

## CHAPTER 7 SHORT-TERM USE VERSUS LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

This chapter analyzes the short-term, or temporary, uses of the environment from the Proposed Action and its alternatives as well as effects on the long-term or permanent productivity of the environment. As documented in Chapter 4, Environmental Impacts, the Proposed Action and its alternatives (excluding the No-Action Alternative) would result in construction and operation-related impacts to various natural, cultural, and socioeconomic resources. However, these construction and operation-related impacts are not anticipated to result in long-term impacts to the overall environmental productivity of the region. Most of the project's natural and cultural resource impacts would be realized via project construction with little to no long-term or lasting environmental effects. Once the project is constructed, the impacts would cease. The typical exception to this would be the loss of certain site-specific wetland functions and values including sediment trapping, storm water retention, nutrient filtration, flood flow attenuation, groundwater interaction, and seasonal aquatic habitat. Most of the impacted wetlands for this project are trackside features created by adverse drainage conditions from failing storm water facilities (e.g., silted-in drainage pipes, collapsed culverts, un-maintained drainage ditches, etc.), which have negligible wetland functions and values. Additionally, many of these wetlands have been impacted by AMD, which further compromises their function and value.

Operation-related impacts (i.e., air quality, noise, energy resources, transportation and safety, etc.) would have a more long-term or lasting effect, particularly on the properties located immediately adjacent to the proposed rail line. However, the overall production of the region's environment would not be affected. This determination is based on the approximate 100-year history of railroad operations associated with the former Beech Creek Railroad. Regional environmental productivity does not appear to have been compromised, or in any way adversely impacted, by the historic existence of an active rail line in this area.

While not a typical measure of "environmental productivity," a more long-term impact on the productivity of the region associated with the proposed rail line could be the economic loss from the conversion of 9.3 miles of the Snow Shoe Multi-Use Rail Trail back to an active rail line. SSRTA has conducted surveys of its membership regarding total dollars spent in using the rail trail. This survey indicates that the Snow Shoe Multi-Use Rail Trail serves as a source of financial revenue for various local and regional businesses (i.e., restaurants, hotels, gas stations, etc.). Therefore, it is conceivable that elimination of 9.3 miles (or approximately 50%) of the total trail length could impact the overall use of the trail, particularly by visitors and vacationers from outside the region. While difficult to estimate, this potential loss of revenue would impact the economic productivity of the area. However, given that the proposed rail line would be intended to service new businesses and industrial operations in the area, the adverse economic impact associated with the loss of this section of the trail would potentially be offset by the fiscal benefits that could be realized as a result of these new economic opportunities.

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