

350 Colorado • 350 Eugene • 350 Hawaii • 350 Seattle • 350 Tacoma • Accelerate Neighborhood Climate Action • Action for the Climate Emergency (ACE) • American Bird Conservancy • American Rivers • American Whitewater • Animals Are Sentient Beings, Inc • Arkansas River Outfitter Association • Arkansas River Tours • Athens County's Future Action Network • Businesses for a Livable Climate • Call to Action Colorado • Capitol Heights Presbyterian • Catholic Network US • Center for Biological Diversity • Center for Climate Change and Health • Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition • Central Jersey Coalition Against Endless War • Citizens for a Healthy Community • CO Businesses for a Livable Climate • Collegiate Peaks Chapter Trout Unlimited • Colorado Mountain Club • Community for Sustainable Energy • Conservation Colorado • Democratic Socialists of America • Eagle Summit Wilderness Alliance • Earth Action, Inc. • EcoFlight • Elders Rising for Intergenerational Justice • Endangered Species Coalition • Environment America • Environmental Action • Environmental Ministry, First Unitarian Church of SLC • Environmental Protection Information Center • Extinction Rebellion San Francisco Bay Area • Fresnans Against Fracking • Friends of Browns Canyon • Friends of the Bitterroot • Garfield County Democratic Party • Great Old Broads for Wilderness • Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice • HEAL Utah • High Country Conservation Advocates • Holloway Educational Resources • Honor The Earth • I-70 Citizens Advisory Group • Indivisible Ambassadors • Indivisible Colorado • John Muir Project John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute • Mayfair Park Neighborhood Association Board • Mental Health & Inclusion Ministries • Metro State University, Our Children's Trust Juliana case • Montbello Neighborhood Improvement Association • Mormon Environmental Stewardship Alliance • Natural Resources Law • New Mexico Sportsmen • No Coal in Oakland • North American Climate, Conservation and Environment (NACCE) • North Range Concerned Citizens • Peaceful Uprising • RapidShift Network • Rio Grande Indivisible, NM • Rocky Mountain Recreation Initiative • Rocky Mountain Wild • San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council • Save EPA • Sevier Citizens for Clean Air & Water • Sierra Club Utah Chapter • Small Business Alliance • Stand.earth • Standing Trees • Sunflower Alliance • System Change Not Climate Change • Terra Advocati • The Green House Connection Center • The Quantum Institute • Unite North Metro Denver • Utah Native Plant Society • Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment • Utah Tar Sands Resistance • Wall of Women • Waterkeeper Alliance • Western Environmental Law Center • Western Resource Advocates • Western Slope Businesses for a Livable Climate • Wild Connections • WildEarth Guardians • Wilderness Workshop • Women's Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN) • Womxn from the Mountain

January 26, 2022

The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Request to Block Forest Service Right of Way That Will Undermine President Biden's Climate Goals

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

The undersigned groups representing millions of supporters working to protect our climate, national forests, and communities from the climate emergency request that you stop the United States Forest Service's plan to approve a right-of-way through the Ashley National Forest that

would enable construction of the proposed Uinta Basin Railway resulting in a quadrupling of fossil fuel extraction in the Uinta Basin and degrading a National Forest roadless area. The Forest Service deadline for resolving our objections to the draft record of decision is March 5, 2022.

This new railway and the oil trains it will facilitate, will cause 53 million tons of carbon pollution a year to be emitted into the atmosphere, equal to six dirty coal plants, and otherwise do tremendous harm to the environment, including increasing the risk of oil train and climate driven wildfires.

The stated purpose of the railway and the financial basis for it, is to quadruple fossil fuel extraction in Utah's Uinta Basin from the current level of 80,000 barrels per day, to 350,000 barrels per day. Further, because the proposed rail line is intended to transport crude oil to Gulf Coast refineries, the project will adversely affect disproportionately impacted communities already exposed to particularly elevated levels of air and water pollution.

Many of the undersigned organizations have communicated our concerns to the United States Forest Service prior to issuing draft approval of the right of way, including to the Ashley National Forest Supervisor, and Forest Service Chief Randy Moore.

We were astonished by Chief Moore's [response letter](#) to us in support of the project that characterized the railway as comporting with President Biden's Executive Order 14008 concerning the climate crisis. Specifically Chief Moore wrote that: "The Forest Supervisor determined the proposed use of the project **is in the public interest and supports President Joseph R. Biden's policies outlined in Executive Order 14008 to rebuild our infrastructure for a sustainable economy.**"

Chief Moore is incorrect—the Uinta Basin Railway directly conflicts with the President's order.

Executive Order 14008, "Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad" sets as U.S. policy the goal of "significant short-term reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and net-zero global emissions by mid-century or before." To that end, President Biden has set a goal to reduce U.S. emissions by 50-52% from 2005 levels by 2030, just eight years away. Section 213 of E.O. 14008 further states that the administration "shall take steps, consistent with applicable law, to ensure that Federal infrastructure investment reduces climate pollution, and to require that Federal permitting decisions consider the effects of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change." And, section 201, of E.O. 14008, further states that "It is the policy of my Administration to organize and deploy the full capacity of its agencies to combat the climate crisis to implement a Government-wide approach that reduces climate pollution in every sector of the economy...).

Contrary to E.O. 14008, the intended purpose and stated goal of the railway is to *increase fossil fuel extraction on public lands in the Uinta Basin*. Increased drilling and extraction the railway seeks to induce will boost greenhouse pollution at every step in the process: from extraction, to transportation, to refining, to combustion. The infrastructure investment solely enabled by the issuance of this discretionary right-of-way thus contradicts the President’s stated climate policy.

In addition to worsening the climate crisis, the railway would cause irreversible environmental damage. According to the environmental analysis that the Forest Service relies on, the Uinta Basin Railway would alter more than 400 Utah streams and strip bare or build on 10,000 acres of wildlife habitat, including areas on Forest Service land designated as “crucial” habitat for bighorn, deer, and elk. In Emma Park, a remote sagebrush valley known to birdwatchers, bulldozers and train traffic would drive imperiled greater sage grouse out of their mating and nesting grounds and, it is feared, wipe them out from the region. Virtually the entirety of the railway on the Ashley National Forest, totaling 12 miles, would be built in an inventoried roadless area protected by the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, and according to the Forest Service, degrade roadless area values by building five bridges and blasting three tunnels up to 2100 feet wide.

The railway will also inflict harm downstream where the trains would be headed through Colorado to Gulf Coast refineries at a time when western states are reeling from drought, wildfires and pollution caused by the climate emergency. Federal documents show that 672 to 1,809 oil trains each carrying approximately 642 barrels of crude oil would leave the Uinta Basin each year. These trains would increase the risk of fires and oil spills along the route through Colorado, including the vulnerable Colorado River corridor. The western slope of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado would likely experience increased ozone pollution resulting from increased fossil fuel production drifting into Colorado from the neighboring Uinta Basin.

The harm from this proposed railway will exacerbate the climate emergency, increase the risk of wildfires and oil spills, put pressure on our already strained rail system and increase pollution while undermining President Biden’s goals to address the climate crisis.

We therefore, respectfully request that you protect the public interest by instructing the Forest Service to reject the proposed right-of-way through the Ashley National Forest.

Sincerely,

Randi Spivak	Center for Biological Diversity
Micah Parkin	350 Colorado
Patricia Hine	350 Eugene
Sherry Pollack	350 Hawaii

Selden Prentice	350 Seattle
Daniel Villa	350 Tacoma
Honorable Jackie Biskupski	35th Mayor of Salt Lake City
Karen Bueno	Accelerate Neighborhood Climate Action
Maayan Cohen	Action for the Climate Emergency (ACE)
Steve Holmer	American Bird Conservancy
Michael Fiebig	American Rivers
Kestrel Kunz	American Whitewater
Sarah Stewart	Animals Are Sentient Beings, Inc
Bob Hamel	Arkansas River Outfitter Association
Billy Marquis	Arkansas River Tours
Heather Cantino	Athens County's Future Action Network, acfan.org
Marie Venner	Businesses for a Livable Climate
Marie Venner	Call to Action Colorado
Mark Meeks	Capitol Heights Presbyterian
Stefanie Klass	Catholic Network US
Randi Spivak	Center for Biological Diversity
Linda Rudolph	Center for Climate Change and Health
John Stansfield	Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition
Sid Madison	Central Jersey Coalition Against Endless War
Natasha Leger	Citizens for a Healthy Community
Jim Smith	CO Businesses for a Livable Climate
Karen Dils	Collegiate Peaks Chapter Trout Unlimited
Julie Mach	Colorado Mountain Club
Scott Denning	Colorado State University
Fred Kirsch	Community for Sustainable Energy
Luke Schaffer	Conservation Colorado
Clayton Dewey	Democratic Socialists of America
Michael Browning	Eagle Summit Wilderness Alliance
Earth Action, Inc.	Earth Action, Inc.
Jane Pargiter	EcoFlight
Kathy Albury	Elders Rising for Intergenerational Justice
Tara Thornton	Endangered Species Coalition
Ellen Montgomery	Environment America

Patrick Kelly-Fischer	Environmental Action
Joan M. Gregory	Environmental Ministry, First Unitarian Church of SLC
Thomas Wheeler	Environmental Protection Information Center
Leah Redwood	Extinction Rebellion San Francisco Bay Area
Ronald J. Martin, Ph.D.	Fresnans against Fracking
Michael Kunkel	Friends of Browns Canyon
Jim Miller	Friends of the Bitterroot
Debbie Bruell	Garfield County Democratic Party
Shelley Silbert	Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Bradley Angel	Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice
Alex Veilleux	HEAL Utah
Matt Reed	High Country Conservation Advocates
Matt Holloway	Holloway Educational Resources
Cheryl Barnds	Honor The Earth
Rachael Lehman	I-70 Citizens Advisory Group
Philip Beck	Indivisible Ambassadors
Elizabetha Stacishin	Indivisible Colorado
Jennifer Mamola	John Muir Project
Marie Claire Egbert	John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute
Debbie Thornburg James	Mayfair Park Neighborhood Association Board
Amy Petré Hill	Mental Health & Inclusion Ministries
Nic Venner	Metro State University, Our Children's Trust <i>Juliana</i> case
Emmett Hobley	Montbello Neighborhood Improvement Association
Marc Coles-Ritchie	Mormon Environmental Stewardship Alliance
Rene Voss	Natural Resources Law
Oscar Simpson	New Mexico Sportsmen
Margaret Rossoff	No Coal in Oakland
Jerry Rivers	North American Climate, Conservation and Environment
Kristi Douglas	North Range Concerned Citizens
Judy Lord	Peaceful Uprising
Cheryl Barnds	RapidShift Network
Oscar Simpson	Rio Grande Indivisible, NM
Roz McClellan	Rocky Mountain Recreation Initiative
Alison Gallensky	Rocky Mountain Wild

Christine Canaly	San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council
Jeff Hart	Save EPA
Dick Cumiskey	Sevier Citizens for Clean Air & Water
Rebekah Ashley	Sierra Club Utah Chapter
Marie Venner	Small Business Alliance
Nathan Taft	Stand.earth
Zack Porter	Standing Trees
Jean Tepperman	Sunflower Alliance
Maura Stephens	System Change Not Climate Change
Tim Duda	Terra Advocati
Harmony Cummings	The Green House Connection Center
Ruth E. Kastner	The Quantum Institute
Fran Aguirre & Deb James	Unite North Metro Denver
Tony Frates	Utah Native Plant Society
Jonny Vasic	Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment
Raphael Cordray	Utah Tar Sands Resistance
Paddy McClelland	Wall of Women
Daniel E. Estrin	Waterkeeper Alliance
Susan Jane Brown	Western Environmental Law Center
Joro Walker	Western Resource Advocates
Chris Calwell	Western Slope Businesses for a Livable Climate
John Sztukowski	Wild Connections
Jeremy Nichols	WildEarth Guardians
Juli Slivka	Wilderness Workshop
Katherine Quaid	Women's Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN)
Renée M. Chacon	Womxn from the Mountain

Cc:

Senator John Hickenlooper

Senator Michael Bennet

Representative Joe Neguse

Representative Diana DeGette

Randy Moore, Chief, US Forest Service

Sean Babbington, USDA Senior Climate Advisor

Meryl Harrell, Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Gina McCarthy,

David Hayes, Special Assistant to the President for Climate Policy

Gina McCarthy, White House National Climate Advisor

Tracy Stone-Manning, Director, Bureau of Land Management



Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
The Voice For Our Public Lands, Waters, and Wildlife

Date: 14 February 2022

RE: Uinta Basin Railway Project

Dear Senator Michael Bennet,

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (BHA) is the voice for our public lands, waters and wildlife. We seek to ensure North America's outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing in a natural setting through education and work on behalf of fish, wildlife and wild places. The Colorado Chapter of BHA would like to request your involvement regarding the Uinta Basin Railway Project, which has received preliminary approval from the USFS.

While this project is based in Utah we are concerned about the unwanted impacts this railway could have in our home state of Colorado. If this project is approved the Union Pacific Railway route along the Colorado River and the Arkansas River through Browns Canyon could see an estimated three to ten more trips a day for crude oil transport. Crude oil train cars tend to be longer, heavier, and more difficult to control, increasing the potential of track failure in this mountainous region which is prone to severe weather.

Heavy crude oils are highly toxic and almost impossible to remove from a water source; contamination is severe and long-term. The waxy-crude oil this railway proposes to transport does not float on water. Were a spill to occur along the Colorado River it would require heating up the rocks, gravel, dirt, and water to remove the substance from the environment, a virtually impossible task. It took 10 years to "cleanup" the Kalamazoo River after a 1-million-gallon oil spill in Enbridge Marshall, MI; while this is an example of a refined oil spill the consequences of a crude oil spill would be of greater consequences. Water contamination is not the only risk crude oil transport poses to our local environment. Crude oil railway transport increases the risk of fire ignition and spread. Historical data suggests once a fire ignites on a High Hazard Flammable Train, offensive firefighting strategies are ineffective. In a state already heavily scarred by major wildfire events, where local response teams are often stretched thin in the summer months, we cannot afford this kind of risk.

This project would pose an unacceptable threat to our cherished waterways, landscapes, and wildlife which contribute millions of dollars to our state economy. Ensuring Coloradans and future generations have the ability to fish, wade and recreate on our public waters and lands is a priority for Colorado BHA. We respectfully request that you intervene to ensure decisions made by the USFS in Utah don't jeopardize Colorado's public lands, waters, and wildlife.



Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
The Voice For Our Public Lands, Waters, and Wildlife

Before closing we want to thank you for your public service and your ongoing efforts to protect the wild lands of the West. Please take our comments into consideration and include them in the public record regarding the Uinta Basin Railway Project.

Sincerely,

Brittany Parker, Assistant Regional Director
Roaring Fork Region
Colorado Backcountry Hunters & Anglers



COLORADO
WATER CONGRESS
INFORM | CONVENE | TRAIN | ACT

March 11, 2022

Senator Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator John Hickenlooper
Russell Senate Office Building
2 Constitution Ave NE
Suite SR-374
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper,

The National Transportation Safety Board recently approved the rail transport of “hot crude” from the Uintah basin in eastern Utah through Colorado via rail lines which parallel the I-70 corridor.

The Colorado Water Congress Federal Affairs Committee shares concerns that a thorough environmental review was not conducted prior to this decision, particularly related to the potential threat to water quality should a significant accident occur in the transport near Colorado waterways on this or other possible routes.

We encourage and support any steps you might take to obtain a more extensive review of potential impact, particularly related to critical water resources.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

Andy Colosimo
CWC Federal Affairs Committee Chair

Christine Arbogast
CWC Federal Affairs Committee Vice Chair

Matt Moskal
David Nickum
Barbara Sheedlo
Colorado Trout Unlimited



March 28, 2022

The Honorable Michael Bennet
The Honorable John Hickenlooper
The Honorable Joe Neguse
Via email

Dear Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper and Congressman Neguse,

We are writing to urge you to oppose a plan to build a rail line that will result in [up to 10 two-mile-long trains](#) of heated rail cars filled with waxy crude traveling along the Colorado River and through some of Colorado's most vulnerable landscapes.

The proposed Uinta Basin Railway would connect oil fields in Utah to the national rail network, specifically the Central Line adjacent to the Colorado River through Grand Junction, Glenwood Springs, Eagle, and other small towns, along the Colorado and Fraser Rivers and through Denver before heading south and east to refineries in Oklahoma and the Gulf Coast.

The project has sparked [opposition from more than 70 counties, municipalities, and sanitation districts](#) and dozens of environmental groups. Concerns are many. Eagle County and a number of environmental groups have filed a lawsuit to stop the project, citing the need for further environmental assessment, and the local elected officials have opposed the project, voicing concerns that a derailment could devastate local tourism. Others say the project will more than quadruple the production of the Uinta Basin oil fields – an increase of more than 350,000 barrels per day – and cause more than 53 million tons of additional carbon pollution per year. And there are concerns that increased traffic through the Moffat Tunnel [would prompt a reopening of the Tennessee Pass rail line](#).

As an organization that works to protect cold-water fisheries and ecosystems, Colorado Trout Unlimited is focused on the environmental devastation that will occur when there is a derailment (and it is a question of when, not if, as the Environmental Impact Statement estimates there will be an average of 0.89 accidents per year involving a loaded train and another 0.89 accidents involving unloaded trains [Table 3.2.2](#)). Waxy crude is solid at room temperature and each of the railcars on these two-mile-long trains is heated to around 110 degrees to keep the substance liquid.

Tens of millions of people depend on the Colorado River – one of the most important rivers in the West – for drinking water, tourism and irrigation. As they move through Colorado, these heated oil tankers will travel along the river – through the center of Glenwood Springs and on through Glenwood Canyon, Eagle County, through Gore Canyon and Grand County along the headwaters of the Colorado river, then along the Fraser River through Winter Park and the Moffat Tunnel. East of the tunnel the train will rumble through 33 tunnels and navigate horseshoe curves as it makes its way to Denver and beyond.

Picture up to 10 two-mile-long trains with heated rail cars filled with crude oil that hardens to the consistency of candle wax when exposed to air traveling along two of the most threatened rivers

Trout Unlimited: America's Leading Coldwater Fisheries Conservation Organization

Colorado Office: 1536 Wynkoop St, Suite 320, Denver, CO 80202

PHONE: (303) 440-2937 WEB: coloradotu.org

in the country, the Colorado and Fraser. Picture what the Colorado River would look like if even one of the tanker cars split open and spilled its load of 29,400 gallons of waxy crude, which solidifies as it flows into the river. The devastation to the river ecosystem would be catastrophic. What happens if one of these [tankers derails in Denver](#)?

Picture oil tankers heated to 110 degrees derailing in tinder-dry forests on the West Slope or the bone-dry grasslands of the Front Range. In an era where more and bigger fires are predicted, it's easy to see another Troublesome Fire on the West Slope or another out-of-control grass fire on the Front Range [sparked by one of these heated tankers](#).

Colorado Trout Unlimited does not oppose all oil and gas development and indeed has worked with your Oil and Gas Commission and other stakeholders on rulemakings to manage such development responsibly. This project, however, poses unacceptable levels of risk – and the impacts to Colorado specifically have largely been ignored in the federal permitting processes to date.

We ask that you to do everything you can to stop the Uinta Basin Railway project. We are happy to meet with you and/or your staff to discuss options. In the meantime, please ensure no federal money is used for the project.

Sincerely,



Matt Moskal
President



David Nickum
Executive Director



Barbara Sheedlo
Bull Moose Committee Chair