

Dave Navecky
Surface Transportation Board
RE: Docket # 35952 – Great Lakes Basin Railroad Petition/Application

Dear Mr. Navecky,

I am in **opposition** to the proposed Great Lakes Basin Railroad for a number of concerns over environmental safety, public safety and the safety of my own family.

The proposed route now crosses the Kishwaukee River several times. One of the crossings on the South Branch is in an area that would need a long bridge with numerous pilings that would disrupt the environment. This potential crossing is just south of a USGS stream monitoring station. The South Branch of the Kishwaukee River is considered a class A stream, which means that a significant number of species of animals are intolerant to silt and pollution. In addition, this area is home to 28 species of animals that are on the Illinois and Federal endangered/threatened/watch lists. River otters now live on the South Branch. There are nesting bald eagles near the proposed South Branch crossing. There are 14 species of endangered plants and 14 species of threatened plants that grow along the South Branch of the Kishwaukee River. The disruption to the environment by the construction and the operation of this railroad is considerable. Should there be an accident near the river crossings, the impact to the Kishwaukee River would be irreparable.

In addition to the issue with the river, the area around the SE corner of Winnebago Co., SW corner of Boone Co., NE corner of Ogle Co. and NW corner of DeKalb Co. contains a sand-gravel aquifer that provides water to the residents. This aquifer is a shallow aquifer and is very porous. In addition to the wells for individual farms, there are numerous wells that provide water to subdivisions and communities in the surrounding area, including Rockford. Should any of the containers spill, leak, or explode the pollution of the aquifer would mean thousands of people without potable water.

The other public safety issue that concerns me is the response that is available by first responder services in the same area of concern above. Monroe Center is a volunteer station, Cherry Valley has a staffed station on Blackhawk Road. The tracks are situated in such a manner that at least 8 households would be effectively cut off from EMS service. Those houses are provided services through Monroe Center, but the train tracks are between the station and their homes. These homes are on the other side of the tracks from the Cherry Valley station, which provides back up to Monroe Center. The tracks would increase response times that are already long. Ambulances would also have to cross back over the tracks to get to the hospital. Adding 5 to 10 min. can mean the difference between life and death. In addition, Monroe Center is not equipped to respond to hazmat situations, nor does it have the funds for training and equipment.

My farm is one of those in NE Ogle County that is affected by the impact to the river, by the potential of polluted well water, and from being cut off from EMS services. I am vehemently opposed to this railroad.

Sincerely, 

Sharon H. Davids
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815-522-2438

* Information about river quality and aquifers has come from various government websites, such as Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources, EPA, USGS, Illinois State Water Survey.

Ms Sharon Davids
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