

Ken Blodgett Surface Transportation Board 395 E Street, SW Washington, DC 20423-0001

Environmental Filing Docket No. Otter Creek, FD 30186

Mr. Blodgett:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the proposed Tongue River Railroad line application.

It appears that Montanans just can't say no. Apparently, we can't say no to meth because we're hooked with just one night of bliss. We can't say no to increased development of our wild places because Asians are buying cars in record numbers and using more electricity so they apparently need our coal. They need our coal because Montana's governor and the Land Board sell it cheaper than dirt, less than \$7 a ton. China sells its coal to Australia for over \$140 a ton. I wouldn't mind coal mining so much if Montanans were making a "ton" of money off our coal – and it is our coal – but no, companies like Arch Coal are making the money. We are left with the reclamation and clean-up costs.

Let me back up a bit. We can't say no because since 1980 this proposed coal mine in the Otter Creek area of Montana, pristine as it is and the concomitant Tongue River Railroad line permit has been rejected. In 2011 everyone breathed a big sigh of relief when a federal court threw out the illegally issued permit for the proposed coal hauling railroad. On October 16th 2012 the owners reapplied. Apparently we just can't say no. Nancy Reagan advised that we do, but hey, it doesn't work. It doesn't work for drugs and it doesn't work for railroad permits from coal fields.

Now, what is interesting is that we have just suffered a few years of rhetoric about the 1% of wealthy Americans and guess what? We have one of them in the Otter Creek Area. His name is Forrest Mars, Jr. of *Mars* bars fame. In the beginning he said, no way, no railroad in my back yard. Now, he has used his wealth and power to reroute the railroad around his land and he is one of the owners of the railroad, along with Burlington Northern and Arch Coal. Arch Coal advertises active mining complexes across every major US coal supply basin. They don't suggest they are a small entrepreneur that needs the government's help and that they really need this coal field, they boldly claim to be the second largest miners of coal in the country and they want to stay on top with all those profits. They have the money to get what they want regardless and no one is asking them for a bond up front to cover reclamation. Burlington Northern is owned by Warren Buffett. He knows how to invest money and boldly states that the government doesn't ask him to pay enough taxes.

Actually, Exxon Mobil asks the federal government to increase taxes on coal and oil companies – it's the only way that alternative energy is going to stand a chance to survive against the giant money that coal and oil makes. And that comes from Exxon Mobil, not the citizens. Exxon Mobil knows that climate change is happening. Apparently those giving away Montana coal don't know about carbon burning. And we don't tax them enough. In fact, several years ago coal companies successfully campaigned to drop the coal tax from 30% to 15%. This and the cheap cost of Montana coal allows companies to afford

shipments to China. China sells its coal for over \$140 a ton. Good deal --- for them. What does Montana and the US federal government get out of the deal? A whole lot of Superfund cleanup sites.

No one has asked Arch, Burlington Northern or Mars to submit a complete environmental impact statement. Those are apparently hot topics – let's not use the word environmental – let's just call it – "what happens," or "what if." or "do we have a choice?" The "analysis" should have an impact statement that considers impacts to agriculture, water, climate, communities and rail transport. If an analysis is not complete and the permit goes through, this will abuse the power of eminent domain on Montana ranch lands, hunting and fishing impacts, pristine habitat, and rich water resources.

Please take the time to look up Otter Creek on your computer and see for yourself what a beautiful place it is. Then take the time to reject this application.

Thank you again for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Linda Holding". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Linda" being more prominent than the last name "Holding".

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