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Submission Text

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My name is Shiloh Hernandez, S-H-I-L-O-H H-E-R-N-A-N-D-E-Z. I'm a member of the Sleeping Giants Citizens Council. I'm a Helena resident and a parent of two young children ages three and two. I think that the Tongue River Railroad should not be built. Otter Creek should not be strip mined. The United States Government should not sanction destroying Montana's water, our community, and our atmosphere simply to enrich the shareholders of a private corporation by exporting coal.

Coal is an energy source that belongs in the last century. The writing is clearly on the wall. The leading coal companies in the United States have experienced 90% reduction in their share values in the past eight years. It's not just Arch Coal, it's all of them. The market for coal is falling apart. Coal is a dead man walking, and the state of Montana should not put any bets for our future on additional coal development.

I'm just going to address three concerns of air quality that need to be addressed in this Environmental Impact Statement, none of which I believe are adequately addressed. First is the local pollution from coal trains, both coal dust and diesel particulate matter. Some of you might have noticed that just this year Helena received an F for air quality from the American Lung Association. We're teetering on the brink of being a non-attainment area for particulate matter. Diesel locomotives are major sources of particulate matter and diesel emissions are a recognized carcinogen by the World Health Organization. The train tracks in Helena cut right through the center of our city and go past numerous educational institutions, (Capital High, Helena High, Carroll College), areas where people who are particularly sensitive to air pollution are; children that are developing lungs and they spend a lot of time outside. They don't need to be breathing additional air pollution, especially given our current air quality.

The second issue is mercury pollution, and this involves the combustion of the coal. We know where the coal is going. It's going to Asia. It's not going there to build houses. It's going there to be burned, burned to generate energy. When you burn coal it releases a host of noxious pollutants. One of the most nefarious is mercury. Mercury is a potent neurotoxin. That means it kills the brain. It is particularly harmful to developing children and fetuses. Right now Montana's waters are extraordinarily polluted with mercury. You might not know it, but some of the waters repeated as the most clean waters in our state, Flathead Lake and the lakes in Glacier National Park, have fish with levels of mercury in them that's so high that you can't eat very many of them. There are fish consumption advisories for mercury throughout all water bodies in the state of Montana. How does the mercury get there? It's from atmospheric deposition. It comes from the air. Recent studies show that 50% of the mercury being deposited in the Western United States comes from Asia. So when the coal from Otter Creek is transported to Asia and burned, it's just going to come back to us. It's going to poison our waters. It's going to poison our children. This issue needs to be addressed in the EIS. It's clearly foreseeable.

The final issue that I want to address in my remaining minute is green house gas pollutants. The inner governmental panel on climate change issued a report last year, basically the summary of all the good science reviewed by all the nations in the world. Their conclusion is that the impacts of climate change are going to be severe, pervasive and irreversible if we don't do something about this fast. Climate change is the moral issue of our time. The Pope is going to issue an Encyclical on Thursday addressing the moral implications of climate change. As Kate mentioned, the poorest

and the most vulnerable will suffer the most from climate change.

The impact of climate change from the combustion of the coal at Otter Creek, transported via the Tongue River Railroad, and exported to coal export terminals on the west coast need to be assessed in the EIS. Getting beyond the moral argument, the EIS needs to address the monetary cost of this. Montana all totaled, at the end of the day, we get about one dollar in royalties and taxes from each ton of coal that's mined. The United States government had an inner agency working group on the cost of carbon pollution to assess how much damage is caused by one ton of carbon pollution. The middle value they came to was \$38, so for every one dollar we get from a ton of coal, the global environment suffers \$38 in harm. That's not a good trade off. It's not good for us and it's not good for the world. Approving a project to gain one billion dollars in revenue from one billion tons of coal, if that's going to cost 38 billion dollars in climate impacts, that's crazy. In legal talk that's arbitrary and capricious. It needs to be assessed in EIS, and it's just one more reason that the Tongue River Railroad should not be built, and Otter Creek should not be strip-mined.

Thank you.