

October 12, 2010

Referencing: FD35380

Dear Members of the Surface Transportation Board,

On August 29, 2009 Conejos County along with Alamosa and Costilla County was designated as the *Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area (SDCNHA)* and is located within the largest and highest alpine valley in North America. The heritage area designation was something that U.S. Representative John Salazar and U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar strived for. The heritage area is inclusive of twenty cultural properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places the narrow-gauge Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad between Antonito, CO and Chama, NM, is one such site as well as the *Sociedad Proteccion Mutua de Trabajadores Unidos (SPMDTU)*, *Society for the Mutual Protection of United Workers*, and *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. In addition to these official cultural sites are Ute petroglyphs, located ten miles down river from the nuclear waste transfer site, century old ranches and farms surround the nuclear waste transfer site, the Santa Fe Trail runs about 1/8 of a mile from the nuclear waste transfer site, local ranchers such as Demetrio and Olive Valdez have found historic skinning knives, axes and hammers and in 1969 – 1971 researchers and students from *The Colorado School of Mines* excavated the Valdez ranch to find evidence of six different eras of prehistoric man!

Within the *Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area* are diverse cultures. Many of us may not be wealthy but we have our cultures and values and most importantly we have our home, a place that we have been rooted in for many generations; nineteenth-

century Mexican land grants triggered initial settlement by families whose descendants remain in the San Luis Valley today. My cultural group is a beautiful and ancient Indo-Hispanic Culture with a Unique Spanish colonial dialect.

The mission of the *SDCNHA* is to “help communities in the valley protect their cultural, historical and natural assets”. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if everyone could strive to protect humanity, culture and our natural resources? We struggle to advocate for basic protection of our water sources, our San Antonio River.

Many outsiders do not view our community as important, in fact in the *Impact Analysis on p. 13* of the application submitted by *EnergySolutions to Conejos County* the following quote states: “No paleontological, historic, or archaeological areas of importance have been identified at the transload facility location” importance according to whom? To us our San Antonio River is a historical site, which has promoted historical ways of farming and cultivating our land for generations. It represents a way of life for us, the river is us and we the river. The land that surrounds the river is us and we are the land, it is that basic.

Discrimination comes in many forms according to scholar Fred L. Pincus it may be individual, institutional, structural and environmental. Environmental discrimination is that which is found in poor – high minority populations, where those of power and privilege demonstrate little to no concern for those of less power and privilege. Discrimination becomes recognizable to those of us who have experienced it on various occasions. It leaves us with little trust to outsiders who have historically taken advantage of us and of our precious resources. Dorceta Taylor explains that Environmental racism

arises from: “the interaction of three factors: (1) prejudicial belief and behavior, (2) the personal and institutional power to enact policies and actions that reflect one's own prejudices, and (3) privilege, unfair advantages over others and the ability to promote one's group over another. Thus, the term *environmental racism*, or *environmental discrimination*, is used to describe racial disparities in a range of actions and processes, including but not limited to the (1) increased likelihood of being exposed to environmental hazards; (2) disproportionate negative impacts of environmental processes; (3) disproportionate negative impacts of environmental policies, for example, the differential rate of cleanup of environmental contaminants in communities composed of diverse racial groups; (4) deliberate targeting and siting of noxious facilities in particular communities; (5) environmental blackmail that arises when workers are coerced or forced to choose between hazardous jobs and environmental standards; (6) segregation of ethnic minority workers in dangerous and dirty jobs; (7) lack of access to or inadequate maintenance of environmental amenities such as parks and playgrounds; and (8) inequality in environmental services such as garbage removal and transportation.

Environmental racism exists here in our own community and remnants of age old debris along the road and alongside the railroad tracks and the high rate of illness in our community validate this statement. I believe more illness will come with the transport of low level radioactive material through our home.

I have recently become aware that no level of radioactive exposure is safe. In fact a 2003 study *Health Impacts from Acute Radiation Exposure* which found that “a 300 rad exposure (which is the dose that you could get from a 90 minute unshielded exposure to

some of the nastier containerized A waste) would lead to hematopoietic syndrome. 50% of people would die within 60 days of level of exposure without medical treatment is a concept that in Radiation Health Physics is known as LD50-60 (LD = lethal dose to 50% of the population within 60 days.” I would say that this study’s findings are cause for concern, especially when these toxins make there way into poor and vulnerable communities such as Antonito Colorado.

Many of our community members recognize environmental discrimination, many who are veterans of foreign war. I have experienced the aftermath of war within my own family and my family has fought against these hardships and losses, each one of us in our own way. Sometimes this loss prompts me to ask “what is worse, being bombed and dying immediately or having waste from bombs passing through our homes killing us slowly through disease that comes from exposure to such toxic material?” I think of all the occurrences of cancer and illnesses that exist among poor people and people of color near and around labs such as Los Alamos and I question if this waste will kill us off with a plague of reproductive cancers; the oppression of it, the anguish of it the physical illness from it. Please protect us.

Very respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michele Trujillo".

Michele Terese Trujillo, Conejos County Citizen