



MONTANA COAL COUNCIL

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June 12, 2015

Ken Blodgett, Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington D.C. 20423-0001

ATTENTION: Environmental Filing, Docket No. FD 30186

Dear Mr. Blodgett:

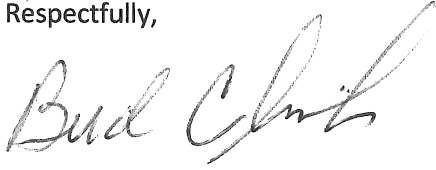
The Montana Coal Council (MCC) is an industry trade association that represents all six of Montana's operating coal mines, a number of coal reserve holders, numerous coal consumers, and a wide variety of associated industry suppliers. Collectively our member companies provide a huge economic engine for the State of Montana while providing a much needed energy source to American electricity consumers.

You have before you for review the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Tongue River Railroad Construction and Operation. Railroads provide a critical transportation need for all of Montana's coal mines and this proposal is no exception. The Tongue River Railroad will facilitate the development of the Otter Creek Coal Reserves leading to a significant increase in Montana's coal production-ultimately substantially increasing employment in multiple sectors and providing a much needed revenue tax stream (\$91 million in state and local taxes).

In April of 2012 an economic analysis by the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Montana determined a number of positive economic impacts as the result of the Otter Creek development. During construction of the mine and railroad more than 2600 jobs would be created. At the completion of construction and mine development 1700 permanent jobs would be created adding \$125.4 million to household income annually. Of significant importance is that 50% of the Otter Creek reserves are state school trust assets. This means that the royalty payments on that portion of production will go directly to helping fund the Montana K-12 school system.

It is for these reasons that the Montana Coal Council believes the positive benefits of the Tongue River Railroad and the subsequent Otter Creek Development far out-weigh any perceived environmental impacts and wishes to go on record in support of this draft EIS.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Bud Clinch". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Bud Clinch, Executive Director

Montana Coal Council