

November 2, 2016

To the Wasco County Commissioners: Scott Hege, Steve Kramer, and Rod Runyon

In regards to the Appeals hearing concerning Union Pacific Railroad's proposal to create double track within the National Scenic Area on either side of Mosier.

Honorable Commissioners,

The National Scenic Act requires that each of the six gorge counties, including Wasco County, adopt land use ordinances that are consistent with the management plan. In order to be in compliance with that plan the County is held to a higher standard.

The primary purpose of the creation of the National Scenic Area and the Act which authorized it is to protect and provide for the enhancement of the scenic, cultural, recreational and natural resources of the gorge.

I think approval of UPRR's application PLASAR 15-01-0004 as it was approved by the Wasco County Planning Commission would **not** be in compliance with your own land use development ordinance that holds you to a higher standard, and it would not meet your obligations to the National Scenic Act. I urge you to deny the application as it was approved by the Planning Commission.

I attended the Planning Commission hearing on this matter on September 26th, 2016. Numerous times during that hearing Director Brewer cautioned the commissioners to not eliminate any of the Planning Staff's proposed conditions written to address this application. She said that if the commission chose to eliminate any of the conditions, that would potentially put 'us' out of compliance with our ordinance. The planning staff wrote these conditions to address our obligations to the National Scenic Act. Director Brewer advised the commissioners they could modify the conditions, but not eliminate them. They were there for a reason.

The Planning Commission then proceeded to disregard the staff's advice and eliminate condition #13 having to do with possible future open coal car pollution, condition #15 having to do with limiting the number of trains passing through this area, condition #16 requiring the railroad to adhere to FRA safety standards, and condition #20 which prohibited the railroad from significantly increasing the volume of train traffic, including the number of trains, the length of the trains, and their speed. These very conditions which were eliminated are all critical to addressing the County's compliance to the Management Plan. By law you must find that the railroad's proposal is consistent with the goals and objectives of the management plan for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, and consistent with the provisions of the County's implementing ordinances.

I believe that Union Pacific's attempt here to expand their facilities and create a longer stretch of double track in the National Scenic Area is more than an attempt to create a fluidity of train movement and improved regional service, it is also about increasing their share of profits earned by moving cargo, especially fossil fuels. The problem with that idea in our region is that this expansion of their traditional use of this land corridor flies in the face of the intention of the Scenic Act itself.

Gentlemen,

In our pursuit of human commerce let me remind you that:

When the last tree is cut down,
The last fish eaten, and
The last stream poisoned,
You will realize
that you can't eat money.

Alanis Obomsawin

Thank you for your service to our community.

John Nelson

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "J" and "N".

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The Dalles, OR
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