



Fw: EIS Otter Creek Mine
Kenneth Blodgett to: Joshua Wayland

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From: Judith Akins <sunsetjam@gmail.com>
 To: OtterCreekEIS@mt.gov
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 Date: 02/07/2013 12:43 AM
 Subject: EIS Otter Creek Mine

Judith Akins
 2174 E Birch St.
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 February 5, 2013

As you see I live on the west coast and along the train route to Cherry Point, the proposed terminal, where, if all the plans are approved, the coal will be sent to Asian markets. I also live near our drinking source, Lake Whatcom, where the water already has high concentrates of mercury directly from the Chinese coal burning plants, as scientists have proven. I am very concerned about this threat to our global environment that is being proposed by shipping our US coal to Asian ports. I have been watching the recent news from China which they now are building domes over areas of cities to allow people to breathe cleaner air while they go about their daily activities. I have been following this issue for some time and below are the main points which I have researched along with others.

There are several issues that need to be studied before this proposal should or should not go forward. Therefore, I am requesting that the EIS include for study:

Overall Public Convenience and Necessity: This proposed railroad is not for the "public convenience and necessity" which I understand is what is required in order for a body to get the power of eminent domain and condemnation authority. This railroad would serve only one coal company giant, Arch Coal, not the general public and its sole purpose is to sell our natural resource of coal to China and other Asian countries. This serves only the wealthiest 1%.

Environmental Pollution: A study of the direct effects that these coal trains will have on the people, animals, land, water and air caused from the increased diesel pollution and coal dust which blows off these trains must be conducted. Contamination of mercury, lead, arsenic and other heavy metals must be measured to see its effect on all living organisms in this area.

Impacts on Property Values: The project would devalue property (especially along river front) and infringe on property rights. Will the railroad cause fires, spread weeds, and make ranching and farming more difficult because it will split ranch land in half and separate fields from the river? Will the liability of train crossings be shifted to the landowner, taxpayers and county budget responsibilities, while returning no financial rewards to these parties?

Wildlife: The Tongue River Valley has one of the last remaining in-tact wildlife habitats in the world and is home to outstanding elk and mule deer populations, as well as upland birds. Allowing the industrialization of this valley with a railroad and the coal strip mine it serves will seriously degrade this excellent sportsman resource now and for future generations.

Flooding: The railroad bed will act as an earthen dam and potentially worsen the flooding problems now experienced in Miles City in the winter with ice jams. Who will be held liable for this loss of life and/or property?

Noise/Quality of Life: The amount of loud trains rumbling through this valley will both ruin the quiet enjoyment of all the residents near Miles City, along with nearby recreation areas, but will also have a detrimental effect in disrupting the animal habit and breeding in this area. Please study the impact of heavy laden trains on nearby farm/ranch livestock.

Infrastructure and Traffic: Taxes will go up for residents communities along the rail lines as the coal heads to coastal ports for shipment do to the needed infrastructure. This railroad will increase coal train traffic substantially causing traffic delays, noise, and diesel pollution. The only way to live with this increased traffic will require expensive over passes and safety crossing, not paid for by the railroad purposing this expansion, but are paid for primarily by local taxpayers and city governments. What will the cost be on the communities along the rail.

The Tongue River Railroad will take our natural resource which should stay in the ground, but instead be burned in China and will fuel intolerable, decades-long increases in Carbon Dioxide emissions. How can this be mitigated?

The greenhouse gas costs of Otter Creek coal go far beyond just burning the coal. It must be mined, hauled by trains fueled by diesel to purposed West Coast terminals, shipped overseas by ships fueled by diesel, and then transported throughout China to it's coal fired energy plants. There are better alternatives that are available today and must be used today for the sake of the planet and civilizations future. We each have a responsibility to do what is right, just and sustainable for today and future generations. As responsible citizens given the job to protect it's people and it's overall community, I ask you to do just that and conduct an expansive EIS covering all of the topics listed above.

Sincerely,
Judith Akins