

Minutes of the "Lock 14 Meeting with CSX" 11/17/06

Cushaw Project News

Attendees: David Farley, CSX; Jim Thornton, Dominion Power; Sarah Christian, Amherst County; Bill Tanger, FORVA; Jeff Wold, FFV; (James Adams and Steve Kessler, DGIF, attended first part of meeting).

Bob Munson was ill and unable to attend and had representatives from the DGIF attend in his stead. James Adams expressed the opinion of the Commonwealth that Virginia wanted to see this crossing developed. David made the observation that there was a lot of train traffic at this site. Jim commented that Dominion's estimates were approximately 17 trains during a 24 hour period. Sarah pointed out that Amherst County was very interested in seeing the lock 14 takeout become a reality.

The status of the crossing was discussed as to whether it would be public or private. David made the comment that a public crossing would be much better in the eyes of the railroad. FORVA and FFV will pursue this determination with DCR. If the crossing is public, crossing gates will not necessarily be required but trains will have to blow their whistle. Will the whistle be a problem with the James River Face Wilderness? Will check Forest Service.

David made the comment that while the current railroad crossings constitute a trespass situation, one central designated crossing would definitely be better. David made the point that the DOT normally determines the status of a crossing (active or passive) to determine if crossing gates are needed. The hardware for gates is \$75,000 to \$100,000 without installation. Bill suggested that gates were not needed and that signage would be all that is required. Bill pointed out that under current Virginia law (20-109), the railroad would have less liability if they went along with this proposal. David made the point that we should try to get VDOT to take the crossing into their public system. This is common practice in West Virginia. Bill will discuss with Mike McCormack of VDOT. David asked the group who would be responsible for maintenance of the crossing site if developed. Bill stated that FORVA will hold the Forest Service use permit and that the Float Fishermen, Blue Ridge River Runners, and Coastal Canoeists would help out with the maintenance.

The photos of current pedestrian crossings in other locations in Virginia were discussed. The photos showing the current parking situation were discussed and it was pointed out that the AT parking had many boater vehicles. David asked what would prevent boaters from using the current unsanctioned crossings if we were to open up an official crossing at lock 14. Bill stated that "no one in their right mind" would paddle farther down the river in flat water to take out.

David asked how boaters would know where the new take out site is located. Bill responded that current sites are not marked and they have no trouble finding them. The new site will be marked and its location will be posted at the put-in as well as written up in newsletters etc. Bill made the point that the line of site up and down the railroad tracks is quite good at the Lock 14 site. David took photographs at this location. Some of the current unsanctioned crossing sites were visited and photographed.

In summary, Bill and Jeff emphasized the three major points:

- 1) CSX would have much less liability with one designated at-grade crossing rather than multiple unofficial crossings.
- 2) The lock 14 crossing will be much safer than the current situation.
- 3) A designated crossing is in the public interest.

Respectfully submitted, Jeff Wold, FFV and Bill Tanger, FORVA

