


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30 coal cars derail in northwest Montana

UPDATED: Mon., Aug. 14, 2017, 10:40 p.m.



A Montana Rail Link train hauling coal left the tracks Sunday night, sending several thousands tons of coal near or into the Clark Fork River. (Courtesy of Brenda Calvin Fitchet)

The cars, each carrying roughly 122 tons, derailed from a westbound train on Aug. 13 and dumped much of their contents on the south side of the Clark Fork River reservoir between Noxon and Heron.

It took most of two days to clear the tracks and reopen them to train traffic. Montana Rail Link spokesman Jim Lewis said scrap and coal removal began Monday, when rail equipment and contractors arrived and loaded the first cars.

Lewis didn't grant an interview request, but sent an update by email Thursday.

"A large percentage of the coal has been loaded on railcars and removed from the site," he wrote. "The clean-up process has gone well and will wrap up shortly."

Lewis wouldn't speculate on the cause of the derailment, but said MRL is cooperating with the Federal Railroad Administration in its investigation.

The spill occurred eight miles upstream from the Idaho state line, and was readily visible from Montana Highway 200 across the river for weeks.

It didn't sit well with some who expressed concern over water quality degradation, a history of derailments along the Clark Fork River system, and recent signs of spontaneous combustion in the coal spill.

The Clark Fork here is backed up by the Cabinet Gorge dam as it leaves Montana. The river empties into Lake Pend Oreille, less than 20 miles downstream from the spill.

Locals remember another coal train wreck in November 2006 just 17 miles upriver. Twenty-seven loaded cars in a 115-car train traveling from Wyoming to Oregon derailed on a bridge across the river west of the town of Trout Creek. Four of the cars were initially unaccounted for and were thought to be submerged in as much as 80 feet of water.

In rainy March of this year, an empty MRL coal train derailed on a washed-out section of track near the Lake Pend Oreille shore.

The Federal Railroad Administration classifies coal as a non-hazardous commodity, but there has been little research into the effects of coal and coal dust on waterways.

In May a federal judge in Seattle approved a settlement between BNSF Railway Co. and seven environmental groups who claimed that coal dust regularly flies off BNSF trains and into waterways. BNSF agreed to put \$1 million toward environmental projects and to study methods for covering its coal and petroleum coke trains, and to clean up areas near Washington waters most affected by its trains.

The precedent-setting study of rail car cover “puts the rail operator on a court-ordered path toward keeping coal and petcoke out of sensitive water bodies,” said the Columbia Riverkeeper, one of the plaintiff groups.

Kristi Ponozzo, public policy director for the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), said it’s estimated that something less than 10 tons of coal reached the river from the original Heron spill.

Olympus Technical Services, a Helena company hired by MRL to do a water quality assessment, said a “small amount” ended up in the river in the immediate vicinity of the shoreline.

“However, due to a subsequent drop in water level, all of the coal was exposed above river level on the shore as of September 1,” the company said in the sampling and analytical plan it submitted to MRL on Sept. 8.

With the effects on bull trout habitat in mind, DEQ turned to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to oversee the water quality assessment. Olympus began four weeks of coal and river surface sampling on Sept. 12 in order to characterize concentrations of metals and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs.

FWS spokesman Ryan Moehring said because of its shallow depths and warm temperatures, as well as large populations of Northern pike and other predators, Cabinet Gorge Reservoir isn't prime habitat for bull trout, which are on the federal threatened list.

Moehring said the only viable migratory spawning population in the area is the East Fork Bull River, which meets the main stem 10 miles north of the reservoir. Rock Creek, the next major drainage up from Bull River, is home to most of the resident bull trout.

“Our expectation would be that there may be relatively low numbers of juvenile and subadult bull trout residing in Cabinet Gorge Reservoir, either from reservoir resident populations or downstream migrating fish from upstream of Noxon Rapids dam,” Moehring said. “In other words, we feel the risk to bull trout is very low.”

Sandy Compton of Heron watched last weekend from across the river as workers poured water on what he called “some heavy-duty smoke coming out of the coal pile.”

He and a friend, Marjolein Groot Nibbelink of Sandpoint, Idaho, posted a selection of pictures on Facebook and sent some to area news outlets, including the Missoulian.

Compton, who owns Blue Creek Press in Heron and is program coordinator for Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness, called the smoke “very concerning.” Loose piles of low-grade coal are subject to spontaneous combustion and once started, a coal fire is notoriously difficult to extinguish.

Workers manning chainsaws also were removing trees near the coal and partially covered by it, Compton said.

On Wednesday morning he and Nibbelink observed even more smoke coming from the coal pile, though it had disappeared by that night and the next day, when Nibbelink said she saw heavy equipment at the site for the first time.

It was too long coming, in the eyes of Matt Nykiel of the Idaho Conservation League in Sandpoint.

Rains that put an end to a hot, dry summer didn’t arrive in these parts until last Monday.

“It’s alarming that a rail company would be that irresponsible to create that sort of fire danger,” Nykiel said. “We’d been lucky until recently to kind of get away without fires in the Panhandle. It would be more than unfortunate to have a fire that could have been prevented, one, if they weren’t transporting oil and coal through in the first place and then, if it does spill, at least cleaning it up quickly and efficiently.”

It’s not known if the burning coal is adding more complications to a cleanup already challenged by limited access to the wreck site.

In his email, Lewis said simply, “A small amount of smoldering material was extinguished and is being removed from the site.”

The people in Idaho appreciate that the cleanup is finally taking place, Nykiel said. “But it’s sort of cold comfort because our states have long histories of different industries that take risks in local communities to make a buck.”

He pointed south to Idaho's Silver Valley, where he said mining companies for years discharged waste into the South Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River or along the valley floor.

"And they never cleaned it up," Nykiel said. "It's now in the hands of the EPA and the state to clean up all that mess and remediate it. So to see a train derail and coal just lie there for a month or more on the river bank sort of brings back those old memories.

"It's a trend we tend to see from folks who pass through our state or use our resources for their own interests. It's troubling to see."

MORE INFORMATION



Coal train derails along Clark Fork River in western Montana

- Shuttered aluminum plant leaving unresolved legacy
- Thousands of defects found on oil train routes
- Montana communities gird for oil train explosions they hope never come
- MRL report cites 'track geometry' issues in July derailment of Boeing fuselages
- Cabinet Gorge coal spill cleanup all but complete
- Montana Rail Link eyes quicker response after Noxon coal spill

- Stable crossing: After all these years, Heron gets itself a shiny new bridge

Kim Briggeman

Mineral County, Veterans Issues Reporter

Outlying communities, transportation, history and general assignment reporter at the Missoulian

From: Judith Butler
To: [Comments](#)
Subject: Comment on Proposal by BNSF for Sandpoint Rail Project
Date: Sunday, March 11, 2018 2:34:46 PM

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to oppose the Sandpoint Junction Connector project and urge you to do the same.

A second track, "passing lane" for trains should be done over land not water where the damage from a spill would be far greater.

Regards,
Judith Butler
140 Monarch View Lane
Hope, ID 83836



March 13, 2018

VIA E-MAIL

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

USACE - Shane Slate - NWW_BNSF_Pendoreille@usace.army.mil

U. S. Coast Guard

USCG - Shelly Sugarman - shelly.h.sugarman@uscg.mil

RE: Application NO. NWW-2007-01303; Proposed rail bridge over Lake Pend Oreille

Dear Mr. Slate and Ms. Sugarman,

The City of Sandpoint requests an extension to the public comment period for the proposed second rail bridge over Lake Pend Oreille. A 30-day comment period is not long enough to solicit meaningful public comment for a project of this magnitude and potential effect on our small town.

I respectfully request that the public comment period be extended at least 90 days for a total of 120 days, with the public comment period ending on June 26, 2018. This extended period of time will allow both year-round and seasonal residents of the City of Sandpoint enough opportunity to thoroughly review the 250+ page permit application, formulate meaningful comments and share them with permitting agencies.

It's my understanding that the Army Corps of Engineers plans to hold a hearing in Sandpoint. Not everyone would be able to attend a single hearing. I respectfully request that at least three (3) public hearings be held in Sandpoint to consider the proposed project. Ideally, two public hearings would be held prior to the development of the Environmental Assessment (EA) and one public hearing held after the release of the draft EA. These opportunities would allow the public to thoroughly vet the proposal, share their concerns and suggest alternatives. The proposed project has the potential to significantly impact the people and environment of Sandpoint and warrants the additional public hearings.

Public Health and Safety:

The construction of a second rail track will allow for an increase in rail traffic. The rail lines through our City currently cause problems for our emergency responders. Emergency responders and residents currently experience extended delays at crossings, which puts the person requiring medical attention in a potential life-threatening situation. Increased rail traffic will cause a greater delay for emergency

response. The City cannot afford the high cost of comprehensive monitoring devices that alert emergency responders to a blocked crossing. Another alternative would be to add new emergency response infrastructure, like a satellite fire, police and EMS station on the north side of Sandpoint. However, this would cost up to \$1.5 million dollars and require ongoing costs to maintain and staff the satellite station. Similarly, the cost of other rail infrastructure improvements, such as overpasses or underpasses would be a huge burden on City taxpayers. This is a burden that a town of 7,500 residents cannot afford.

The City receives frequent noise complaints. An increase in rail traffic will undoubtedly exacerbate problems and citizen complaints that we currently receive. The City has looked into creating quiet zones, but even this step is financially unavailable to the City.

Environmental Concerns:

Hazardous materials are transported along the shores and over Lake Pend Oreille every day via the existing rail bridge in Sandpoint. With respect to transport of volatile crude oil and coal, transport of these commodities could increase if export terminals, refineries and other related infrastructure are built along the west coast.

Transport of coal and crude oil threatens the water quality of Lake Pend Oreille and the downstream of Pend Oreille River. Coal and coal dust released from open rail cars introduces heavy metals such as mercury, lead and arsenic into our waterways. Oil spills are notoriously difficult to contain. Our communities are not prepared to address the environmental fall out from a coal or oil train derailment into Lake Pend Oreille.

Lake Pend Oreille and the Pend Oreille River provide potable drinking water to thousands of residents and visitors. A public water treatment facility on Lake Pend Oreille serves residents of Kootenai, Ponderay, Sandpoint and parts of unincorporated Bonner County

A derailment of a train carrying hazardous materials adjacent to or over Lake Pend Oreille would pose a significant risk to those that depend on these waterbodies for a source of clean water. Derailments of crude oil trains have impaired waterbodies across the country, including rivers and wetlands, and pose a serious threat to public safety.

Lake Pend Oreille and the Pend Oreille River are also extremely popular with all types of recreationalists, including anglers and hunters, and the waterways serve as important habitat for a diverse array of wildlife. The increase in capacity of trains carrying hazardous material enhanced by a second rail bridge will directly threaten recreational activities and sensitive wildlife habitat.

Public Interest:

A second rail bridge over Lake Pend Oreille could significantly increase current rail traffic. Increased rail traffic has been demonstrated to cause an increase in accidents at crossings. According to data collected by the U.S. Department of Transportation, the number of accidents significantly increases when the number of trains exceed thirty (30). Increased traffic will also result in significant delays at crossings. The City has estimated that an approximate doubling of rail traffic would result in traffic delays of up to six (6)

March 13, 2018

Page 3 of 3

hours per day, causing economic losses of \$575,000, which is an increase of \$300,000 attributed to current traffic delays.

The risk of derailment and subsequent spills of toxic materials, such as Bakken crude oil, also increases with additional rail traffic. As previously mentioned, the rate of oil train derailments continue to increase across the United States with disastrous consequences for the affected communities. Emergency responders within the Lake Pend Oreille region admittedly do not have the resources needed to adequately address an oil train disaster. With the cost of an oil train derailment disaster estimated in the billions of dollars, communities like Sandpoint would face the possibility of financial ruin.

In conclusion, for the reasons stated above, I respectfully request the following:

1. The public comment period to last a total of 120 days, ending on June 26th, 2018.
2. At least three (3) public hearings held in Sandpoint to consider the proposed project. Ideally, two (2) public hearings would be held prior to the development of the EA and one public hearing held after the release of the draft EA.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Shelby Rognstad
Mayor

CC:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Gregory Hughes - greg_m_hughes@fws.gov
Idaho Department of Lands: Tom Fler - tfler@idl.idaho.gov
Idaho Department of Environmental Quality: June Bergquist - june.bergquist@deq.idaho.gov
Kalispel Tribe of Indians: Deane Osterman - dosterman@knrd.org
Kootenai Tribe of Idaho: Kevin Greenleaf - greenleaf@kootenai.org
Coeur d'Alene Tribe: Tyrel Stevenson - tstevenson@cdatribe-nsn.gov
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes: Misty Doss - misty.doss@cskt.org
Spokane Tribe of Indians: B.J. Kieffer - bjk@spokanetribe.com

From: Maree Peck
To: "NWW_BNSF_Pendoreille@usace.army.mil"; "shelly.h.sugarman@uscg.mil"
Cc: "greg_m_hughes@fws.gov"; Tom Flee; "june.bergquist@deq.idaho.gov"; "dosterman@knrd.org"; "greenleaf@kootenai.org"; "tstevenson@cdatribe-nsn.gov"; "misty.doss@cskt.org"; "bjk@spokanetribe.com"
Subject: Application NO. NWW-2077-01303 - Proposed Rail Bridge Over Lake Pend Oreille
Date: Tuesday, March 13, 2018 3:33:03 PM
Attachments: [Proposed Rail Bridge.pdf](#)

Mr. State and Ms. Sugarman:

Attached is a letter signed by Mayor Shelby Rognstad regarding the proposed rail bridge over Lake Pend Oreille.

Sincerely,

*Maree Peck
City Clerk
City of Sandpoint
1123 Lake St.
Sandpoint, ID 83864*

*Phone: 208-263-3310
Fax: 208-263-3678*

The City of Sandpoint and USDA are equal opportunity providers and employers. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.



From: Patricia M. Ragen
To: [Comments](#)
Subject: Sandpoint Idaho and Trains
Date: Friday, March 16, 2018 11:07:53 AM

Please cover the coal trains if you plan to add more traffic through Sandpoint Idaho. The dust from these trains collects in our waterways and on the tracks themselves. This is a safety issue. Coal dust is not only toxic to life, it is dangerous on the tracks as it causes the pins, holding the tracks down, to work up and out.

From: [State of Idaho WebMaster](#)
To: [Comments](#)
Subject: IDL Comment
Date: Thursday, March 15, 2018 7:24:53 PM

Name: tom mallard

Contact Phone number: 9285421656

E-mail address: mallard@mallard-design.com

Mailing address: PO Box 58814

City: Renton

State: WA

Records Request Description: Great need for bypass tracks where possible. The increase in volume needs thought. Update crossings to all have gates, no horns even outside urban areas! Instead use visual heavily everybody's on their phone inside a car, IIoT style. Then, acceleration sensors are cheap & reliable far better resolution on where trains are provided by a more dense network of sensors. I'm working on 3000-4000hp permagnetic motors as replacements to diesel, no emissions, quiet, no fuel, far less waste-heat, alnico's ok to use, no rare earths, the magnets can be repolarized 3-times for longevity. cheers

From: [State of Idaho WebMaster](#)
To: [Comments](#)
Subject: IDL Comment
Date: Monday, March 19, 2018 10:29:58 AM

Name: Sharon Burdick

Contact Phone number: 2082904437

E-mail address: sharonburdick@hotmail.com

Mailing address: Pob61

City: Kootenai

State: ID

Records Request Description: As a resident of Bonner county I am very disturbed by the plans for 3 new bridges in Sandpoint for rail traffic. The concerns are many. First of all the danger to our pristine waters from derailment is very real as we have experienced 4 of them just in t.he last 4 years. Doubling the amount of train traffic is a terrible idea and only benefits the railroad. We already have to deal with delays in emergency response situations as well as debilitating levels of noise and air pollution from trains going thru town. Please consider these issues and how they effect citizens. Thanks. Sharon Burdick PO Box 61 Kootenai ID 83840

From: [State of Idaho WebMaster](#)
To: [Comments](#)
Subject: IDL Comment
Date: Monday, March 19, 2018 10:02:12 AM

Name: Robin Beard

Contact Phone number: 2086993077

E-mail address: robinmbeard@hotmail.com

Mailing address: 19021 W Mincoda Rd

City: Hauser

State: ID

Records Request Description: I want to provide you with my thoughts, as a community member concerned about our environment, about the possible BNSF bridge across Lake Pend Oreille. More rail traffic is not safe given our precious aquifer that we all depend on. My husband and I are easily employable medical professionals who have discussed moving out of the area, but the clean, safe area keeps us here. Please don't allow a change in our region that will endanger our health and encourage us to leave.



Bonner County Planning Department

"Protecting property rights and enhancing property values...."

Milton Ollerton
Planning Director

March 19, 2018

Amidy Fuson, Lands Resource Specialist Sr.
Idaho Department of Lands
2550 Highway 2 West
Sandpoint, Idaho 83864

Subject: Notice of Application: ERL-96-S-0096E - BNSF Railway Co.

Dear BNSF Railway Co.:

The Bonner County Planning Department is in receipt of the Idaho Department of Lands' notice of application. Bonner County Revised Code 14-403 (Floodplain Development Application) and 14-204 (definition of development) requires a floodplain development permit for any man-made alteration to improved or unimproved real estate, including but not limited to, buildings or other structures, mining, dredging, filling, grading, paving, within the floodplain. Therefore, the **applicant** shall be required by Bonner County to obtain all necessary permits prior to construction or alteration within the flood hazard area. The **applicant** is required to fill out all applicable sections of the enclosed Development Permit Application and return it to our department with a fee of \$200.00 payable to Bonner County Planning.

When submitting your Flood Development Permit, please include in the package the approved copies of your permits from the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL permit) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps permit). Failure to do so may delay permit processing.

If you have any questions, please call the Bonner County Planning Department at 208-265-1458 or visit our office at 1500 Hwy 2, Ste. 208, Sandpoint, Idaho.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jason Johnson".

Jason Johnson, CFM
Planner/Floodplain Manager

Enclosure: Floodplain Development Permit Application

From: [State of Idaho WebMaster](#)
To: [Comments](#)
Subject: IDL Comment
Date: Tuesday, March 20, 2018 8:37:48 PM

Name:

Contact Phone number:

E-mail address:

Mailing address:

City:

State: ID

Records Request Description: NO MORE TRAIN TRACK ARE YOU AWARE OF THE
ISUE

From: [State of Idaho WebMaster](#)
To: [Comments](#)
Subject: IDL Comment
Date: Wednesday, March 21, 2018 4:46:15 PM

Name: Timothy Anderson

Contact Phone number: 5094470317

E-mail address: highmountainranch@gmail.com

Mailing address:

City: Newport

State: WA

Records Request Description: I am writing to protest the Sandpoint Junction Connector project and urge your swift denial of the permits needed for construction. The project represents a significant threat that does little to protect the local environment. It is a project worthy of an expedited denial. The proposal to build a bridge and second track across Lake Pend Oreille when completed would allow trains to run in both directions, increasing the environmental risks to a fragile eco system, decreasing water quality, and adding to emissions issues in area that regularly suffers from hazardous air quality to inversions and wildfire smoke. This project will mean longer wait times on nearby roads and streets that cross BNSF tracks as BNSF has already seen massive derailment in the area that clogged local thoroughfares for days at a time. Doubling rail capacity of the line here, this will substantially increase the safety risks associated with hazmat train traffic in the region. The projects threat to the scenic value and sustainability of the Pend Oreille and Upper Columbia watershed is unproven and BNSF is commitment to the highest standards for safety is certainly debatable considering that in recent years BNSF/Montana Rail Link has seen Boeing 737 planes lost into the Clark Fork, grain dumped along US 95 south of Lake Pend Oreille among other accidents. It is questionable if BNSF is as well prepared to deal with sensitive areas like Lake Pend Oreille as they claim. Their "highly-detailed response" plans for environmentally sensitive regions don't mitigate the damage created by an accident and the reset to zero in billions of dollars in restoration and recovery efforts. The reality is rail is hardly the safest, most efficient and environmentally friendly way to ship commodities. The best thing we can do is oppose proposals such as Sandpoint that will further impact local stakeholders, decrease safety, while exposing the environment to great risk. Sandpoint is an outdated and poorly envisioned proposal that in many regards places the needs of a just passing through rail operator above those of local residents who have raised significant opposition and critical questions. Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opposition for the Sandpoint Junction Connector. I strongly urge your timely rejection of the projects necessary permits.

From: [State of Idaho WebMaster](#)
To: [Comments](#)
Subject: IDL Comment
Date: Wednesday, March 21, 2018 3:51:00 PM

Name: Sarah Wylie

Contact Phone number: 5097107794

E-mail address: sarahwylie13@gmail.com

Mailing address:

City: Spirit Lake

State: ID

Records Request Description: The BNSF should be highly ashamed of itself. The proposed second railroad bridge in Sandpoint is nothing but a disguise to bring hundreds of thousands of tons of silica by railway to the proposed smelter plant they are trying to force into Newport, WA. This will affect everyone in the area, and the disastrous environmental impact has already been proven by other silicon smelters around the world. Please contact CANNs, a citizens group informing the public about the truth of this plant. They have made people aware of why this bridge is trying to get pushed through. But the people of Sandpoint and Bonners County dont want it and wont stand by while this area gets destroyed. I strongly urge your timely disapproval of the projects necessary permits.

From: [State of Idaho WebMaster](#)
To: [Comments](#)
Subject: IDL Comment
Date: Thursday, March 22, 2018 11:19:43 AM

Name: David Phillips

Contact Phone number: 808-463-8128

E-mail address: phillipsdf@me.com

Mailing address: 1312 Pine ST

City: Sandpoint

State: ID

Records Request Description: I am steadfastly opposed to the BNSF plan to build more bridges and potentially double rail traffic. I am opposed to the process that seems to give BNSF the ability to proceed without approval, and I am opposed to more train traffic unless BNSF provides funds to mitigate rail intersections to reduce/eliminate train horn noise.

From: [State of Idaho WebMaster](#)
To: [Comments](#)
Subject: IDL Comment
Date: Monday, March 26, 2018 10:49:53 AM

Name: Steven Okelberry

Contact Phone number: 2083638665

E-mail address: skokelberry.2@gmail.com

Mailing address: 418 Superior St.

City: Sandpoint

State: ID

Records Request Description: Dear Idaho Dept. of Lands, I would like to share some thoughts on the proposed second rail bridge over Lake Pend Oreille. Sandpoint has long been a hub for railway traffic. Sandpoint residents have tolerated trains rolling through town for many years. There are currently 50 - 60 trains going through Sandpoint each day. Those numbers include a significant increase of coal and oil trains. Now, BNSF wants to increase that number (perhaps double!) and build a second rail bridge to accommodate coal and oil interests. I feel the future of our beautiful town is threatened by this proposed project. The environmental impact from additional diesel and noise pollution, coal dust, threats to our water, and greater chance of a devastating tanker accident does not paint a pretty picture. The is not the vision of a future for people who love and want to maintain a clean environment. The coal on these trains is going overseas to contribute to an already serious air pollution problem. This project appears to be based on a few people making a lot of money. So....just what benefits does Sandpoint receive from this project? I can only see disruption, a diminished quality of life, and an unwanted tomorrow that people would be stuck with. Sincerely, Steven Okelberry Longtime resident

From: [State of Idaho WebMaster](#)
To: [Comments](#)
Subject: IDL Comment
Date: Sunday, March 25, 2018 7:20:01 PM

Name: Megan Sausser

Contact Phone number: 2087712216

E-mail address: megansausser@gmail.com

Mailing address: 212 Wide River Road

City: Post Falls

State: ID

Records Request Description: Given the significance of Lake Pend Oreille to the local aquifer and recreationists, I would ask that an EIS, rather than an EA, be performed before the second rail line over the lake proceeds.

From: Richard Warren
To: [Richard Warren](#)
Subject: Proposed BNSF railroad bridges
Date: Sunday, March 25, 2018 12:53:24 PM

I've lived in Bonner County, Idaho near Sandpoint for over 30 years, and am very alarmed that BNSF railroad proposes to begin building 3 new bridges in Sandpoint over Lake Pend Oreille, Sand Creek, and Bridge Street, and all without a full Environmental Impact Statement(EIS). Increased rail traffic will mean more commuter crossing delays, delays to EMS services, a higher risk of a disastrous accident spilling oil and/or coal into our lake, and will ultimately exacerbate climate change and mercury pollution since it will facilitate trade of domestic coal and oil products to Asia. Ship transport of oil to American refineries via our coastal waters will also prove disastrous as numerous collisions and near collisions of such ship traffic have already been documented for decades. The estimated increase to 114 trains per day by 2035 is unacceptable, and will surely be harmful to the health and economy of our citizens. Please help to expand the public comment period to 90 days at least, schedule several public hearings, and initiate a full EIS before construction could even begin. This would be the largest construction project in decades near and on Lake Pend Oreille, and as such requires careful scrutiny and full public and professional review. I would like to see it stopped completely.

From: [State of Idaho WebMaster](#)
To: [Comments](#)
Subject: IDL Comment
Date: Friday, March 23, 2018 6:34:07 PM

Name: Stephen Ayers

Contact Phone number: (208) 667-7342

E-mail address: sayers777@hotmail.com

Mailing address: 1307 E Ash Avenue

City: Coeur d'Alene

State: ID

Records Request Description: I write in opposition to the proposed second train bridge by BNSF over Lake Pend Oreille. As a consumer of water from the Rathdrum aquifer and one who recreates on this lake, I see no reason why the monetary gain of this commercial enterprise should trump the thousands of people who use the lake. The potential for harm is great in that at some point in time there will be a derailment or other accident causing a spill into the lake of oil or other toxic chemical all to the detriment of the citizens of this state. Thanks you for your consideration of my comments.

From: [State of Idaho WebMaster](#)
To: [Comments](#)
Subject: IDL Comment
Date: Friday, March 23, 2018 3:59:14 PM

Name: Wes Hanson

Contact Phone number: 208-667-9389

E-mail address: wesleyrhanson@gmail.com

Mailing address: 2725 W. Carder Ln.

City: Coeur d'Alene

State: ID

Records Request Description: 2725 W. Carder Ln. FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814 March 23, 2018 Dear Sir: I oppose building a second railroad bridge across Lake Pend Oreille at Sandpoint. Right now, rail cars containing petroleum, coal and exotic chemicals pose a permanent threat to the lake's health, Sandpoint's tourist economy, lake residents and downstream communities, and the half million people who drink Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer water. When a spill occurs, there will be no really effective way to clean it up. Any cleanup effort would be compounded by four factors—the difficulty of separating oil and water-soluble chemicals from water, especially water moving around bridge pilings, the closeness of the bridge to Sandpoint's popular beach and marina, the currents carrying lake water to the nearby Pend Oreille River and downstream communities, and the complex geology that is the conduit to the Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer. This proposed new bridge would double the rail traffic and at least double the chances of a spill occurring in this very vulnerable part of the lake. I believe it would be irresponsible to approve its construction, given the risks currently posed by the existing single bridge. To visualize these risks, simply ask yourself this question: How adequate would cleanup measures really be if a petroleum or chemical spill occurred on the existing bridge? I believe an honest answer would either indicate that a second bridge should not be built or that a great deal of preliminary research needs to be done on how to prevent and cleanup future spills before the construction of a second bridge is considered. To gather sufficient public comment and conduct research into the bridge's structure and spill safeguards, potential impacts on public health and the environment, and the realism and feasibility of plans to clean up spills, I am asking that you extend the current 30-day public comment period to 120 days. Further, because the consequences of a water spill would be complex and prolonged, I request that you conduct a full Environment Impact Statement, not the currently proposed Environmental Assessment. An Environmental Assessment may be appropriate in a situation that has poses minimal risk to public health and the environment, but this is clearly not the case here. This proposed bridge and the freight it will carry poses significant long-term risk to the local economy, public health, and the environment and therefore deserves to have a thorough Environmental Impact Statement written. Sincerely, Wes Hanson

From: [Sharla Arledge](#)
To: [Margaret Major](#); [Andrew Smyth](#)
Subject: FW: Second bridge across Lake Pend Oreille.
Date: Tuesday, March 27, 2018 4:01:46 PM

From: Jim Corcoran <corcorjm@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 27, 2018 12:56 PM
To: Stephen.M.Fischer@uscg.mil; D13-PF-D13BRIDGES@uscg.mil; shane.p.slate@usace.army.mil; NWW_BNSF_Pendoreille@usace.army.mil; Comments <comments@idl.idaho.gov>; mnkiel@idahoconservation.org
Subject: Second bridge across Lake Pend Oreille.

To whom it may concern,

I write today, asking all of the above mentioned people and organizations to not build the second bridge across this beautiful lake.

I have lived in Sagle for the past 13 years and in that time have seen numerous derailments take place in various areas of the northern Idaho rail lines, with mixed results in clean up. It is only a matter of time before there is a serious derailment where oil, coal, or other toxic chemicals will be dumped somewhere in the lake.

Being a former firefighter for 7 years in Sagle, I know of the possibilities of toxic dumps taking place, as the cars that are pulled have a variety of deadly chemicals which could pollute areas of the lake. Doubling the number of trains that travel over the lake double the chances of these spills.

Rescue vehicles sit idling while mile long trains slowly move through Sandpoint, diminishing the chances that a person in need of life saving intervention will not be allowed to get those needs filled. Doubling the trains traveling in the Sandpoint area could, quite possibly double the loss of life within this community.

If you do honestly believe that a second bridge needs to be built, plan now to allow emergency vehicles to get where they need to go by building underpasses or overpasses, so as to complete their mission. Plan now for these vehicles and get the public behind your desire for the second bridge.

Even though you do a large amount of advertising, telling the public of the many positive accomplishments you do, from what I hear, your reputation has taken a nosedive for the past 5 to 6 years. Do something seriously positive and allow all emergency vehicles to accomplish their mission and get to where they need to be in the shortest amount of time. You will be looked upon by the public as a truly thoughtful group.

Thank you,

Jim Corcoran
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