

ATTN: Docket #30186

Jim Steitz
564 Esslinger Drive
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

August 5, 2015

Ken Blodgett/Office of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC, 20423

Dear Mr. Blodgett,

I urge you to **reject the Tongue River Railroad**, whose purpose is service the proposed 'Otter Creek' coal mine in Southeast Montana. The approval of **this railroad is tantamount and functionally equivalent to approval of the mine, and the Surface Transportation Board must therefore reject it**, as diametrically opposed to our interest in a habitable planet. The 'Otter Creek' coal mine would decimate the Tongue River Valley's precious and productive agricultural and natural landscapes for the sole purpose of exporting coal to Asian markets. This is not a reasonable or sane use of our landscape or natural resources, and would gravely **reduce the prospects both for a healthy, humane landscape for residents of east Montana, and the long-term survival prospects of humankind**.

The Otter Creek coal mine is an archetypical instance of the carbon-moving, soil-destroying projects with which human survival can no longer coexist. Our atmosphere cannot safely absorb any more carbon dioxide, and **this liability to human welfare and survival must be incorporated into Surface Transportation Board's assessment of the net economic utility of the railroad**. This would be the largest single coal mine in America, and could cast 1.3 billion tons of carbon into the atmosphere. This colossal quantity is a considerable fraction of America's overall contribution to global warming (6-8 billion tons of carbon dioxide annually). This presents a material threat to America's national security, and **directly violates the Obama Administration's stated objective to preserve a habitable climate, as well as the 'Clean Power Plan' published this week**. By approving the Tongue River Railroad and enabling the Otter Creek Mine, the Board would facilitate, in Asian power plants, the very climate sabotage that the Administration seeks to combat in American power plants. This is at minimum insubordination.

Moreover, the 'Otter Creek' mine would devastate the land, vegetation, wildlife, and agriculture of the Tongue River Valley. The mine would effectively cash in the long-term sustainability of the ecological substrata of the Tongue River Valley for a short-term monetary reward, very little of which would be shared locally anyway. The residents of the Valley, of Montana, of the United States, and of the world would suffer a deep loss in their overall health and welfare if this mine is dug, and the coal exported and burned. The so-called "reclaimed" land would make a charade of the notion of reclamation, leaving the human and wildlife residents of the Valley with a wasteland of rock spoil. In addition, eastern Montana has already been heavily scarred and wounded by coal mining. This prior exploitation constitutes more than adequate concessions to the coal companies, including Arch Coal. The adverse impact of permitting this railroad and mine is compounded specifically in Montana, which has in recent years suffered some of its worst drought and wildfire seasons in recorded history. **By allowing this mine, the Board would condone an interminable series of comparable droughts, heat waves, and wildfires** that ultimately render uninhabitable the very Montana landscape through which this railroad would run, rendering much of the STB's analysis an idle exercise.

Again, please withdraw this heinous 'Tongue River Railroad' and its conjoined 'Otter Creek' coal mine proposal. Instead, please **uphold your responsibility toward the land, people, and wildlife of Montana, and to our nation's future survival. This depends upon keeping this 1.3 billion ton carbon bomb securely underground** in Southeast Montana, not allowing Arch Coal to detonate that bomb in narcissistic pursuit of profit. Thank you for your attention to this urgent issue.

Sincerely,



Jim Steitz