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Belvidere Scoping Mtg
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Comments Concerning Great Lakes Basin Proposed Railroad Track through Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana

Docket #35952

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We have many concerns about Great Lakes Basin's planned railroad. The second route went close to the back of our house and cut our 240 acre field in two sections separating the tile outlet on the west from the tile on the east side of the farm.

- ❖ We have protected our farm land from development because this is our industry. This is a finite natural resource that cannot be replaced. We nurture it with fertilizers, tillage techniques, and water management. To consider this a resource that has no value and should simply be taken to build a profit railroad is wrong. You would not simply take part of a business and expect not to affect the way the rest of the business is run.

Many falsely believe we have an endless supply of farm land. This is simply not true. We lose nearly 50 acres of farmland throughout the country every hour to development. We value and protect wetlands, national forests, and other unique ecological areas. Our rich productive soils are also a unique ecological resource that provides food for the world. This seemingly abundant rich soil needs to be saved not by the acre but by the inch.

- ❖ Drainage is a very expensive problem to fix in a field. Because we are in Spring Township, we have had many issues that needed investment in tile to ameliorate the problem. If GLB runs a railroad through a field, that drainage is changed forever. The fix will be very expensive if there is a fix. If the grade of the land is wrong or there is now no outlet for the tile, the problem will not be fixed. The productivity of that land will forever be altered as will the income of that farm family.
- ❖ Many of us are reliant on our aquifer for raw water. This water has been untreated and untested for years. We trust the purity of this resource. All it will take is one derailment and chemical spill or crude oil spill and that purity is forever changed. Who then will pay for hauling water in for home use not to mention the effect on growing crops.

We have personal experience with the effects of a contaminated aquifer. One of our farms is next to a city where a factory dumped their waste that then contaminated the aquifer below. This occurred in 1950, over 60 years ago, and that contamination continues to prevent the usage of water from wells to this day. In addition to this, the two brothers that lived their lives on this farm have both been fighting leukemia. Officials monitor it yearly and simply are waiting for nature to clean up the aquifer. This toxic waste is now a part of this farm and the life of everyone else that depends on it.

We do not want the possibility of chemicals or contaminants in our ground water.

- ❖ Safety is clearly a concern. Great Lakes Basin states in their material that they are planning to place this track west of Chicago because of safety issues as trains travel through Chicago with chemicals and crude oil. The Chicago suburbs have been fighting this commerce through the TRAC coalition. All you have to do is read the Mitigating Conditions that have been instituted through the STB for each of the communities the EJ&E railroad passes through to realize the danger and level of concerns these communities and our community will face if this track is laid. The difference is that the track existed before people in those communities purchased their homes or businesses. Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel tried to tax each railroad car passing through carrying these commodities. Our lives and livelihoods matter just as the lives matter in more tightly populated areas. If this is not desirable in those areas it is not desirable in ours.

Derailments occur every 2 weeks causing chemical spills. Our concern about our safety is real. People have purchased their homes and farms without this and many would not have purchased them if there had been a railroad as their next door neighbor. This railroad will carry all the chemicals and fuel that no one wants through Chicago. Our emergency departments will need special training to deal with these explosive situations. Many of these spills have caused evacuations for miles.

There is a great deal of information about the crashworthy state of the tank cars carrying flammable material. The Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration admits existing tank cars have a high tendency to puncture in a derailment. The Cherry Valley derailment in 2009 is a good example of this propensity to breach in an accident with 13 of the 19 derailed tankers spilling causing a fire that killed a motorist. In addition, 600 homes were evacuated because of the fire.

- ❖ Transportation will be disrupted. These trains will be moving at 70 miles an hour and there can be as many as 110 trains a day. This is a train about every 13 minutes leaving emergency vehicles, farm equipment, and rural traffic a short period of time to pass through any given spot. Remember that there will only be fly overs on state roads and some county roads. Our important township roads will not have these.

In addition, passing through a farm and requiring a locked gate for passage over the tracks to the rest of the field on the other side of the tracks is very dangerous and will lead to many accidents. Simply taking a slow moving combine or semitrailer truck over the tracks in your thirteen minute window between 70 mile an hour trains would be difficult. Now you have to get down, unlock the gate, get back in, let the train pass, carefully drive over the tracks, get out, close the gate, cross the tracks, and get back in your equipment. On top of this, if you leave the gate open you are liable for an accident if it occurs not Great Lakes. This creates a dangerous situation for farmers at a time when they are stressed and working extremely long hours. These in field crossings will need to be crossed multiple times a day during spring and fall.

We urge you to say "NO" to this project for all the above stated reasons. Please preserve our farmland, aquifer, and the quality of life we have worked for years to preserve.

Michael Paulson 4/19/2016
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