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SERVICE DATE - AUGUST 11, 1997

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NO. AB-508X

**THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF SEATTLE AND KING COUNTY
-ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION-
IN KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, the Land Conservancy of Seattle and King County has filed a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment of its railroad line located between milepost 7.30 in Redmond, and milepost 19.75 in Issaquah, a distance of 12.45 miles, in King County, Washington. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the exemption becomes effective, the railroad will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances, and to dispose of the right-of-way.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE

The railroad corridor varies in width from approximately fifty feet to two hundred feet or more. The corridor is located on the east side of Lake Sammamish, generally parallel to East Lake Sammamish Parkway, on rolling terrain in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains. The property is chiefly residential suburban in character, with many single family dwellings or vacation homes or cottages. In Issaquah, the rail line abuts commercial and industrial parcels. Abandonment of the line would permit avoidance of a substantial expense to signalize and to construct two sets of rail crossings at an interchange with I-520 near Redmond.

There have been only two shippers on the line in the past three years: Darigold, Inc., and Marinakos Rock Co. In recent years the only significant user has been Darigold, Inc. which in 1996 shipped out 276 carloads of bulk butter. Marinakos Rock Center has employed the line once in 1994 for inbound rock products, and a few times for same in 1995, with no use in 1996.

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 consulted with 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 the King County Office of Cultural Resources, the King County Department of Parks and Recreation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Western Washington Office, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10, the Washington State Department of Transportation, the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Columbia Cascades System Support Office, the National Geodetic Survey, and the State of Washington, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.

CONDITIONS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has advised the Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) that as the lead Federal agency, the Surface Transportation Board must determine whether this action may affect Federally listed species or critical habitat. Based on the information before us, we conclude that the abandonment is not likely to adversely affect Federally listed species or critical habitat.

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has identified 1 geodetic station marker along the rail line and requests 90 days notice to plan relocation of any marker which may be disturbed or destroyed. Therefore, we recommend that the following condition be imposed on any decision granting abandonment authority: **The Land Conservancy of Seattle and King County shall consult with the National Geodetic Survey and provide NGS with 90 days notice prior to disturbing or destroying any geodetic marker.**

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

Following abandonment and salvage of the rail line, 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 the petition for exemption in the Federal Register. Nevertheless, the Board will accept late-filed requests as long as it retains jurisdiction to do so in a particular case. This request must comply with the Board's rules for use of rights-of-way as trails (49 CFR 1152.29). The Land Conservancy of Seattle and King County intends to transfer the corridor to King County Washington for permanent preservation for possible future rail use and interim trail use.

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.

COMMENTS

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, you should send an **original and two copies** to Vernon A. Williams, Office of the Secretary, Room 711, Washington, DC 20423-0001, to the attention of Scott Decker, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-508X in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions

regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Scott Decker at (202) 565-1531.

Date made available to the public: **August 8, 1997.**

Comment due date: September 12, 1997.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary