: Why would anyone consider allowing the sale of a natural resource from our area to another country at the extreme sacrifice it will ask of Montanans and people from Idaho and Washington?

Question #4: How can anyone predict that our ancestors will not need these coal reserves at some time in the distant future? We are old enough to know that coal has been replaced and considered unnecessary before only to come back with a new use years later.

Question #5: Why open a new coal mine when mines and power plants in Montana and Washington are rapidly closing down or reducing workers? We have friends in Washington out of work because of closures there in the past couple of months and now a lay-off is planned at the Decker Mine here in Montana.

Question #6: Wouldn't it make more sense to re-open the mines in Washington with closer access to shipping outside of the country if we feel the need to sell overseas?

Question #7: How will the Otter Creek mine affect the Rosebud Mine at Colstrip? It does not seem likely that the Rosebud Mine will stay in operation if the Otter Creek Mine does begin production.

The following are questions regarding our personal interest in this issue if the Colstrip Alternative is chosen:

Question #8: If the railroad is built on the proposed Colstrip Route it will completely cross our piece of land. The grade that is necessary for the railroad track is going to making it very difficult to prevent flooding issues along Rosebud Creek thus causing major flooding problems for our property.

Question #9: We have often seen fires started along railroad tracks by passing trains. What protection will our land and buildings have from fire hazard? Who will be liable for fires started by a passing train?

Question #10: There is no doubt that the property value of our place would drop significantly if there is a railroad track cutting across the middle of it. Will we be compensated for the loss of property value?

Question #11: Living on a small ranch, it is difficult to contemplate the noise and disruption that a railroad track would add to our daily lives. There is just no way we could get far enough away from the track to ever have our lives be the same. How will BNSF ever compensate us for completely destroying our quiet, peaceful lifestyle?

We would like to go on record as opposing the Tongue River Railroad regardless of the route chosen and also mining of the Otter Creek/Ashland area. We do not feel it is in the best interest of the people of Montana. Therefore, we are urging the Surface Transportation Board to accept the NO ACTION Alternative.

Sincerely,



Hugh & Ann Wells
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