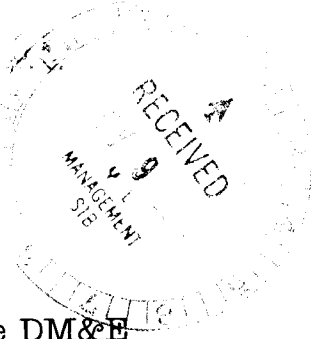


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ENVIRONMENTAL
DOCUMENT

November 2, 2000
Draft Environmental Impact Statement Hearing



My husband Vernon and I are adamantly opposed to the DM&E Expansion project. We have always reasoned any project that worries about divulging their financial resources, and floats out lovely visions of great economic benefits quite possibly needs to keep the public and media busy with wonderful visions and happy consequences. Meanwhile there are communities, groups, and individuals actively considering all the myriad of repercussions this expansion project will commence on our lives.

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Some of you in the audience have undoubtedly read and understand the complete 5000 page DEIS. I am wondering if I am the only one in a total state of frustration after reading, pondering, trying to decipher maps and graphs, and trying to find the cross references that are supposed to lead me into a more explanatory frame of mind. I spend quite a bit of time looking up the acronyms and definitions for words, and many words are not defined. So far I have not arrived at the ultimate informed state of mind. It is unreasonable that we are given only 90 days to comment on this Draft Environmental Impact Statement. I expect that the Surface Transportation Board does understand there must be at least 90 more days added to the comment period of time.

The Vernon Schnose ranch received the Executive Summary of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. I requested this Executive Summary thinking it would have sufficient information to base a reply on.....WRONG!!! I went to the Hot Springs Library (a 50 mile round trip from our ranch) and sat down with THE profuse Volumes full of detailed information. I did find a rail car full of words an abundance of them repeated over and over, and it takes so much time sifting through repetitive statements much of the meaning is lost.

The maps are inadequate. They have evidently been copied from the Corps of Engineers' maps. The black and white copy leaves many details blurred and shading disguises many features. One item I searched for on the maps was some type of number or symbol referring to the width of the right of way. I do not believe there is any width measure on the maps. I consider this an important item. The Corps of Engineers Map Volume is located at

the Hot Springs Library and two or three other volumes, but I have not accomplished much studying in them. Due to the miles we need to travel to study the information and limited time we plan on making more comments concerning this Draft Environmental Impact Statement as our allotted time rolls on.

This proposed rail line will do more than damage the grass on our ranches in South Dakota and Wyoming. Rail lines will totally change ranching operations and alter the future condition of the land. I did not find any information estimating landowners' costs in fighting fire, keeping cattle from the tracks, extra hours needed when moving cattle, and extra hours moving machinery. Also, when we are shipping cattle out of the Schnose ranch, livestock trucks will need to cross at least two railroad crossings. Where is the money for shrink while beef sweats off pounds standing on trucks on a hot summer day while DM&E's 110 cars full of coal pass through on the way to their paycheck?

Landowners are at a disadvantage as far as any mitigation proceedings. Ranchers are to meet with the Landowner Advisory Board to negotiate our problems concerning the loss of land, damage and displacement of capital improvements, weed control, fences, livestock deaths, fires, and construction related impacts (ES-87). Do any of you in the audience believe the Landowner Advisory Board will want to give very much credence to landowners' concerns when they are drawing a salary from the DM&E Railroad?

I am dismayed that there are so few analytical statements. Compare contrast statements are used most frequently allowing the authors to form the conclusion that Alternate C is the best route. I did begin locating and documenting these, but at the present time they are in one of the masses of paper scattered over the ranch house. Why is DM&E the authority on so many issues in the DEIS? Shouldn't the authors of these volumes reach out to other Railroad Chief Executive Officers and receive other viewpoints? What is the source or sources for their statement that businesses are attracted to the location of a rail line? This could be verified by a drive along the Burlington Northern Santa Fe line. My neighboring town of Edgemont is not exactly a bustling robust city.

One of my interests is the quality of air that is expected when these 110 carloads of coal pass through our region. I did find "fugitive dust emissions are intermittent and difficult to quantify" (4.4-32). All the air quality visibility information becomes a game called "Decipher This System of Numbering". I went on the next game "More Information is Available in Another Volume".

Water is one of our most precious resources on our ranch. I did not locate any information of construction schedule restrictions enforced near any stream crossings. This is a serious oversight.

Information on Alternative D is added into the DEIS, but again I see compare contrast statements downplaying the feasibility of this route. Length of the route should not be as important as the environmental impacts to the land and Alternative D does not cross Buffalo Gap National Grasslands and the amount of land crossed in Thunder Basin is minimal.

In the DEIS there are many references to destruction of woodlands, wild game habitat and on and on. Even though there will be lethal destruction to our ranches, scenery, pristine environment the Draft Environmental Impact Statement proclaims the need for this line to be built. I am not sure the authors of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement know we live in an area of fragile unforgiving land. When this land is slapped with an overabundance of water, a period of no water, whipped by wind, or suffers from damage inflicted by manmade machines, these soils do not bounce back and produce. The earth in our region does not forgive and forget.