

January 24, 2022

Re: Concern Over Right-of-Way Permitting for Uinta Basin Railway



Dear Senator Bennet,

The Northwest Colorado Council of Governments Water Quality/ Quantity Committee (“QQ”), which comprises [40 local governments](#) in the headwaters of the Colorado, Yampa, and Gunnison River Basins, would like to voice our deep concern for the proposed Forest Service Right-of-Way to allow the transportation of crude oil up the Colorado River to its headwaters via the Uinta Basin Railway.

We urge you to work with the Administration to halt the issuance of a right-of-way permit through the Ashley National Forest’s Roadless Area because of the project’s potential significant water quality impacts and carbon emissions.

The QQ region would see up to 350,000 barrels of oil on ten two-mile-long trains per day on the Union Pacific mainline, which runs along the Colorado River to its headwaters and then through the Moffat Tunnel, which is already nearing capacity. The significant increase in railroad traffic creates air quality and noise impacts through the Colorado River recreation corridor, renowned for rafting and fishing and thus an important economic driver for our region. The high volume of crude oil transported along the Colorado River, especially through Glenwood Canyon already struggling to recover from 2020 wildfires, makes a spill more likely and more catastrophic. A spill on the railway could affect drinking and irrigation water supplies for many miles along with the environmental harm. Union Pacific already has a [history of releasing damaging sludge](#) from the Moffat Tunnel into the Fraser River.

The local water quality impacts compound larger concerns for permitting a project that would generate 53 million tons of carbon emissions annually, posing a serious threat to clean air in the QQ region and in direct opposition to President Biden’s recent actions on climate change, including Executive Orders 13990 and 14008 and would limit our progress as a state and a nation towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

QQ urges your office to take further action to prevent the Uinta Basin Railway from being approved. For questions or concerns, please contact Torie Jarvis, NWCCOG/QQ Director and Staff Attorney (970-596-5039; tjarvis@nwccog.org).

Sincerely,

Kathy Chandler-Henry
Chair, NWCCOG/QQ and Eagle County Commissioner
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