

ATTN: Docket # FD 35952

May 31, 2016

Mr. Navecky
Surface Transportation Board
Docket No. FD 35952
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Mr. Navecky,

After reviewing the available information about the proposed Great Lakes Basin (GLB) rail project, it is my opinion that the proposed GLB project has failed to sufficiently provide documentation that supports public convenience and necessity. Further more I believe that fast tracking this project and waiving the six month notification period was an error on the part of the STB. For the following reasons I respectfully request that the STB cease any further action on this project.

NEED

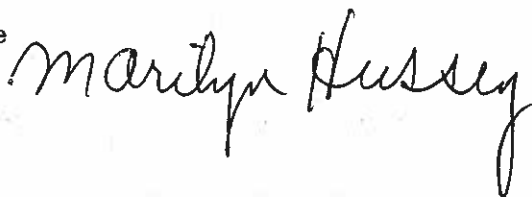
- The Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) program - a collaboration between rail companies, local, state and federal government - is in the process of implementing physical and managerial improvements to make the rail system in Chicago more efficient in order to decrease delays. Letters from the Class I rail lines in response to the July 13, 2015 letter by the Chairman of the STB Daniel R. Elliot, II, indicate the CREATE project, although not completed, is improving the delays in Chicago.
- The GLB proposed project undermines and subverts the CREATE program.
- The GLB project is neither comprehensive, visionary, or collaborative. The proposed project is not part of any federal, state or local long-term freight plan. It is strictly a commercial venture by a for-profit company.
- There is no publicly available business plan for the proposed rail line to document public convenience, necessity or benefits.
- GLB documentation does not describe a need for the 50 foot utility easement (beyond stating that it is a potential revenue source), or the need for the proposed 15,000 acre Kankakee rail terminal, which is five times larger than the largest rail yard in the world. The Surface Transportation Board's (STB) jurisdiction to approve a utility corridor is also in question.
- Union Pacific and Norfolk-Southern have publicly stated that they are not interested in the proposed GLB project. Instead they prefer to work with the CREATE program in Chicago.
- Canadian National invested heavily in their own Chicago bypass by purchasing the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Railway line and are therefore less likely to use the proposed GLB toll rail.
- The letter from Norfolk Southern Corporation's legal department (filed as EI-22974 under FD-35952) states that Norfolk-Southern does not have a non-disclosure agreement with GLB, nor is it interested in using the proposed rail. It also states that no information about current rail movements or traffic volumes was provided for the GLB project. This raises the question whether there are any "non-disclosure agreements" at all. It also makes one wonder about the market research that was done, or not done, for this project.
- Mr. John Yonan, P. E., Superintendent of the Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways writes the following in his letter to the STB; *"The proposed Great Lakes Basin Rail Line will, at best, only address a very small part of the region's freight congestion. Cook County's Department of Transportation and Highways is proceeding with a long range transportation plan and an analysis to identify and prioritize freight pinch points and possible solutions. Those studies will yield a more comprehensive range of projects to address freight congestion and promote development."*

PUBLIC CONVENIENCE

- I find no evidence that the proposed GLB Chicago bypass has been identified as a solution to the Chicago bottleneck, a public convenience, or a national transportation priority (as Mr. Patton asserts). It is a business proposal by a for-profit company.
- Due to the fact that the route of the proposed rail will likely change (Mr. Patton's words) people in an area of over 32,220 square miles have lived in uncertainty about the future of their homes, farms and livelihood.
- The potential for unwanted rail - and the use of eminent domain - has increased stress for land and property owners.
- Farm fields divided by the proposed rail will be more difficult and dangerous (due to farm field crossings) to manage. Productivity of the land will decrease due to construction of the rail, odd shaped parcels and increased compaction. Costly irrigation and tiling infrastructure will be damaged and rendered useless.
- Government has spend millions of tax dollars preserving farmland, woodlands and promoting good agricultural practices. Farmers spend thousands of dollars on soil conservation practices. The proposed rail line is counter-productive to these efforts.
- Home and land owners near the proposed rail will see their home and land values reduced.
- GLB intends to be a toll railroad. Investors in this proposed project will have only their own financial interest in mind, not the public convenience.
- Opposition to the proposed project has been overwhelming, seven of eleven counties involved have passed resolutions opposing the GLB rail. Mr. Patton has stated that he will take land by eminent domain if the proposed project is approved.
- The loss of thousands of acres of prime farmland cannot possibly be considered a public convenience. Taking highly productive land out of production for a speculative for-profit project is not in the publics' best interest

The above provided information is what led me to the conclusion that the proposed GLB project is inconsistent with the public convenience and necessity. It was insufficiently vetted before starting the approval process. I respectfully request that the STB cease work on this project. Individually, or as part of a group, I will fight the GLB proposed plan using all options available, including Congress, my vote at the ballot box and the judicial system.

Signature



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Dear Mr. Navecky,

Please also consider the enclosures in making your decision. This year is also the first year that Swans on the Kankakee River successfully hatched young. Bald Eagles, our National Bird and the symbol of our democracy are starting to nest and raise their young along the river. The Kankakee River just this week was designated a National Recreational Trail. A railroad crossing this great river would endanger it's existence. Also, a spill would contaminate the drinking water of towns downstream.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Hussey

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Common Name: Kankakee mallow
Type: Herbaceous perennial
Family: Malvaceae
Native Range: Northwestern United States, Illinois, Indiana, Virginia
Zone: 5 to 6
Height: 4.00 to 6.00 feet
Spread: 2.00 to 3.00 feet
Bloom Time: June to July
Bloom Description: Apple blossom to bluish pink
Sun: Full sun to part shade
Water: Medium
Maintenance: Low
Flower: Showy, Good Cut
[Garden locations](#)

★★★★★, [See Comments](#)

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Culture

Easily grown in moderately fertile, medium moisture, well-drained soil in full sun to part shade. Tolerant of hot and humid conditions.

Noteworthy Characteristics

This wild hollyhock was first discovered in 1872 on a gravelly river island (Langham Island) in the Kankakee River near Altorf, Illinois, where it still grows. It is not known to be native to any other area in the world, and is one of the rarest native American plants. A clump-forming, erect plant which features mallow-like, five-petaled flowers up to 2.5" across on spikes growing 4-6' tall. Flowers are apple blossom to bluish pink fading to white toward the center with a noticeable central column of stamens. Seven-lobed leaves are maple-like and to 6" across. Flowers bloom in early summer and then give way to pod-like fruits.

Problems

No significant insect or disease problems.

Garden Uses

A rare and interesting plant for the border, naturalized garden or wildflower garden, but may be very difficult to find in commerce.



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CENTERPIECE

TOP STORY

16 bald eagles spotted at Kankakee dam

Robert Themer

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Jan 9, 2014



The Daily Journal/Mike Voss

An American Eagle lifts off the water after snatching a fish from the Kankakee River west of the dam in Kankakee on Wed

Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2014, was a historic day at Kankakee, when — to the surprise of many — an unprecedented gathering of 16 bald eagles converged below the Kankakee River dam.

"It's eagle heaven out there," said Terry Johnston, who has lived on the river downstream from the dam for 45 years. "I've never ever seen anything like it. They're all over the place."

Johnston counted a dozen, sometimes snagging fish, their preferred food, or swooping down on geese to scare them into flight and maybe to pick off one that fails.



Veteran birder Jed Hertz, of Kankakee, was at Jeffers Park most of the morning, marveling at the display as the eagles glided over the open water below the dam. Some motorists crossing the Washington Avenue bridge pulled into the neighborhood for a longer look.

Hertz counted 16 — a dozen immature birds and four adults, readily identifiable by the white heads and tail feathers that the

younger birds lack.

"To see 16 bald eagles in Kankakee is historic — at least in our lifetimes," Hertz said.

"This is pretty unique, but we have had some unusual weather conditions."

Wildlife photographer Gary Soper, of Kankakee, has observed bald eagles in the area for about a dozen years. "The most I've ever seen before is three at one time," he said. "I never thought I would see them like this. The population has grown, but I really think the extreme weather we just had has something to do with this."

Soper and Hertz were correct, said Michael Ward, an avian ecologist with the Illinois Natural History Survey. "Since it is so cold and everything is frozen up, if you find open water you are going to find them."

The deep freeze this week likely sent more of them farther south than usual, seeking open water.

In recent years, Illinois has become the winter home of more than 3,000 of the once-endangered bald eagles, which migrate south and converge around open water areas usually below dams on the Mississippi and Illinois rivers and other waterways, according to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Hertz noted that a fellow birder at Fulton, on the Mississippi River north of Moline, reported 850 bald eagles in the Lock and Dam 13 area, compared to 500 or 600 in past years.

"They're definitely coming back and weather like this is definitely a good opportunity to go out and see them," Ward said.

Eagle watching

If the eagles don't stay at Kankakee or aren't enough to satisfy you, eagle watch events are held through much of the state — the closest at Starved Rock State Park and the Illinois Waterway Visitor Center at Utica on Jan. 25-26. For information about it or other eagle watches, Google "eagles in Illinois."

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Uncommon wild lupine in bloom now

Host for endangered Karner blue butterfly

Most people have heard of the monarch butterfly and the role milkweed plays in its life cycle. If you haven't, I am sure to cover it at a later date.

Today, I want to highlight a plant that also plays host to a butterfly, but this relationship is in far greater peril. The plant is wild lupine (*Lupinus perennis*) and the federally endangered butterfly is the Karner blue.

Along the Kankakee River, we have some of the finest sand prairie and sand savanna habitats in all of the state. The wild lupine is a fairly uncommon sand-loving flower that only occurs in a handful of counties in Illinois including Kankakee, Iroquois and Will (man, we are lucky).

The lupine is found in drier areas that get a lot of sun such as the edge of woodlands, openings created by fallen trees and sand prairies.

The plants I ran into were about knee high and along a south-facing slope in an area where the Illinois Department of Natural Resources

had done some invasive brush removal (*Kudosi*).

Lupine can be identified by a few features. First, make sure you're in the right habitat because other prairie plants such as indigos can have similar flower appearance. You should be able to avoid this confusion

because lupine is blooming right now and the native indigos bloom later in the summer.



TREVOR EDMONSON
OFF THE TRAIL

Secondly, the leaf structure is very unique to this plant. The leaves are alternate along the stems and are palmate. Palmate basically means that the individual leaflets are originating from a central origin which kind of looks like a flower head in itself. The flower stalks are fairly long (4 to 11 inches tall) with captivating deep blue-violet colored petals.

The lupine is not just merely a showy plant to look at. The federally endangered Karner blue butterfly relies solely on the wild lupine as a host (food) plant for its larva.

The Karner blue was listed as endangered in 1992 and since then has seen massive declines in populations all over the Midwest. In Illinois, most people believe the

Karner blue is extirpated (locally extinct) but you still can find it listed in the "Butterflies of Illinois Field Guide" (a great resource by the Illinois Natural History Survey). A variety of factors why exist, including habitat loss, climate change and pollution.

The lack of lupine is important to note because most of our ideal habitat is fragmented and isolated, and studies have shown that the Karner blue rarely moves more than a mile.

Climate change also is a huge issue for this symbiotic relationship. The eggs of the Karner blue are carefully planned to hatch when the lupine leaves are available for food. During warmer years, the lupines can bloom and die off earlier, leaving the butterfly larva with nothing to eat. Nature is a complex system and everything is connected.

If you want to see wild lupine, you need to drive on over to the Shannon Bayou Environmental Education Center in Aroma Park. The prairie next to the baseball diamonds there was seeded heavily with lupine so you can't miss it.

If you want to see the Karner blue butterfly, you need to drive to Michigan and hike some of the dunes, but do it soon.

Trevor Edmonson can be reached at trevoredmonson@gmail.com.

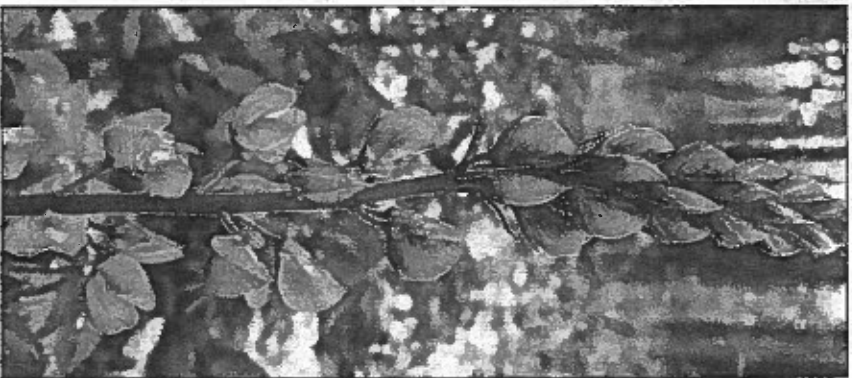


Photo by Trevor Edmonson
At bloom in Kankakee River State Park, the wild lupine (*Lupinus perennis*) is a vital host plant for the endangered Karner blue butterfly.





Mrs. Marilyn Hussey
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