

## GLBT RR harms wildlife

By Mirjam Melin

Concerns regarding the request of Great Lakes Basin Transportation, Inc. to construct and operate a new railway are many. Let's look at issues impacting wildlife in the areas being impacted. Our home and property are located in Bradford Township along Turtle Creek, about half a mile away from the proposed rail.

Wildlife typically follows streams, lakes, and wetlands in order to find food and water as well as find places for travel and breeding. Disruptions in these corridors such as roadways, bridges, and rails fragments them resulting in negative impacts on both flora and fauna. The importance of continuous wildlife corridors is well described in many publications.

A pair of bald eagles is nesting less than a mile from the proposed track. We have had a pair of sandhill cranes nesting in a wetland on our property for the last couple of years. This area is frequented by deer, fox, coyote, turkey, pheasants, raccoons, possums to mention just a few. Even a cougar was sighted here a few years ago. Turtle Creek is home to a variety of fish, turtles, and clams. Birdlife is abundant and includes great horned owls, kestrels, eagles, hawks, several species of cranes, as well as kingfishers and



many wood and other duck species. Our 150+ year old lime stone barn is home to a thriving colony of bats.

Part of our property is in a Soil and Water Conservation program, part is in a Managed Forest Program. We have installed riparian buffers along the creek.

We did all of this because we value the land and everything that lives on and in it.

The proposed project will not add anything positive to the natural beauty and diversity of this area, neither will it enhance our human environment. We share our property for hunting, hiking, bird watching, or just plain to enjoy the peacefulness of it with our neighbors and friends. Their human environment will also be negatively impacted.

I request that environmental impact studies inventory flora and fauna species possibly affected by the proposed rail construction as well as describe the short, long, and cumulative effects this project will have on the flora and fauna in this area. The EIS should include a plan to mitigate all the negative impacts caused by this proposed project. You must deny the GLBT Inc. project outright as there is no way to mitigate these concerns and there is no demonstrated need or public interest being served.

## GLBT expects more inappropriate waivers

The only thing more ridiculous than advancing GLBT to STB Phase 1 approval is the prospects that Phase 2 approval may be fast-tracked with waivers. When one closely looks at the flimsy and irrational *Great Lakes Basin Transportation* plan submitted to *Surface Transportation Board*, as outlined throughout this issue GLBRN&V, it is bizarre that a Phase 1 environmental study has begun.

How can anyone submit meaningful comments when managing partner Frank Patton claims basic details cannot be disclosed to anyone because of "non-disclosure" agreements? And on the few points of the plan he will discuss, the story changes radically depending on who he is talking to and what he is trying to convince them of.

But there is a bigger absurdity ahead. Reports are that Patton will ask for exemptions to waive GLBT from being scrutinized under a full review. Management thinks they should obtain approval and be granted the right to use federal eminent domain laws to take massive amounts of property without having to present an objective, adequately documented, and verifiable financing, operations, and business plan.

GLBT is structured as a limited liability company (LLC), which means it is a business structure that combines the pass-through taxation of a partnership or sole proprietorship with the limited liability of a corporation. An LLC, although a business entity, is a type of unincorporated association and is not a corporation.

So while Frank Patton has identified himself as a "managing partner" and is now commonly referred to this way in the press, he is hiding behind a business structure that has evolved to accommodate companies with a



single owner or partners (including silent partners). This designation does not adequately describe GLBT. Being essentially immune from responsibility is a huge advantage for GLB, but perhaps more-so is the

fiction that only one party, Frank Patton, is privy to whatever it is that the partners he represents intend to do.

Patton has publicly stated "that at least two, or really three or four" railroads will need to feed GLBT freight to make the project feasible, yet not a single carrier has supported the project, let alone acknowledge that it will divert railcars and revenues to the proposed line. The nation's largest railroad, *Union Pacific*, publicly stated in 2014 that it would not support GLBT.

In March of 2016, UP again stated that, after carefully reviewing the proposal, it is not interested and is "focused on several major public-private partnerships, including CRE-ATE, which will benefit the region and enhance efficiency for the Chicago-area and regional railroad operations."

GLBT's proposed 15,000 acre freight yard alone will required forcing landowners to sell the equivalent of 25 square miles of land., larger than many towns in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Indiana! And that is just for the proposal's rail yard and does not account for the 200 foot (or possibly 250 foot) wide right-of-way which, according to the plan, runs more than 275 route-miles in total.

Don't think STB will waive GLBT from basic scrutiny of its finance, business, and operations? Think again. STB waived GLBT out of a mandated 6 month notification period, which is why anyone with an interest or concern about this project is frantically scrambling to get some facts about what Patton is trying to do.

## More of what people are saying...

The proposed new railway is planned to go right through our dairy farm on Lake Shore Rd in Clinton, WI. The impact of this train going through so many of our country roads is a huge safety concern. A train every 14 minutes, 110 trains a day will make our roads almost impassable. Trying to get to and from work, school buses trying to pick up children in the morning and drop of in the afternoon. There is also emergency vehicles to consider. We don't know what will be on the train and feel that could be a hazard also.

We have a daughter with a medical condition. There are times when she HAS to go to the hospital. With this railway, how am I suppose to do this with as many trains they are saying are going to run on these rails. I will have to wait a lot longer, if I get across the tracks at all. This is a concern that I thought we would never have to think about.. What if this was your child? How would you feel?



Freight trains invariably will transport a wide range of toxic & flammable substances. The proximity of communities, and even closer proximity to schools, along the proposed route

put these residents and children at substantial risk in the event of a train derailment. Local emergency responders are ill-equipped to handle an emergency of a proposed rail system of this magnitude.

The proposed route passes over a number of tributaries that feed the Kankakee River creating the potential for contamination concerns in the event of a release.

The project sounds like a money making deal for a handful of investors at the expense of hundreds of long time land owners. The route goes through some of the best farmland in the country and removes this land from the tax roles leaving the resident of the county to make up for this loss.

I am terrified of how close this will be passing to two schools along the route. In Lake County, IN, it passes 1/2 mile from the Lowell IN elementary school and here in Porter County, it passes about 1/4 mile from the Morgan Township School system.

This is far too close for comfort. Not just in my area, but in all areas involved, there is insufficient knowledge and preparation to deal with a rail disaster. I have seen the footage from Lac-Megantic, QC and am horrified at the destruction wrought by the crash of a single freight train. And if this is near one of our schools???

We have very serious concerns about ground water contamination if there were an accident. Everybody in this area is on a well.

This railroad proposal by GLBT is horrifying to me. I don't understand how a for-profit company can impose eminent domain and start ruining small towns and farms, etc.? At 110 diesel trains per day, going 70 mph, carrying millions of gallons of hazardous materials, our dreams are ruined

The thought of these trains, projected to travel at 70 miles-per-hour, zooming past my kids and our livestock makes me sick to my stomach because of the obvious dangers it would pose. My son also suffers from many environmental allergies. We know and understand the ones that he is been tested for, but it concerns me to think of what the trains would be hauling, and what it is going to emit and how much that we don't know my son is allergic to, in such close proximity to our home, harms, children, and livestock.