

EI-1323

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Re: Finance Docket No. 34284 – Southwest Gulf Railroad Company

I almost did not attend the Public Meeting held on 12/2/04 at the Medina County Fair Hall. I assumed it would be just so much BS. Again. In my opinion, it began that in just that way. The attorney and reps from the STB/SAE began to tell us how the proposed rail construction and coincidently, the gravel/limestone Quarry, would minimally impact our community and our lives. The data used to prepare the draft EIS was commissioned, bought and paid for by SRG. It is obvious to individuals who live in this area that neither the STB nor the SEA actually did any research "on the ground". The draft EIS was prepared using less than perfect data.

A majority of the people who spoke at this meeting were very emotional in their opposition to the rail line, many included the Quarry itself. The few individuals not opposed do not reside anywhere near the area that will be impacted; some do not even reside in Medina County.

I live at the junction of CR 450/365. The Quihi runs directly in front of my home. The Elm creek crosses 450 about a half-mile west. I cross the Elm, Hondo, Verde and Cherry creeks along with a couple of the "unknown" tributaries each time I leave home. I have seen them all at flood stage and I have seen them at a trickle. On a regular basis, I see white and gray cranes, dove, quail and several species of ducks and beautiful white egrets along the creek. I am fortunate to see white tail and spotted deer, raccoons, gray fox, nutria, porcupines, squirrels, rabbits, possums, armadillos and turtles in my yard. I have seen hundreds of arrowheads and other weapons and tools right down this little dirt road, left hundreds, even thousands of years ago by our predecessors.

All this will end with construction of the rail line. Drive west on highway 90 to Knippa and see what a quarry and a railroad have done. Knippa is ugly desolate and filthy. Drive from Rio Medina towards San Antonio via fm 471, see where trucks are hauling out gravel and limestone and are stripping once fertile farmland.

We have neighbors whose families have farmed the area for over a hundred years, people who have stayed when it was not easy or profitable. Their entire live, their hearts are in the places they call home.

Controversy over the proposed quarry and rail line has caused considerable adversity in the community. It has changed lives, turning life long friend and neighbors against each other. Should the entire situation magically disappear, the heart of this little community has already been damaged. Aside from the probable impact on our water, biological resources, air quality, land use noise, vibration, historic and archeologically sensitive areas, it is clear that the detrimental impact on the populace should be considered.

I am 58, Max is 70. We like many in the Quihi area are not young enough, wealthy enough or healthy enough to "start over". We do not want to live near this proposed "BLIGHT" on our lovely community. Like a lot of our neighbors, everything we have is in this property. Look at the map showing the proposed routes (CR 450/365). Would you want to live here?

Carol Casillas