Letterbox

Rails to trails

If you read the legal notice of the Bon Homme Commission meeting on 8-17 it was reported that Ron and Janet Wagner made a proposal to convert unused rail line in Bon Homme and Charles Mix County into the core of a regional multipurpose recreational trail. They asked the board to consider passing a resolution of support for the project. We delayed action until September 7. Since the rail hasn't been used for 35 years, I felt responsible to check the condition of the tracks to see if it is a respectful use of taxpayers dollars (a grant).

As I drove from Tabor to Platte, staying as close as I could to the rail, I found many major obstacles that would cost a lot of money to overcome. As I talked to farmers along the rail line they were not at all supportive. I found that most of the rail goes through private property. They don't want Tom, Dick and Harry going across their property. There will not be any way that activity on the trail can be monitored. My decision to not support this project came after talking to a businessman in a small town who said all they will do is make a lot of farmers mad.

The promoters of this project are meeting with city councils to get support. In my opinion they should be meeting with the farmers first. I have been in contact with officials in Pierre and I will be a strong voice for the farmers.

On September 7, Ron Wagner was invited to our meeting so we could ask questions. He never showed up so we took no action on the resolution. Maybe they are starting to realize this is not a very popular project to push for. The promoters need to realize farmers are very protective of their property and should be shown great respect.

Commissioner Ed Van Gerpen
Avon, SD

Thanks Ed Van Gerpen