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SERVICE DATE - JUNE 18, 1997

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NO. AB-103 (SUB-NO. 11X)

THE KANSAS CITY SOUTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY  
- ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION --  
BETWEEN A POINT NEAR HOPE, AR AND THE ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA STATE  
LINE, IN HEMPSTEAD, LAFAYETTE, AND COLUMBIA COUNTIES, AR

### BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, the Kansas City Southern Railway Company (KCS) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152.50 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment of its railroad line located between Milepost 4.00 near Hope and Milepost 46.78 at the Arkansas-Louisiana State Line, a distance of 42.78 miles in Hempstead, Lafayette, and Columbia Counties, AR. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. The right-of-way is located not far from Lake Erling, a large lake in Lafayette County and not far from Southern Arkansas University in Columbia County.

If the notice becomes effective, the railroad will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances and to dispose of the right-of-way. KCS indicates that if the Board grants abandonment authority, it would remove the track materials in the rail line and sell or reuse them elsewhere in its system.

### ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The railroad has submitted an environmental report that concludes the quality of the human environment will not be affected significantly as a result of the abandonment or any post-abandonment activities, including salvage and disposition of the right-of-way. The railroad has served the environmental report on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Board's environmental rules at 49 CFR 1105.7(b). We have investigated the record in this proceeding. Also, we have contacted appropriate agencies and individuals to verify the railroad's report and to obtain additional information and comments regarding the potential environmental effects of the proposed abandonment. Contacts have included U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency, Region 6; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 4; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program; and the Planning Officers of Hampstead, Lafayette, and Columbia Counties.

### **CONDITIONS**

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has identified 78 geodetic station markers that may be affected by the proposed abandonment. NGS has forwarded a listing of these markers to the railroad's legal representative and we have placed a copy of NGS's letter in the docket for this case. NGS requests that if the railroad plans any activities that will disturb or destroy these markers, it must provide not less than 90 days notification to NGS in advance of such activities. Therefore, we recommend imposition of the following condition: **Kansas City Southern Railroad shall provide the National Geodetic Survey no less than 90 days notice prior to engaging in any salvage activities that would disturb or destroy the 78 markers previously identified.**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the information provided from all sources to date and subject to the recommended condition, we conclude that, as currently proposed, abandonment of the line will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, the environmental impact statement process is unnecessary.

Alternatives to the proposed abandonment would include denial (and, therefore, no change in operations), discontinuance of service without abandonment and continued operation by another operator. In any of these cases, the existing quality of the human environment and energy consumption should not be affected.

### **PUBLIC USE**

If abandonment and salvage of the rail line does take place, the right-of-way may be suitable for other public use. A request containing the requisite four-part showing for imposition of a public use condition (49 CFR 1152.28) must be filed with the Board and served on the railroad within the time specified in the Federal Register notice.

### **TRAILS USE**

A request for a notice of interim trail use (NITU) is due to the Board, with a copy to the railroad, within 10 days of publication of the notice of exemption in the Federal Register. However, the Board will accept late-filed requests as long as it retains jurisdiction to do so. This request must comply with the Board's rules for use of rights-of-way as trails (49 CFR 1152.29).

#### **PUBLIC ASSISTANCE**

The Board's Office of Public Services (OPS) responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact OPS directly at (202) 565-1592, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, Room 848, Washington, DC 20423.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL COMMENTS**

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, send an **original and two copies** to Vernon A. Williams, Office of the Secretary, Room 2215, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Victoria Rutson, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-103 (Sub-No. 11X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Ms. Rutson at (202) 565-1545.

Date made available to the public: June 13, 1997.

**Comment due date: June 27, 1997.**

By the Board, Elaine K. Kaiser, Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis.

Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary