

Final CPL

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My name is Nancy Nichols. I live at 93849 Deadwood Creek Road. Deadwood, Oregon. I came to speak to the environmental issues in this case before you.

I have been a member of the Leadership Board of the Siuslaw Watershed Council for over 10 years. I have seen the Council repeatedly reach out to this railroad, offering help to replace culverts that are blocking fish passage. They have not been interested, even with culverts that clearly had safety problems in addition to the fish passage issues. The owners of this rail line have been consciously refusing needed repairs for years.

If you allow RailAmerica to abandon this line, require real abandonment. Require removal of all culverts and bridges. Require replanting the rail bed with native vegetation. Require that RailAmerica put the landscape back the way it was before there was a rail line. Require RailAmerica to post a bond sufficient to do this work for their offer to be accepted.

While complete removal of the railroad might seem the best choice from an environmental point of view, this may not be the case. Rail is very energy efficient transportation. This is an important factor arguing to keep this railroad running. A fair balance could be had with an accessible local owner who addressed the railroad's environmental problems.

If you accept the offer from the Port of Coos Bay, I believe local groups will find a partner they can work with to improve local salmon runs. To make sure, the Board should add wording which encourages the Port to address fish passage issues. You have the opportunity here to make a decision that improves the local economy in more than one way. Fishing is in trouble and anything that increases access to spawning grounds will increase the number of fish. More fish benefits commercial fishing, the tourist industry, and general quality of life in the coastal area.

1.5 min