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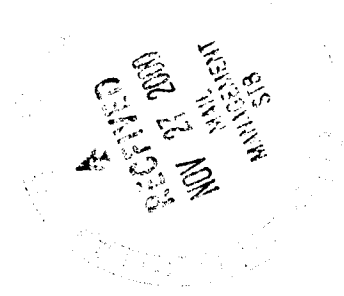
**SAGE & CACTUS VILLAGE**  
**TEPEE BED AND BREAKFAST**

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**ENTERED**  
**Office of the Secretary**

**DEC - 1 2000**

**Part of**  
**Public Record**



November 6, 2000

To Whom It May Concern:

I have some comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) prepared by the U.S. Surface Transportation Board on the application for expansion by the D.M. & E. Railroad.

As I've looked at the box of documents received, it has left me thoroughly confused, knowing less than I did before. There is no index. I cannot find adequate maps. I cannot tell exactly where the proposed route is.

Since the material arrived in early October we've had very little time to even look at it. This is one of the busiest times of year with weaning and shipping and preparing for winter. Now we are going into the winter feeding season. We need at least 180 additional days, or any time which can be allowed to try to assess this DEIS.

The only alternative which I can possibly endorse is Alternative A - No Build. In addition to the immeasurable problems a new rail line along the proposed route would introduce into our ranching operation, it would sound the death knell for the business I have so carefully developed to augment and supplement our income, which is the Sage & Cactus Village, tepee bed and breakfast.

I put at least five years of planning, preparation, and acquiring equipment in compliance with environmental requirements before the business was established in 1993. Since then I've spent years and a lot of money establishing the business, becoming known and gaining visibility and credibility. I am a member of Wyoming Homestay & Outdoor Adventures. This is a very credible operation, in that we've had customers and visitors from 47 states and 16 foreign countries. Many of these are repeat visitors year after year.

This is a unique and different kind of operation, where people come to enjoy a peaceful time amidst God's handiwork. The precious undisturbed beauty and sounds of nature are our chief commodities – along with the rare, golden prize of pristine silence. Imagine how noisy, dirty trains less than a mile away would destroy all that!

Wildlife is part of the attraction here. We have sizable populations of deer, antelope, wild turkey, grouse, coyotes, fox, and several prairie dog villages which are also habitat for black-footed ferrets, mountain plover, and burrowing owls. The extremely invasive nature of a railroad corridor through the midst of established migration routes will have harmful effects on all this population. We also have a population of both golden and bald eagles, and a long-established eagle nesting area is in proximity to the proposed rail route.

I have researched Native American culture extensively in developing my tepee village, and it has received recognition and commendation from Native American people for the authenticity in portraying life as it was when they inhabited the land. We show great respect for their people and their approval has been a matter of pride to me as well as enhancing the appeal of my business. A railroad has no part in that.

Additionally, our property contains paleontologic relics from dinosaur bones to marine fossils and archaeologic relics from several eras of native American population. No archaeological survey has ever been conducted, which we've understood would be a prerequisite to any such development as that proposed by D.M. & E.

We are involved in the study of herbology and future plans for our property may include the cultivation of organic herbs, especially of the types once used by Native American's for medicinal purposes. The introduction of even more weed seed through gravel, ballast necessary to construction and transportation by the actual trains plus the contamination of diesel smoke, coal dust, and possible diesel fuel and other contaminant spills from accidental derailments into our watershed would make it nearly impossible to have a certified organic crop.

Prairie fires are another major concern. This summer our region was devastated by a major fire set by lightning, and even though all the local and regional fire units were dispatched, it could not be stopped until a lot of valuable pasturage was lost. Why do we need additional potential for fires to start? And isn't it historically proven that trains start fires?

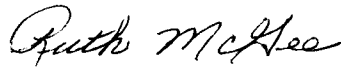
In my opinion the issues involving the intrinsic aesthetic value of the land and wildlife in its natural state are absolutely necessary to my business. Furthermore, in my opinion,

the impact of any rail construction anywhere in this area would be an issue which it would be impossible to mitigate.

On crisp winter days we can hear the existing trains going through Dewey, South Dakota, nearly 20 miles away. We certainly don't need them any nearer.

Thank you for reviewing these serious concerns. I reserve the right to make further comment at a later date.

A concerned citizen devoted to preserving our heritage,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ruth McGee".

Ruth McGee, owner/manager

SAGE & CACTUS VILLAGE

**Addendum:**

Our son in law was involved in the coal industry in the Thunder Basin area and has just lost his job because they're cutting back production. Very recently the Bell Aire and Coal Creek mines have closed, and employee reduction is underway at the Cypress Amax operation.

In view of this very obvious cutback in production, it would seem absolutely ridiculous to be planning to build even more rail lines into the area. I strongly believe the Surface Transportation Board should research this situation and obtain definitive information before one more step is take regarding D.M. & E's application. Even the hearings now underway are costing us, the taxpayers, a lot of money, and the whole thing should be terminated.