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November 24, 2014

Mr. Curtis Parrish
P.O. Box 32
Toppenish, WA 98948

RE: *BNSF v. Yakima County*
WUTC Docket Nos. TR-140382 and TR-140383

Dear Mr. Parrish:

This letter and its enclosure follow our telephone call on October 17, 2014, and our meeting on November 18, 2014.

Enclosed for your review is Prefiled Testimony of Curtis Parrish. If this testimony accurately reflects the information we discussed, please sign where indicated and return to our office in the enclosed, self-addressed, stamped envelope.

If you have any questions or concerns about this testimony, please contact me at your earliest convenience at 509-969-0317.

Thank you for your assistance in this pressing matter.

Very truly yours,


Quinn N. Plant

QNP:ksl
Enclosure

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BEFORE THE WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

BNSF RAILWAY COMPANY,) DOCKET TR140382 and
) DOCKET TR140383
 Petitioner,)
 vs.)
) PREFILED TESTIMONY OF
 YAKIMA COUNTY,) CURTIS PARRISH
)
 Respondent.)

1. Please state your full name and address.

Curtis Parrish, 230 Division Street, Toppenish, WA 98948.

2. What is your occupation?

My brother and I own SP Farms and Ranches (“SP Farms”), a general partnership. We farm approximately 2,500 acres and also have some ranch land. We primarily grow spearmint, grapes, hay, hops and corn. We farm land located on both sides of the BNSF line.

3. Does SP Farm’s farming operations use the railroad at-grade crossings at North Stevens Road and Barnhart Road?

SP Farms uses the North Stevens Road crossing extensively. We own and farm two 80-acre parcels that are bisected by the BNSF line near the N. Stevens Road crossing. The parcels are owned by Nomu Financial, LLC, and are outlined in rend as

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3 parcel number 32003 on the map attached hereto as Exhibit A. The North Stevens Road
4 crossing allows for convenient access to the portions of these parcels falling on either
5 side of the BNSF line.

6 **4. What impact would the closing of the railroad at-grade crossings at North**
7 **Stevens Road and Barnhart Road have on SP's farming operations?**

8 The closure of the North Stevens Road crossing would have both operational and
9 economic impacts on our farming operations. Geography and farming practices
10 necessitate that farm equipment move efficiently between the portions of our field on
11 both sides of the BNSF line. We presently accomplish these moves by way of the North
12 Stevens Road crossing. If the crossing is closed, our equipment must travel a more
13 circuitous route.
14

15 The closest alternate crossing is about a mile to the southeast on South Track
16 Road near North Harris Road. This crossing has a bridge with a weight limit and cannot
17 be used by our heavy farm equipment. The closest alternate crossing we can actually use
18 is further to the southeast at Wapenish Road. Use of this crossing in either direction
19 requires travel on SR 22 for a distance of approximately 1.1 miles. A slightly greater
20 distance to the northeast is the crossing at Meyers Road. Use of this crossing in either
21 direction requires travel on SR 22 for a distance of approximately 1.5 miles.
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23 Regardless of what alternate crossing is used, significant additional transportation
24 time will be required as a normal course of SP Farms' operations if the North Stevens
25 Road crossing is closed.
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3 I will give one example. We have just completed harvesting corn on the parcels
4 located near North Stevens Road. The harvest required the use of a combine. The
5 combine was accompanied by a grain cart into which the combine dumps corn. The
6 combine was also followed in the field by a tractor-pulled stalk beater. On a regular
7 basis, semi-trucks arrived on site, were loaded, and hauled away corn. All of this
8 equipment was able to quickly cross the BNSF line by way of North Stevens Road.
9
10 There was minimal disruption to harvest operations.

11 If the North Stevens Road crossing is closed, future corn harvests will require this
12 caravan of large, slow moving farm equipment (combine, grain cart, tractor with stalk
13 beater, semi-trucks) to travel more than a mile on SR 22 each time we need to cross the
14 BNSF line. This is just one example. The same impacts would occur for all aspects of
15 our farming operations, from field preparation in early spring through planting and then
16 harvest in late fall.
17

18 **5. Is there a safety risk associated with travel by farm equipment on SR 22?**

19 Yes. I have lived in the area of these crossings my whole life. SR 22 is the
20 primary route that agricultural commodities are exported out of this region as well as
21 within this region. Most of the corn brought to local food processing facilities, such as
22 the Del Monte canning facility in Toppenish, comes by way of SR 22. The highway is
23 also the primary route utilized by semi-trucks to access I-82, and then to other locations
24 in Washington State and beyond.
25

26 As one example, SR 22 is the primary route by which cattle are brought to the
27 Washington Beef facility in Toppenish, and by which processed beef is exported from
28 that facility to the market. I have always understood the number of cattle processed by
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3 the facility to exceed 1,000 per day. I located an article from the Yakima Herald-
4 Republic which reports that number to be 1,500 per day. I am attaching a copy of that
5 article as Exhibit B. Regardless the precise number, a sizeable number of semi-trucks
6 bring cattle to the Washington Beef facility each day. And a sizeable number of semi-
7 trucks export beef products from the Washington Beef facility on SR 22 each day. This
8 is just one example that illustrates the nature and volume of traffic on SR 22.
9

10 I have driven a semi-truck in this area. In my experience, a significant safety
11 hazard exists where heavy semi-trucks encounter slow moving farm equipment. It can
12 often be difficult for trucks to slow in time. They are often rushed, with employer-
13 dictated delivery schedules. Passenger vehicles travelling behind a semi-truck cannot
14 always see around the truck and may not understand why the truck has slowed or that
15 there is farm equipment ahead. This can lead to unpredictable maneuvers by passenger
16 vehicles.
17

18 This hazard is exacerbated where visibility is poor. SP Farms often moves its
19 farm equipment during the early morning and evening hours. Particularly in late fall, this
20 means our farm equipment will be on the roadways in the dark. In my view, this presents
21 a serious safety hazard to our employees and equipment as well as other vehicles on SR
22 22.
23

24 **6. Have there been any collisions involving SP Farms equipment on SR 22?**

25 Yes. I don't recall the exact date but it was about 15 or so years ago. One of our
26 John Deere tractors was pulling a mint chopper down SR 22. An oncoming passenger
27 vehicle crossed the center lane and collided with the mint copper.
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3 **7. Would the closure of the railroad at-grade crossings at North Stevens Road**
4 **and Barnhart Road divert farm equipment onto SR 22?**

5 Yes. The closure of North Stevens Road will divert heavy, slow-moving farm
6 equipment onto SR 22.

7 **8. What types of farm equipment would be diverted onto SR 22?**

8 We rotate the crops we grow on the 80 acre parcels near the North Stevens Road
9 crossing. Due to different practices associated with different crops, it is difficult to
10 predict the types of farm equipment that will be diverted onto SR 22 in a given year.

11 This year, we planted corn on these fields. As an illustrative example, corn production
12 this year has required the transport across the North Stevens Road crossing of the
13 following equipment:
14

- 15 • Disc rippers (pulled by tractor);
- 16 • Rollers (pulled by tractor, often behind disc rippers);
- 17 • sprayers (we contract this out);
- 18 • tractors for side-dressing and establishing irrigation channels;
- 19 • Combine for harvesting corn;
- 20 • Corn cart;
- 21 • Corn stalk beaters (pulled by tractor)
- 22 • Semi-trucks for loading and exporting corn from the property;
- 23
- 24

25 In addition to whatever we grow on our land, we also do custom grape harvesting
26 on property south of the BNSF line near the North Stevens Road crossing. We rely on
27 that crossing to transport grape harvesting equipment.

28 At present, we are able to use the North Stevens Road crossing to move this
29 equipment between those portions of our farmland on either side of the BNSF line and
30

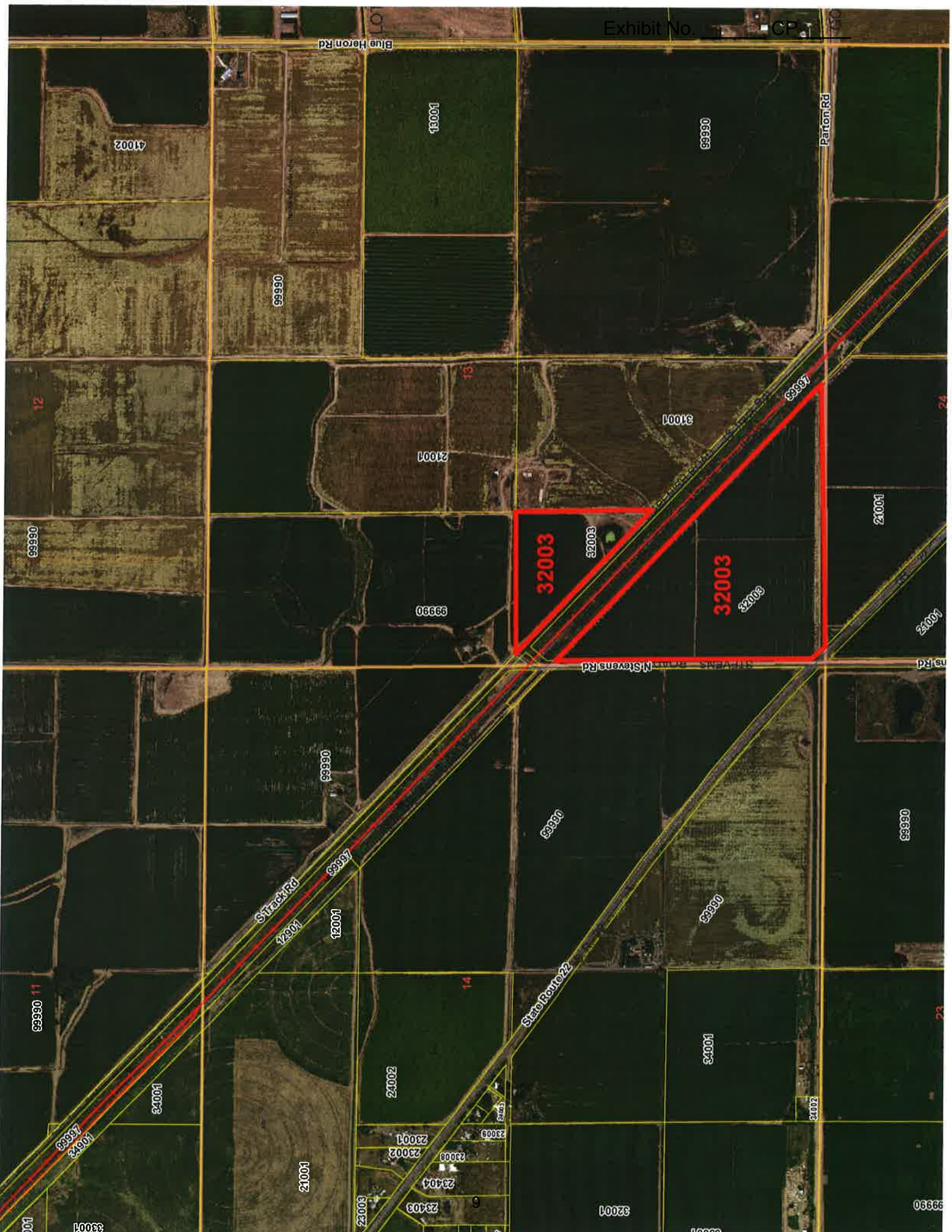
PREFILED TESTIMONY OF CURTIS PARRISH - 5

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3 SR 22. None of the farm equipment identified above has to travel along SR 22. If the
4 North Stevens Road crossing is closed all of the farm equipment listed above will be
5 diverted onto SR 22 for a distance that exceeds a mile each time work is needed on these
6 parcels.

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8 DATED THIS _____ day of November, 2014.

9 _____
10 CURTIS PARRISH
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Exhibit A



Blue Heron Rd

Parton Rd

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18001

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21001

31001

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32003

32003

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24001

Stevens Rd

ns Rd

Strach Rd

99990

99990

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99990 11

24001

12001

State Route 22

34001

24002

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21001

23003

23002

23001

23008

23009

23404

23403

32001

63001

99990

33001

33001

24002

07

Exhibit B

Washington Beef: Company goes beyond beef, stands out

POSTED ON APRIL 21, 2013

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By Phil Ferolito / Yakima Herald-Republic
pferolito@yakimaherald.com

Phone: 509-577-7749

Related Information

Washington Beef

- **Location:** Toppenish
- **Number employed:** 900
- **Payroll information:** \$30 million; average hourly wage is \$13

TOPPENISH — One recent afternoon, dozens of workers used knives to clean bones and fat from meat in an assembly line at Washington Beef, where about 1,500 head of cattle are slaughtered every day.

Annually, that adds up to more than 400,000 head of cattle for about 300 million pounds of beef. While most of that is

■ **Year founded:** 1950s

■ **Category:** Agriculture & Food Processing

shipped across the country, roughly 20 percent — all prime beef — is sold to Japan and Singapore, said company president Brad McDowell.

Perched at the corner of U.S. Highway 97 and Fort Road in Toppenish, the slaughterhouse has supplied the area with jobs since the 1950s.

Today, the company says, it employs about 900 workers and boasts an annual payroll of \$30 million, with an average wage of \$13 per hour. The plant also creates another \$26 million infusion into the local economy annually through contracted services such as laundry and trucking and purchasing supplies. The plant spends roughly \$4 million a year on boxes alone, McDowell said.

Ownership of the plant changed several times over the years before Agri-Beef, based in Boise, Idaho, bought it in 2003. Founded in 1968, Agri-Beef also owns feedlots in Idaho, Kansas and Moses Lake and manufactures its own feed supplements. The company supplies most of the cattle that is processed at the Toppenish plant and employs a total of 1,200 workers, including those working in Toppenish.

Since 2005, the slaughterhouse has added 350 new jobs with additional meat production lines and upgrades to its wastewater treatment plant, which converts solid waste into compost. Animal waste parts are cooked and ground to make fertilizer.

“And we continue to add more jobs,” McDowell said.

A new ground beef production line completed in December has the potential to add up to another 15 jobs this year, and a planned expansion to its shipping and receiving area is expected to bring another 10 to 20 jobs sometime next year, he said.

The processing plant directly competes with giant beef producers in the Midwest such as Cargill, National Beef, JBS and Tyson, which also has a plant near Pasco. Those companies process about 650,000 head of cattle a week compared with approximately 7,500 at Washington Beef, McDowell said.

But being vertically structured, from ranching to producing beef, allows the company to intensely focus on the quality of each animal to produce high-quality meats and target premium markets. Close attention is paid to animal genetics and nutrition, and the company has its own scientists and nutritionists, he said.

“That’s how we have been able to survive in a high-level competition, low-margin market,” McDowell said. “But it’s really challenging because there are a lot of moving parts.”

The company raises a Japanese breed of cattle that produces famed Kobe beef. About 200 head of the premium animal is processed a day into high-quality cuts of meat that have been served at prestigious gatherings such as the Academy Awards and at the White House, McDowell said.

The plant also sells cowhide for leather and animal parts for medical research. For example, a membrane found around a cow heart is used to build replacement heart valves for humans, he said.

“There’s a lot of little side pieces of our business that people don’t know about,” he said.

In addition to making profits, the plant also donates beef to local and regional food banks. Over the past three years, Washington Beef has given away more than 800,000 servings of meat to needy people, he said.

Strategically, the Toppenish plant probably couldn’t be better situated, he said.

It’s not far from shipyards on the west side of the state and serves as a central hub for Agri-Beef’s cattle operations in Idaho and Moses Lake.

“We’re just 21/2 hours away from the ship, as to where the other guys in the Midwest are 21/2 days away,” he said.