



City of Glenwood Springs
101 West 8th Street
Glenwood Springs, CO 81601

The Honorable John Hickenlooper
B85 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

January 25, 2022

Re: Uinta Basin Railway Proposal Which Threatens Glenwood Springs and the Colorado River

Dear Senator Hickenlooper:

We write to ask for your assistance in helping to stop the proposed Uinta Basin Railway through the Ashley National Forest. If built, this Utah railway will send as many as ten, 2-mile-long heated oil tanker trains per day along the Colorado River through Glenwood Canyon/I70 corridor, Glenwood Springs, and other Colorado communities as they head toward refineries along the Gulf Coast. The potential for disaster from derailment, fire and spills, at a time when our state is suffering from the devastating consequences of extreme drought and wildfire is a risk Colorado cannot take.

We request that you ask the Forest Service to reject this right-of-way, as the trains from this railway would create new unacceptable risks to the health and safety of our community as well as others along the rail corridor.

Data on rail accidents show that because oil tanker unit trains are longer and heavier than other types of trains, they are harder to control and more likely to cause track failure. Spills from the type of crude oil proposed to be transported are hard to clean up in water because the oil remains as individual droplets. The threat to the health and integrity of the River and its precious water far outweigh the benefits of the proposed project.

The 2020 Grizzly Creek Fire in Glenwood Canyon and the resulting historic mud/debris flows of 2021 closed I-70 for several weeks and is still impacting transport. Cleanup is ongoing in the canyon to protect the integrity of I-70, the Colorado River and the UP Rail line during Spring runoff and future anticipated debris flows in the fire burn-scar area. The risk of mud/debris flows will exist in the burn area surrounding Glenwood Canyon for a decade to come – the risk of introducing heated oil trains to such a sensitive area is simply too great.

Alarming, the proponents of the railway have not analyzed the risk in their environmental impact statement, nor have they detailed any plan for dealing with the fire risk. Yet historical data shows that once a fire starts on a High Hazard Flammable Train – none have been controlled by using offensive strategies.

Finally, the railway's purpose is to quadruple fossil fuel extraction in Utah's Uinta Basin to up to 350,000 barrels per day. This at a time when our state is feeling the direct impact of the climate emergency. Enabling the Uinta Basin Railway would make that emergency worse, while directly endangering our community. Use of infrastructure funding to construct a railway for the purpose of expanding the extraction of carbon burning fossil fuel is problematic given the State and Federal Governments commitment to fighting Climate change.

We respectfully request that you use all means at your disposal to protect the public interest and urge the Secretary of the Agriculture to reject the proposed right-of-way for the Uinta Basin Railway through the Ashley National Forest.

We look forward to hearing from you. We understand that the Forest Service may make a final decision as soon as February 3, 2022.

Sincerely,

Steve Davis
Jon Godes *Shelley Kaup*
Ingrid Wussow *Paula Stepp*
Charlie Willman

Jonathan Godes, Mayor

Charlie Willman, Mayor pro tem

Shelley Kaup, Councilor

Paula Stepp, Councilor

Steve Davis, Councilor

Ingrid Wussow, Councilor

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