

David K. Wollgast
2490 S. Verona Rd.
Verona, IL 60479
(815) 287-2036

June 28, 2016

Mr. Dave Navecky
Surface Transportation Board
Attn: Docket No. FD-35952
395 E. Street SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Re: Great Lakes Basin Railroad
Docket No. FD-35952

Mr. Navecky,

I would like to inform you of a great environmental impact that might be overlooked with regards to the Great Lakes Basin Railroad with its proposed route through Grundy County and its portion of the Illinois River Basin. In April of 2013 a flood event on the Illinois River caused severe damage to the Marseilles Lock and Dam. Crucial to the repairs, the water level in the Illinois River Marseilles Pool, which is the pool the Great Lakes Basin Railroad would be crossing, had to be lowered to a below navigational level. The drastic drainage of the river created a dire situation for species of benthic invertebrates within the pool. Greatly concerned about the threatened and endangered mussels which are known to inhabit the Marseilles Pool, a collaboration of biologists from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Illinois Natural History Survey undertook the daunting burden of returning all native mussels left perishing above the waterline back into the river. Their attempt to salvage some threatened and endangered species of mussels created a rare opportunity to survey the species of mussels making the Marseilles Pool their home. During the survey/salvage attempt there were many different species of threatened and endangered mussels documented living in this pool from living and dead shell specimens. One of these species was only found once during that time as a dead shell, but had not been previously recorded or believed to inhabit this area of the Illinois River for over 70 years. The concern is, with the fragility of these species and vulnerability to so many environmental factors, that the construction of a large railroad project in the Marseilles Pool would decimate a recovering endangered species of mussel or cripple sustained populations of endangered/ threatened species which are unknown anywhere else. The destruction of the streambeds from construction and the extra sedimentation created from the current disruption of pylons would prove fatal to a limited population of the previously thought extricated species since the exact whereabouts of such are unknown. The Federal Government is currently funding millions of dollars in projects in the Marseilles Pool to deter the introduction of the Asian Carp into the Great Lakes to protect the salmon which are not even a native species. Should a private railroad be allowed to cripple or potentially extinguish a native threatened or endangered species existing in the Marseilles Pool of the Illinois River?

The Great Lakes Basin Railroad also threatens to disrupt not only the Illinois River in Grundy County, but 15 other watersheds (Nettle Creek, Stanton Creek, Carson Creek, Waupecan Creek, Johnny Run Creek, Murray Sluice, the West Fork of the Mazon River, Brewster Run Creek, Woods Run Creek, an unnamed creek, West Fork of Gooseberry Creek, East Fork of Gooseberry Creek, East Fork of the Mazon River, a second unnamed creek, and Reddick Run Creek). The Mazon River is a significant ecosystem which has been studied and known for its containment of a variety of threatened and endangered mussels as well as other species. The other smaller waterways are unstudied, for the most part, as to the potential significance of the flora and fauna they harbor. Not only do these watersheds stand to be profoundly disrupted by the crossing of a large railroad bridge, but also the increased runoff sediment from the lacerated field tile networks the railway will dismantle.

Please take the time to contemplate the threatened/endangered mussels and all other flora and fauna occupying the Illinois River and surrounding watersheds when conducting your analysis.

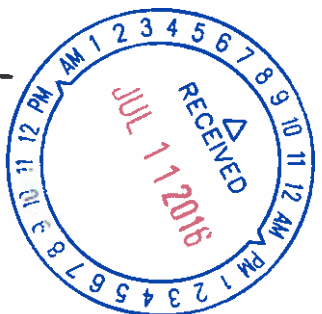
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David K. Wollgast', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

David K. Wollgast

Dave Wollgast
2490 S. Verona Rd.
Verona, IL 60479

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Freedom
FOREVER

Mr. Dave Navecky

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