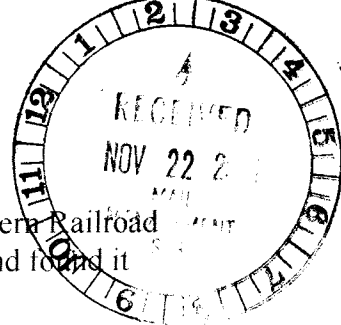


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November 20, 2000

I would like to comment on the DEIS prepared for the Dakota Minnesota and Eastern Railroad expansion project. I reviewed the document on the INTERNET and at the library and found it confusing and containing many errors. Please delay your decision on this project.



I live on the Custer Ranch in eastern Custer County, South Dakota. We are located 13 miles east of Hermosa, SD. The ranch is an active cattle raising business with around 600 head of beef cattle. We have also developed a business that releases 1,000 ringneck Chinese pheasants annually. Habitat has been developed along the creek to support the bird population. This game preserve is available for hunting in the fall season.

I reviewed the photos of the land where this rail line is supposed to cross Battle Creek on the ranch and the photos show no buildings. This is an error. The railroad intends to construct the new line right through our ranch headquarter. Further research and talking with the railroad official shows the track will run straight through our main ranch house, the hired hands residence, all our cattle and machine buildings, the water well and fuel storage locations. All the cattle corals will be destroyed as well. The ranch will be destroyed and split in two.

On the south boundary of the ranch we lease land from the Buffalo Gap National Grassland. We have been asked by the rangers not to impact this area and our cattle grazing permit is very limited so that erosion and overgrazing are prevented. We gladly comply with the authorities. My question is how can a railroad build new line through this grassland and not impact the environment. The geology alone in this area is made of Pierre Shale which is known to cause land to be very unstable. Slopes in the area crumble and slide all the time. Imagine the effect of heavy rail cars rumbling through.

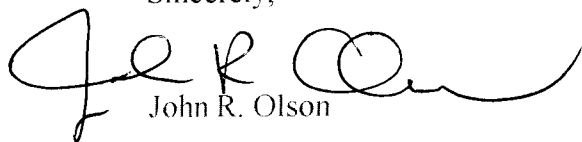
As I stated earlier this ranch is a business for cattle and pheasants. The valley where the train line is going to be built is a wonderful area full wildlife, native grasses, trees, year round water in the creek, and home to our family.

I understand the need for a railroad, but why hasn't DM&E considered using already built track right of ways. Why choose a completely new route through people's homes and business?

I do not think DM&E has been honest with you about the impact of their proposal. I do not think the DEIS addressed the true impact to the environment in Custer County. I do not understand how one private business like DM&E can destroy another private business like our ranch. I do not think DM&E is after anything except quick profit at other's expense.

I ask you to list me as in support of the "NO BUILD" proposal. I ask you to send a representative out to the ranch and see for yourself what the impact of this railroad's idea of progress will do.

Sincerely,



John R. Olson

ENTERED
Office of the Secretary

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Robert is the owner of the ranch and I am the father-in-law who also lives on the ranch.

3

